AGENDA

RIO GRANDE REGIONAL WATER PLANNING GROUP (RGRWPG) (REGION M)

9:30 A.M. TUESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2025

LRGVDC MAIN CAMPUS
INITIATED AND CHAIRED VIA GoToMeeting & IN PERSON AT
301 W. RAILROAD ST., WESLACO, TEXAS

Virtual access is available at:
https://meet.goto.com/811909405

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MEETING MATERIALS WILL BE AVAILABLE AT LEAST THREE (3) DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETING.

PRESIDING: JIM DARLING, CHAIR

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1. Call to Order & Roll Call.....Chairman

2. Consideration and **ACTION** to Approve November 6, 2024, Meeting Minutes.....Chairman

3. Public Comment.....Chairman

4. Consideration and **ACTION** to Accept Resignation and to Solicit Nomination in Environmental Category.....Chairman

5. Discussion and Possible **ACTION** on Membership Attendance.....Manuel Cruz

6. Status Reports

ACTION MAY BE TAKEN ON ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

A. Status on Current TWDB Contract Activities..... Jaime Burke
Black & Veatch

1. Schedule and Progress Update

2. Summaries of Draft Chapters

3. Presentation, Consideration and **ACTION** Regarding any RWPG member comments on draft chapters received by December 20, 2024.

B. Status of Joint Groundwater Area Planning in GMA's 13 & 16..... Louie Pena, GMA 16
Debbie Farmer, GMA 13

C. Reports from Other Regional Water Planning Groups
1. Reports from Liaisons with: Region J, Tomas Rodriguez; Region L, Don McGhee, and Region N, Commissioner David Fuentes

D. Report on Water Conservation Plans and Drought Management Plans Filed with Region.....Chairman

E. Report on Notices of Applications for Funding and Grants .....Chairman

F. Report on Regional Water Resource Advisory Committee (RWRAC)……. Melisa Gonzales
RWRAC

7. Reports from Federal and State Agencies

ACTION MAY BE TAKEN ON ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

A. TWDB.....Kevin Smith
Regional Water Planning

1. 2025 SWIFT Timeline

2. Financial Assistance Workshop

B. TCEQ Watermaster.....Georgina Bermea
Rio Grande Watermaster

1. Status of Reservoirs

8. Discussion, Consideration, and **ACTION** on Date for Next Business Meeting.....Chairman

9. Adjourn

Agenda items may be considered, deliberated and/or acted upon in a different order than numbered above. The Board of Directors of the Rio Grande Regional Water Planning Group (RGRWPG) (Region M) reserves the right to adjourn into Executive (Closed) Session at any time during the course of this meeting to discuss any of the items listed on this agenda as authorized by the Texas Open Meetings Act. No final action will be taken during the Executive Session.

PUBLIC INPUT POLICY
Public Input Policy: "At the beginning of each RGRWPG meeting, the RGRWPG will allow for an open public forum/comment period. This comment period shall not exceed one (1) hour in length, and each speaker will be allowed a maximum of three (3) minutes to speak. All individuals desiring to address the RGRWPG must be signed up to do so, prior to the open comment period. The purpose of this comment period is to provide the public an opportunity to address issues or topics that are under the jurisdiction of the RGRWPG as outlined within final implementation guidelines of Senate Bill 1, 75th Legislative Session (SB-1). For issues or topics which are not otherwise part of the posted agenda for the meeting, RGRWPG members may direct staff to investigate the issue or topic further. No action shall be taken on issues or topics which are not part of the posted agenda for the meeting. Members of the public may be recognized on posted agenda items deemed appropriate by the Chairman as these items are considered, and the same time limitation (3 minutes) applies."

ITEM 2.

MEETING MINUTES

MINUTES

RIO GRANDE REGIONAL WATER PLANNING GROUP (RGRWPG)

(REGION M) 9:30 AM WEDNESDAY, November 6, 2024

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. Manuel Cruz called the meeting to order at 9:32 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 Schuster	Other
Nick Benavides	Small Business
Glen Jarvis	Other
Tomas Rodriguez	Public
Jaime Flores	Environmental
Louie Pena	Ground Water Management Area
Dr. Neal Wilkins	Agriculture
Tom McLemore	Water Districts
Debbie Farmer	Ground Water Management Area
Steven Sanchez	Water Utilities
Marilyn Gilbert	Municipalities

The following voting members were **not in attendance**:

Sonny Hinojosa	Water Districts
Donald K. McGhee	Industries
Carlos Garza	Small Business
Judge Joe Rathmell	Counties
Dale Murden	Agriculture
Jorge Flores	Municipalities
Commissioner David Fuentes	Counties
Robert Latham	Electric Generating Utilities

2. Consideration and Action to Approve August 7, 2024, Meeting Minutes.

Marilyn Gilbert stated that she had spoken with staff on Meeting Minutes for typos to be corrected. Liza Alfaro sent out a copy of corrected minutes out to members. ***Marilyn Gilbert made a motion to approve the corrected minutes for the August 7, 2024, meeting as presented. Neal Wilkins seconded the motion, and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.***

3. Public Comment – No public comment submitted for this meeting.

4. US Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District with Lieutenant Colonel Darryl W. Kothmann Deputy District Commander.

I'm here with Aaron Chastain, my project manager, who focuses on the Lower Rio Grande Watershed Assessment. I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce myself and provide my contact information, so you have a point of contact with the Army Corps of Engineers in Galveston. While we are responsible for the entire Texas coast, my focus is primarily on the Lower Rio Grande Valley. I manage our partners and projects in that region, allowing the commander to concentrate on the rest of the coastline. Marilyn Gilbert asked if they could provide more details on the potential mission of the Army Corps of Engineers regarding water supply, and if you are able to share information about your potential involvement in the future. They responded with the Army Corps of Engineers is currently working on several projects in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, including the Raymond Drain Assessment, which focuses on flood control, and a watershed assessment that addresses both flood control and water retention. Additionally, the Rosoccas project, if restored, could provide water retention capabilities. The goal is to build relationships with regional partners to secure both federal and local funding for these projects, which aim to improve drainage and water retention. The focus is on managing water effectively, ensuring that there is enough when needed and controlling excess water when it occurs. The ongoing studies are crucial for understanding the watershed system to ensure that future projects are designed and implemented effectively to meet water management goals.

Jim Darling Mentions the Nueces-Rio Grande Basin, which flows northward, was not claimed by any cities for water rights because there was no way to store the water. As a result, it primarily flowed to the Raymondville Drain or La Raya Colorado, which are managed by separate county and IBWC systems. Interest in the basin remained low until Brownsville began discussions about resetting conditions in the area. This highlights the importance of addressing water management in the region. Marilyn Gilbert then asks, the question was raised due to involvement with other associations, particularly the Policymakers' Council for APPA, where ongoing changes proposed under WARDAA in Congress are being tracked. The inquiry focused on whether water supply could become a core mission of the Army Corps of Engineers and how that might impact the region, specifically in terms of potential assistance for watershed management. The Army Corps of Engineers is actively tracking the potential shift in their focus toward water supply, and if that becomes a priority, discussions will be held regarding implementation and its impact on the Texas coast, including the Rio Grande Valley. Currently, the Corps is in a transitional phase, awaiting clarity on changes at the executive level. The watershed assessment project is ongoing, with a final report and recommendations expected by 2027. A working group focused on water supply has been established, with an open invitation for those interested in contributing their expertise, especially on issues related to resiliency, flooding, recreation, ecosystem restoration, water supply, and economic development. Collaboration on a holistic approach to regional water resource challenges is encouraged. The best-case scenario for water supply and additional reservoirs involves exploring opportunities and having discussions with federal, state, and local entities to determine the feasibility and potential outcomes for the future of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. An open invitation is extended for further participation in these discussions, and the goal is to engage more people in the process. The meeting concluded with appreciation for the report, and the Colonel expressed gratitude for the opportunity to present.

5. **Consideration and possible ACTION regarding request from Agua SUD for a Letter of Support for a Consistency Waiver for Brackish Groundwater Project in Hidalgo County.**

Mr. Jose Leal presented the request to the planning group. Mr. Roberto Salinas sought a letter of support for a consistency waiver for a brackish groundwater project in Hidalgo County. Mr. Leal and Norris Leal provided an overview of Agua SUD and its operations. The presentation is available on the Region M website, under the Meetings page. ***Nick Benavides made a motion to approve the request from Agua SUD for a Letter of Support for a Consistency Waiver for Brackish Groundwater Project in Hidalgo County. Marilyn Gilbert seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

6. **Consideration and possible ACTION regarding request from Legacy WSC for a Letter of Support for a Consistency Waiver for Groundwater Project in WEBB County.**

No one from Legacy was in attendance in the meeting. ***Debbie Farmer made a motion to table the item and move on to the next item, Marilyn Gilbert seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.***

7A. Status on Current TWDB Contract Activities

Jaime Burke, Black & Veatch Water Planning Leader, was recognized and reported on the following items.

1. Schedule and Progress Update

Jaime Burke started with the Schedule and Progress update by showing the board the Conceptual Schedule for Region M Plan Development, that was given to them in the packet. She mentioned a RED Flag at the initially prepared plan that's due March 3rd of next year. Jaime mentioned that this will lead into going to public hearings and receiving comments and then developing the final plan by next October. Jaime then showed the 2024 Schedule that was provided in packet for everyone to see the tasks that have been worked on in quarter four. Jaime then moves on to the 2025 Region M Anticipated Schedule. The anticipated schedule for next year includes meetings in January and February to review draft chapters, address comments, and approve the Initially Prepared Plan for submission to the board by March 3rd. Following the submission, a public hearing is expected between April and May. After a brief break, the group will reconvene to review the received comments and discuss how they will be addressed. The final plan is expected to be adopted in September or early October, ahead of the October 20th deadline. Since the last update, the following progress has been made. Progress has been made on evaluating water management strategies, with all municipal needs met by identified strategies, although some unmet needs remain for irrigation. Non-municipal needs have also been addressed. Draft chapters 1 through 4, along with chapter 7 (drought response), will be sent out for review soon, and comments are requested for the January meeting. Updates have been made to Chapter 8 (legislative and policy recommendations) in collaboration with the executive committee, and additional input from Brownsville is being finalized. Once completed, Chapter 8 will also be sent out for review and feedback at the January meeting. The team will begin work on chapters 5 (water management strategy), 6 (impacts of the regional water plan), 9 (implementation and comparison to the previous regional water plan), and 10 (public participation). These chapters will be sent out for initial comments at the January meeting, with additional follow-up allowed before approval at the February meeting to provide more time for review. Additionally, the team will begin entering all water management strategy data into the TWDB database (DB27).

2. Water Management Strategy Updates and Action to Designate WMS as Recommended, Alternate, or Considered.

Jaime Burke mentioned that A list of approved water management strategies for evaluation was presented. Group-one strategies were discussed at the August meeting, with additional details provided in blue. The first strategy, advanced municipal conservation, includes a handout (A) with municipal conservation savings and costs, split by water loss mitigation and water use reduction. An error in the water loss mitigation sheet was noted regarding the column "pipe replaced," which incorrectly lists total pipe length rather than the replaced amount. This will be corrected and resented. The irrigation district conservation strategy includes handout (B), breaking down allocations to both districts and water user groups. Agricultural conservation costs per acre-foot of savings are detailed in handout (C), with water savings by county and river basin. Lastly, the conversion of water right classification strategy, previously reviewed, will be revisited today for further evaluation. Group two strategies, listed in blue, will also be discussed today.

Moving on, Jaime discussed the Timeline and Process for WMS Evaluations. A timeline was presented, outlining key upcoming meetings. At the November meeting, group two strategies will be presented, and the planning group will be asked to consider which strategies to add as recommended or alternative, helping to move the process forward. In the January meeting, the group will review the impacts of the regional water plan as a whole and address any initial comments related to Chapters 5 and 6. Jaime then talked a little about the Important disclaimer and notes provided in the packet.

Jaime then moved on to talk about the Conversion of Water Right Classification. The discussion covered converting Class A and Class B irrigation rights to DMI rights to provide supplies for municipal utilities and potential industrial customers. Information on the cost was added, with the market value of water estimated at $3,480 per acre-foot. Under the Texas Water Code, municipal suppliers can purchase water rights for irrigable acres in a subdivision at 68% of the market value, which equates to $2,370 per acre-foot. A graph was presented showing how irrigation demands decrease, allowing for more municipal and industrial water supplies. Additionally, the slide showing converted DMI supplies on a county basis was reviewed. Jim Darling asks the question was raised about how the

market value is determined, particularly regarding the percentage of market value used. It was noted that while the Water Authority tracks the conversion and sales, the actual price is not provided. Therefore, the authority must independently research and obtain the price from the seller. The response clarified that this is just an estimate, as the actual cost needs to be determined. The estimate was based on the 2019 market value reported by the Rio Grande Regional Water Authority, with a CCI conversion applied. The costing tool for other capital projects was adjusted by converting the data to September 2023 dollars.

Conservation of Water Right was next on Jaimes report. The tables on this slide and the next do not obligate any user to convert or purchase water rights from another user. The assumed volumes are based on surface water treatment projects or entities with surface water needs, and these numbers may change. The strategy is currently applied to water user groups with specific needs or projects requiring additional surface water. However, there is a consideration to expand this strategy to include all users of surface water. The group was asked for feedback on whether to maintain the focus on specific needs and projects or to apply the strategy more broadly. Jim Darling then asks, what is significant is the potential impact of excluding this. If you don't include the purchase of water rights and the conversion of water rights, would you then need to amend the plan later? What is the process for that? Jaime replies that if you wanted to get swift funding from the board, um, to do that, you would need, we would need to come back and add them. Marilyn Gilbert then shared their experience with their entity's established water right fee, which is charged to all developments on a per-acre basis to ensure water availability as development occurs. They explained that Brownsville has traditionally been acquiring water rights as it grows, noting that there are no new water rights to be created, only existing rights to be converted. The speaker expressed concerns about supporting SWIFT funding for water rights acquisition, stating that development should pay for its own water rights and that these costs should be passed directly to the development community. They also noted that using state tax dollars for water rights acquisition could potentially divert funds from other important projects, such as municipal water treatment. From their perspective, water rights should not be included as a requirement for SWIFT funding eligibility. Other members all agreed with Marilyn Gilbert on this topic as well. Jaime asks Should we consider adding other entities to this list that may not currently have identified needs or projects requiring surface water rights, but could potentially need to purchase them within the next five years? Stephen Sanchez replies to Jaime, I believe you should include all entities, regardless of whether they currently have a need, because water rights are an asset that belongs to the entity. As new customers or developments emerge, the need will arise, and without including everyone, you'll be shifting resources around. Therefore, I think it's important to include all entities in this plan. Members then continued in discussion and will be found in the Meetings page.

New or Expanded Surface Water Treatment.

Jaime started with, for this update, new or expanded surface water treatment projects from the previous planning cycle have been carried forward into the 2026 plan, with updates to reflect current conditions. No new strategies have been requested for this cycle. The strategies primarily focus on water treatment plant expansion. The TWDB uniform costing model was used to develop planning-level costs for these projects, using September 2023 dollars. It's important to note that the costs for purchasing surface water rights are not included in this strategy but are covered under the conversion of water rights strategy, which was discussed earlier. Jim Darling asks regarding the use of purple water from sewage treatment plants, specifically about whether it's still considered river water due to return flow obligations. If anyone is considering this, particularly in the case of an industrial project that could use purple water and treat its sewage for reuse, it's important to ensure that the return flow obligation is addressed. This is especially relevant if the water is being sourced from the Rio Grande Basin, but the sewage treatment plant is in the Oasis Rio Grande Basin, as these are two different basins. This issue should be considered and potentially addressed, especially given that cities are actively working to attract companies that require water. This issue needs to be resolved, either through the plan or in coordination with TCEQ, especially for industrial companies. Jaime mentions that there will be many tables over the next slides and will not go over every number. But she did mention that she wanted to explain what the tables are. The tables in Blue are Strategy Yield Tables, these tables explain how much water supply we'll get from the strategy.
Jaime next mentioned the tables in green. Those tables are the Strategy Cost Summary. These tables are presented in the same order as before, with the recommended projects listed first. These tables include the cost of facilities, as well as the total project costs, which encompass additional expenses such as engineering, planning, design, land acquisition, and environmental considerations. Marilyn Gilbert states I may have missed this, but is there another section that specifies the number of MGDs (Million Gallons per Day) for each project? For example, when reviewing

the water treatment plant expansion, there's a listed cost, but I'm wondering if the capacity details are mentioned elsewhere.

New or Expanded Distribution and Transmission Facilities Resulting in Increased Supplies. There were no new strategy requests for this category during this planning cycle. Instead, we updated the strategies from the previous cycle to reflect current conditions for inclusion in the 2026 plan. These strategies primarily focus on pipelines and pump stations. We used the TWDB costing model to develop the planning-level costs, based on September 2023 figures. The following slide includes our blue strategy yield tables, which list the recommended strategies from the previous plan, along with the associated entity names, projects, and yields. The next slide presents the strategy cost summary for each of these projects.

New or Expanded Fresh Groundwater Supply. We have separated our groundwater categories into fresh and brackish to maintain clarity. New or expanded fresh groundwater projects were carried over from the previous planning cycle and updated to reflect current conditions. There were no new strategy requests for this category, so all strategies are updated from the 2021 plan. The strategy components focus on wells, pumps, pipelines, and disinfection treatment. It is important to note that some projects are limited by groundwater availability, particularly in Cameron County, where groundwater availability issues affected the ability to meet all requested project yields. In these cases, the yields for strategies relying on the over-allocated aquifer were reduced proportionately in the earlier decades to prevent over-allocation. We used the costing model to develop planning costs, again in 2023 dollars. All the strategies shown here were recommended in the previous cycle. While there are no blue strategies on this slide, if a strategy is highlighted in blue, it indicates limited aquifer availability associated with the project. For example, the Rio Hondo project is sized for 1,120 acre-feet per year, which equals one MGD. However, due to groundwater availability constraints in earlier decades, the total yield has been reduced to a lower amount to account for these limitations. On the Green Table Strategy Cost Summary, we've added a couple of columns on the right side of the table to show the unit cost and unit cost without debt service, particularly in cases where there are limited yields, and to illustrate how those limitations impact the unit costs. There are no such cases on the first page, but on the second page, you can see that for Rio Hondo, the unit cost is slightly higher when they are unable to reach their full yield as originally sized.

New or Expanded Brackish Groundwater Desalination. Before moving forward Jaime wanted to highlight some information, she stated before we begin, I wanted to share that Javier Guerrero from RAITS and the LRGV Stormwater Task Force recently reached out to us with information on several projects they are working on, which involve groundwater in Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, and Starr Counties. These four projects are as follows:

1. Brackish groundwater desalination for Elsa
2. Assessing the potential for groundwater as an alternate supply in Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties
3. Assessing the potential for new groundwater districts in the lower Rio Grande Valley
4. Feasibility of regional groundwater supplies in Cameron and Willacy counties

These projects have just been brought to our attention. My question for the group is whether you would like us to include the brackish groundwater desalination project for Elsa in this cycle. Although we only recently received this information, we could potentially present it and bring it back to you in January. The other projects are likely too general to fully evaluate within our remaining timeline for this draft plan, but we could mention them in Chapter 5 as considered projects. I spoke with Mr. Guerrero on Friday, and he provided me with additional details yesterday, which I wanted to bring to your attention for consideration. Glen Jarvis commented the only point I would raise is the timing of these projects. Given our deadlines, we need to ensure that the projects we include are valid and can be realistically incorporated into the plan, especially since we won't have another plan update for five years. It seems that the Elsa brackish groundwater desalination project is more immediate and feasible, whereas the other projects appear to be more focused on future considerations. There was no agreement at this time.

Several new projects were submitted by project sponsors for inclusion in the 2026 plan, along with some projects from the previous plan that have been carried forward and updated to reflect current conditions. In Cameron County, limitations on groundwater availability have resulted in some yield reductions in the earlier decades to avoid aquifer over-allocation. We used the TWDB uniform costing model, assuming a total dissolved solids (TDS)

level of 3,500 milligrams per liter, with reverse osmosis at 80%, unless specified otherwise. Injection wells for brine disposal were also assumed unless instructed differently. We have multiple strategy yield tables, starting with the recommended strategies from the previous plan. The fresh groundwater yield tables also identify the county and aquifer where the yield is coming from, which may be useful. For instance, the North Alamo WSE Delta Area Brackish Groundwater Desalination project has a full yield of 2,240 acre-feet per year (2 MGD), but the yield was adjusted in the earlier decades to stay within groundwater availability limits.

Additional slides include strategy yields for new projects, such as a two-phase brackish groundwater desalination project and a new project for Eagle Pass, which will be discussed in more detail. We have made efforts to incorporate and address the needs of various projects for inclusion in the plan, including two projects for East Rio Hondo WSC. Additionally, there are three projects associated with Southmost RWA. Jaime Burke then moved on to information as far as the infrastructure included for these new strategies. First it shows details on Agua SUD and its two phases. Next, Jaime mentioned that the next one was for the Eagle Pass project. The Eagle Pass brackish groundwater project is exploring options for developing well fields in both Maverick County and Kinney County (Region J). We coordinated with the Region J consultant to confirm that a 5,000 acre-foot well field in Kinney County would not impact their aquifer availability, and they indicated that this would be acceptable. As for Maverick County, Eagle Pass is also considering the Maverick Basin as an aquifer source. However, there is insufficient data on this source to establish a clear methodology for availability, so we are not able to include it currently. Instead, we have proposed a small well field in the Carrizo-Wilcox aquifer in Maverick County. The project also requires a 30-mile transmission line from the Kinney County well field to the treatment plant, with plans to implement this by 2026. The East Rio Hondo projects include one planned for 2030 and several others for the 2040 decade, focusing on expanding well fields and treatment plants over the next 10 to 20 years. Infrastructure for each project has been outlined. Additionally, the Southmost area has three projects planned, all set for the 2030 decade. In the regional water planning context, the Rio Grande alluvium is part of the Gulf Coast aquifer system, which is covered in the plan. Details on the required infrastructure for each project have been provided, along with the associated costs.

Strategy Cost Summary for New or Expanded Brackish Groundwater Desalination

Jaime started off with, the recommended projects from the last cycle were reviewed. It was noted that there was limited availability in earlier decades, and revised unit costs were presented based on the limited yield numbers. A question was raised regarding the alluvial wells mentioned in the prior discussion. Specifically, it was asked whether their connection to the Gulf Coast Aquifer affects the flows of the Rio Grande. It was explained that as part of joint planning, the wells are technically included in the Gulf Coast aquifer system. The speaker also asked if Maryland would like to provide further input on this matter. It was noted that there may be concerns about whether these wells impact the flows of the river. It was clarified that the proposed projects will not impact on the river's flow, as water is being pulled from the Rio Grande Valley alluvium. The hydrology plan previously circulated includes alluvium wells, and there is sufficient water availability. If there are concerns about river flows, the hydrology model can be revisited. A full presentation on the plans, progress, and resilience efforts will be provided at the next meeting. The expansion efforts aim to optimize existing plant capacity, prevent well system issues, and address necessary electrical upgrades, especially in areas with only a single electrical feed. Additional details will be shared as needed. Jaime then continued with the Strategy cost Summary. The first two slides present the strategy cost summary based on the recommended strategies from the last cycle. These include costs for the Agua Sud, Eagle Pass, and East Rio Hondo projects.

Water Management Strategy (WMS) Updates, Drafts WMS Evaluations.

A new seawater desalination strategy was requested for the inclusion of this cycle, alongside three strategies carried over from the previous cycle with updates reflecting current conditions. It was noted that seawater desalination typically requires more energy and incurs higher costs due to higher TDS levels and lower freshwater yield. There was a potential issue with RO efficiency, which is usually lower than the assumed 80%, and this will be checked for accuracy.

The seawater desalination strategies include one for Laguna Madre, two alternatives for Brownsville (one demonstration and one implementation), and a new strategy requested by South Texas Water Development and Private Utilities, involving a small treatment plant and a 220-mile transmission pipeline from Brownsville to

Laredo. The pipeline results in high costs for this strategy, but only phase one has been included in the plan for the 2030 decade. Further details and cost considerations will be reviewed later. Marilyn Gilbert then comments, before proceeding, the speaker reiterated previous comments regarding the inclusion of non-governmental entities in the plan and opened the floor for discussion on whether they should be included. Jaime responded, it was noted that if non-governmental entities are unable to sell bonds, they would not be eligible for SWIFT funding. While the intention of these entities in the plan is unclear, it was stated that they likely would not be able to receive SWIFT funding for the project. The board then had a discussion among them. You can find more information in the Region M Meeting page.

Reuse- One new project was submitted for inclusion in the plan, while the rest were carried forward from the previous planning cycle and updated for current conditions. The projects are categorized into three types of reuses: non-potable reuse (for irrigation or industrial demands), indirect potable reuse (with an environmental buffer), and direct potable reuse (where treated water is sent directly to the treatment plant or distribution system). The planning level costs for these projects were developed using the uniform costing model in September 2023 dollars. The discussion began with non-potable strategy yields. Moving on, Jaime went on to Reuse – Non-Potable. The meeting covered several strategies from the previous plan, including a couple that were recommended and others that were considered alternative options. These strategies are listed along with their corresponding yields. Next, Jaime moved on to Reuse-Potable. The first slide presents all the recommended strategies from the last cycle, along with their associated projects. Many of these strategies involve multiple phases, so the entity names appear twice, with their respective yields listed. The third slide includes potable strategies, featuring some that were recommended, one that was an alternative in the last cycle, and a new strategy for Brownsville. Jaime mentions that The Brownsville PUB submitted a project for indirect potable reuse, which involves piping treated wastewater effluent from the Brownsville-Robindale WWTP to the Resaca la Guerra, where it will be extracted and sent for treatment at Brownsville WTP No. 2. The project includes advanced treatment of wastewater effluent before it leaves the treatment plant and potentially additional brackish water treatment at the water treatment plant. It also requires an 8,500-foot transmission line to transport the water to the outfall in the Resaca. The project is planned to be online by 2030 and is included in the horizon for all decades. Marilyn Gilbert explains that Part of the project involves utilizing an abandoned pipeline to transport water to the Resaca. As mentioned earlier by the U.S. Engineer, certain sections of the Resaca are already being dredged. Additionally, there is potential funding from other legislation introduced in Congress that could support this project. The proposed timeline for the project is outlined in the presentation. Moving on Jaime went on to the Strategy Cost Summary for Reuse-Non-Potable. The presentation begins with the non-potable strategies, followed by the first slide of potable strategies. The second slide continues with additional recommended potable strategies from the last cycle, an alternative strategy from that cycle, and a new strategy.

Moving on, Jaime started with Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR). No new strategies were requested for this cycle, and ASR (Aquifer Storage and Recovery) was determined to be unfeasible for McAllen and North Alamo WSE, the two entities that met the 10,000-foot need threshold established in the previous meeting. Therefore, ASR is not being included for these entities currently. ASR involves storing potable water in an aquifer, where treated water is pumped in during times of excess and retrieved when needed. The planning level costs for ASR were developed using the uniform costing model based on September 2023 dollars, and the strategy components include a well field with dual-purpose pumps, pipelines, and water treatment. Additionally, the Eagle Pass strategy, an alternative from the last plan, uses the Carrizo Wilcox to supply 3,360 acre-feet of water per year and is expected to be online by 2040, with associated costs included. It is expected to be online by 2040, with the associated costs outlined.

Last category that was mentioned was the Off-Channel Storage and Regional Wate Supply Facilities. The presentation combines two strategy categories—off-channel storage and regional water supply facilities—since most regional water supply projects also involve reservoirs. These projects may include reservoirs, transmission, and treatment components. The Brownsville projects, included in previous plans, have been updated for the 2026 plan, while the Hidalgo County Drainage District No. 1 projects were added as an amendment to the 2021 plan and updated for 2026. All projects were included in either the original plan or as amendments. The Banco Morales project for Brownsville was recommended, while the Matamoros Weir and Reservoir project was an alternative. Additionally, three Hidalgo County Drainage District projects are associated with reservoirs for the Delta regional water supply project, with their respective yields and costs presented. Marilyn Gilbert then stated, I would like to clarify that the Banco Morales reservoir is an abandoned reservoir that has become silted over the years. It has been

included in the plan for some time. Currently, we are exploring funding options and ensuring that our rates can cover the costs of this project, which is why it has been reintroduced. At this point, I need input from everyone to initially designate each strategy as recommended, alternative, or considered but not recommended. This will help move forward with drafting Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, as well as entering data into our database. These designations are initial and can be adjusted before the plan is submitted or finalized. In some cases, a strategy may be considered alternative based on its sources and yield, not just as a backup. If an alternative strategy is later proposed for funding and reclassified as recommended, a plan amendment would be required for SWIFT funding eligibility. The next few slides aim to provide all the relevant information in one place for easier review. I've assigned a number to each water management strategy and project, listed on the left, along with their respective water recipients, status from the last cycle or new this cycle, and the suggested designation for this cycle (which you can accept or modify). I've provided this in one place for easier reference and discussion. We can review and discuss specific strategies using the numbers as a reference point. While many strategies that were recommended in the last cycle have retained that status for this cycle, some may be adjusted if they don't result in overallocation. Notably, for the new brackish groundwater strategies, we are recommending that they be included as recommended strategies for this cycle.

7A2. Water Management Strategy Updates and ACTION to Designate Water Management Strategies as Recommended, Alternate or Considered.

Marilyn Gilbert made a motion to approve Water Management Strategies updates, to designate water Management Strategies as recommended, Alternate and considered, Tomas Rodriguez seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.

7A2A. Consideration and possible ACTION regarding Designation of Legacy WSC as a Wholesale Water Provider (WWP) as defined in 31 TAC for Regional Water Planning Purposes.

This motion was withdrawn, no action was taken at this time. ***Glen Jarvis made a motion to table; Tomas Rodriguez seconded the motion and upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

7A2B. Consideration and ACTION regarding Designation of the South Texas Water Development Private Utilities, LLC as a wholesale Water Provider (WWP) as defined in 31 TAC for Regional Water Planning Purposes.

Dr. Armando Ocaña, President of South Texas Water Development Private Utility, LLC, introduced the company's proposal for developing a desalination water plant at the Port of Brownsville. He emphasized the innovative nature of the project, which aims to provide a drought-tolerant alternative water source. Dr. Ocaña explained that the company is seeking partnerships with public entities, including the City of Brownsville, and has already secured support from the City of Laredo, which is considering the desalination project as a secondary water source. The project was originally conceived by Dr. Ocaña and the Mayor of Laredo during their time as mayors, in response to water restrictions caused by limited water sources.

Dr. Ocaña highlighted the importance of having the project included in the Region M plan to access funding sources beyond private investors. He mentioned ongoing discussions with the Port of Brownsville regarding land acquisition and noted that the company started in 2022, with plans to provide a secondary or tertiary water source for the Rio Grande Valley. The company is also exploring potential funding through the Texas Water Development Board, including SWIFT funds, contingent on inclusion in the regional plan. Dr. Ocaña opened the floor to questions and noted that the company would accept an alternative designation for now, with plans to update the project as it progresses. Kevin states that the motion would be to designate them as a Wholesale Water Provider and include the project as an alternate project in the 2026 regional water plan. Marilyn Gilbert her motion is to not designate them as a Wholesale Water Provider. Carlos Garza seconded the motion.

7B. Financial Report.

7B1. Consideration and ACTION to Accept Expenditure Report.

Mr. Cruz presented the expenditure reports, covering the period from January 1, 2024, to September 30, 2024. For the third quarter, the total expenditure was $2,434.10, with the original budget set at $22,650 and an available balance of $14,524.74. He noted that the higher cost for website maintenance was due to two factors: the renewal and the website fee for the domain, which contributed to the increase compared to previous quarters. He then entertained a motion to accept the financial report as presented. ***Nick Benavides accepted the Financial Report Expenditure Report. Tom McLemore seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

7C. Status of Joint Groundwater Area Planning in GMA's 13 & 16.

GMA 16 – Mr. Louie Pena provided a brief update. On October 22nd, the GMA 16 met at the office in Falfurrias to review the new GAM that was sent to them. After discussing the matter and going back and forth, they expressed dissatisfaction with the new GAM. A letter was sent, and it was decided to continue using the old GAM unless a new one is provided. That is the status.

GMA 13 – Ms. Debbie Farmer provided a brief update. GMA 13 met on September 20th at the Evergreen Groundwater Conservation District in Pleasanton. Dr. Bill Hutchinson, the technical consultant for GMA 13, provided an update on the recalibrations of the Groundwater Availability Model (GAM). The committee approved a resolution to submit a request to the Texas Water Development Board for an update the GAM to the southern portion of the Carrizo-Wilcox, Queen City, and Sparta aquifers based on the revised model. The next GMA meeting is scheduled for March 7th, 2025, in Pleasanton.

7D. Reports from Other Regional Planning Groups

Tomas Rodriguez reported on Region J, Plateau, approved Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 during their meeting on October 17th. There was a discussion regarding the number of acre-feet available, but the approval was made based on the current figures. There were no other updates from the other planning groups.

7E. Report on Water Conservation Plans and Drought Management Plans Filed with Region.

We discussed the current situation, noting that we have exceeded the 20% level, prompting the need for a new strategy on water conservation and drought management. Unlike the situation in 1998 or 1999, we are still facing record low levels. It's important to encourage cities and water supply corporations not to become complacent with the 20% reservoir level. A letter may be sent out to remind them of the need for continued vigilance.

7F. Report on Notices of Applications for Funding and Grants. NO reports to report currently.

7G. Report on Regional Water Resource Advisory Committee (RWAC)

Mrs. Melisa Gonzales just wanted to let everyone know that next meeting would be taking place on Dec. 4th @ 2pm and that it would be Hybrid.

8. Reports from Federal and State Agencies.

8A. Kevin mentioned that there is a new Executive Administrator, Mr. Brian McMath. Although he was announced on September 4th, he had been serving as the interim since March of this year. Additionally, Ms. Tanya Miller was appointed as a new board member by Governor Abbott, with her term set to expire on February 1st, 2027.

Regarding resources, several items were shared via email related to the IPP completion and the regional water plan. The first item is a schematic flowchart outlining the process, with the planning groups preparing to adopt their IPPs. An IPP hearing is expected in May, followed by the regional water plan process.

The second item is a public notice summary, which includes details about the notice format, required notifications, and public comment timelines. The IPP public hearing will have a 30-day notice period and a 60-day comment period, with additional entities needing to be contacted compared to a regular meeting.

Finally, a review checklist was released, which will be used by board staff when reviewing the IPPs. This checklist is intended to streamline the review process, ensuring that both the consultants and board staff are aligned when reviewing draft plans.

8B. IBWC - No report was given.

8C. TCEQ Watermaster

Ms. Georgina from the Rio Grande Watermaster provided the latest report from October 26th. The U.S. combined storage at Amistad and Falcon reservoirs is at 20.60%, holding 694,420 acre-feet, which is down from 21% at the same time last year. The combined storage for the system is currently at 16.92% of its conservation capacity, with Amistad at 20.87% and Falcon at 12.14%. Mexico's storage stands at 11.98%, impounding 301,487 acre-feet at both reservoirs. Watermaster operations are currently releasing 15 CMS from Amistad, 20 CMS from Falcon, and 11 CMS from the U.S. The water year for 2024 has started with low account balances, and users are encouraged to plan accordingly and conserve water as much as possible.

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

Next meeting is set for Jan. 7th @ 9:30am. ***Louie Pena made a motion to approve date for next business meeting. Tom McLemore seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

10. Meeting Adjourn.

_____

Mr. Jim Darling, Chairman

ITEM 6A.

STATUS ON CURRENT TWDB CONTRACT ACTIVITIES

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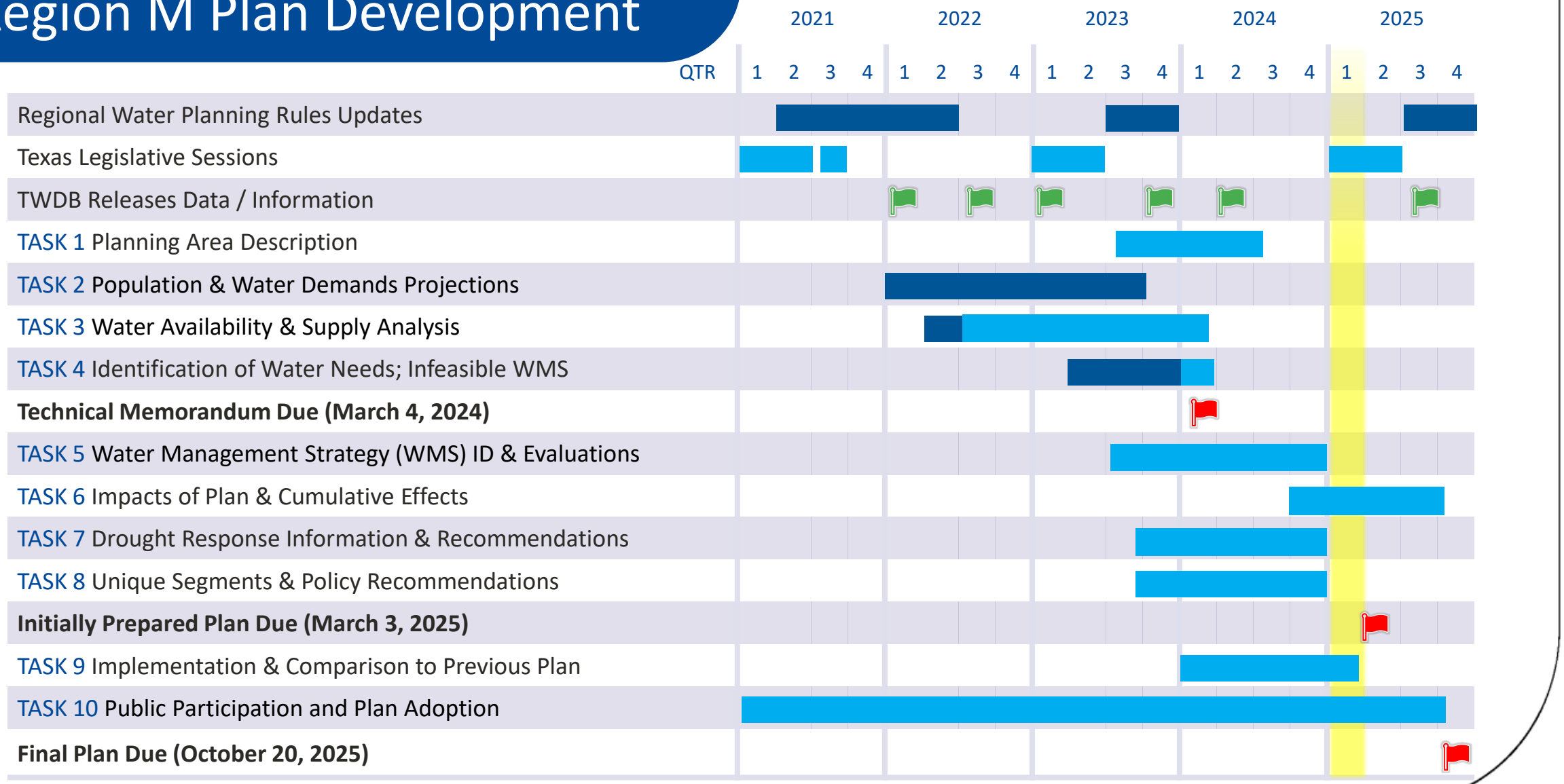
Jan. 2025

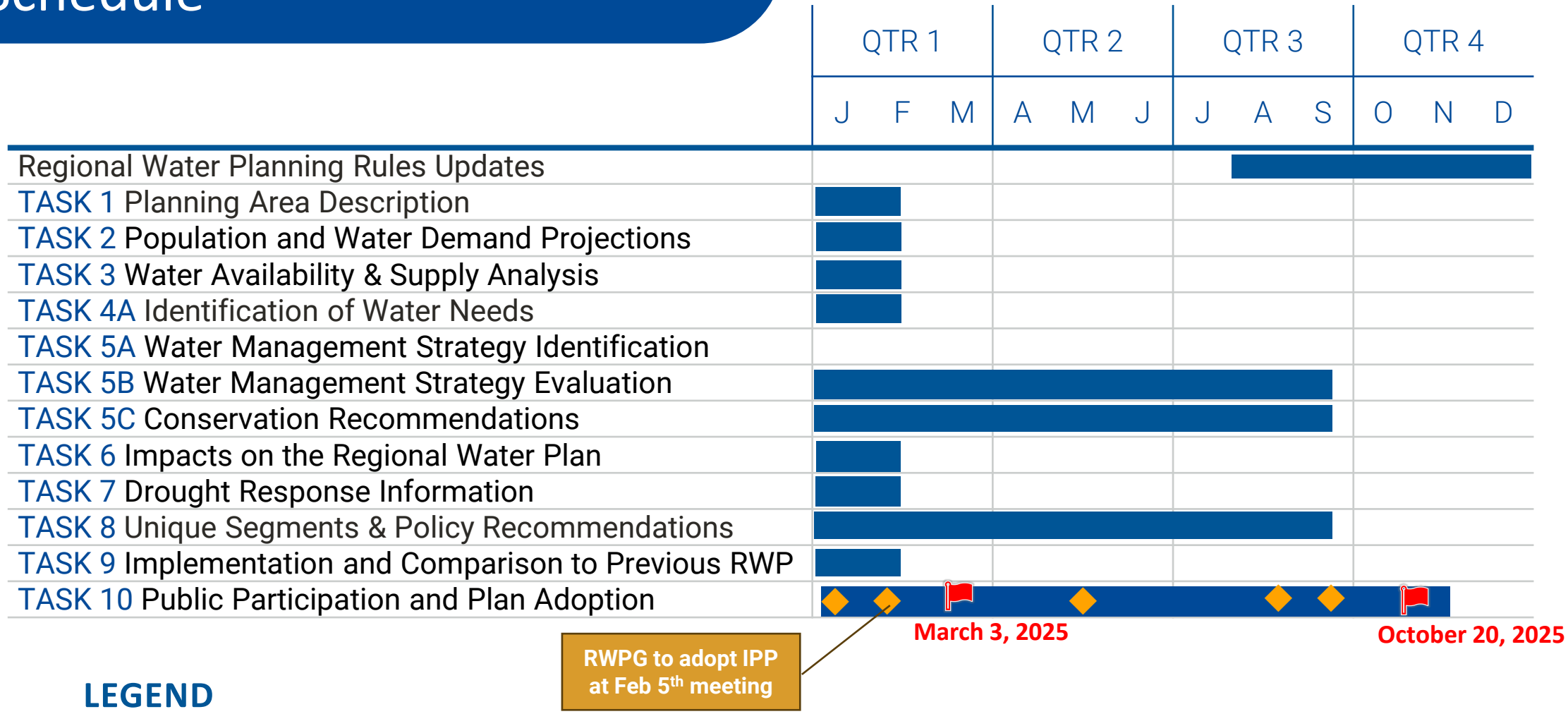
Agenda Item 6.A.1:
Schedule and Progress Update

Conceptual Schedule for Region M Plan Development



TWDB Conceptual Schedule ■ B&V Planned Schedule TWDB Data Release TWDB Deadline

2025 Region M Anticipated Schedule



Progress Since Last Meeting

- Continued work on draft chapters
  - Chapters 1-5, 7, and 8 have been sent out for RWPG review

    Initial Draft Chapters 1-4 were sent out by Valerie Ramos on November 22, 2024

    Initial Draft Chapters 7 and 8 were sent out by Valerie Ramos on December 5, 2024

    Initial Draft Chapter 5 was sent out by Valerie Ramos on December 30, 2024
  - Completing Chapters 6, 9, and 10 that will be sent out as well
  - **Please submit any/all comments by January 26th** for incorporation/consideration at the February meeting
- Chapter 9 Implementation Survey being sent out to project sponsors from the 2021 Plan
  - Will continue to incorporate survey responses until the Final Plan is adopted

Update on New or Ongoing Efforts

- Enter all water management strategy data into the TWDB Database (DB27)
- Update on Strategy Data since last meeting
  - Laguna Madre Water District Seawater Desalination
    - Yield and Online decade changed to 5,600 AFY and 2030
    - Project Cost updated to $127 million

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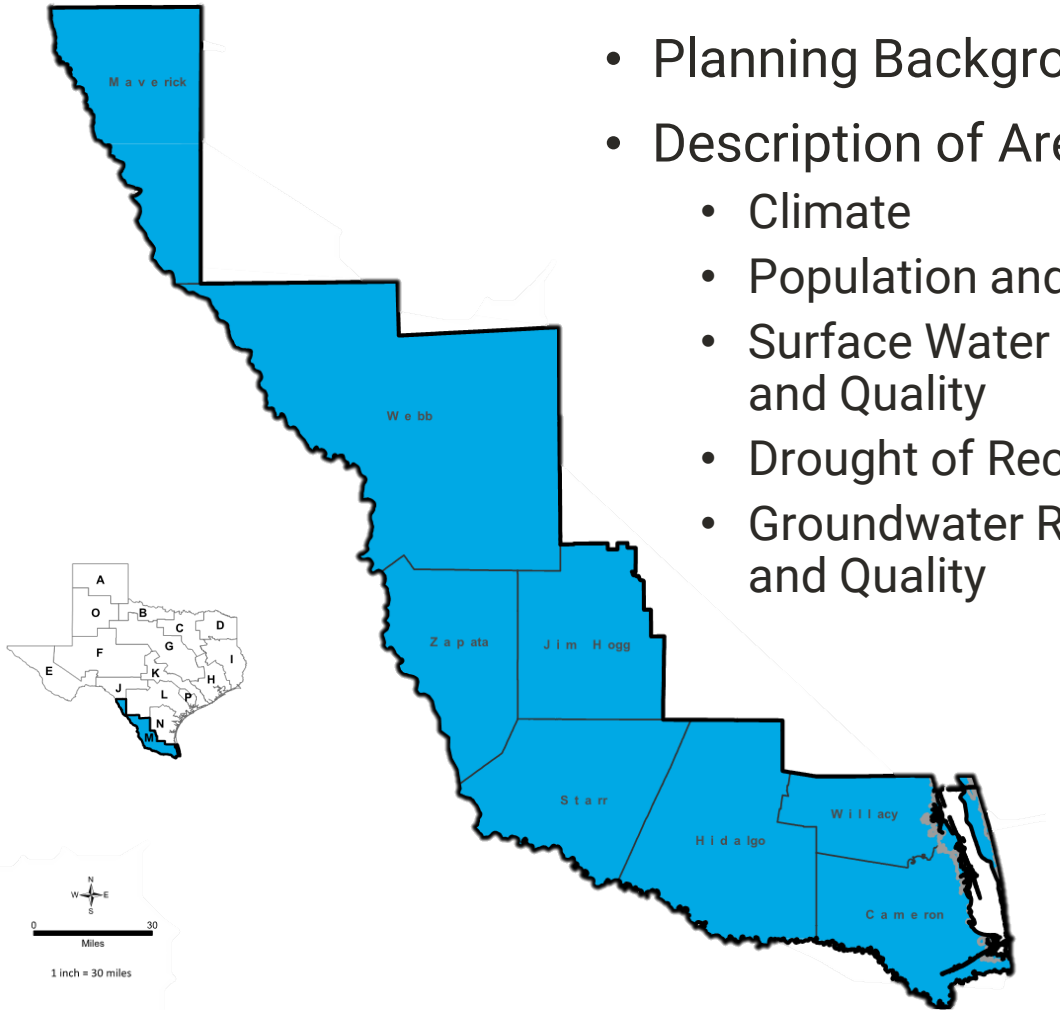
Jan. 2025

Agenda Item 6.A.2:
Summaries of Draft Chapters

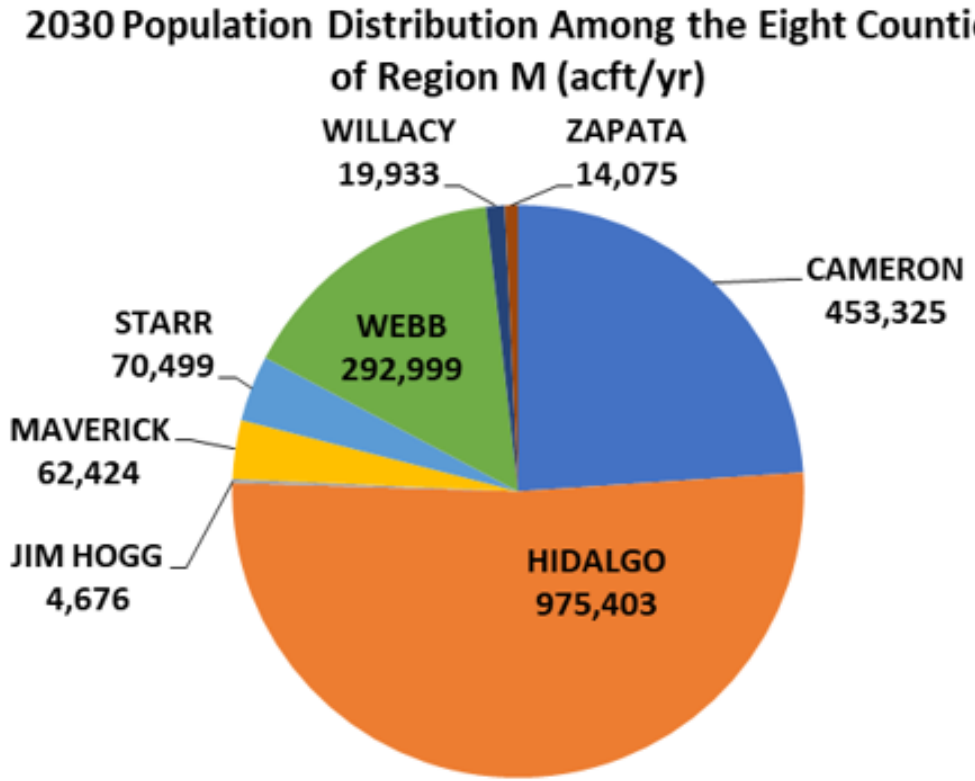
Chapter 1
Description of the Regional Water Planning Area



- Planning Background
- Description of Area
  - Climate
  - Population and Economy
  - Surface Water Resources and Quality
  - Drought of Record
  - Groundwater Resources and Quality
- Current Water Use
- Major Water Providers
- Agricultural and Natural Resources, and Threats to Them
- Existing regional and local water plans
- Current preparations for drought
- Water loss audit data

Chapter 2
Population and Water Demands

- Introduction
- Methodology and Projections
  - Population and Municipal Demands
  - Manufacturing Water Demands
  - Steam-Electric Water Demands
  - Mining Water Demands
  - Irrigation Water Demands
  - Livestock Water Demands
- Major Water Providers



Chapter 3
Water Supply Analysis

- Introduction
- Surface Water Availability
  - River Basin Sources
  - Allocation of Surface Water Supplies
- Groundwater Availability
  - Aquifer Sources
  - Allocation of Surface Water Supplies
- Recycled Water
- Major Water Providers

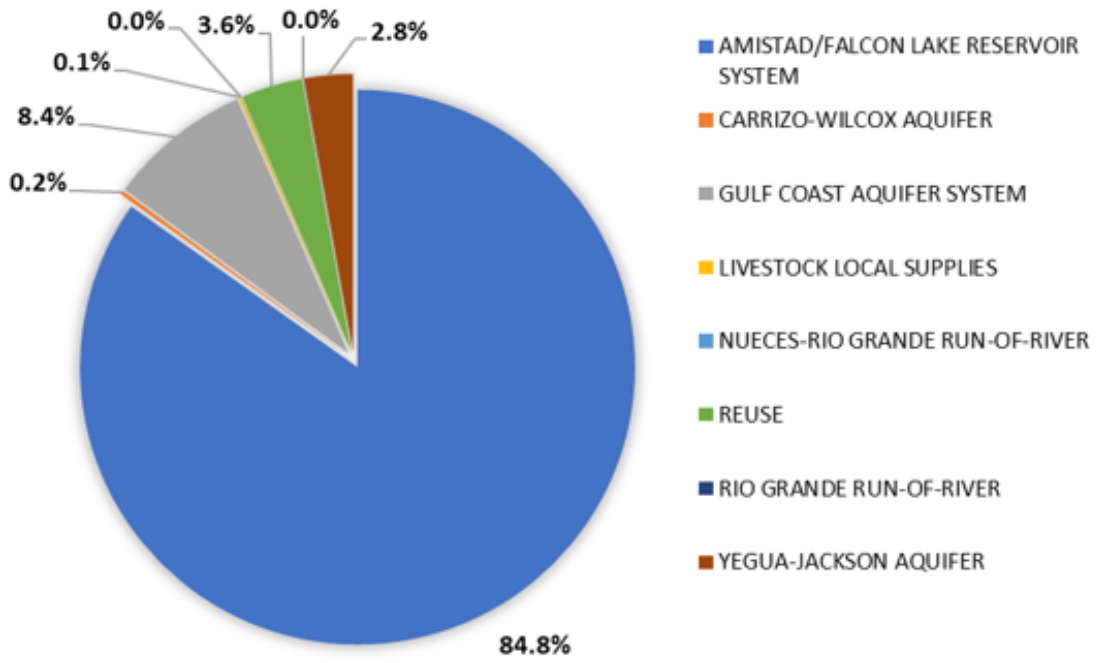


Figure 3-1 Major Groundwater, Surface Water, and Reuse Water Source Projections in Region M

Chapter 4
Identification of Water Needs

- Introduction
- Regional Needs Summary
- Municipal Needs
- Irrigation Needs
- Steam-Electric Needs
- Mining Needs
- Manufacturing Needs
- Livestock Needs
- Major Water Providers' Needs
- Secondary Needs Analysis

Chapter 5
Water Management Strategy Evaluation and Recommendation

- New Chapter Organization this cycle
  - 5.1 Potentially Feasible Water Management Strategies
    - Process to Identify
    - Description of Evaluation Process
    - Potential for ASR
    - Index of Entities with Links to Water Management Strategies
  - 5.2 Recommended Water Management Strategies
    - Organized by Strategy Category
    - Includes evaluations for each applicable entity in subsections under the strategy category
  - 5.3 Alternative Water Management Strategies
    - Same as Section 5.2, but for identified alternative strategies and projects
  - 5.4 Considered Water Management Strategies
    - Those that were not included as recommended or alternative
  - 5.5 Implementation of Certain Water Management Strategies

Chapter 6
Impacts of the Regional Water Plan and Consistency with Protection of Natural Resources

Includes the following information:

- Impacts of water management strategies (cumulative)
- Protection of resources
- Unmet Needs
- Socioeconomic impact of not meeting identified water needs
    - This will be provided by TWDB and included in the Adopted Final Plan

Chapter 7
Drought Response, Information, Activities, and Recommendations

Includes the following information:

- Drought of record
- Uncertainty and droughts worse than the drought of record
- Current preparations for drought
- Drought response triggers and actions
- Existing and potential emergency interconnects
- Emergency responses to drought or loss of municipal supply
- Development of region-specific model DCPs
- Drought management WMSs
- Other drought-related considerations and recommendations

Chapter 8
Policy Recommendations and Unique Sites

31 TAC §357.43 specifies that the regional water plans must include recommendations on regulatory, administrative, or legislative issues, such as:

- Ecologically Unique River and Stream Segments
- Unique Sites for Reservoir Construction
- Other Recommendations

Chapter 9
Implementation and Comparison to the Previous Regional Water Plan

Includes the following information:

- Comparison of Population and Water Demand Projections to the previous Regional Water Plan (RWP)
- Comparison of Water Availability and Supplies to the previous RWP
    - Includes Drought of Record and Modeling Assumptions
- Comparison of Needs to the previous RWP
- Comparison of Water Management Strategies to the previous RWP
- Implementation survey results
- Assessment of progress towards regionalization

Chapter 10
Public Participation and Plan Adoption

Includes the following information:

- Public Participation
  - Detailing of the public participation process
  - Documentation of rural outreach
  - Detailing of the public hearing, and plan adoption.
    - The majority of this will be added between the Initially Prepared Plan and the Adopted Final Plan
- Facilitation of the regional water planning process
- Documentation of interregional coordination efforts
- Plan implementation issues

BLACK & VEATCH

Jan. 2025

Agenda Item 6.A.3:

Presentation, Consideration and ACTION Regarding any RWPG member comments on draft chapters received by December 20, 2024

Comment on Chapter 3

1. On Table 3-11, Page 3-32, the name indicated is "United Water Laredo Southside WWTP". "United Water" should be removed. It should be "Laredo Southside WWTP".

   - This will be corrected, and other chapters will be checked for any instances as well.

Comment on Chapter 4

1. On Page 4-3, first paragraph second line which begins, "While one-time purchases of water": I would suggest adding after the word "water" the following words "allocations through Contract Sales under Rio Grande Watermaster rules,". This is the method that what I refer to as "wet water" rather than "water rights" is handled below on the Rio Grande in Region M. Above Region M, the water rights are run-of-river and handled like the rest of the State.

    - Will add this language to the sentence

Comments on Chapter 7
(comments only)

1. Pages 7-1 - 7-4 dealing with the drought of record seem outdated and just a repeat of the last two 5-year cycles with the only updated is table 7-1 firm yield projections from 2030 to 2080.
2. RWP is not defined and used in the Demand Management Measures first paragraph at the bottom of page 7-5.
3. On page 7-7 above Table 7-2 there is a discussion about dropping below 20% in 2024 for the Reservoirs, but if you look at the levels now and 1998, it would seem that even thought we now have gone over 20% (but still less than 20% on usable storage -should we mention the water master now reports both gross storage and usable storage?
4. Where do we mention to improvements to the water systems (pipes, electrical metering that deal with the consumption side and treated delivery systems as a strategy?)
5. Section 7.3.2 Drought Response Triggers. Should we add river to plan delivery losses as another trigger as for some cities (Raymondville, etc.) that can be a significant amount and should be included in their calculations.
6. 7.3.2.1. For December 2014, the Water Master added additional 55K acre feet to the storage pool to take it to 280,000 so apparently that is at the discretion of the water master and maybe we should mention that in this section.
7. 7.5.1.1.2 2nd paragraph - re 2014 study, don't we have any current studies or info on releases? I also thought that the gauge at Rio Grande City showed pollution releases. Any way maybe we should delete the paragraph re 2014 release and mention the RGWQI data if we have it including when and if that what happened and current efforts. You can take out my comments on a 2014 fish kill at the bottom of the page as outdated too.

Comments on Chapter 8
(comments only)

1. Section 8.1.3: Since there is no mention post-2005 in the previous sections (8.1.2) do you have the dates for the 8.1.3 sections? If no action, can we eliminate the paragraphs and say we haven't done anything relating to the issues since that time and no action is proposed for this planning cycle?
2. Section 8.2.3: When did the RWPG endorse the Lower low water weir project - can you please put the year in?
3. In Chapter 8, I believe there is a conflict between statements in paragraph 8.2.1 on page 8-5 dealing with the Brownsville Weir and Reservoir and the statement on Federal policy statement number 5 on page 8-11 dealing with the 1944 Treaty and the taking of water by Mexico at Anzaldua Dam and the Anzaldua Canal in Mexico. I believe at this point it might be resolved by deleting from the first paragraph of Paragraph 8.2.1 the following 2 sentences: "The agencies from the U.S. and Mexico would need to form a partnership for the project to determine how the two cities would share in the benefits of the project. One of the benefits includes capturing releases from the Rio San Juan, which is downstream of the Falcon Reservoir." This conflict could result in an adverse impact in accounting of the water allocation of a Texas water rights holder in Region M of water diverted that would otherwise flow unused to the Gulf.

Accepting Comments

Please submit any/all comments by January 26th for incorporation/consideration at the February meeting

Thank you!

ITEM 7A.

REPORTS FROM FEDERAL & STATE AGENCIES - TWDB

Region M TWDB Update January 7, 2025

2025 SWIFT Timeline

- December 17, 2024 abridged application solicitation period begins
- February 3, 2025 abridged applications due to the TWDB
- April 2025 Invitations extended to submit complete applications
- May 2025 Complete applications due
- July 2025 Projects recommended to the Board for commitment

Region M TWDB Update January 7, 2025

Financial Assistance Workshop

- When: Tuesday, January 21, 2025, 1:30 p.m.
- Where: Pharr One Community Center
  1121 East Nolana Loop, Pharr, TX 78577
- Discuss specific projects and answer questions about following financial assistance programs:
  - Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)
  - Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)
  - State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT)
  - Texas Water Development Fund (DFund)
  - Flood Infrastructure Fund (FIF)
  - Texas Water Fund (TWF)