

MINUTES

RIO GRANDE REGIONAL WATER PLANNING GROUP (RGRWPG)

(REGION M) 9:30 AM WEDNESDAY, January 7, 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 Schuster	Other
Nick Benavides	Small Business
Glenn Jarvis	Other
Tomas Rodriguez	Public
Carlos Garza	Small Business
Judge Joe Rathmell	Counties
Jaime Flores	Environmental
Louie Pena	Ground Water Management Area
Dale Murden	Agriculture
Jorge Flores	Municipalities
Com. David Fuentes	Counties
Debbie Farmer	Ground Water Management Area
Robert Latham	Electric Generating Utility
Steven Sanchez	Water Utilities

The following voting members were not in attendance:

Sonny Hinojosa	Water Districts
Dr. Neal Wilkins	Agriculture
Tom McLemore	Water Utilities
Marilyn Gilbert	Municipalities

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

Dale Murden made a motion to approve October 7, 2025, meeting minutes, Carlos Garza seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.

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

4. **Discussion and Consider ACTION on Status of Solicitation for voting member in Industries Category.** As discussed, Mr. McGee is no longer representing Region M in the Industry category. Before a new member can be nominated or approved, the position must be publicly advertised. Staff will proceed with advertising the vacancy through each of the Region M county's local newspapers. Once the advertisement period is complete, nominations may be brought forward at the next meeting. Board members may also recommend additional candidates at that time, in accordance with the required public notice process. ***Dale Murden made a motion to approve solicitation for advertisement to fill this vacant seat, Steven Sanchez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

5. **Discussion and Consider ACTION to approve Membership Renewals for Members who have expired Term Dates.** We currently have two members who have indicated they will not be continuing with Region M: Glenn Jarvis and Sonny Hinojosa. They have formally notified the office that they will not be seeking another term. As a result, while we are requesting approval to renew the remaining member's term, we are also requesting approval to solicit candidates for the two upcoming vacancies—one representing the Water District and the other in the applicable category. Originally, Glenn Jarvis and Sonny Hinojosa were included in today's renewal items; however, their decision not to continue now creates two openings moving forward, unless additional members step down. For Dale Murden, the action before the board is to approve an extension of his appointment for another term. At this point, we want to ensure everyone understands that the motion would be to approve Dale's term extension and authorize solicitation for the two vacant positions. ***Steven Sanchez made a motion to approve membership renewals for Members who have Expired Term dates. Jaime Flores seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

6. **Consideration and ACTION to approve Nominations for Annual Election of Officers/Executive Committee.** The following members for Officer seats were nominated:
 - Chair: Jim Darling, ***Dale Murden made a motion to approve Jim Darling as Chair. Nick Benavides seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***
 - Vice Chair: Steven Sanchez, ***Dale Murden made a motion to approve Steven Sanchez as Vice-Chair. Frank Schuster seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***
 - Secretary: Nick Benavides, ***Nick Benavides made a motion to approve himself as Secretary. Steven Sanchez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***
 - Member-at-Large: Frank Shuster, ***Dale Murden made a motion to approve Frank Schuster as Member-at-Large. Steven Sanchez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***
 - Member-at-Large: Tomas Rodriguez, ***Tomas Rodriguez made a motion to approve himself as Member-at-Large. Nick Benavides seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried.***

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.** As a reminder, before any technical work can begin, a pre-planning meeting must be held to gather public input. This meeting typically takes place towards the end of the year, during the fall or winter. I also want to remind everyone that this process requires 30-day public notice and a large mail-out, so please keep that timeline in mind. The pre-planning meeting may be held on the same day as a regular meeting, meaning two separate meetings are not required. While there are costs associated with the notice and outreach, those expenses are reimbursable, though the process does involve a significant amount of coordination and effort. The proposed motion would authorize the Rio Grande Council of Governments, in coordination with the Executive Committee, to provide public notice and conduct a public hearing to receive input on the development of the 2031 Regional Plan. The Executive Committee would notify the Council of Governments when to issue the required notice, with the understanding that the pre-planning meeting would take place sometime in the fall of 2026. ***Dale Murden made a motion 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. Steven Sanchez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

8. Discussion and consider ACTION to advertise for Request for qualifications (RFQ) to Procure Technical Consultant(s) for 7th Cycle Region M Regional Water Planning as per the Scope of Work to be approved by Texas water Development Board (TWDB). My understanding is that we have worked with Black & Veatch for some time now. At this point, I want to ask whether anyone has any suggestions or feels it is necessary to interview additional engineering firms. I am not certain whether that is permissible under the current seven-cycle plan, as we may be required to advertise first. Kevin confirmed that we must follow the established procurement process. Therefore, the motion before the board is to authorize advertising for engineering services. ***Dale Murden made a motion to approve advertising for qualifications to procure technical consultants for the 7th cycle Region M Regional Water Planning as per the Scope of Work to be approved by Texas Water Development Board. Steven Sanchez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

9. Status Reports

A. Consideration and ACTION to Approve Financial Report. The Region M 2025 Budget and Expenditure Report was presented for review. To date, the average available balance in the budget is \$12,040.24, and the actual cash available is \$71,732. Approval of the budget is being requested. During the discussion, Mr. Darling asked whether the remaining expenses would carry over into the next funding cycle. Mr. Cruz confirmed that the funds do carry over and clarified that they are considered local cash. ***Tomas Rodriguez made a motion to approve the Region M Financial Report. Carlos Garza seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

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

GMA 16:

Louie Pena had a couple of announcements. He announced that GMA 16 will be meeting on January 27th in Falfurrias Texas at 1 pm. Our consultant, Steve Young, is currently working with us on the development of our IPP Plan. Additionally, Nueces County has petitioned the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Several landowners and individuals have also submitted a petition requesting the formation of a groundwater district in Nueces County.

Furthermore, the City of Corpus Christi has purchased land along the Nueces River and has drilled eight wells, which will pump water into the river and send it to the treatment plant. The city is also planning to drill an additional ten wells. In response, several landowners have filed a petition of inquiry regarding the validity of the Corpus Christi ASR District's authority to proceed with this activity. These matters will be discussed further at the upcoming GMA 16 meeting. This concludes his report.

GMA 13:

Debbie Farmer announced that the next GMA 13 Joint Planning Committee meeting has been rescheduled from January 9 to February 13 at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will be held at the Evergreen Underground Water Conservation District, located at 110 Wyoming Boulevard, Pleasanton, Texas.

Special items on the agenda include a status report on the GMA groundwater availability model updates and recalibrations presented by Dr. Bill Hutchinson, a discussion and possible action regarding a standardized methodology for tracking desired future conditions (DFC), and a review of the schedule and timeline for the fourth round of DFC planning.

C. Reports from Other Regional Water Planning Groups:

1. Reports from Liaisons with: Region J, Tomas Rodriuez; Region L & Region N, Commissioner David Fuentes.

There were no reports to report at this time.

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

There were no reports to report at this time.

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

There were no reports to report at this time.

10. Reports from Federal and State Agencies

A. TWDB – Kevin Smith introduced Noah Powell as the new Region M Water Planner. Mr. Powell greeted the group and expressed his enthusiasm about joining Region M and working with the board and stakeholders. He shared that he recently completed his master’s degree in May while working at the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, where his work focused on water conservation, groundwater usage research, surface water quality monitoring, and groundwater monitoring. He noted that his background is strongly rooted in water resource management. Mr. Powell earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Texas at Austin and his master’s degree from Texas State University. He stated that he is excited to contribute to Region M and looks forward to collaborating with everyone.

B. IBWC – No report was provided. No IBWC staff attended.

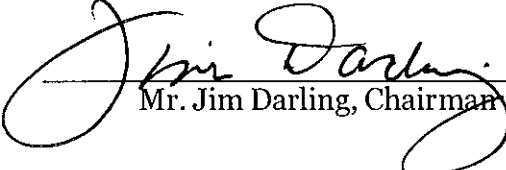
C. TCEQ - All information is based on International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) data available on their public website. As of December 27, U.S. combined ownership at Amistad and Falcon Reservoirs stood at 27.20% of normal conservation capacity, impounding 910,713 acre-feet. This reflects an improvement compared to the same time last year, when U.S. ownership was 20.81%, impounding 702,648 acre-feet. The U.S. combined usable storage at Amistad and Falcon is currently 26.43% of normal conservation capacity, totaling 892,319 acre-feet. Overall, the reservoir system is holding 18.70%, with Amistad at 24.65% and Falcon at 11.50%. Mexico currently holds 7.61% of normal conservation capacity, impounding 191,463 acre-feet at Amistad and Falcon.

Regarding Watermaster operations, current releases include 30 CMS from Amistad, 10 CMS from Falcon Dam, 9.18 CMS at Anzalduas, and an anticipated 10 CMS from the San Juan Transfer. Releases continue to be managed based on system demand, with ongoing evaluation and planning adjustments as demand changes.

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

Next business meeting will be on April 1st @ 9:30AM, at the LRGVDC Ken Jones Board room and virtual option.

12. Adjourn. Mr. Jim Darling called meeting adjournment.


Mr. Jim Darling, Chairman