

AGENDA

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

9:30 A.M. WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2026

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

VIRTUAL ACCESS AVAILABLE AT:

<https://meet.goto.com/225875461>

YOU CAN ALSO DIAL IN USING YOUR PHONE:

Access Code: 225-875-461
United States: +1 (872) 240-3212

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

PRESIDING: JIM DARLING, CHAIR

-
1. Call to Order & Roll Call.....Chairman
 2. Consideration and **ACTION** to Approve October 7, 2025, Meeting MinutesChairman
 3. Public Comment.....Chairman

ACTION MAY BE TAKEN ON ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

4. Discussion and Consider **ACTION** on Status of Solicitation for Voting Member in Industries Category.....Chairman
5. Discussion and Consider **ACTION** to Approve Membership Renewals for Members who have Expired Term Dates.....Chairman
6. Consideration and **ACTION** to Approve Nominations for Annual Election of Officers/Executive Committee.....Chairman

- 7. Discussion and Consider **ACTION** to Authorize the Region M Political Subdivision to Provide Public Notice and Hold a Pre-planning Meeting to Obtain Public Input on Development of the 2031 Regional Water Plan. Chairman and Kevin Smith

- 8. Discussion and Consider **ACTION** to Advertise for Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to Procure Technical Consultant(s) for 7th Cycle of Region M Regional Water Planning as per the Scope of Work to be Approved by Texas Water Development Board (TWDB)..... Chairman and Kevin Smith

- 9. Status Reports
 - A. Consideration and **ACTION** to Approve Financial ReportMelisa Gonzales

 - 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 (no representation), 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 GrantsChairman

- 10. Reports from Federal and State Agencies

ACTION MAY BE TAKEN ON ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

- A. TWDBKevin Smith

- B. IBWCIBWC Staff

- C. TCEQ Watermaster Georgina Bermea
Rio Grande Watermaster
 - 1. Status of Reservoirs

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

12. 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, October 7, 2025

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
Sonny Hinojosa	Water Districts
Donaldo McGhee	Industries
Frank Schuster	Other
Nick Benavides	Small Business
Glenn Jarvis	Other
Tomas Rodriguez	Public
Carlos Garza	Small Business
Judge Joe Rathmell	Counties
Jamie Flores	Environmental
Louie Pena	Ground Water Management Area
Dale Murden	Agriculture
Jorge Flores	Municipalities
Comm. David Fuentes	Counties
Debbie Farmer	Ground Water Management Area
Steven Sanchez	Water Utilities
Marilyn Gilbert	Municipalities

The following voting members were not in attendance:

Neal Wilkins	Agriculture
Tom McLemore	Water Districts
Robert Latham	Electric Generating Utility

2. Consideration and Action to Approve August 12, 2025, Meeting Minutes.

Sonny Hinojosa made a motion to approve August 12, 2025, meeting minutes, Steven Sanchez seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.

3. Public Comment – No public comments were received nor were they given.

4. Resignation Letter by Don McGhee

Mr. Jim darling wanted to appreciate all the Service that Mr. Dom McGhee has done and contributions and Mr. Darling also stated that it has been great.

5. Discuss and Consider ACTION to designate the LRGVDC as the Political Subdivision/RWPG Sponsor to administer the Rio Grande RWPG for the 7th cycle of Regional Water Planning (2031 Regional Water Plans)

Mr. Kevin Smith states that the cycles starting next year, a series of steps will need to take place. The first is for the Planning Group to officially appoint the Planning Division as the full sub-administrator. This will move forward if the Lower Rio Grande Development Council is willing to continue serving in that role. Mr. Smith went on to explain the graph of water plans with everyone. ***Dale Murden made a motion to approve to designate the LRGVDC as the political Subdivision/RWPG Sponsor to administer the Rio Grande RWPG for the 7th cycle of regional Water Planning (2031 regional Water Plans. Frank Shuster seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

6. Discuss and Consider ACTION to authorize the Region M Political Subdivision to submit a grant application to the TWDB and execute a contract with the TWDB on behalf of the Rio Grande RWPG for initial funding of the 7th cycle of Regional Water Planning (2031 Regional Water Plans)

In March, the RFA will be released to request applications. Since they have been designated, they will be eligible to apply. They will have about one month to submit their application. In June, those applications and potential contracts will be presented to our Board for approval. If approved, the contracts will be executed in August. ***Dale Murden made a motion to approve authorizing the Region M Political Subdivision to submit a grant application to the TWDB and execute contract with the TWDB on behalf of the Rio Grande RWPG for initial funding of the 7th cycle of Regional Water Planning (2031 regional Water Plans). Frank Shuster seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

7A. Status Reports - Status on Current TWDB Contract Activities

7A1. Schedule & Progress Updates

Ms. Jaime Burke provided the following schedule status and progress updates from the last meeting: 1) Black & Veatch finished addressing TWDB comments and all Level 1 comment responses have been approved by TWDB; 2) Incorporated new recommended and considered water management strategies into Chapter 5 and DB27; 3) Made final edits to the plan, including incorporating the socioeconomic impact analysis; 4) Final draft chapters with track changes were sent out to the RWPG members for review; 5) Clean chapters have were included online as meeting material; 6) Completed updates to DB27 (deadline was September 22). Ms. Burke mentioned that the upcoming efforts are to finalize proofing and formatting of the chapters; accessibility requirements will be confirmed to Adobe Acrobat; hard copies and electronic deliverables are being generated; and lastly submit adopted final plan and associated deliverables to TWDB by October 20th.

7A2. Presentation of New Public Comments Received on IPP and Additional Updates for the Final Plan. Discussion and Consideration of Any Additional Edits to the Final Plan. Consideration to Approve Proposed Responses and Updates.

Ms. Jaime Burke identified a public comment received during the additional public comment period the RWPG allowed after the August 12th meeting for comments related to new water management strategies recommended by the RWPG at the meeting. The public comment, from Wintergarden GCD, expressed opposition to the Maverick County Brackish Groundwater Desalination project, because the identified project infrastructure was much larger than the groundwater volume available under the MAG. The group expressed concerns that the project was much larger than the available groundwater identified under the MAG. The group discussed options, including potential removal from the plan, resizing of the infrastructure discussed in the strategy write-up, and other edits to the strategy write-up. Jaime Burke mentioned that TWDB would need to let the RWPG know if changes to the TWDB database could be made at this point, as the database had closed on September 22nd. If

changes could still be made, it would be possible to resize the Maverick County infrastructure to reflect the 170 aft/yr available volume for pumping, instead of the Maverick County requesting 1.5 MGD. If not, language could be added to the plan showing additional information for a smaller size project, while keeping the original larger size project in the plan. ***Tomas Rodriguez made a motion to change the size of the infrastructure in the recommended strategy to reflect the available firm yield if TWDB allows changes to the database, and to provide additional language in the strategy write-up that discusses additional details on a smaller size project if the TWDB could not allow changes to the database at this time. Steven Sanchez seconded the motion upon a vote; the motion was carried unanimously.***

Sonny Hinojosa made a motion to include the proposed dedication to Ms. Debby Morales to be included in the final plan. Mr. Glenn Jarvis second the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.

7A3. Discussion and Consider Action to Adopt the 2026 Rio Grande Regional Water Plan, Authorize Black & Veatch to make Non-Substantive Revisions and Submit Final Plan to TWDB

Steven Sanchez made a motion to adopt the 2026 RGRWP Plan and authorize Black & Veatch to submit the final plan to TWDB. 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.

Louie Pena mention that the following meeting for the GMA 16 will be meeting on October 28th in Falfurrias at 1:00 PM. Mr. Pena also mentioned that additionally, the neighboring group—Nueces County Groundwater—is currently petitioning TCEQ for the creation of a Groundwater District in Nueces County. One more update: the Corpus Christi City Council has been in discussions with the Gulf Coast Authority about the possibility of bringing back the Inner Harbor Desalination Plant. He was not sure where they are in the process, but it was mentioned in a recent news update he came across.

Next, GMA-13 Report by Debbie Farmer to Region M RWPG. The Groundwater Management Area-13 met on August 15, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. at the Evergreen UWCD Office in Pleasanton. Public comment was received from Jordan Furnans noting that LRE Water has a new company name, Sphero’s Environmental. Another public comment was received from Ted Boriack, landowner in Gonzales County and member of Water Protection Association. His comments were regarding Gonzales County’s export of groundwater and permitted volumes of groundwater. Updates from Regional Water Planning Groups, TWDB, GMA-13 Stakeholders were received. The Maverick Aquifer was discussed. Dr. Bill Hutchison reported on GAM updates/recalibrations; proposing a standardized methodology for tracking DFC’s; and 4th round of DFCs. Ms. Farmer mentioned that Dr. Ron Green, Technical Consultant for the Wintergarden Groundwater Conservation District, made a presentation regarding Joint Planning. It was noted to the group of the New Water Management Strategy introduced at the 8-12-25 Region M meeting referencing Maverick County and the deadline to submit written public comment on the proposed new WMS.

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

No reports were provided for each of these regions.

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

No reports or updates were provided.

E. Report on Notices of Applications for Funding and Grants

Jim Darling mentioned that the Legislature and major water suppliers are holding meetings across the state about potential water projects—they’re eager to access the billions of dollars currently available for funding.

8. Reports from federal and State Agencies

8.A TWDB

Kevin Smith started off with the proposition related to the Texas Water Fund. TCEQ recently posted an FAQ on their website, and Mr. Smith highlighted a few key points. Senate Bill 7 and House Joint Resolution 7 passed during the regular 89th Legislative Session. Contingent on voter approval this November, the proposal would allocate Prop 4 that would require the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts each state fiscal year to deposit to the credit of the Texas Water Fund the first \$1 billion of the net revenue derived from the imposition of the state sales and use tax that exceeds the first \$46.5 billion of that revenue coming into the treasury in that state fiscal year. This allocation would begin on September 1, 2027, and end on August 31, 2047. We anticipate that the Board will begin distributing funds for projects by fiscal year 2029.

The Texas Water Fund is structured as an umbrella fund, giving the Board discretion to distribute money among existing programs. It also requires that 50% of the funds go to two specific programs: SWIFT, which finances projects in regional and state water plans—and the New Water Supply for Texas Fund. Last session, this new fund defined “new water supply” as ASR, produced water, brackish desal, and seawater desal. Senate Bill 7 has now expanded that definition to include reuse, out-of-state water rights, and reservoir projects that already have land and permitting secured. All other existing programs remain eligible for funding. Some, such as SRF and ROF, are grant programs, meaning Water Fund dollars allocated to them could be awarded as grant funding. The materials and the links in the presentation will take you directly there if you need more detailed information.

Presentation can be found on the Region M website.

8.B IBWC

No report/presentation was provided.

8.C. TCEQ Watermaster – Status of Reservoirs

Mr. Jose Davila was experiencing audio difficulty; therefore, no report was provided.

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

Mr. Jim Darling confirmed the next business meeting to be scheduled on January 7th of 2026, at 9:30am.

10. Adjourn

Mr. Jim Darling, Chairman

ITEM 5.

**DISCUSSION AND
CONSIDER ACTION TO
APPROVE
MEMBERSHIP
RENEWALS FOR
MEMBERS WHO HAVE
EXPIRED TERM
DATES**

RGRWPG - REGION M - MEMBERS & TERM EXPIRATION DATES

	Name	Category	1st Term Began	Current Term Ends
1.	Glenn Jarvis	Other	3/25/1998	2025
2.	Sonny Hinojosa	Water Districts	3/25/1998	2025
3.	James Darling	River Authority	11/17/2004	2029
4.	Tomas Rodriguez	Public	7/30/2008	2028
5.	Carlos Garza	Small Business	7/30/2008	2028
6.	Judge Joe Rathmell	Counties	6/1/2011	2026
7.	Jaime Flores	Environmental Interests	8/3/2011	2026
8.	Frank Schuster	Other	1/4/2012	2027
9.	Nick Benavides	Small Business	6/5/2013	2028
10.	Dale Murden	Agriculture	3/9/2016	2026
11.	Marilyn Gilbert	Municipalities	8/2/2023	2028
12.	Dr. Neal Wilkins	Agriculture	7/13/2016	2026
13.	Jorge Flores	Municipalities	1/24/2018	2028
14.	Commissioner David Fuentes	Counties	8/1/2018	2028
15.	Tom McLemore	Water Districts	3/20/2019	2029
16.	Robert Latham	Electric Generating Utilies	1/12/2022	2027
17.	Steven Sanchez	Water Utilites	1/12/2022	2027
18.	Louie Pena	GMA Catergory	8/2/2023	Term limits Do Not Apply to GMAs
19.	Debbie Farmer	GMA Catergory	9/29/2021	Term limits Do Not Apply to GMAs

ITEM 6.

**CONSIDERATION AND
ACTION TO APPROVE
NOMINATIONS FOR
ANNUAL ELECTION
OF
OFFICERS/EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**



*Jim Darling, *Chairman*
Rio Grande Regional Water Authority

*Sonny Hinojosa, *Vice-Chairman*
HCID #2, San Juan,

*Vacant, *Secretary*

*Frank Schuster
Val Verde Vegetable Co., McAllen

*Nick Benavides
Nick Benavides, Company, Laredo

Glenn Jarvis
Attorney, McAllen

Marilyn Gilbert
Brownsville PUB

Tomas Rodriguez
Public, Laredo

Carlos Garza, P.E.
AEC Engineering, LLC., Edinburg

Joe Rathmell
Zapata County Judge

Jaime Flores
Arroyo Colorado Partnership, Weslaco

Louie Pena
Brush Country GCD, GMA 16

Dale Murden
Texas Citrus Mutual, Mission

Neal Wilkins, Ph.D.
East Foundation

Jorge Flores
Eagle Pass Water Works

David L. Fuentes
Hidalgo County Commissioner

Tom McLemore
Harlingen Irrigation District

Debbie Farmer
Wintergarden GCD, GMA 13

Robert Latham
Magic Valley Generating Station

Steven Sanchez
North Alamo Water Supply Corp

***Executive Committee**

MEMORANDUM

TO: RGRWPG Voting Members

FROM: Manuel Cruz, LRGVDC Executive Director

DATE: January 2, 2026

SUBJ: **Election of Officers**

According to the Region M Bylaws:

ARTICLE VII. OFFICERS

Section 1. Officers, Restrictions and Terms of Office

Voting members of the RGRWPG shall select from the voting membership a Chair, a Vice Chair, and a Secretary to serve as officers. *Each officer shall serve a term of one calendar year.*

Section 6. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall be composed of five RGRWPG members, including the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and two members-at-large. No two voting members representing the same interest shall serve as members of the Executive Committee at the same time. The two members-at-large shall be selected annually in the same manner and with the same terms as set forth for the selection of officers under this Article.

Those currently serving on the Executive Committee are:

NAME	OFFICE	CATEGORY	COUNTY
Jim Darling	Chair	River Authorities	Hidalgo
Sonny Hinojosa	Vice Chair	Water Districts	Hidalgo
Vacant	Secretary		
Frank Schuster	Member-at-Large	Other	Hidalgo
Nick Benavides	Member-at-Large	Small Business	Webb

Stewards of water resources from Amistad to the Gulf

Administrative Agent: Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council, Manuel Cruz, Executive Director
301 W Railroad – Weslaco, Texas 78596
Telephone: 956-682-3481 Fax: 956-631-4670 Website: riograndewaterplan.org

ITEM 10.A.

REPORTS from FEDERAL and STATE AGENCIES

Region M TWDB Update January 7, 2026

Final Invoicing for 2026 Regional Water Plan Contracts

- **Final Reimbursable Expense Date: 2/27/2026** (this is the last day that work performed under this contract is eligible for reimbursement).
- **Final Payment Request Deadline: 4/30/2026** (this is the latest day that final payment requests may be submitted for reimbursement).
- **Contract Expiration Date: 8/31/2026** (this is the date the contract expires. Any budget memorandum requests must be submitted by **July 31, 2026**)
- To indicate your submitted payment request to TWDB is the final payment request, please ensure that the payment request form is marked as the final payment request, or document in the email submittal that the expenses are “final”.
- Final payment requests may be submitted following TWDB Board approval of the 2026 Regional Water Plans, anticipated to occur January 22, 2025.