



**REGION E – FAR WEST TEXAS WATER PLANNING GROUP  
GENERAL MEETING MINUTES**

July 23, 2024

1:00 P.M. (MDT) / 2:00 P.M. (CDT)

8037 Lockheed, Suite 100

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>	✓, virtual
Albert Miller	<i>Water Utilities</i>	✓, physically present
Becky Brewster	<i>Municipalities</i>	✓, virtual
Haley Davis	<i>GMA #4</i>	✓, virtual
David Etzold	<i>Real Estate</i>	✓, physically present
Sterry Butcher	<i>Public</i>	✓, virtual
Rick Tate	<i>Agriculture</i>	X
Randy Barker	<i>Groundwater Districts</i>	✓, virtual
Jeff Bennett	<i>Environment</i>	✓, virtual
Tim Leary	<i>Agriculture</i>	X
Sean Woodard	<i>Industries</i>	X
Gerry Grijalva	<i>Water Districts</i>	✓, virtual
Arlina Palacios	<i>Public</i>	X
Avi Nash	<i>Counties</i>	X
Omar Martinez	<i>Water Districts</i>	✓, virtual
Dan Dunlap	<i>Small Business</i>	X
Jay Ornelas	<i>Water Districts</i>	✓, virtual

<u>Non-voting Member</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Present(✓)/Absent(X)/ Alternate Present (*)</u>
Elizabeth McCoy on behalf of Heather Rose	Texas Water Development Board	✓, virtual *
Gerardo Melendez	Bureau of Reclamation	✓, virtual

Others Present:

Jennifer Jackson, Carollo, virtual	Jon Albright, Freese & Nichols, virtual
Kristal Williams, Freese & Nichols, virtual	Annette Gutierrez, RGCOG, physically present
Peggy O'Brien, RGCOG, physically present	John T. Kennedy, Presidio Municipal Development District, virtual
Raquel Onsurez, El Paso Electric, physically present	Daniel Bueno, Village of Vinton, physically present
Rebecca Manriquez, Communities Unlimited, virtual	Thomas Black, San Elizario, virtual

1. **Welcome –Chairman Scott Reinert**

Chairman Reinert, with a quorum present, called the meeting to order at 1:10 pm MDT.

2. **Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

3. **Recognition of Guests and Designated Alternates**

Welcome was extended to Elizabeth McCoy who is attending on behalf of Heather Rose, Texas Water Development Board. Also welcomed were candidates for vacant positions (Raquel Onsurez, Daniel Bueno, John T. Kennedy, Jose Landeros and Thomas Black), Non-voting member Gerardo Melendez from the Bureau of Reclamation and Rebecca Manriquez from Communities Unlimited.

4. **Review and approve the minutes for the General Committee Meeting held on April 23, 2024**

Chairman Reinert asked if there were any comments. Since there were none, David Etzold made a motion to approve the minutes. Albert Miller seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved.

5. **Discuss and consider action regarding all nominations related to FWTWPG vacancies for voting members**

Chairman Reinert introduced the categories with vacancies:

Economic Development Urban: Roberto Ransom was not able to join the meeting. He is Director of El Paso Economic Development Department, formerly of the HUNT Institute out of UTEP.

Tourism: Jose Landeros, Director of El Paso County Director or Mobility, manages a few things at the county. Unable to attend.

Electric Generating Utilities: Raquel Onsurez, Plant Chemistry supervisor. Works with power generation for water and how it contributes to water planning – to be able to contribute to the community. And water treatment (well, reuse and discharge to Rio Grande – subject to NM and TX regulations).

Since there was only one candidate in these three categories, Chairman Reinert asked for a member to make a motion. Dave Hall made a motion for the approval of Roberto Ransom to Economic Development Urban, Jose Landeros to Tourism and Raquel Onsurez to Electric Generating Utilities. David Etzold seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved.

Chairman Reinert expressed how pleased the group is about the interest in these positions. For the Economic Development Rural, there are three candidates:

1. Thomas Black, Alderman from City of San Elizario – not present, but attended the Executive Committee Meeting virtually. Lives in Lower Valley of El Paso. Has passion for water supply projects in the borderland region.
2. Daniel Bueno, Village of Vinton. Helped manage \$34 million in Federal grant monies to bring first-time water and sewer services to 506 households and decommissioned old failing water systems that have been flagged by TCEQ for contaminants. In Upper Valley of El Paso County (Anthony and 5 colonias) working to bring first-time water to unincorporated communities that lack infrastructure. Is very interested to collaborate.
3. John T. Kennedy, Consultant with Presidio Municipal Development District. Had been in DC doing infrastructure planning and most recently in Alpine doing waste water infrastructure. Now working in surveying and City of Presidio hired him to develop a Community Resiliency and Economic Development strategy, green infrastructure, master planning, water and sewer infrastructure for city, county and integrating with NAD Bank and Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District. Suggested needs are great and varied in many rural locations in our region.

Teresa Todd was asked to weigh in regarding the two candidates having so much to offer and their desires to serve. Each will bring something different and represent an area that are not currently represented by our planning group. How this agenda item is worded: "Discussion and consideration of all of the nominations" - the language is broad enough to allow the creation of other vacancies to accommodate three rural positions. David Etzold asked about how that would be done. Teresa advised that the motion today will be to make a nomination and vote on that one person for the existing position and also vote, because of the quality of the nominations received for the category of Economic Development Rural, to create two additional new vacancies for these positions and advertise for them. Elizabeth McCoy at TWDB says there are 12 categories that comprise a planning group, but this rural spot was additional and created by Region E to reflect the region. Elizabeth suggested proceeding in accordance with the group's By-Laws.

Teresa Todd made a motion for today's nominee to be appointed to Economic Development Rural to be John Kennedy. Becky Brewster seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved.

Dave Hall made a motion that the RGCOG advertise the two additional Economic Development Rural positions, solicits nominees for those positions and that those positions be brought on as voting members. Albert Miller seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved.

Dave Hall instructed Daniel Bueno and Thomas Black to re-apply and asked them to please participate in the interim, as non-voting members. Teresa suggested advertising and posting so that new members can be on board for the September meeting. Annette stated that there is a 30-day requirement in the By-Laws and that the ads will go out next week.

6. **Report from Carollo on the schedule of Regional Water Planning**

Jennifer Jackson presented with Jon Albright and Kristal Williams of Freese and Nichols, engineering consultants, to review preliminary draft chapters and provide a status report on where the group is on the schedule. Jennifer conveyed the suggestion made at the

Executive Committee that Jennifer hold a new member class for her to share details on development of regional water plan so new members can be brought up to speed outside of a general board meeting. Asked the group to do thorough review of the redlined drafts so that specific interests/areas regional plan reflects the interests and needs. Technical Memo deadline has been met. Task 5B Notice to Proceed has been passed by TWDB, so Region E has the green light to move ahead in evaluation of recommended water management strategies in previous plan and any new plans to be included in the new water plan. These drafts are opportunities to refine and update needs. Population projections were revised, based on surveys, plats, connections. Water demands will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 in the September meeting.

**7. Consideration and Discussion of material from Carollo regarding a draft Chapter 1 for the 2026 Region E Water Plan**

Substantial changes and enhancements are included in the redline. Asked the group to review through the lens of where each member's interest group so the plan truly reflects the activities in the region. Chapter 1 has 13 sections. This draft summarized what is discussed in each section. Key changes in Chapter 2 section 1.1. Boundaries of the region, recognition of underground water conservation districts. High level discussion about priority groundwater management area. Geographic setting of the region – population, regional economy, topography, state parks, river basin. Changes to the region's boundary, population projection, land use (agriculture is top), average monthly rainfall data needed updating, water demand (irrigation is the top need), surface water, tributary flows, stream segments. Groundwater comprises 90% of the region's water. Springs continue to be critical supply sources for species and habitats. Reuse sections need support of the members to provide new content for inclusion so areas of importance are highlighted. Water quality and source protection includes 15 years of data from TCEQ. Water Loss Audit will be updated will be ready for review at the next meeting. Economically Distressed Area program to bring services to colonias (residential unincorporated subdivisions, lacking all or some basic services: water, sewer, drainage, streets, etc.). 24 projects total including 2 active projects: Montana Vista Wastewater System and Presidio County Water and Wastewater Improvement. Mayor Summer Webb wants to clarify if Valentine is a colonia. Rebecca Manriquez added that there is a geographic component to the definition (150 miles from the border). David Etzold asked for clarification of the purpose of the table is to document this growing subset, the potential demand/unmet needs and provide information to the legislature for funding. Each agency has an updated description and hyperlink. Universities that impact the planning. Relying heavily on the members of the group for updated information.

**8. Consideration and Discussion of material from Carollo regarding a draft Chapter 2 for the 2026 Region E Water Plan**

Jennifer provided high level summary of main sections: Population Projections were adjusted by using National Undercount data and a survey to insure feedback was received to explain that the initial data set for TWDB did not accurately reflect the region and the collection methodology was questioned. TWDB approved the change, but it didn't reflect the undercount sufficiently. Jennifer included additional data from Tom Fullerton at UTEP (Section 2.1.2) and directed the group to review and comment on this section – use TWDB data but balance with local data and local knowledge because this is a “bottom up” plan. Awaiting results from UTEP so that additional data in all 7 counties will be incorporated into the plan. This information should be received in August. Chairman Reinert noted that population has collateral negative consequences such as lack of funding for roads, hospitals, and other crucial maintenance of infrastructure. Jennifer encouraged this type of feedback from the group. Region E needs to tell her what's important. By third week of

August so Jennifer can aggregate and get it to the group for review in time for the next meeting in September.

9. **Report from Carollo on other regional planning efforts**

Task 5B was reviewed by TWDB. Just a few small changes: to include ASR and groundwater desalination as their own categories. Given the new members and the details they can provide, new projects may be possible and it's beneficial that Task 5B is flexible to be inclusive of additions. Elizabeth McCoy advised that the TWDB review timeline should be a fairly quick process so additions will be included within our deadline. Next steps: Carollo and Freese & Nichols are looking to review Drought Contingency Plans – which is needed to complete Chapter 7. The deadline was May so there should be good information to share before the September meeting. Also needed is input for Chapters 3 and 4 that a date will be determined at the September meeting.

10. **TWDB General Updates, by Elizabeth McCoy, including highlights of the new Conservation Resources Guide and a live demo of their new Conservation Information Dashboard for Water Supply Planning**

Elizabeth McCoy water conservation plans, water loss audits and annual reports were due May 1. TWDB is still accepting late submissions. Implementation plan SB28 (is flexible and subject to change) – it will determine how to distribute funding, statewide awareness program, details of plan on the TWDB website. Here's a link to the [Texas Water Fund](#) website where the Implementation Plan can be found.

The 2026 Guide, Water Loss Audits, Water Supply Needs, New Conservation and Water Use Resource Information Dashboard, GPCD Maps, Reporting Requirements, etc. can all be found here: [TWDB Conservation Information Dashboard for Water Supply Planning](#). Elizabeth navigated around on the TWDB site to show the group where data for resources can be accessed.

11. **Consider and Discuss a date for the next regular meeting**

The next meeting will be Tuesday, September 10, 2024. At the RGCOG offices and hybrid. Executive Committee at 10:30am MDT and General Meeting at 1pm MDT.

12. **Adjourn**

**Albert Miller made a motion to adjourn. Dave Hall** seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved. Meeting was adjourned at 3:11 pm MDT.