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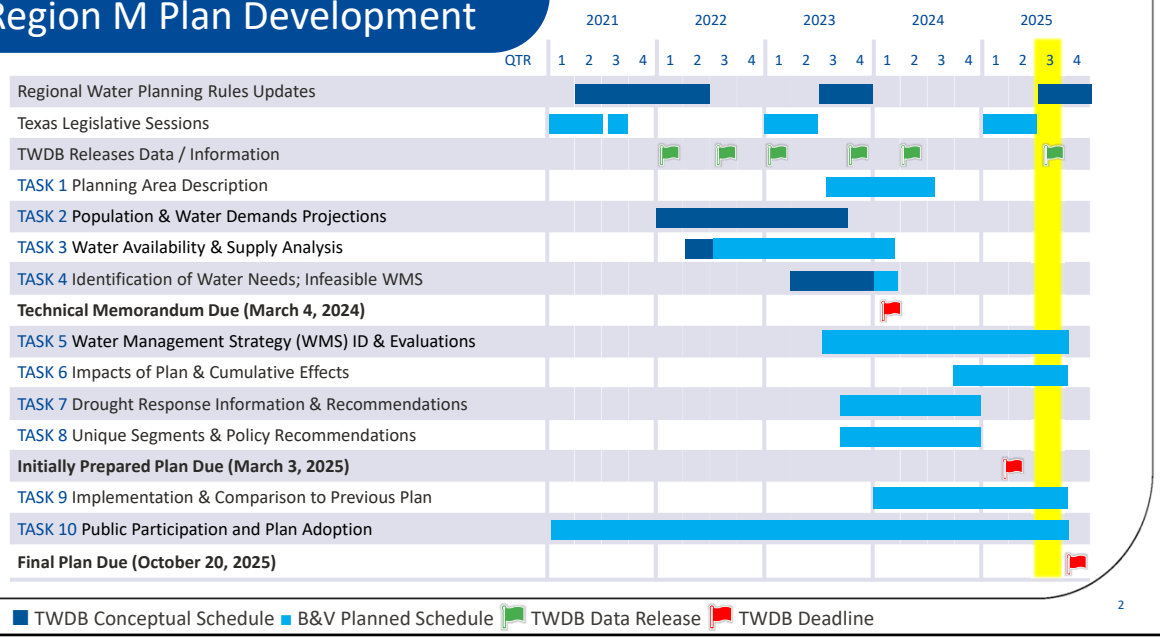
Aug 2025

Agenda Item 5.A.1:
Schedule and Progress Update

1

Conceptual Schedule for Region M Plan Development



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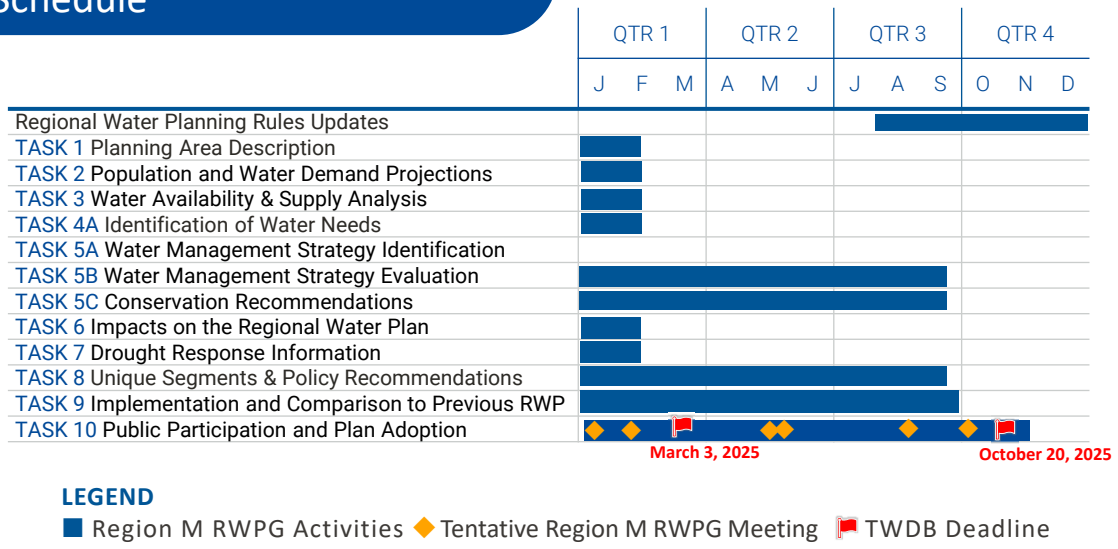
2025 Region M Anticipated Schedule



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Progress Since Last Meeting

- Worked with LRGVDC to plan the public hearing
  - Public hearing was held at LRGVDC and virtually on May 22, 2025, at 2:00 pm
    - Presentation was given, and public comments were received
    - Written public comments were accepted until July 22, 2025
- Followed up on 2021 Plan implementation surveys that were sent out early this year. Will send monthly reminders and include updated results in final plan.
- Received draft preliminary comments in early June on IPP from TWDB and prepared a response
- Received official comments on IPP from TWDB in late June and have been working on responses and updating the plan
- Received comments from Texas Parks and Wildlife and have been working on responses
- Received public comments requesting new water management strategies
- Received the Socioeconomic Impact Analysis from TWDB that will be included as part of Ch 6

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Upcoming Efforts

- Finishing addressing comments and get TWDB Level 1 comment responses approved by TWDB
- Make final edits to the plan, including incorporating the Socioeconomic Impact Analysis
- Complete updates to DB27 (deadline is September 22)
- Prepare for October RWPG meeting where final plan will be adopted
- Submit adopted final plan to TWDB

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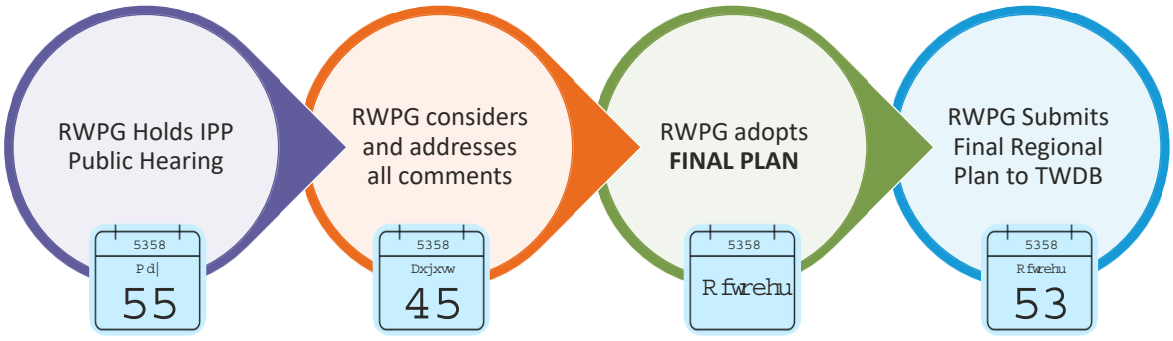
IPP to Final Timeline



Written public comments were accepted until July 22

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Aug 2025

Agenda Item 5.A.2:

Presentation of Public Comments Received on IPP, including New Water Management Strategies, and Proposed Responses (Action Required)

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Public Comments (1 of 3)

1. Rene Perez, TCEQ (both verbal at public hearing and written)

   Requested that Region M incorporate a new salinity study into the 2026 Plan. U.*S.- Mexico Salinity Study of the Lower Rio Grande/Rio Bravo* was conducted collaboratively by the University of Texas at Austin and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

2. Isabel Keddy, TCEQ (verbal at public hearing)

   Wished to second Rene Perez's comments supporting the incorporation of the salinity study into the 2026 Plan.

   Proposed Response: Adding a new paragraph to Chapter 1, Section 1.4.2 (which discusses other existing water-focused plans in the region)

"In 2025, the *U.S.- Mexico Salinity Study of the Lower Rio Grande/Rio Bravo* was conducted collaboratively by the University of Texas at Austin and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. The study was developed under the Border 2025 Initiative and focuses on the delivery of quality water from the U.S. to Mexico via the Colorado River. It highlights key treaty obligations under the 1944 Water Treaty and Minute 242, salinity control efforts in the U.S., and binational coordination between IBWC and CILA. It also outlines ongoing challenges related to climate change, drought, and infrastructure needs, as well as water and salt exchanges between groundwater and the Lower Rio Grande/Rio Bravo. The study provides insights on organization and cooperation, data and salinity, and recommendations on data, models, and remediation."

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Public Comments (2 of 3)

3. City of Elsa

   Requested to add several strategies. We responded that of the list, we could consider a new fresh groundwater well WMS and a non-potable, direct reuse WMS.

   Additional data will be presented later in the presentation for consideration by the RWPG.

4. City of Pharr

   Requested to add a new Brackish GW Desalination project and updates to their existing Direct Potable Reuse WMS.

   Additional data will be presented later in the presentation for consideration by the RWPG.

5. City of Donna

   Requested to add a new Brackish GW Desalination project and a new Reservoir project.

   Additional data for the Brackish GW Desalination project will be presented later in the presentation for consideration by the RWPG. There is not enough time and budget to fully evaluate the new Reservoir project, but it can be included in the "Considered Water Management Strategies" section of Chapter 5.

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Public Comments (3 of 3)

6. City of Mercedes

   Requested to add a new Brackish GW Desalination project and a new Reservoir project.

   Additional data for the Brackish GW Desalination project will be presented later in the presentation for consideration by the RWPG. There is not enough time and budget to fully evaluate the new Reservoir project, but it can be included in the "Considered Water Management Strategies" section of Chapter 5.

7. City of Rio Hondo

   Requested to add a new Reservoir project.

   There is not enough time and budget to fully evaluate the new Reservoir project, but it can be included in the "Considered Water Management Strategies" section of Chapter 5.

8. Maverick County

   Requested to add a new Brackish GW Desalination project .

   Additional data for the Brackish GW Desalination project will be presented later in the presentation for consideration by the RWPG.

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Elsa – New Fresh Groundwater Well WMS

- Will provide new additional supply of GW from the Gulf Coast Aquifer System (Hidalgo County) to supplement and blend with the existing surface water supply
- GW would be treated with chlorine disinfection and blended before entering distribution system
- 2,464 ac-ft/yr (2.2 MGD) online before 2040. MAG volume is available.
- Costs include GW well with wellfield piping, water disinfection treatment, 2-mile transmission pipeline and pump station to connect to the existing WTP, and land acquisition

Facilities Cost	Total Project Cost	Annual Cost	Annual Cost of Water ($ per acft)	Annual Cost of Water After Debt Service ($ per acft)
$7,996,000	$11,143,000	$1,048,000	$425	$108

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Elsa – Non-Potable Direct Reuse WMS

- Construct a direct reuse water system to utilize treated effluent from Elsa's WWTP for non-potable irrigation of parks and fields and future commercial demands.
- Request for 168 ac-ft/yr of yield, but supply volume assumed is limited to 25% of Elsa's projected demands (per Region M methodology).
- Will provide up to 108 ac-ft/yr of supply by 2040.
- Costs include water treatment (level 1 advanced treatment), 150,000-gallon storage tank, 10-inch 1-mile transmission pipeline, pump station with flow regulation and SCADA-compatible monitoring, and land acquisition.

Facilities Cost	Total Project Cost	Annual Cost	Annual Cost of Water ($ per acft)	Annual Cost of Water After Debt Service ($ per acft)
$4,481,000	$6,303,000	$689,000	$6,380	$2,278

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Pharr – Brackish GW Desal WMS

- New groundwater supply strategy to supplement Pharr's raw water system with brackish groundwater from new wells in the Gulf Coast Aquifer System (Hidalgo County). This water would be conveyed to a proposed treatment facility on the City-owned Chowdary Tract. The raw water would be treated using a reverse osmosis (RO) membrane system to meet primary drinking water standards, followed by post-treatment for corrosion control and disinfection. Treated water would then be pumped through a 2.4-mile 24-inch pipeline to integrate with the City's existing 24" transmission main.
- 75% RO efficiency will pump 7,500 ac-ft/yr to provide 5,600 ac-ft/yr (5 MGD) of treated water by 2030. MAG volume is available.
- Request for a second phase, but since second phase is so far out (after 2060), only including first phase this cycle. Will consider additional phasing next cycle.
- Components of this project include the construction of a new brackish groundwater treatment facility, a well field, and a transmission pipeline at the City-owned Chowdary Tract. Costing assumes 9 new groundwater wells to support the facility. Concentrate from the RO process will be discharged into the Arroyo Colorado.

Facilities Cost	Total Project Cost	Annual Cost	Annual Cost of Water ($ per acft)	Annual Cost of Water After Debt Service ($ per acft)
$73,743,000	$105,288,000	$17,437,000	$3,114	$1,791

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Pharr – Update to Raw Water Augmentation Potable Reuse WMS

- Limited updates based on new OPCC
  - 2 new project components added to cost estimate
    - A second pump station
    - A 1 MGD WWTP Effluent EQ Tank
  - These additions have increased the facilities cost from $38 million to $40.3 million
  - Project costs increased from $53.9 million to $57.3 million
  - Annual costs increased from $7.4 million to $7.7 million
  - Unit costs per ac-ft/yr increased from $2,194 to $2,282
- No other changes to the strategy

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Donna – Brackish GW Desal WMS

- Construct a new brackish groundwater wellfield, treatment plant, and transmission pipeline to address long-term reliability and regulatory compliance. This project will add a new source of reliable water supply from the Gulf Coast Aquifer System (Hidalgo County).
- Assumed 80% RO efficiency will pump 7,000 ac-ft/yr to provide 5,600 ac-ft/yr (5 MGD) of treated water by 2040. MAG volume is available.
- Components of this project include the construction of a new brackish groundwater treatment facility, a well field, a 7-mile transmission pipeline, and land acquisition. Costing assumes 9 new groundwater wells to support the facility. Concentrate from the RO process will be discharged into a local stream and injection wells are not included in the costing.

Facilities Cost	Total Project Cost	Annual Cost	Annual Cost of Water ($ per acft)	Annual Cost of Water After Debt Service ($ per acft)
$82,930,000	$118,371,000	$18,480,000	$3,300	$1,814

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Mercedes – Brackish GW Desal WMS

- Construct a new brackish groundwater wellfield, treatment plant, and transmission pipeline to address long-term reliability and regulatory compliance. This project will add a new source of reliable water supply from the Gulf Coast Aquifer System (Hidalgo County).
- Assumed 80% RO efficiency will pump 7,000 ac-ft/yr to provide 5,600 ac-ft/yr (5 MGD) of treated water by 2040. MAG volume is available.
- Components of this project include the construction of a new brackish groundwater treatment facility, a well field, a 7-mile transmission pipeline, and land acquisition. Costing assumes 9 new groundwater wells to support the facility. Concentrate from the RO process will be discharged into a local stream and injection wells are not included in the costing.

Facilities Cost	Total Project Cost	Annual Cost	Annual Cost of Water ($ per acft)	Annual Cost of Water After Debt Service ($ per acft)
$82,930,000	$118,371,000	$18,480,000	$3,300	$1,814

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Maverick County – Brackish GW Desal WMS

- Request to include a new 1.5 MGD (1,680 ac-ft/yr) Brackish GW Desal facility. Construct a new brackish groundwater wellfield, treatment plant, and transmission pipeline to address long-term reliability and regulatory compliance. This project will provide a new source of reliable water supply.
- Source is from the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer in Maverick County. Water availability is MAG-limited. Maximum available for pumping is 170 ac-ft/yr in 2030-2060. Assumed 80% RO efficiency would provide a treated supply of 136 ac-ft/yr by 2040.

	2030	2040	2050	2060	2070	2080
Requested Yield (ac-ft/yr)	0	1,680	1,680	1,680	1,680	1,680
Available Yield under MAG (ac-ft/yr)	0	136	136	136	4	4

- Components of this project include the construction of a new brackish groundwater treatment facility (1.5 MGD), a well field, a 14-inch, 3.5-mile transmission pipeline and pump station, a 0.5 MG ground storage tank, and land acquisition. Costing assumes 3 new groundwater wells to support the facility.

Facilities Cost	Total Project Cost	Annual Cost	Annual Cost of Water – Requested ($ per acft)	Annual Cost of Water After Debt Service ($ per acft)	Annual Cost of Water –MAG-Limited ($ per acft)
$40,118,000	$57,218,000	$9,532,000	$5,674	$3,278	$70,088

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RWPG Consideration of Including Additional WMS in the Final Plan

- Propose to incorporate updates to Pharr DPR project
- Propose to add the following strategies as recommended in the 2026 RWP
  - Elsa – New Groundwater Well
  - Elsa – Non-Potable Reuse
  - Pharr – New Brackish Groundwater Desalination
  - Donna – New Brackish Groundwater Desalination
  - Mercedes – New Brackish Groundwater Desalination
  - Maverick County – New Brackish Groundwater Desalination
- Propose to add the following strategies as "Considered"
  - Donna – New Raw Water Reservoir
  - Mercedes – New Raw Water Reservoir
  - Rio Hondo – New Raw Water Reservoir
- Does the RWPG want to consider additional public comment time for these strategies?

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Aug 2025

Agenda Item 5.A.3:
Presentation of Agency Comments Received on IPP and Proposed Responses (Action Required)

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Texas Water Development Board Comments

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Summary of TWDB Comments

- Handout included in meeting materials of comments and proposed responses
  - 43 Level 1 Comments – must be sufficiently addressed for final plan
  - 7 Level 2 Comments – can be addressed, but not required
- Summary of Level 1 Comments
  - 1 comment on Ch 1 – Regional Water Planning Description (add reuse description)
  - 2 comments on Ch 2 – Population and Water Demands (typo corrections)
  - 5 comments on Ch 3 – Water Availability and Supplies (provide clarifying information)
  - 26 comments on Ch 5 – Water Management Strategies
    - Corrections, clarification requests, additional information requests, project maps, implementation status, concerns that certain WMS may not meet TWDB requirements
  - 2 comments on Ch 6 – Impacts to RWP (no longer applicable once DB27 is corrected)
  - 1 comment on Ch 7 – Drought Response (provide clarifying information)
  - 3 comments on Ch 9 – Implementation and Comparison to Previous RWP (provide additional detail)
  - 3 comments on other components – accessibility and GIS data

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TWDB Comments of Particular Interest (1 of 2)

Status update on:

Comment #18 –

East Rio Hondo WSC – FM 2925 Transmission Line WMS

Comment #19

El Jardin WSC – Distribution Pipeline Replacement WMS

Comment #20

HCID No. 6 – Service Area Expansion WMS

Comment #21

Rio Hondo – Emergency Interconnects WMS

Comment #24

Southmost RWA – Phase 3 SRWA Wellfield WMS

- TWDB expressed concerns about whether these projects increase supply.
- Coordinating with TWDB, but these projects or portion of projects may have to be removed as a recommended WMS and moved under Considered section.

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TWDB Comments of Particular Interest (2 of 2)

Status Update on:

Comment #11

Implementation status spreadsheet and timeline needed for additional projects

Comment #17

Reservoir strategies require separately presented acreage and land area costs for reservoir footprint and mitigation area

- Coordinating with project sponsors to get additional information needed

RWPG Consideration of Proposed TWDB Comment Responses

- Concerns about any of the proposed responses to TWDB Comments?
- RWPG want to consider action to approve responses provided to date?

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Texas Parks and Wildlife Comments

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TPWD Comments that Require an Update to the Plan

1. The Plan references the U.S. Endangered Species Act to identify species of conservation concern but does not incorporate the most recent version of the *TPWD Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species of Texas by County,* which was updated again in January 2025.

   Response: The Plan will be updated to reflect the latest species.

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TPWD Comments for Consideration to Include as Policy Recommendations in Chapter 8

These are comments which Region M could respond to by including a policy recommendation in Chapter. It is not required, though, particularly if Region M does not agree with the recommendation. Potential proposed language is included below if Region M wants to include any new recommendations based on TPWD comments.

1. We suggest that the Plan include specific recommendations for developing a voluntary instream flow program or an ecological monitoring network to track freshwater inflow changes over time. Region M could identify "ecological trigger points" tied to flow thresholds that, when met, initiate management responses such as conservation measures or temporary reductions in diversions

   Potential proposed language for Chapter 8:

   It is recommended that the State develop a voluntary instream flow program or an ecological monitoring network to track freshwater inflow changes over time.

2. We recommend that the Plan explicitly require invasive species risk assessments as part of the design phase for all water transfer and treatment projects. Further, each WMS involving conveyance or reservoir construction should incorporate site- specific invasive species prevention and monitoring plans.

   Potential proposed language for Chapter 8:

   It is recommended that the State or local entities consider requiring invasive species risk assessments as part of the design phase for all water transfer and treatment projects.

3. Establishing a formal process for ecological monitoring of WMS implementation could support a more adaptive management approach.

   Potential proposed language for Chapter 8:

   It is recommended that the State establish a formal process for ecological monitoring of project implementation to support a more adaptive management approach.

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TPWD Comments that Region M May Consider Next Planning Cycle (1 of 2)

These are comments that are thoughtful ideas for things that could be looked at by Region M in future planning cycles, but there is not enough time to consider this cycle.

1. The Plan could be strengthened by more clearly explaining how the relative contributions of each WMS category, especially reuse and desalination, will be implemented across planning decades. A more transparent breakdown of how each WMS type scales with population growth would improve understanding of long- term supply reliability.

2. The Plan would benefit from a more detailed discussion of interregional dependencies and the vulnerability of key infrastructure to extreme weather events, especially in relation to the Rio Grande's binational watershed. Including adaptive scenario planning would further ensure that projected strategies remain viable over the 50-year planning horizon.

3. TPWD recommends expanding the quantitative treatment of cumulative impacts across multiple WMSs and planning decades. For example, the Plan could include overlay maps showing where multiple infrastructure strategies intersect ecologically sensitive areas. The Plan would benefit from a clearer accounting of potential indirect effects on landscape connectivity, groundwater—surface water interactions, and long-term ecological resilience.

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TPWD Comments that Region M Consider Next Planning Cycle (2 of 2)

4. The Plan should explicitly address whether any WMSs might collectively reduce flow variability, which is vital to sustaining estuarine and riverine ecosystems.

5. Region M may wish to consider nominating ecologically unique stream segments with high biodiversity or ecological significance in future cycles TPWD has included in the 2024 Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan a goal of updating the statewide assessment of ecologically significant stream segments by 2028. TPWD looks forward to assisting the Region M Planning Group as they investigate and pursue designation of ecologically unique stream segments, and we are willing to assist with the preparation of a recommendation packet as identified in 31 TAC § 357.43.

6. The RWPG is encouraged to develop a framework to assess the long-term ecological benefits or trade-offs of selected strategies.

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RWPG Consideration of Proposed TPWD Comment Responses

- Concerns about any of the proposed responses to TPWD Comments?
- RWPG want to consider action to approve some or all responses?

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