

## Planning Water Resources for the State as a Whole Committee Meeting Minutes

July 15, 2020, 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

held via GoToWebinar Videoconference

*Committee decisions bolded and italicized in document*

**Participation: Number of Planning Water Resources Committee Members present 5 of 5:**

H	Mark Evans	C	Kevin Ward	K	David Wheelock
N	Carl Crull	O	Melanie Barnes		

**Senators/Representatives/Other VIPs in Attendance:** Heather Harward

**TWDB Board Members and Staff:** Temple McKinnon, Bryan McMath, Patrick Lopez

### MEETING GENERAL

Chair Mark Evans (Region H) introduced all committee members and acknowledged Suzanne Scott (Region L), Interregional Planning Council (IPC) Chair. All committee members were present and Mr. Evans determined that a quorum was present and called the meeting to order. Mr. Evans asked Ms. Scott if she would like to speak to the committee. Ms. Scott thanked all committee members for their willingness to serve and stated that formation of subcommittees would be most productive to address the IPC's charges. Mr. Evans asked if any members had comments. Carl Crull (Region N) stated that he is not sure the regional aspects of water needs is a solution to water needs for the State as a whole. Mr. Evans asked that Mr. Crull wait to provide comments discussion portion of meeting.

### AGENDA ITEMS

#### 1. Public Comment

No public comments were offered.

#### 2. Review and Discussion of Resources

Mr. Kevin Smith, TWDB point of contact, reviewed list of resources on the TWDB IPC website, related to Planning Water Resources for the State as a Whole. These resources were requested by IPC members during previous IPC meetings.

#### 3. Consideration of an Action Plan

Mr. Evans presented the draft action plan, explaining that the action plan represents high level actions and IPC deadlines. Mr. Evans stated that drafting of the committee's report to the IPC will be done by TWDB staff, based on discussions from committee meetings. It is the Chair's intent that all committee work will be done in meetings, there will not be subcommittees working between meetings, other than

by members forming their thought processes they will bring to meetings. Ms. Melanie Barnes (Region O) asked if members had access to the draft action plan. Mr. Smith stated that the action plan would be developed real-time during the meeting and final version of action plan forwarded to committee members. Mr. Evans detailed the structure of the committee report to the IPC and proposed the following action plan deadlines:

- Complete initial draft of committee report section, August 20<sup>th</sup>
- Review and edit draft committee report section, August 27<sup>th</sup>
- Submittal committee report to IPC, September 4<sup>th</sup>
- Present committee report to IPC, September 15th

#### **4. Discussion of Planning Water Resources for the State as a Whole**

Mr. Smith reviewed the committee Problem Statement, Goal Statement and Committee Charges. Mr. Evans then opened discussion on agenda item.

Mr. Crull commented that first paragraph of Problem Statement. Regions with water needs may not have the supplies in their region. Coordination with other regions to meet water needs is problematic. Suggested modifying regional aspect of Problem Statement to emphasize State need as a whole. Mentioned previous planned project to bring water from the Sabine river to west Texas. Numerous reservoir projects from previous water plans which did not consider environmental impacts. These were scrapped when environmental flows considered.

Mr. Evans commented that you find planned strategies have been previously studied. Ground up process gets sponsors involved to build projects.

Mr. Kevin Ward (Region C) noted that planning used to be done by the State with last water plans done by the State was a consensus plan in 1996 or 1997. Mr. Ward indicated that the list of projects serving multiple regions is telling; that there are 34 projects, line items 6 through 29 are all Region C projects. If planning for State as a whole, why aren't other regions doing the same as Region C?

Mr. Ward stated that there is no real effort between regions to share water. Mr. Ward indicated that Senate Bill 1 required looking at interconnections during drought, so all regions have done this. Mr. Ward commented that the regional water planning process doesn't do water planning for the State as a whole, and suggested the bottom up process has run its course and there is a need to utilize agencies for a state level clear vision across state. Mr. Ward stated the water plan has significant money to do its work. Mr. Ward mentioned a recent megadrought study, and that we have groundwater since surface water may dry up.

Mr. Ward suggested that a seawater pipeline throughout the state seawater would be the solution to megadrought and that such a project would need to be sanctioned by the IPC or it would not be considered by the legislature. Mr. Ward commented the need for big ideas and that regions cannot individually do this; if the State asked then regions could.

Mr. Nelson clarified that there are quite a few existing water supplies that flows between regions and interaction with existing supplies. TWDB can provide this information.

Mr. Crull indicated that the Corpus Christi area does not just rely on the Nueces River basin, but has diversified also to the Lavaca River and Colorado River basins, and now seawater desalination and noted that East Texas supplies are more drought tolerant. In response to Mr. Ward's idea of building a seawater pipeline for the state, Mr. Crull indicated that it would be best to treat seawater prior to distribution.

Mr. Evans explained to the committee that his plan was to have two-hour meetings, with a five-minute break after an hour.

Ms. Scott indicated that the Interregional Coordination committee raised the same issue of where in the planning process to move up concept of shared water resources. Ms. Scott reminded the committee that they were charged by Chairman Larson to also look at innovative and multi benefit projects, such as ASR and captured floodwater. Ms. Scott mentioned 'One Water' concept - changing regulation for use of greywater, stormwater, and rainwater harvesting – and raised the question of how regional water planning should look at innovation in the future.

Mr. Evans pointed out the distinction regarding how to consider what is allowable under existing law vs what would require statutory change. Mr. Nelson pointed out that changes in statute might also require changes to resources to agencies.

Mr. Ward mentioned interregional coordination in a context of upstream/downstream locations of wastewater treatment discharges and that in the Dallas-Fort Worth area most of discharge to the Trinity River is used by City of Houston. He indicated that looking holistically at how to better discharge return flows into different tributaries that could benefit other regions and that this would require regulatory change.

Mr. Evans indicated that there currently are \$8 billion worth of projects to use Trinity River water to Luce Bayou and Lake Houston, with the examples of the northeast Houston treatment plant expansion project and water authorities in Harris and north Fort Bend Counties.

Mr. Ward indicated that there is push to consider water supplies in other regions, and suggested the committee look at a process that state committees could use to develop state's water resources and that such an approach could come up with different answers.

Mr. Crull indicated that Corpus Christi area has historically looked at surface water supplies and that that 40 percent of water supply in Region N goes to industry. He indicated that because the region needs a drought proof supply it is looking at seawater desalination and that the effort is supported by fees paid by industries.

Ms. Barnes indicated that a balancing of upstream reuse and downstream seawater desalination should occur at regional level.

Mr. Crull pointed out the environmental flows and bays and estuaries requirements issues and that how people along the coast are vocal on this issue.

Mr. Evans pointed out the agriculture and natural resources language in the Goal Statement.

Ms. Barnes indicated that in her region, a recent ruling allows a 1:1 reuse.

Mr. David Wheelock (Region K) mentioned the Trans-Texas Water Program that went away and became Senate Bill 1 and expressed interest in obtaining information on existing interregional water transfers. Mr. Wheelock commented that House Bill 807 discussed regional coordination, but that the committee discussion has grown to statewide issues. Mr. Wheelock asked the question “what do we consider multi-regional; is it two regions or more than two regions?” Mr. Wheelock brought up the issue of Interbasin Transfer (IBT) rules with TCEQ, and commented that they are a major consideration. Mr. Wheelock suggested need to discuss changes to IBT rules. Mr. Wheelock indicated that there would be more interregional project in Central Texas but for IBT rules, and that this is probably true around the state.

Mr. Evans pointed out that the committee doesn’t have to necessarily make recommendations on all discussed issued, but can state observations in the committee report, then IPC can decide what to recommend.

Mr. Nelson asked the committee what they believe is preventing larger multi-regional project in the regional plans?

Mr. Evans commented that when speaking with representatives from other states, they say that water planning in Texas is the model.

Mr. Nelson indicated that resources (time and financial) limits are likely one issue and asked the committee what changes could be made to achieve better coordination?

Mr. Evans responded that the committee charges allowed for committee to develop additional solutions as needed.

Mr. Ward indicated that if there’s not a task and required chapter in the plan [to address interregional coordination] then you won’t get it. Mr. Ward asked to confirm if House Bill 807 addressed multi-regional planning areas? Ms. Scott clarified that the bill also discusses coordination among regional water planning groups and planning for the State as a whole.

Mr. Ward suggested that during the regional water planning group chairs conference call, could have discussion of multi-regional projects and reiterated that this is not a required task for consultants or chapter in regional water plans. Mr. Ward indicated that if regional water planning budgets were reduced, and the TWDB increased, the process would change.

Mr. Crull suggested increasing the responsibility of planning group liaisons, giving them responsibility for discussing interregional projects.

Mr. Wheelock commented that the current regional water planning process does consider needs for the State.

Ms. Barnes indicated that a missing piece is a group that brainstorms ideas which can then be considered by the regions.

Mr. Nelson clarified that regional water planning groups do state planning, but asked what within current framework is not working? Mr. Ward responded that “we’re not there yet” and that regions currently have enough water, but that in the future regions will have to get water from other regions

since basis of water plan is to get the cheapest water first versus what is best for the State. Mr. Ward indicated that the planning process needs to look beyond 50 years, even 250 years.

Ms. Scott commented that what drives regions is making customer costs and contracts work; can't increase rate, must be affordable, customers must be happy. She indicated that the state has never sponsored a project that has that risk involved. Ms. Scott stated that there may be a multi-region project that addresses region's needs, but economically would not work for a sponsor's customers. Asked if the State could sponsor a project; local regions could buy into a State project?

Mr. Nelson asked what could be done in the current framework to address this and mentioned state participation in projects. Ms. Barnes replied there is no place currently in the regional planning process [to consider multi-region projects] and doesn't think planning groups are encouraged by TWDB or the legislature. Mr. Evans indicated that limitations may be included in committee report.

Mr. Wheelock suggested that the scopes of work for regional water planning include a requirement that all strategies be evaluated for whether they could be a multi-regional project and offered the example of Region K joining a seawater desalination project with neighboring region.

Mr. Ward suggested finding regions to pair in multi-regional projects, and indicated that it is common in Region C for major water providers to do this. Mr. Ward stated there currently isn't mechanism for interregional "focus groups" to get together and look at projects.

Ms. Barnes asked if there were specific documents for members to read, Mr. Evans responded that there is an upcoming agenda item addressing future reference materials and Mr. Nelson indicated that there are relevant documents on the IPC webpage.

## **5. Discussion of Next Steps**

Mr. Crull stated looking at Trans-Texas Water Program Reports and previous state water plans would be beneficial.

Mr. Ward suggested comparing lists of all IBTs, before Senate Bill 1 and before Senate Bill 3. Mr. Nelson indicated that TWDB does not keep this information and that TCEQ has this information; TWDB has map of existing transfer of water between basins and will provide.

Mr. Ward indicated that if we looked beyond 50 year planning, it could produce a planning script for whole state.

Mr. Wheelock asked in 2021 regional water plans what projects would need IBT that doesn't currently have one?

Mr. Evans proposed the following committee schedule, based on member input:

- July 28<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm
- August 6<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am
- August 20<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm
- August 27<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm

**6. Discussion of Agenda for Future Meetings**

Mr. Evans discussed agenda for future meetings.

**7. Public Comment**

No public comments were offered.

**8. Adjourn**

Mr. Evans asked for motion to adjourn. Mr. Crull motioned, Mr. Ward seconded motion. The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:22 pm.