



REGION E – FAR WEST TEXAS WATER PLANNING GROUP
MEETING MINUTES

July 13, 2023
1:00 P.M. (MDT) / 2:00 P.M. (CDT)
8037 Lockheed, El Paso, TX 79925

<u>Voting Member</u>	<u>Interest Category</u>	<u>Present (✓)/Absent (X) / Alternate Present (*)</u>
Chairman Scott Reinert	<i>Water Utilities</i>	✓, physically present
Vice-Chairman Dave Hall	<i>Public</i>	✓, physically present
Secretary, Teresa Todd	<i>Counties</i>	✓, virtual
Summer Webb	<i>Groundwater Districts</i>	X
Albert Miller	<i>Water Utilities</i>	✓, virtual
Lindsey Adams, Alternate for O. Martinez	<i>Water Districts</i>	✓, physically present
Becky Brewster	<i>Municipalities</i>	✓, physically present
Hailey Davis	<i>GMA #4</i>	✓, virtual
David Etzold	<i>Real Estate</i>	X
Sterry Butcher	<i>Public</i>	✓, virtual
Rick Tate	<i>Agriculture</i>	✓, virtual
Randy Barker	<i>Groundwater Districts</i>	✓, virtual
Jeff Bennett	<i>Environment</i>	✓, virtual
Tim Leary	<i>Agriculture</i>	✓, virtual
Sean Woodard	<i>Industries</i>	✓, physically present
Gerry Grijalva	<i>Water Districts</i>	✓, virtual
Arlina Palacios	<i>Public</i>	✓, virtual
Avi Nash	<i>Counties</i>	✓, physically present
Omar Martinez	<i>Water Districts</i>	✓, physically present
Dan Dunlap	<i>Small Business</i>	✓, virtual
Jay Ornelas	<i>Water Districts</i>	X
<u>Non-voting Member</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Present(✓)/Absent(X)/ Alternate Present (*)</u>
Heather Rose	Texas Water Development Board	✓, physically present
Others Present:		
Enriqueta Caballero, virtual	Katie Dahlberg, TWDB, virtual	
Jennifer Herrera, WSP, virtual	Sarah Lee, TWDB, virtual	
Juan Acevedo, WSP, virtual	Peggy O'Brien, RGCOG, physically present	
William Alfara, virtual	Alex Bashing, EP Water District, physically present	

1. **Welcome –Chairman Scott Reinert**

Chairman Reinert welcomed the group and received confirmation that a quorum was present. The meeting started at 1:09 pm.

2. **Review and approve the minutes for the General Meeting held on June 8, 2023**

Dave Hall made a motion to approve the Minutes from June 8, 2023. Omar Martinez seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved.

3. **WSP Presentation – Review, Discuss and Potentially Take Action**

Juan Acevedo (WSP) presented an updated draft of Population and Municipal Water Demand Projections for the 2026 Regional Water Plans which included data from 16 WUGs (72%) in the region that responded to the survey. Juan’s updated research shows the population and water demand in the region as a whole is projected to stay the same or increase slightly, rather than the 2021 projections, which were based on the 2010 census and showed significant increases.

Juan explained that when Gallons Per Capita Daily (GPCD) values exceeded Texas Demographic Center (TDC) values, WSP incorporated reported water use and hookups from the surveys, which includes increased historical average use, and Census undercount calculations.

Even though there was more survey information to include, the region believes the 2026 projections are not an accurate representation of the projected population and water demand for the next 50 years.

Heather Rose from TWDB advised that regions can plan to any level of demand based on supply, account for uncertainty – it’s always about the needs.

Scott asked how the amendment process in a current cycle works. Heather said it is a lengthy process but can be down. The amendment gets submitted to the TWDB for re-adoption. They determine if it’s a major or minor amendment and whether a revision is justified. There is a public meeting. The amendment requires local funds and it applies to the entire region.

Teresa Todd asked if decreased population means decreased funding. Sarah Lee said population is a small part of that determination by TWDB. Katie Dahlberg said if data continues to be different that can speak to TDC directly. Enriqueta Caballero offered to do a presentation at the next meeting about funding that is independent of population growth (e.g., SRF opens December 1, 2023 for State FY 2025 – loans with really good rates and some provide principal forgives, if an entity meets program categories). If not growing there are other programs for upgrading infrastructure – just because population is stagnant, doesn’t mean communities don’t have needs.

Omar Martinez asked how population stagnation affects prioritization. What’s the impact on existing rate payers. How can entities pay back? Many WUGs rely on Federal programs rely on population growth as a consideration -- and applicants are asked to use State data as supporting documents (so this presentation will negatively impact chances for funding for projects). Katie

Dahlberg said they work with applicants for sustainable natural growth (e.g., EPA doesn't fund massive population increases), and discuss all aspects of projects (financial, sustainability, etc.).

Conversation was edifying, but the group was concerned about approving the data (with the revision as to the Census undercount), which justifies to TWDB that the data has value/is credible. As a group, questions remained around validity of the data. An amendment is possible and in the plan the group can continue to develop water management strategies to meet demand and management of the supply factor. There are mechanisms that can be built out that are more accurate for the region's growth and future demands.

The vote will be predicated on a methodology (using historical information based on the undercount and the trending data collected by survey) that will give WSP data to work with TWDB to continue to modify/revise the projections. Teresa Todd said that where there's such a discrepancy, it's alarming to adopt the historical data if survey information has been provided to the contrary. In these counties, there's likely more of an undercount and the group is duty bound to turn in this survey data -- and if it doesn't pass muster, fall back on the historical data.

Jennifer Herrera provided language for the motion:

FWTRWPG provides WSP authorization to submit on their behalf the required TWDB revision request letter which will include all counties (except for El Paso, Culberson and Hudspeth) the data that WSP produced based on the undercount projections for both population and water demand. For counties El Paso, Hudspeth and Culberson, WSP will be submitting to TWDB two data sets for their review process: 1) the county survey responses; and 2) the undercount projections. And WSP will include in chapter 2 of the 2026 Regional Water Plan, the language and data sets for which WSP submitted.

Teresa Todd made the motion. Sterry Butcher seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved.

4. Public Comment

Heather Rose said it was 107 degrees outside.

5. Consider and Discuss a date for the next regular meeting

The group decided to meet next on September 21, 2023, at 1:00 pm., local time, rural location TBA.

6. Adjourn

Dave Hall made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Becky Brewster seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 2:45 pm.



Janet Adams

Date