



REGION E – FAR WEST TEXAS WATER PLANNING GROUP
 GENERAL MEETING MINUTES
 January 23, 2025
 12:00 P.M. (MDT) / 1:00 P.M. (CDT)
 Rio Grande Council of Governments
 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> | X |
| Secretary, Teresa Todd | <i>Counties</i> | X |
| Summer Webb | <i>Groundwater Districts</i> | ✓, virtual |
| Albert Miller | <i>Water Utilities</i> | X |
| 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> | ✓, virtual |
| Jeff Bennett | <i>Environment</i> | ✓, virtual |
| 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> | ✓, virtual |
| Avi Nash | <i>Counties</i> | X |
| Omar Martinez | <i>Water Districts</i> | ✓, virtual |
| Dan Dunlap | <i>Small Business</i> | ✓, virtual |
| Jay Ornelas | <i>Water Districts</i> | ✓, virtual |
| John T. Kennedy | <i>Economic Development Rural</i> | ✓, virtual |
| Raquel Onsurez | <i>Electric Generating Utilities</i> | ✓, virtual |
| Jose Landeros | <i>Tourism</i> | ✓, virtual |
| Roberto Ransom | <i>Economic Development Urban</i> | ✓, virtual |
| Thomas Black | <i>Economic Development Rural</i> | ✓, virtual |

| <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: | | |
| Jennifer Jackson, Carollo, virtual | Jon Albright, Freese & Nichols, virtual | |
| Kristal Copp, Freese & Nichols, virtual | Becky Gates, Carollo, virtual | |
| Ron Ellis, TWDB Chief of Staff, physically present | Tonya Miller, TWDB Director, physically present | |
| Aaron Burciaga, RGCOG, physically present | Peggy O'Brien, RGCOG, physically present | |

1. Welcome –Chairman Scott Reinert

Chairman Reinert, with a quorum present, called the meeting to order at 12:09 pm MDT.

2. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

3. Recognition of Guests and Designated Alternates

Welcome was extended to new TWDB leadership: Tonya Miller, Director and Ron Ellis, Chief of Staff.

4. Review and approve the minutes for the General Committee Meeting held on November 7, 2024

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

5. TWDB General Updates, by Heather Rose

Heather Rose mentioned additional new leaders at TWDB, who were not present: L’Oreal Stepney, Chairwoman and Bryan McMath, Executive Administrator. 2024 Water Use Surveys have gone out. Entities need 3 years of data in order to receive State funds. Contact the water survey team at TWDB with questions. SWIFT Abridged Applications are due February 1. Agricultural Water Conservation Grants for agriculture are available. State Revolving Funds are also coming up in March. Drinking Water State Revolving Funds in April. Upcoming informational webinars on water loss, use and conservation are on February 12 and March 11. Attendance is required to receive State funds. They will be recorded, so entities may attend when convenient. Reach out to Heather with questions. Dave Etzold asked if there were any new water user groups. Jennifer Jackson said there are none but she has seen staff member changes so there may be new members to WUGs. Heather said new validation is required for State funding.

The Initially Proposed Plan (IPP) is to be approved by the Group at the next meeting on February 27 and submitted to TWDB on March 3. TWDB will review and provide formal comments to Group within 120 days. Group will post notice of Public Hearing at least 30 days prior. Copies of the IPP will be sent to libraries, county seats, etc. for review and public comment. The Group will hold a Public Hearing to accept oral and written comments followed by a General Meeting. Following the Public Hearing there is a written public and agency comment period for at least 60 days. These comments will be addressed at another Meeting of the Group after which Jennifer will incorporate into a Final Draft which will be approved by the Group at another Meeting (August/Early September). Then the IPP will be submitted to TWDB by October 20.

6. **Consider, discuss and take appropriate action to approve the draft IPP Chapters 2, 7 and 8 and authorize Carollo to work with WUGs and/or the TWDB on any final modifications.**

Jennifer recapped the process that was used to amend the population projections by Dr. Fullerton for Appendix 2A of the IPP. Also summarized was reasoning of the Management Supply Factor which would provide a customized buffer for Region E. She reminded the Group of the survey data from all the WUGs, projected higher populations into the future. Dr. Fullerton's population projections were slightly lower for 2030, 40, 50 but slightly higher for 2060, 70 and 80. Both data sets can be considered to build on for future planning cycles. Scott Reinert asked if Dr. Fullerton can provide numbers for El Paso in the chart for 2A. Jennifer will request and include in forthcoming corrected version.

Chapter 7 had no additional feedback. So the version presented in October and November but noted comments from Jeff Bennett and John Kennedy about riparian repair strategy in a future plan. Dave Etzold asked Jeff to share his comments. Jeff talked about streams being degraded by industry and grazing pressure. Stream restoration can restore the flows, capture sediment to rehydrate and recharge streams.

Chapter 8. Policy recommendations. Had a comment by Omar Martinez with a new recommendation that proposed Municipal Utility Districts (MUDs) be required to coordinate with regional water planning to better prepare for the 50-year water use plan (for section 8.2) (i.e., a proposed development near the water desalination plant in El Paso will have a significant impact). Dave Etzold asked how MUDs can be required to coordinate. Omar suggested it being added to a TCEQ checklist so the FWTWPG would be informed of proposed changes. Jennifer added this recommendation in Chapter 8.

Omar Martinez made a motion to approve draft IPP Chapters 2, 7 and 8. Dave Etzold seconded the motion, with the provision that Appendix 2A will include the El Paso data in Dr. Fullerton's study. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved.

7. **Consider, discuss and review draft Chapter 5, Appendix 5A & 5B and Chapter 6 of the 2026 Far West Texas Water Plan.**

Jennifer said these Chapters need the most coordination with the WUGs, the recommended and alternate management strategies, and the evaluation procedure and matrix for review/contribution by the Group. Chapter 5 includes procedures to collect 68 strategies (38 of which are conservation-oriented) with consistent cost factors. Conservation is a huge priority and reuse is a big part of that. Water Loss Audit and Mainline Repair were included in 15 strategies - 7 are new to this Plan, which is great to have included. The Plan needs to keep as many strategies in order to provide options for SWIFT funding. The region is in a constant state of drought and the Plan needs to mention unmet needs (e.g., irrigation and mining which are governed by underground water conservation districts need to be coordinated with FWTWPG).

Appendix 5A & 5B is missing strategy information from Van Horn. Summer Webb offered to provide more information for inclusion. El Paso Water has 10 WMSs to coordinate and finalize and El Paso County is pending finalization of cost estimation. The Appendices contain recommended management strategies (5A) and Strategy Evaluation Quantification Matrix (5B) for each entity.

Chapter 6 has entities' responses to surveys re: Protection of: water resources; agricultural resources; natural resources; and public health and safety.

This requires the FWTWPG to review these chapters and get suggested changes to Jennifer no later than close of business January 27.

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

9. Report from Carollo on other regional planning efforts.

Jennifer condensed both items and recapped a few slides by sharing the remaining timeline and the ongoing work to be done. If things come in after submission on March 3, there is time to address comments from the public and additional input from the Group.

10. Confirm date for the next regular meeting and location for future meetings.

The next General Meeting before the IPP deadline in March will be on Thursday, February 27, 2025 (in person, with hybrid option, at the RGCOG offices in El Paso) at 1pm MDT / 2pm CST.

11. Adjourn

David Etzold made a motion to adjourn. Jeff Bennett seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved. Meeting was adjourned at 1:32 pm MDT.