

May 2008

Volume 7, Issue 3

Regional Water Planning Groups Compete for Next Round of Funding

THE 16 REGIONAL WATER PLANNING GROUPS (RWPGs) IN TEXAS HAVE UNTIL JUNE 13 TO APPLY FOR FUNDING TO CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS THROUGH THE REMAINING THREE YEARS OF THE CURRENT LONG-RANGE WATER PLANNING CYCLE. THE TEXAS WATER DEVELOPMENT BOARD (TWDB), WHICH OVERSEES PLANNING EFFORTS, WILL AWARD UP TO \$9 MILLION IN GRANTS TO THE RWPGs. TWDB EXPECTS TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDING AT THE BOARD'S AUGUST MEETING AND THEN NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE CONTRACTS BY THE END OF NOVEMBER.

The current planning cycle began in 2007 and will culminate in 2011 with revised regional water plans. Initially, the state had provided funding for only the first two years of the effort; the 2007 Texas Legislature appropriated an additional \$6 million in funding for the current biennium and TWDB anticipates \$3 million more in appropriations for the next biennium.

The remaining \$4.8 million will be awarded for additional work beyond the base activities. Applications for those funds will be evaluated on a competitive basis, factoring in the amount and timing of need for water supplies in the region, changed conditions, lack of duplication of effort, and soundness of the scope of work.

TWDB plans to award \$4.2 million in "base funding" to RWPGs to update their regional plans, hold meetings, and prepare and submit documents and data. These funds will be allocated according to specific tasks required and the number of water user groups and wholesale water providers in the region.

Further details are available at www.twdb.state.tx.us. Click on "Planning" in the home page header, then on "Water Resources Planning & Information." The application materials for funding for 2011 Regional Water Plans are listed under "What's New."

Senate Natural Resources Committee Sets Hearing Schedule

The Senate Natural Resources Committee wasted no time diving into its interim charges, already holding a hearing on the powers and duties of river authorities and a joint hearing with the Senate Business & Commerce Committee on the use of water by energy plants.

Future hearings are planned throughout the state on these issues:

- Responsibility for major dam and levee

safety and how to fund assessments, repairs or replacements of impaired structures;

- Liability and control standards for flood control structures;
- Conservation of water used in the production of energy and if those demands should be considered in regional water plans;
- Inventory and analyze high-salinity bodies of water and explore new technologies to reduce salinity in surface and ground waters, including brine disposal options;
- Study the impact and implementation of HB 1763 from the 79th Legislature on groundwater conservation districts (GCD), including their efforts to work with other entities within their groundwater management area;
- Investigate groundwater use in areas without

a defined aquifer, such as the Barnett Shale;

- Study the need for regional water quality standards in areas such as the Edwards and Barton Springs recharge zone; and
- Monitor progress of the Edwards Aquifer Authority Recovery Implementation Plan.

The committee's tentative schedule has them meeting in the following cities on these dates: Dallas, May 13; El Paso, June 10; Houston, July 8; Amarillo, August 5; and Arlington, September 9. The House Natural Resources Committee held two hearings on several of its interim charges in mid-January before Chairman Robert Puente resigned. New Chairman Mike "Tuffy" Hamilton plans to finish up their work this summer.

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JOINT COMMITTEE ON STATE WATER FUNDING

TO ADDRESS MONEY GAP

When the TWDB surveyed water user groups as part of the 2007 State Water Plan, the need for state funding assistance was predicted to be nearly \$1.7 billion through 2020 and \$2.1 billion by 2060. Recognizing the importance of finding new ways to meet those funding needs, the 80th Legislature created the Joint Committee on State Water Funding. The committee will review current financing options for water supply infrastructure, including strategies in the 2007 state water plan.

The committee has asked TWDB staff to reevaluate the funding projections by surveying local and regional providers of municipal water. That survey is ongoing.

Chairing this committee are the current leaders of the legislative natural resources committees, Sen. Kip Averitt (Waco) and Rep. Mike "Tuffy" Hamilton (Mauriceville). Other members are Rep. Brandon Creighton (Conroe), Rep. Will Harnett (Dallas), Rep. Dan Gattis (Georgetown), Sen. Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa (McAllen), Sen. Robert Duncan (Lubbock), and Sen. Kevin Eltife (Tyler).

Their first meeting will be in Dallas on May 14, followed by meetings in Houston on July 9, and in Austin on September 24. For details on meeting times and locations, see www.senate.state.tx.us.

Changes at Texas Water Development Board

Gov. Rick Perry made some important changes to the Texas Water Development Board, moving member James E. Herring of Amarillo into the chairman's seat, and appointing three new members.

Herring is President and CEO of Friona Industries, L.P., one of the largest cattle feeding operations in the United States. Herring has served on the TWDB since January 2004. The new appointees to the board are banker Joe M. Crutcher of Palestine, attorney Edward G. Vaughan of Boerne, and retired Texas Instruments executive Lewis H. McMahan of Dallas. Chairman Herring designated Mr. Vaughan to represent the TWDB on the Coastal Coordination Council.

On a staff level, Carolyn L. Brittin has been named the Deputy Executive Administrator for Water Resources Planning and Information, a new division at TWDB that combines the Water Resources Planning Division – which she's been leading for the past three years – with the Texas Natural Resources Information System (TNRIS).

Brittin has more than 20 years' experience in state government, including several years in governmental affairs at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

Also, Dr. Hari J. Krishna, a leader of the innovative water technologies division, is retiring after 8 years of service to the TWDB. Dr. Krishna previously worked for TCEQ and the Texas A&M University System. He is well known throughout the nation for his research on rainwater harvesting and reuse, and played a key role in the growth of this conservation practice by starting the American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association (www.ARCSA.org), a non-profit organization of more than 300 members.

NRS Celebrates Anniversary

NRS Consulting Engineers celebrated its 20th anniversary with receptions in Austin on April 9 and Harlingen on April 25. At the Austin event, dozens of clients and friends, including Rep. Bill Callegari and Rep. Eddie Lucio, III, spoke to the



JESUS AND BILL POSE WITH AN ICE SCULPTURE BEARING THE NRS LOGO

company's success. NRS Principals Bill Norris and Jesús Leal look forward to the company's third decade of engineering innovative water solutions.

Way to Go, Water Winners!

Efforts to restore wetlands, to educate children on the connection between pollution and water quality, and to conserve water along the Rio Grande were among the winners of this year's Environmental Excellence Awards (EEA), handed out by TCEQ.

The Bahia Grande Restoration Partnership, a large, coordinated effort between several nature conservation groups and governmental agencies, won in the Civic/Nonprofit category. Before the restoration project began, the Bahia Grande was a barren, 11,000-acre basin located near Brownville and the Gulf of Mexico. More than \$14.6 million has been spent digging channels to return sea water to the bay, planting native plants, and restoring the habitat. The bay is now back to its natural state – popular with fish, birds, and other marine life.

In the category of Education, the Nueces River Authority (NRA) won for its campaign to show students in the five-county Nueces River basin how pollution impacts creeks, rivers, and bays. As part of a larger "Up 2 U" campaign, NRA created a relief model of the Nueces River Basin that staff take to 5th

and 6th grade classrooms throughout the year. Food coloring is placed on the model to represent different pollutants, and then sprayed with a water bottle to show just how easily contaminants can make their way downstream.

Texas Water Resources Institute's Rio Grande Basin Initiative was honored in the Agriculture category for its large-scale effort to conserve water along the Rio Grande. A coalition of 19 state and federal agencies, 4 universities, and 31 irrigation districts are working together to more efficiently use current water resources while exploring ways to create new water supplies. An estimated 4 million acre-feet of water has been "saved" since 2002, thanks to hands-on training with residents and farmers in the U.S. and Mexico.

In a separate competition, the Kay Bailey Hutchison Desalination Plant, operated by El Paso Water Utilities, won Honorable Mention as "Desal Project of the Year" at the International Desalination Association/Global Water Intelligence conference in London.

ONCE A MAN-MADE DESERT, THE BAHIA GRANDE NEAR SOUTH PADRE ISLAND IS AN OASIS AGAIN. PHOTO BY CARRIE ROBERTSON, NOAA.

Dallas Requires Greener Homes & Offices

The Dallas City Council has approved an ordinance requiring new commercial and residential buildings to be more energy and water efficient, beginning in 2009. Using standards developed by the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED),

the City of Dallas will require homebuilders to construct homes so that they are at least "15 percent more efficient than the base energy code and meet four out of six high-efficiency water reduction strategies." For more information, see www.GreenDallas.net

Laguna Madre Water District Breaks Ground on Seawater Desal Plant

The new seawater desalination project being piloted by the Laguna Madre Water District broke ground on South Padre Island April 24. The director of TWDB's Innovative Water Technologies division, Jorge A. Arroyo, P.E., spoke at the groundbreaking, along with the Laguna Madre Water District vice-chairman Scott Friedman. TWDB is helping fund the pilot. (See *Texas Water News*, March 2008).

NRS Consulting Engineers designed and will manage construction and operations at the pilot. WaterBuild, a South Texas company specializing in water infrastructure projects, is constructing the facility.

Construction is expected to be finished in late June. The pilot study will then run for 6 months.



TWDB'S JORGE ARROYO SPEAKS AT LMWD GROUND BREAKING