

Status of 2020 Interregional Planning Council Report¹ Recommendations

I. TWDB recommended actions

TWDB recommended actions	Status of recommendation
<p>1. Revise planning requirements (contract and rules, as appropriate) so that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) RWPGs identify, in their final adopted regional water plans, a list of strategies to become the basis for RWPGs to further coordinate in the following planning cycle (2.1.a.1); b) RWPGs consider strategy information provided by the TWDB early in the planning cycle, including specifically identifying those strategies sourced in other RWPGAs (2.1.a.2); c) RWPGs document early consideration and coordination associated with the early identified projects and involve RWPG liaisons and project sponsors (2.1.a.3). 	<p><i>Planning rules (§357.12(a)(1)) and contracts have been revised to require that RWPGs discuss how they will conduct interregional coordination and collaboration regarding water management strategies (WMS) at their preplanning public meeting. In June 2021, the TWDB provided an initial list of regional WMSs to all planning groups to assist in this effort. Sixth cycle planning contracts also require RWPGs to document interregional coordination efforts in the Technical Memorandum, Initially Prepared Plan (IPP), and final adopted regional water plan (RWP).</i></p>
<p>2. Support and facilitate the RWPGs in identifying issues or opportunities for interregional coordination, including how to better assist liaisons. (2.1.a.4)</p>	<p><i>Sixth cycle planning contracts include several requirements related to RWPG interregional coordination throughout the planning cycle. RWP staff plan to further develop existing or create new educational or other materials to assist RWPGs with identifying issues or opportunities for interregional coordination, including resources for liaisons.</i></p>
<p>3. Develop and maintain an aggregate listing of each RWPG's active committees and share with all RWPGs for informational purposes. (2.2.a.1)</p>	<p><i>To be developed for sixth cycle.</i></p>
<p>4. Require that RWPGs initiate direct coordination discussions. (2.2.a.2)</p>	<p><i>Recommendation has been incorporated into sixth cycle planning contracts. Contracts require RWPGs to ensure necessary communication, coordination, and facilitation occurs with other RWPGs to develop WMS recommendations.</i></p>
<p>5. Require that the Technical Memorandum document interregional coordination efforts. (2.3.a.1)</p>	<p><i>Recommendation has been incorporated into regional water planning rule (§357.12(c)(8)) and contract requirements. RWPGs are now required to include a summary of the region's interregional coordination efforts to date in the Technical Memorandum.</i></p>

¹https://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/ipc/docs/2020_09_30_mtg/IPC_FinalReport-Apps_091620.pdf

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6. Require that the Technical Memorandum document the consideration of and coordination about interregional water management strategies. (2.3.a.2)	<i>The Technical Memorandum is required to include a list of potentially feasible water management strategies identified to date and documentation of interregional coordination efforts as of the date of the submittal.</i>
7. Support or facilitate RWPGs with technical or administrative resources during interregional coordination. (2.3.a.3)	<i>TWDB provided an initial list of regional WMSs to all planning groups to support early interregional coordination discussions. As able, TWDB will provide additional support to RWPGs as they collaborate on interregional strategies. RWP staff plan to further develop existing or create new educational or other materials to support interregional coordination.</i>
8. Require RWPGs to conduct work on a high-level view of planning, beyond the 50-year planning horizon and beyond drought-of-record conditions, and not necessarily focused on water management strategy evaluations. (3.1.a.1)	<i>Recommendation requires legislative direction and additional appropriations. However, in response to the Sunset Advisory Commission recommendation, TWDB has increased its coordination with the State Climatologist to explore the potential to project forward certain drought-impacting parameters (e.g., evaporation) that could worsen future drought conditions as potential information to be made available for consideration during the regional plan development process.</i>
9. Utilize RWPG Chairs conference calls to consider multi-regional projects. (3.1.a.2)	<i>To be considered, as appropriate, for future RWPG Chairs conference calls.</i>
10. Evaluate alternatives to the current simplified planning process that address timing and data concerns. (4.1.a)	<i>The simplified planning process was previously thoroughly evaluated and addressed through a rulemaking to the extent considered allowable and reasonable under statute. RWPGs are not required to pursue simplified planning, and none have chosen to. Allowing further reductions in planning effort would likely require revisions to statutory requirements.</i>
11. Provide Council recommendations to all RWPGs to inform their planning process. (4.2.a.1)	<i>Recommendation incorporated into regional water planning contract requirements. Exhibit A of the contract requires that RWPGs receive and consider recommendations from the Interregional Planning Council to the RWPGs. TWDB will provide the Council's report to RWPGs for consideration.</i>
12. Provide a distilled policy recommendations report from all adopted regional water plans, sorted by topic, to the RWPGs and the Council. (4.2.a.2)	<i>In development. A summary document of 2021 Regional Water Plan policy recommendations by region is currently available online at: http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/swp/2022/docs/2022SWP-Policy-Appendix.pdf.</i>

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13. Provide the implementation status of policy recommendations to the RWPGs and the Council. (4.2.a.3)	<i>In development.</i>
14. Develop standardized, easy to adopt practices and protocols that apply to all RWPGs. (4.2.a.4)	<i>The Administrative Guidance for RWPG Sponsors (Designated Political Subdivisions) was recently updated for the sixth planning cycle and provides best practices that can be utilized to enhance engagement. The guidance includes best practices for communicating with RWPG members, new member orientation, RWPG websites, and use of committees. As needed, RWP staff will further develop existing or create new materials on improving engagement.</i>
15. Provide feedback to RWPGs regarding TWDB funding for water supply and water conservation projects that are recommended in the regional water plans. (4.2.a.5)	<i>Regional water planners provide annual updates on State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT) applications and funding commitments during RWPG meetings. Additional information can be provided upon request.</i>
16. Require RWPGs to receive member orientation services and documents provided by the TWDB at the beginning of each cycle. (4.3.a.1)	<i>Recommendation incorporated into regional water planning contract requirements. Exhibit A of the contract requires that RWPGs support and accommodate periodic presentations by the TWDB for the purpose of orientation, training, and retraining as determined and provided by the TWDB during regular RWPG meetings.</i>
17. Require RWPG Chairs and Administrative Agents to follow recommendations in the Best Management Practices Guide document prepared and updated by the TWDB. (4.3.a.2)	<i>Recommendation incorporated into regional water planning contract requirements. Exhibit A of contract requires RWPG administrators to consider recommendations in the Administrative Guidance for RWPG Sponsors as prepared and updated by TWDB.</i>

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18. Invest in media consultants to assist in effectively delivering messages and review current practices for email for providing material. (4.3.a.3)	<i>RWP staff have coordinated with internal agency Communications staff to develop more effective strategies for improving the RWPG member consumption of information, including reviewing current TWDB practices around the use of email, social media, program newsletters and external communications distributions for providing information to RWPGs. As a result, a regional water planning email address has been created for broadcast communications. Broadcast emails are now sent directly to all RWPG stakeholders rather than to RWPG political subdivisions for further distribution. Communications staff have also provided social media pushes when relevant regional water planning content is available to share. Staff will continue to work with Communications on improvements and specific feedback from the IPC and RWPG members is welcome.</i>
19. Require RWPGs to add TCEQ as a non-voting member. (4.4.a.1)	<i>No action. There are existing provisions for RWPGs to add voting and non-voting members, and six RWPGs have chosen to add TCEQ as a non-voting member. TWDB may develop materials to facilitate RWPG consideration of adding TCEQ as a non-voting member, including compiling TCEQ regional office contact information and testimonials of benefits from willing RWPGs.</i>
20. Review and make a recommendation to the legislature regarding additional non-voting members that affect statewide regional water planning stakeholders. (4.4.a.2)	<i>No action. Provisions already exist for RWPGs to add additional voting and non-voting members. Each RWPG must weigh the tradeoffs between the size of planning group membership and the governance and decision-making of their group, the engagement level of members as groups grow larger, and logistical difficulties like finding suitable meeting spaces.</i>
21. Consider allowing for the reimbursement of labor costs for the RWPG's designated administrative agency. (4.5.a.1)	<i>Recommendation has been incorporated into agency rules and planning contracts.</i>

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22. Revise rule and contract limitations to accommodate these expenses. (4.5.a.2)	<i>Recommendation has been incorporated into agency rules and planning contracts. 31 TAC § 355.92(c)(5) has been amended to allow for reimbursement of certain eligible administrative costs as specifically limited by the regional water planning grant contract. Sixth cycle planning contracts include a new expense budget category that allows for limited reimbursement of RWPG Political Subdivision personnel costs for the staff hours that are directly spent providing, preparing for, and posting public notice for RWPG meetings and hearings. No additional legislative appropriations have been made to cover such administrative costs. Existing funds for regional water plan development may be redistributed to cover these expenses.</i>
23. Evaluate the fiscal impacts associated with technology required for virtual meetings. (4.6.a)	<i>In 2021, TWDB conducted a Regional Water Planning Stakeholder Survey, which collected limited information on the support needed for RWPGs to successfully hold hybrid meetings. Sixth cycle planning contract expense budgets now allow for reimbursement of pre-approved, proportional costs of purchasing audio/visual equipment for hybrid RWPG meetings. A complete fiscal impact assessment has not been completed.</i>
24. Incorporate a set of management practices to improve efficiency and effectiveness by eliminating waste in the regional water planning process. (4.7.a.1)	<i>At the start of the sixth planning cycle, staff reviewed regional water planning rules and contract materials to identify planning activities that could be removed to improve efficiency in the regional water planning process. As a result, 31 TAC §357.42 was revised to align the rules more closely with statute and reduce unessential reporting requirements. Staff conduct these reviews at the start of each planning cycle.</i>
25. Evaluate the RWPG voting and non-voting membership costs of time and funding. (4.7.a.2)	<i>No action.</i>

II. Legislative recommended actions

Legislative recommended actions	Status of recommendation
<p>1. Some specific recommendations for additional funds to be appropriated for the planning process are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) for additional planning group work for interregional coordination (2.1-3.b); b) for additional planning group work associated with long range, visionary planning (3.1.b.3); c) for better methods of disseminating information for the regional water planning process (4.2.b.1); d) funding enhanced communications between RWPGs, the TWDB, and RWPG members (4.3.b); e) to accommodate labor costs for administering RWPGs (4.5.b). 	<p><i>No legislative action. TWDB's 2022 Legislative Appropriations Request includes an exceptional item request for additional funding to support the regional water supply planning process.</i></p>
<p>2. Return to providing initial sponsorship of projects by the State without financial guarantees from local sponsors. (3.1.b.1)</p>	<p><i>No legislative action.</i></p>
<p>3. Provide financial incentives for local sponsorship of innovative, visionary, multi-benefit projects. (3.1.b.2)</p>	<p><i>No legislative action.</i></p>
<p>4. Establish a process for coordination amongst state agencies, at the state level, related to installation of infrastructure during planning and construction of large-scale projects. (3.1.b.4)</p>	<p><i>No legislative action.</i></p>
<p>5. Discontinue the requirement to update groundwater and surface water availability values in the regional water plan if those availability numbers have not changed significantly (TWC Sec. 16.053(i)) (4.1.b.1) or strike simplified planning from the statute. (4.1.b.2)</p>	<p><i>No legislative action.</i></p>
<p>6. Authorize the use of remote conferencing or webinars. (4.2.b.2)</p>	<p><i>No legislative action.</i></p>
<p>7. Amend TWC Sec. 16.053(c) to add TCEQ as an ex-officio member of each RWPG. (4.4.b)</p>	<p><i>No legislative action.</i></p>

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8. Amend the Texas Open Meetings Act to allow virtual participation during the regional water planning process. (4.6.b)	<i>No legislative action. This recommendation was included in the TWDB's Legislative Priorities Report for the 87th Legislative Session. The Texas Open Meetings Act currently permits RWPGs to hold hybrid meetings that allow for virtual participation in accordance with video conference requirements in Texas Government Code §551.127.</i>

III. Regional Water Planning Group recommended actions

1. Enhance interregional coordination efforts and include standing agenda items for reports from interregional liaisons. (2.1.c)
2. Receive the early input from project consultants and sponsors, planning liaisons, and stakeholders to improve interregional coordination and mitigate future interregional conflict. (2.2.c)
3. Involve the appropriate parties and coordinate timely on potentially feasible interregional water management strategy opportunities and issues. (2.3.c)
4. Collaborate with other RWPGs early in the planning process for multi-regional project opportunities. (3.1.c)
5. Provide new member orientations. (4.2.c.1)
6. Utilize educational programs and subject matter speakers at RWPG meetings. (4.2.c.2)
7. Develop better methods to encourage public participation. (4.2.c.3)
8. Follow recommendations in the Best Management Practices Guide. (4.3.c.1)
9. Read and disseminate the Best Management Practices Guide and New Member Guide. (4.3.c.2)
10. Consider adding TCEQ as an ex-officio member if not required by the Legislature. (4.4.c)
11. Include requests for funding in Chapter 8 recommendations of the regional water plans. (4.5.c)

IV. Future Interregional Planning Council recommended actions

1. Review progress on all of the recommendations in this report and submit its assessment to the TWDB.
2. Monitor the effectiveness of enhanced efforts to promote interregional coordination and review the role of interregional liaisons. (2.1-3.d)
3. Consider whether the Council or RWPGs are the appropriate mechanism for planning for water resources for the state as a whole. (3.1.d.1)
4. Utilize state agencies' expertise to assist RWPGs in developing a vision of planning resources for the state as a whole. (3.1.d.2)

5. Hold work sessions to “deep dive” into more complicated topics. (4.2.d.1)
6. Require RWPG Chairs to meet at minimum on an annual basis to evaluate and document best practices. (4.2.d.2)
7. Review existing technology and recommend appropriate changes. (4.3.d)
8. Review materials and meeting notes from TWDB’s lessons learned technical meetings with RWPG consultants. (4.7.d)