



REGION E – FAR WEST TEXAS WATER PLANNING GROUP
 MEETING MINUTES
 September 10, 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>	✓, virtual
Becky Brewster	<i>Municipalities</i>	✓, virtual
Haley Davis	<i>GMA #4</i>	X
David Etzold	<i>Real Estate</i>	✓, physically present
Sterry Butcher	<i>Public</i>	X
Rick Tate	<i>Agriculture</i>	X
Randy Barker	<i>Groundwater Districts</i>	X
Jeff Bennett	<i>Environment</i>	X
Tim Leary	<i>Agriculture</i>	X
Sean Woodard	<i>Industries</i>	✓, physically present
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>	X
Dan Dunlap	<i>Small Business</i>	✓, virtual
Jay Ornelas	<i>Water Districts</i>	✓, virtual
John T. Kennedy	<i>Economic Development Rural</i>	✓, physically present
Raquel Onsurez	<i>Electric Generating Utilities</i>	✓, virtual
Jose Landeros	<i>Tourism</i>	X
Roberto Ransom	<i>Economic Development Urban</i>	✓, virtual

<u>Non-voting Member</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Present(√)/Absent(X)/ Alternate Present (*)</u>
Heather Rose	Texas Water Development Board	√, virtual
Michael Flores	Texas Water Development Board	√, virtual
Enriqueta Caballero	Texas Water Development Board	√, virtual
Sara Lee	Texas Water Development Board	√, 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	Al Blair, consultant to EPCWID#1, virtual	

- 1. Welcome –Chairman Scott Reinert**
Chairman Reinert, with a quorum present, called the meeting to order at 1:08 pm MDT.
- 2. Public Comment**
There were no public comments.
- 3. Recognition of Guests and Designated Alternates**
Welcome was extended to Michael Flores and Sara Lee from Texas Water Development Board. Also welcomed were newest members: John T. Kennedy; Raquel Onsurez; and Roberto Ransom.
- 4. Review and approve the minutes for the General Committee Meeting held on July 23, 2024**
Chairman Reinert asked if there were any comments. Since there were none, Becky Brewster made a motion to approve the minutes. David Etzold 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 category of Rural Economic Development. Dave Hall made a motion for the group to approve the Executive Committee’s recommendation that Thomas Black be approved as Rural Economic Development voting member. Thomas Black is an Alderman from City of San Elizario and lives in Lower Valley of El Paso. He is an engineer at Union Pacific Railroad and has a passion for water supply projects in the borderland region. Dave Hall amended the motion to add that Mr. Black will become a full member by the next General Meeting. David Etzold seconded the amended motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved. Chairman Reinert imparted to the group the Executive Committee’s desire to encourage Daniel Bueno of Vinton to continue to participate as a contributor of valuable input from his community. And, should Mr. Bueno choose to join, an additional position for Rural Economic Development will be added. Chairman Reinert will reach out to Mr. Bueno for ongoing collaboration.
- 6. TWDB General Updates, by Heather Rose**
Heather Rose presented highlights on planning cycle. Next big deadlines: March 3, 2025 for the Initially Prepared Plan and October 20, 2025 for the Final Regional Plan. First State Flood Plan has been accepted and is now on line at: <https://texasstatefloodplan.org/overview>. Jay Ornelas and Omar Melendez contributed. Annette summarized our Region 14 (covers 14 counties)

accelerated pace, geared for second cycle. There is opportunity to apply for flood infrastructure funds – input is needed to identify where mitigation efforts are needed.

New resource coming for regional water planning outreach efforts: projections/revisions process received population demand revisions to give group an idea for rural outreach to WUGs that didn't submit a local plan.

Proposition 6 passed November 2023. TWDB received \$1M for a Texas Water Fund (TWF) Implementation Plan (surveyed average median household income; rural; and home cost were top considerations). You can see the proposed funding distribution and timeline at www.twdb.texas.gov/board/2024/07/Board/Brd02.pdf.

Heather outlined broad strokes of the Implementation Plan timeline: rules for water loan assistance fund Rural Water Assistance Fund will receive \$195M (\$45% grant for small communities for water loss projects)

Heather will ask TWDB legal team whether it will be considered a new water supply (since it would come from out of state) if there is a settlement between NM/TX and additional water results for El Paso.

Funding that has been awarded for Region E – Jennifer shared list of active projects: Dell City, Anthony, El Paso County a few, Marfa (\$705K for city water well replacement), Presidio County (\$12M waste water systems for sites 20 miles beyond current systems), Study Butte. Jennifer will incorporate this information into upcoming Chapter 5 – details on actual projects will help her to update.

7. Report from Carollo on the schedule of Regional Water Planning

Jennifer Jackson set out the timeline:

Chapters 1 and 2 needed feedback by end of August. Discussed updates to these drafts by next meeting. High level summary of draft Chapters 3 and 4. Will need all feedback by end of October.

8. Consideration and Discussion of material from Carollo regarding updates to draft Chapter 1 for the 2026 Region E Water Plan

Jennifer Jackson presented on the new Water Loss Audit portion of Chapter 1. Said that modern flow meters have a low percentage of error and the rural infrastructure needs updating to capture unrecorded loss by public utilities. Rules say planning groups must consider these strategies that are included in water loss audits. Loss benchmarks historically have been 10%. AWA standards have changed to account for uniqueness of entities. Now looks at water loss through key indicators: (1) retail public utility located in less dense communities (less than 32 connections per mile) and median of water loss is 57 gallons per connection per day; and (2) retail public utilities in dense communities (over 32 connections) and no more than a loss of 30 gallons per connection per day.

Chairman Reinert noted El Paso County's water loss is being aggressively pursued (actually breaking and repairs; or apparent loss measured by flow meters) and will inquire how El Paso is pursuing this effort and the methodology they are using to determine how efficient the model is.

Jennifer compared this table with the previous plan – this plan is capturing 10% loss and showing entities that have made efforts to repair these losses. Calculating water loss and correcting situations creates new water and is a water management strategy.

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

Jennifer advised the only feedback received was from Dave Hall. We are awaiting the UTEP population projection study to accurately reflect the growth in our region. Based on the results, if it finds a way into Chapter 2, if significant enough it will alter other chapters and will be included. The goal is to have some draft numbers by the end of September. Fort Bliss and Terrell County information is needed for population and water demand.

10. Consideration and Discussion of material from Carollo regarding draft Chapters 3 and 4 for the 2026 Region E Water Plan

Carollo and Freese & Nichols requested input from the group. Jennifer showcased high level Water Supply Sources and Capacity. Supply is estimated during drought of record conditions (when at its most critical availability level) – ground water, surface water, reuse. Capacity based on infrastructure, legal limitations and availability from each source.

Jon Albright: Water Availability Models reflect priority allocation system – during times of shortage, the oldest gets first priority. Updated WAM model – how much comes from the Rio Grande (highly variable); focuses on minimum annual supply as definition of supply. Modifications of irrigation water above Fort Quitman and water rights in Balmorhea area. 19 acre feet from Fort Davis is now accounted for as a source that is used for Region F. Other surface water from non-municipal sources and 303D list (impaired water bodies); channelization; etc.

Ground Water laid out sources (aquifers) average max 8 year historical pumping and 11 year (2011-2021). Reflect recharge, municipal well fields.

Desired future conditions – write-ups will reflect local conditions (e.g., how many meters, check valves, etc.). Livestock Local Supply new category - limited water supplies that occur in livestock tanks and can be used for irrigation and manufacturing.

Direct Re-use: used without first being discharged into stream or watercourse

Chapter 4 houses tables from TWDB – water conservation strategies first need to be finalized. Other tables are ready for review (water supply surpluses and shortages by decade).

11. Report from Carollo on other regional planning efforts

Jennifer set out the cadence of upcoming meetings to meet the March 3, 2025 deadline.

TWDB provided an excel sheet to help demonstrate the group conducted rural outreach. Carollo has done 4 surveys, most rural, will pull it together to be sure nobody has been left out.

Chapter 5 survey is underway to capture needs and desires of each entity in order to be eligible for state funding. Jennifer needs input on details from the group. By next meeting Jennifer will update Chapter 7 which will include the 2022 drought and a draft Chapter 9 and 10.

Need a meeting in November or December for sure. Meet in November so have December to fall back on if needed.

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

The next meetings will be the week of October 14 Tuesday, October 15 or Thursday, October 17, 2024 (at the RGCOG offices and hybrid) – A Doodle poll will be circulated to see which is better and Thursday, November 7, 2024 (in person, with hybrid option, in Alpine). Executive Committee at 10:30am MDT and General Meeting at 1pm MDT.

13. Adjourn

Albert Miller made a motion to adjourn. David Etzold seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved. Meeting was adjourned at 2:39 pm MDT.

14. Presentation from Enriqueta (Keta) Caballero on TWDB's funding programs

Keta presented brief summary of programs. TWDB does science, (water and flood) planning and finance for infrastructure projects.

Water Supply and Infrastructure Division (financing component) – program administration and reporting, regional marketing and coordinates all programs, reporting to state and federal; project management teams (engineers, project managers, environmental review, etc.).

Federal Programs – State Revolving Funds – Congressional appropriations through EPA. Each state contributes 20% match. Drinking Water, Lead Service Line Replacement, Emerging Contaminants, Wastewater, Reuse. Asset Management for Small Systems – grant and loan components.

Water Utilities Technical Assistance Program – many systems need assistance to have a pre-application (no cost).

State Programs – State Water Implementation Fund for Texas – bonds.

Economically Distressed Areas Program

Flood Infrastructure Funds (Loan and Grants)

Texas Water Development Fund – Oldest program – non-competitive, no prioritization. Direct dialog. Up to the applicant type(s) of projects.

Agriculture Water Conservation Loan & Grant Program

State Participation – future needs projects.

Rural Water Assistance Fund – loan/grant to small rural water utilities.

Texas Water Fund – new program – new water supply for Texas – rules being formulated now. Project solicitation in near future.

Funding is available in cycles – usually open in Fall, close in Spring. To tap in – Federal applicants submit Project Information Form – describe system, estimated cost.

State – submit abridged application.

TWDB mostly loan-based (low rates) and principal forgiveness categories (for low income, disadvantaged communities) – SRF's up to 70% forgiveness. Or Urgent Need – up to \$800K. There are other categories. Under Federal programs drinking water – max loan \$49M; clean water \$60M and forgiveness is capped at \$10M.

Financial Assistance Webpage – lists all programs for TWDB funds.

www.twdb.texas.gov/financial/index.asp or email enriqueta.caballero@twdb.texas.gov

or call her at 512-435-9071.

Keta will share her slide presentation with the group. She will be in El Paso doing a workshop soon.

Annette asked which is the best funding to apply for and what is not oversubscribed? Keta said there are so many projects and all funds are over capacity. The demand for all the programs is very high.

Suggested submitting pre-applications / project information forms to get all ducks in a row and do both SWIFT, SRF, DFUND to broaden opportunities. Rate studies and technical assistance from Water Finance Exchange. TCEQ does FMT assistance for infrastructure financing