

MINUTES

RIO GRANDE REGIONAL WATER PLANNING GROUP (RGRWPG)

(REGION M) 9:30 AM WEDNESDAY, April 1, 2026

LRGVDC MAIN CAMPUS
VIA GOTOMEETING VIDEO CONFERENCE & IN PERSON INITIATED
AND CHAIRED AT 301 W. RAILROAD STREET, WESLACO, TX
PRESIDING: JIM DARLING, CHAIRMAN

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mr. Jim Darling called the meeting to order at 9:30 am and confirmed that a quorum of the voting membership was present.

The following voting members were in attendance:

Board Members:	Category:
Jim Darling	River Authorities
Frank Shuster	Other
Nick Benavides	Small Business
Tomas Rodriguez	Public
Carlos Garza	Small Business
Judge Joe Rathmell	Counties
Jaime Flores	Environmental
Louie Pena	Ground Water Management Area
Marilyn Gilbert	Municipalities
Jorge Flores	Municipalities
Com. David Fuentes	Counties
Debbie Farmer	Ground Water Management Area
Robert Latham	Electric Generating Utility
Steven Sanchez	Water Utilities
Tom McLemore	Water Utilities

The following voting members were not in attendance:

Dr. Neal Wilkins	Agriculture
Dale Murden	Agriculture

2. Consideration and Action to Approve January 7, 2025, Meeting Minutes.

Tomas Rrodriguez made a motion to approve January 7, 2025, meeting minutes, Steven Sanchez seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.

3. Public Comment – No public comments at this time.

4. Membership Recognition – Presentation of Plaque to Formally Recognize outstanding Contributions and Service by Presenting a Commemorative Plaque to the Designated Members.

Plaques were presented to the following Members; Sonny Hinojosa, Glen Jarvis and Donald McGhee. Jim Darling read the following to all 3: With grateful appreciation for your 27 years of unwavering dedication and outstanding service to the region and the Water Planning Group. Your commitment, leadership, and stewardship have helped shape the future of our region's water resources and will leave a lasting impact for generations to come. Thank you for your remarkable contributions and enduring legacy of service. They all came up and said a little speech and took some pictures with rest of board members.

Mr. Cruz then shared a few closing remarks, Before you all leave — Mr. Jarvis, Mr. Hinojosa, and Mr. McGee — on behalf of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council, the fiscal agent for Region M, we want to sincerely thank you for your dedicated service. Serving for over 20 years is truly remarkable. Since Region M was established back in the mid-to-late 1990s, your commitment and leadership have played a vital role in the success and growth of this organization.

That is a tremendous amount of time and dedication, and your contributions have not gone unnoticed. Please remember that our doors are always open, and if you ever wish to return to the world of water planning, we always have opportunities available. As for Jim, we may just have to clone him so he can continue serving as President a little longer — we'll see how that goes. But sincerely, thank you all for the outstanding job you have done. Job well done, and we wish each of you the very best moving forward.

One thing is certain — the water issue is not going away anytime soon. Over the years, many entities and committees have been formed for various reasons, sometimes political, sometimes for visibility. However, it is important to recognize that Region M is the original source of much of the information and groundwork that continues to guide water planning efforts today. We will continue pushing forward and ensuring that Region M stands above the rest, making it known that we are here, we are committed, and we are here to stay as we work together to address and manage our region's water challenges for the future. Jim Darling stated, There are 27 years of leadership walking out the door today — and not just leadership, but an incredible amount of knowledge and experience that will be very difficult to replace.

For the new members joining the board today, we hope you will stay involved for the next 27 years as well. This work requires dedication and commitment, and now more than ever, that commitment is extremely important.”

5. Discussion and Consider ACTION to approve memberships for the following Categories (Municipalities, Water Districts & Other)

Jim Darling started off with the nominee for this position is Brian McManus, whose area of interest is surface water treatment, groundwater, seawater desalination, and water treatment. Mr. McManus serves as the General Manager of East Rio Hondo Water Supply Corporation. He was nominated by Stephen Sanchez and is the only nominee we have received for this position. At this time, are there any additional nominations from the Board for the 'Other' representative position. ***Steven Sanchez made a motion to approve the nomination for category Other; Tom McLemore seconded the motion; upon vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

The next category is Municipalities. We received only one nomination for this position, and no other candidates were submitted. The nominee is Gabriel Elijah Perez, who submitted his own nomination. We advertised the nomination opportunity and met all required notification and solicitation requirements. No additional nominations were received. Mr. Perez has five years of experience in municipal government, specializing in grant management and compliance. He currently serves as the Grant Manager for the City of Weslaco. His professional background includes grant coordination, regulatory compliance, long-range planning, and related municipal administration functions. At this time, do I have a motion to approve Mr. Pettis as the representative for the Municipalities category? ***Steven Sanchez made a motion to approve Elijah Perez for category Municipalities Category; Tomas Rodriguez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

The first nomination was submitted by Marilyn Gilbert for Scott Frye, P.E., CFM. Mr. Frye has been involved in the water industry in the Rio Grande Valley for more than 20 years, serving both the public and private sectors. He currently serves as the General Manager of Valley Municipal Utility District No. 2 in Rancho Viejo, which treats both groundwater and surface water for potable use. Mr. Frye also served as a member of the Texas Water Conservation Association in the early 2000's.

The second nomination was submitted by Sonny Hinojosa for Anthony Stambaugh. Mr. Stambaugh currently serves as the alternate representative for the Water District category with Region M. He is the General Manager of Hidalgo County Irrigation District No. 2 and previously served as the Rio Grande Watermaster. In addition, he serves as Treasurer of the Texas Irrigation Council and is a member of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council Managers Association.

These are the two nominees for the Water District category. The Chair stated, 'I thought what we would do is allow each nominee two to three minutes at the podium to discuss their qualifications, after which we will proceed with a vote. The Chair also noted that counting votes could be somewhat challenging but that the process would move forward accordingly. The Chair then asked which nominee should be recognized first.

At that time, Frank Schuster inquired whether the Board had a description of the various categories and the eligibility requirements associated with them. Specifically, he asked if the requirements for eligibility under the Water District category could be reviewed before proceeding with the nominations and vote.

Scott Fry - Mr. Fry - stated that he regretted not being able to attend the meeting in person due to a conflicting commitment at his district.

He shared that he is a native of Brownsville and has been involved in the water, wastewater, irrigation, and drainage industries since the mid-to-late 1990s. Throughout his career, he has managed two different districts and currently serves as General Manager of Valley Municipal Utility District No. 2. In that role, he oversees both groundwater and surface water treatment for municipal customers, as well as irrigation water operations.

Mr. Fry noted that while his district is a relatively small irrigation district, holding approximately 5,500 acre-feet of water rights, his professional experience also includes drainage management. He managed the Cameron County Drainage District for seven and a half years and has served as the district's engineer since 2013, a position he continues to hold.

He expressed that water resources management has always been a professional passion and that he has built his career around serving the region's water needs. Mr. Fry concluded by stating that he would be honored to serve if selected, acknowledged the qualifications of the other nominee, and thanked the Board for its consideration.

Anthony Stambaugh - Mr. Stambaugh began by thanking Sonny Hinojosa for the nomination and expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to be considered. He noted that speaking about himself was not one of his strengths and hoped that everyone had an opportunity to review his nomination materials and qualifications.

Mr. Stambaugh stated that he has spent his entire professional career in the water industry. He began his career with the Texas Watermaster Program in the Harlingen office, where he served for eight years. During his final year with the program, he held the position of Rio Grande Watermaster, gaining an in-depth understanding of water rights administration and regulation. He also helped introduce GIS-based tools and technologies to support the management and regulation of water rights.

He explained that he later transitioned to the irrigation district sector and currently serves as General Manager of Hidalgo County Irrigation District No. 2, one of the larger irrigation districts in the region. In addition to serving agricultural customers, the district also delivers a significant amount of water to municipal users.

Mr. Stambaugh stated that he looks forward to the opportunity to continue the work and leadership established by those who have previously served in the position. He again expressed his appreciation for the nomination

and thanked the Board for its consideration.

Jim Darling then stated that everyone in person and online would need to choose either A or B and that's how they were going to choose the one who would get selected. Scott Fry received five votes, and Anthony Stambaugh received eight votes; with that said Anthony was the one chosen for Water District. With no questions or comments. ***Steven Sanchez made a motion to approve Anthony Stambaugh to represent Water District; Tom McLemore seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

6. Discussion and Consider ACTION to approve Membership Renewals for members who have Expired Term Dates

Currently serving on the Region M Board are Judge Joe Rathmell, representing the Counties category, and Jaime Flores, representing Environmental Interests. Judge Rathmell is serving his third five-year term, which will expire in 2026. Upon expiration of his current term, he will be eligible to seek appointment for a fourth term and is willing to continue to serve. Mr. Flores is serving in the Environmental Interests category. His current term expires this month, and he will be eligible for reappointment to another term on the Board and is willing to continue to serve. In the Agriculture category, Dr. Neal Wilkins has completed his second term. Dr. Wilkins has indicated that he is no longer interested in serving on the Board, creating a vacancy in that category.

Jaime Flores made a motion to approve membership renewals for Jaime Flores to serve another term. Tomas Rodriguez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.

Tomas Rodriguez made a motion to approve membership renewals for Judge Rathmell to serve another term. Nick Benavides seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.

7. Status Reports –

A. Consideration and ACTION to approve financial report.

Melisa Gonzales Rosas started off, During the past quarter, total expenditure amounted to \$1,938.15. These expenses were primarily associated with the public notice and posting requirements for the current board positions. In addition, staff time and salary costs were incurred as my team and I worked to support and administer the nomination and appointment process. After accounting for these expenditures, the current fund balance stands at \$70,253.77. ***Jaime Flores made a motion to approve the Financial report; Tomas Rodriguez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

B. Status of Joint Groundwater Area Planning in GMA's 13 & 16.

GMA 13 - Mrs. Debbie Farmer mentioned that the Groundwater Water Management Area 13 met on 2/13/26 and 3/20/26. Main topic of discussion was the Groundwater Availability Model updates and recalibrations which included presentations by Dr. Bill Hutchison of simulations of pumping scenarios for counties in the planning group. The committee plans to propose a Desired Future Condition(s) (DFC)(s) at the April 22, 2026, GMA 13 meeting.

GMA 16 -- Mr. Louie Pena mentioned that they held a GMA 16 meeting on March 24, 2026. They discussed the DFC's, going out to all members of the GMA have to have public hearing and then have 90-day open comment period, then bring back to GMA 16 in September 22nd, 2026. Also, Dario Guerra, general manager from Red Sands, will now be representative for GMA 16 voting member. I thank all for the time that I've served, I will continue to attend meeting, but not as a voting member.

C. Discussion and Possible ACTION to choose representative for Region L.

Valerie Ramos noted that Mr. Don McGee had previously served as the designated representative responsible for providing updates and reports to the planning group. However, since Mr. McGee is no longer a member, that representative position has remained vacant and has not yet been filled.

D. Reports from Other Regional Water Planning Groups.

1. Reports from Liaison's with region J, Tomas Rodriguez; region L (No representation) and Region N, Commissioner David Flores.

No reports nor updates were provided to the group.

Jim Darling provided a brief report on the Interregional Council meeting, which brings together the chairs of all the regional water planning groups across the state. We had an extensive discussion focused primarily on interregional issues and conflicts, particularly regarding the management of shared water resources. While many of the concerns discussed are more prevalent in Central Texas and other areas where regions share river systems, the conversation highlighted the importance of coordination and communication among neighboring regions. Although our region faces unique circumstances, the broader discussion underscored how water management decisions in one region can have impacts beyond regional boundaries. No formal resolutions were adopted during the meeting; however, there was a productive exchange of ideas regarding the need for greater collaboration and communication among regions. A key takeaway was the recognition that focusing solely on the interests of an individual region is not always sufficient, as decisions and challenges in one area can ultimately affect other regions throughout the state. Overall, it was an informative discussion that provided valuable insight into water planning issues and priorities across Texas.

E. Report on Water Conservation and Drought management Plans filled with Region.

No reports at this time.

F. Report on Notices of Applications for Funding and Grants.

No reports at this time.

8. Reports from Federal and State Agencies.

A. TWDB - My name is Noah Powell, and I will be replacing Kevin Smith in working with you all for the seventh cycle. I will also be assisting with the completion of the remaining contract items for the sixth cycle following Mr. Smith's transition. To begin, Water Conservation Plans are required every five years and are due on May 1st. If you are preparing submissions, you may contact Jessica Paz at the Texas Water Development Board for assistance. Again, those plans are due May 1st.

On January 22, 2026, the Board approved the 2026 Regional Water Plans, including the Region M Plan. In March, the contract process for the seventh cycle—covering the 2031 Regional Water Plan—officially began.

Looking ahead, in April the Texas Water Development Board is expected to consider posting the initial draft State Water Plan for public comment and hearings. In addition, the final payment request for the sixth planning cycle is due on April 30; however, Region M has already submitted its request, and it is currently being processed. Regarding the 2031 Regional Water Plan, the anticipated contracting schedule is as follows: applications for Regional Water Planning Group sponsors are due tomorrow. Between May and June, the Board is expected to consider authorization of the contracts. Once the Board meeting date is finalized, we will notify you accordingly. Following Board authorization, contracts between the Regional Water Planning Group sponsors and the Texas Water Development Board are expected to be executed by August 31 of this year. Technical work under the new cycle will commence thereafter.

Jim Darling then stated, Recently, I reviewed a report indicating that approximately \$100 million in contracts were approved. I noticed that six Region M cities were included among roughly 14 total entities. Of that amount, about \$32 million was allocated to Region M communities. These funds appear to be directed toward pipeline improvements and related infrastructure projects.

Melisa Gonzales Rosas then stated that we will be hosting a Texas Water Development Board application workshop next Tuesday in this boardroom. The session will be conducted virtually, and Ms. Caballero will be leading the workshop. She will walk through the application process page by page, as she has noted that many cities encounter issues at specific sections of the application, which can prevent their submissions from moving forward. This workshop is intended to help address those challenges. The session will be virtual, and a link will be distributed to all interested participants. We encourage everyone to attend, as it will provide an opportunity to ask questions and gain clarification regarding the Texas Water Development Board application process.

In addition, the Texas Water Foundation will be hosting a meeting next Thursday in Brownsville at the County building. If you have not yet received an invitation, please let us know and we can forward the registration link. The event is free of charge and includes an in-person option with a complimentary lunch.

Jim Darling noted that, with the ongoing availability of grants and loans, it is important for applicants to ensure their projects are included in the appropriate regional plans in order to qualify. He emphasized that over the past five years, efforts should have been made to confirm inclusion in the relevant planning documents. However, in many cases, issues still arise where projects are not properly listed, which can result in delays. He added that such oversights often require additional time, coordination, and Board action, which can increase both costs and processing time. Therefore, he encouraged applicants to carefully review their grant applications and confirm inclusion in the applicable plans to avoid unnecessary delays. Mr. Darling provided an update, that the entity has not held a board meeting in approximately seven years. He stated that efforts are underway to pursue new legislation to revise the appointment structure of the board, with the goal of re-establishing regular operations. He explained that a proposal for the new legislation will be circulated for review regarding how board members are appointed, and expressed hope that these efforts will help the organization resume its activities.

B. IBWC – IBWC staffed summarized some key information regarding ongoing efforts involving the IBWC in coordination with the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Agriculture related to the 1944 Water Treaty and water deliveries.

As of the end of the last cycle, which concluded on October 24, 2025, the reported water debt from Mexico stood at 865,139 acre-feet. Since that time, negotiations have continued with Mexico to establish a delivery plan intended to improve predictability and reliability of water deliveries. An initial agreement was reached in December for Mexico to begin delivering 202,000 acre-feet starting the week of December 15. Those deliveries have begun, and monthly technical meetings are ongoing to monitor progress, address issues, and discuss concerns related to the implementation of the agreement.

As many of you are aware, certain details regarding sources and operational specifics are sensitive and are not publicly disclosed due to the nature of the negotiations. However, we continue to actively track deliveries and conditions, and additional discussions have taken place since late January to develop a plan for the remainder of the cycle. There is also an understanding that Mexico will deliver a minimum of 350,000 acre-feet during the current year, subject to hydrologic conditions and water availability. Basin conditions remain very low, and ongoing technical discussions continue to assess reservoir levels, delivery performance, and potential options to meet commitments.

Historic lows were reached in June 2024 at both Amistad and Falcon Reservoirs, and conditions remain constrained. Current storage levels are approximately 26.2% on the U.S. side combined across both reservoirs, and 4.1% on the Mexico side. We are also aware of concerns regarding updates to publicly available cycle data. We are currently reviewing what information can appropriately be displayed, given both the outstanding debt and the structure of the five-year cycle. Our goal is to provide as much useful and accurate information as possible while also respecting the sensitivities involved. In accordance with the intent of the agreement reached between the governments, including senior levels of the U.S. government, the objective is to avoid increasing

the existing water debt. Accordingly, deliveries being made at this time are being applied to the current cycle. We continue to work through these matters and will provide additional updates as appropriate. At this time, however, negotiations remain ongoing, and I am limited in what additional details can be shared.

C. TCEQ Watermaster – Ms. Georgina Bermea provided a brief summary of current water demand and reservoir conditions. The following information is based on publicly available data.

As of March 21, 2026, U.S. combined ownership at the Amistad-Falcon system stood at 26.26% of normal conservation capacity, representing approximately 886,387 acre-feet of storage. This reflects an increase compared to the same period last year, when levels were at 20.81%, or approximately 702,438 acre-feet.

U.S. combined usable storage in the Amistad-Falcon system is currently at 25.71% of normal conservation capacity, totaling approximately 867,993 acre-feet. Overall system storage is at 16.77%, with Amistad at 19.48% and Falcon at 13.49%.

As previously noted, Mexico's storage is at approximately 4.05% of normal conservation capacity, representing about 101,994 acre-feet across the Amistad and Falcon system.

Regarding Watermaster operations, we are currently in peak season. Present release levels are 30 CMS from Amistad, 50 CMS from Falcon, and 38.9 CMS from Anzalduas. In addition, a 10 CMS transfer from San Juan is expected. Operations continue to be managed based on daily demand, which is evaluated and adjusted on a daily basis.

9. Discussion, Consideration and ACTION on Date for Next Business Meeting.

Next Region M meeting will be on July 1st, 2026.

Tom McLemore made a motion to approve next meeting date; Steven Sanchez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.

10. Adjourn.



Chairman Jim Darling

