

MINUTES

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

9:30 AM WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 2023

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

Chairman Jim Darling called the meeting to order at 9:37 am and confirmed that a quorum of the voting membership was present. Chairman Darling next announced that as of January 2023, Mr. John Bruciak has retired from Brownsville PUB; as such, he can no longer represent Municipalities on the Region M voting membership. The Group has two (2) other voting members representing Municipalities, therefore all required member categories continue to be well represented, and he recommends not to seek nominations to replace him.

The following voting members were in attendance:

<u>Board Members</u>	<u>Category</u>
Jim Darling, Chairman	River Authorities
Don McGhee, Secretary	Industries
Nick Benavides, Executive Committee	Small Business
Glenn Jarvis	Other
Tomas Rodriguez	Public
Carlos Garza	Small Business
Jaime Flores	Environmental
Armando Vela	Groundwater Management Areas
Dale Murden	Agriculture
Jorge Flores	Municipalities
Commissioner David Fuentes	Counties
Debbie Farmer	Groundwater Management Areas
Steven Sanchez	Water Utilities

The following voting members were not in attendance:

Sonny Hinojosa, Vice Chairman	Water Districts
Frank Schuster, Executive Committee	Other
Judge Joe Rathmell	Counties
Riazul Mia	Municipalities
Dr. Neal Wilkins	Agriculture
Tom McLemore	Water Districts
Robert Latham	Electric Generating Utilities

2. Consideration and Action to Approve September 29, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Commissioner David Fuentes made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 29, 2022, meeting as presented. Mr. Dale Murden seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.

3. Hear Public Comment

Chairman Darling announced that Mr. Rick Carrera, former LRGVDC Director of Community & Economic Development, the program under which Region M is administered, is now the Director of LRGVDC's Valley Metro. Ms. Sarah Dierlam, LRGVDC Assistant Executive Director will lead the C&ED Department until a new director is hired.

Mr. Kevin Smith, TWDB Project Manager was recognized and announced that he has been permanently assigned to Region M, and he is looking forward to working with the Group. In addition to Region M, he is also the Project Manager for Region N (Coastal Bend), Region C (North Central Texas), and Region B (Wichita Falls).

Commissioner David Fuentes was recognized and on behalf of Hidalgo County Drainage District #1, he thanked the Group for their support and leadership to amend the 2021 Rio Grande Regional Water Plan to include the Delta Reclamation Project so they can apply for funding through the TWDB to bring this much needed project to fruition.

4. Annual Election of Officers

Chairman Darling informed the Board that the current officers have been contacted and all have stated that they are willing to serve for the 2023 term. The current officers are:

- Mr. Jim Darling, Chair
- Mr. Sonny Hinojosa, Vice Chair
- Mr. Don McGhee, Secretary
- Mr. Frank Schuster, Member-at-Large
- Mr. Nick Benavides, Member-at-Large

There were no nominations from the floor and the current ***slate of officers was reelected by acclamation.***

5. Status Reports

Ms. Jaime Burke, Black & Veatch Water Planning Leader was recognized to address the following:

A. Status on Current TWDB Contract Activities

1. Schedule and Progress Update

Ms. Burke presented the Conceptual/Initial Schedule for Region M Plan Development and noted that there have been no changes to the schedule since the last meeting, and pointed out that the first major deliverable is the Technical Memorandum that is due on March 4, 2024.

She next summarized updates on received Modeled Available Groundwater (MAG) data for this planning cycle for counties in Groundwater Management Area (GMA) 13 and GMA16.

2. Presentation and Consider Action on Recommendation from Population & Water Demand Subcommittee to Revise Draft Non-Municipal Demand Projections From TWDB

Ms. Burke stated that the Population & Water Demand (P&WD) Subcommittee has met twice, once on June 16, 2022, and again on January 12, 2023. They reviewed draft projections and supporting data for all non-municipal categories, asked questions, and provided direction for follow-up. During the January meeting the committee agreed on a

recommendation to present to the Group for consideration in requesting revisions to TWDB.

The P&WD recommends no revisions to the livestock, manufacturing, steam-electric, or mining water demand projections. For the Irrigation Demand from the 2021 Plan, the committee requested a revision to use the 2011 historical use for 2020 demand. During 2011 there was little rainfall with high demand and full reservoirs that provided minimal supply constraints. The committee requested a rate of change over the planning horizon that used a combination of sedimentation and historic rate at which irrigation water rights have been converted to municipal use which resulted in a decrease in each decade from 2020 out to 2070. **Commissioner David Fuentes made a motion to approve the recommendation from the Population and Water Demand Committee to make no changes to the demand projections for Livestock, Manufacturing, Steam-Electric or Mining and to use the demand projections for Irrigation from the 2021 Rio Grande Regional Water Plan and extend that all the way out to 2080. Mr. Steven Sanchez seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.**

3. Presentation and Initial Discussion of Draft Population and Municipal Demand Projections from TWDB

Ms. Burke informed the Group that TWDB provides Planning Groups with Draft Population and Municipal Water Demand Projections they develop from the State Demographer's Data. Groups are tasked with reviewing the draft projections and providing any requested revisions back to TWDB before August 11, 2023. Groups are to send the draft projections to the municipal Water User Groups (WUG) to get their feedback prior to the deadline.

Ms. Burke further explained that the population projections are based on county-level projections from the Texas Demographic Center (TDC) which used migration rates between the 2010 and 2020 Census to project future growth. The TWDB draft WUG - level populations and water demand projections using the TDC's full-migration scenario (1.0) projections and provided the half-migration scenario (0.5) projections by Region-County for the planning Groups' consideration. The higher of the total regional populations is the allowable cap on total population for the region.

For the 2026 Regional Water Plan (Plan), draft county population projections being provided to the RWPGs followed the trends, including population declines. As expected, the population projections of certain counties and WUGs are significantly different from those in the 2021 Plan. She explained that the 2021 Plan projections were based on the 2016 Plan projections, which relied on migration rates from 2000-2010 and the TDC's 2012 projections. The 2026 draft projections are tied to the 2020 U.S. Census. These projections include associated updates in the TDC cohort model to reflect updated birth and mortality rates.

The Groups will be able to choose if they believe the 0.5 migration scenario is more appropriate. If it is, the Group may want to request that TWDB revise the municipal WUG data using the 0.5 migration scenario before sending to WUGs for review; currently the 1.0 migration is being used.

There was discussion regarding how the Rio Grande Valley region is chronically undercounted in the census because of immigration issues in this region which results in unreliable census data. It was the consensus of the Group that population projections for all counties in Region M are too low. Upon conclusion of discussion, **Mr.**

Tomas Rodriguez made a motion to request TWDB to revise the municipal WUG data using the 0.5 migration scenario, for Black & Veatch to send the Population and Municipal Water Demand Projections using the 0.5 Migration Scenario to Water User Groups, Municipalities, and Counties for their review and comment, and send any appeals regarding population discrepancies to the TWDB for consideration. Mr. Dale Murden seconded, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously. Ms. Burke's presentation is available for review on the Region M website at <http://www.riograndewaterplan.org/meetings>.

B. Financial Report

1. **Consideration and Action to Approve 2023 Budget**

Chairman Darling reported that the 2023 budget is similar to the 2022 budget. The only recommended change is an increase of \$100 to the Website Maintenance line item and a decrease of \$100 to the travel line item.

2. **Consideration and Action to Accept Expenditure Report**

Ms. Sarah Dierlam gave the Expenditure Report for the period of January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022, and reported that from the local funds annual budget of \$26,043.00, there is a balance of \$13,229.59 remaining. The cash fund balance is \$88,947.52 which includes \$1,349.36 in interest income for 2022. ***Mr. Tomas Rodriguez made a motion to approve item 5. B. 1 - 2023 Budget and to accept item 5 B 2 - Expenditure Report as presented. Mr. Dale Murden seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.***

C. Status of Joint Groundwater Area Planning in GMA's 4, 5, 7, 13, & 16

Mr. Armando Vela, General Manager of the Red Sands Groundwater Conservation District was recognized and turned the floor over to Mr. Louie Pena, General Manager for Brush Country Groundwater Management District and GMA 16 member. Mr. Pena informed the Group that the Desired Future Conditions (DFC) for GMA 16 have been distributed for public comment. Brush Country, Duval, and Kenedy GCD's have adopted their DFCs after holding a public hearing. Their next meeting of GMA 16 is scheduled for March 28, 2023, in Falfurrias.

Ms. Debbie Farmer, Representative of GMA 13, and General Manager of Winter Garden GCD was recognized and informed the Group that the GMA 13 committee met on Friday, February 17, 2023, in Pleasanton. Dr. Bill Hutchison has been hired as the hydrogeological consultant for the 4th Round of Desired Future Conditions. The committee has agreed to have a website created. Their next meeting is scheduled for September 15, 2023.

D. Reports from Other Water Planning Groups

1. **Reports from Liaisons with Other Regions: Region J, Tomas Rodriguez; Region L, Don McGhee, and Region N, Commissioner David Fuentes**

No reports were available at this time.

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

The list of plans received was in the meeting packet for review and included two recently submitted plans from Jim Hogg County WCID 2 and Kenedy County Groundwater Conservation District.

F. Report on Notices of Applications for Funding and Grants

Mr. Kevin Smith, TWDB, informed the Group that Hidalgo County Drainage District #1 has submitted an application for the Delta Reclamation Project, and it is in the process of being scored.

G. Report on Regional Water Resource Advisory Committee (RWRAC)

Commissioner David Fuentes informed the Group that the RWRAC currently has industry specific vacancies they are hoping to fill. The Committee is working on their flood infrastructure project, and their next meeting is scheduled for March 7, 2023, at 2:00 pm.

7. Reports from Federal and State Agencies

A. TWDB

Mr. Kevin Smith was recognized and reported on the following items:

1. RP Contract Amendments

Mr. Smith stated that, as the Group is aware, the TWDB has a contract with the LRGVDC and planning grant funds are funneled through that contract. There was an amendment to that contract in October of 2022, because the TWDB receives funds from the legislature during legislative sessions. The first contract was for the Initial Scope, and the amendment was for the full contract amount and the full scope of work. Accordingly, the contract between Black & Veatch and the LRGVDC also requires amending. A copy of the contract amendment between Black & Veatch and the LRGVDC is included in the meeting packet for review. Chairman Darling noted that the amendment increases the funds by \$288,819.00 bringing the total committed funds amount to \$438,267.00. The total project cost is not to exceed \$794,251.00. Mr. Smith noted that board approval is not required by the TWDB, but for full transparency the contract amendment and attachments are presented for approval by the Group. ***Commissioner David Fuentes made a motion to approve the contract amendment as presented. Mr. Steven Sanchez seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion carried unanimously.***

2. Interregional Planning Council

Mr. Smith reported that the first meeting of the Planning Council was held November 9, 2022, in Austin and the next meeting is scheduled for March 9, 2023; he provided a summary of discussions and actions from this meeting.

3. State Water Infrastructure Fund for Texas (SWIFT)

Mr. Smith informed the Group that the abridged applications period for SWIFT was opened until February 1, 2023.

4. New One Pager

Mr. Smith informed the Group that one-page information sheets on water supply and flood mitigation strategies, drought of record and consistency waivers are now available on the TWDB website for review.

5. New Educational Material

Mr. Smith informed the Group that an RWPG Member Guide and Administrative Guidance for RWPG sponsors are now available on their website.

6. Legislative Priorities Report

Mr. Smith stated that for every legislative session the TWDB submits a report to the governor and members of the legislature that includes a statement of the Board's activities and recommendations for necessary desirable legislation. He informed the Group that the list of TWDB recommendations is available for review at:

<https://www.twdb.texas.gov/publications/reports/administrative/doc/88thLegislativePrioritiesReport.pdf>.

B. IBWC

No representative from the IBWC was available to provide a report, however, Chairman Darling informed the Group that he had a conversation with Commissioner Giner recently regarding the Mexican debt, the Amistad Dam repairs, and took all that information to Austin during RGV Day at the Capitol.

C. TCEQ Watermaster

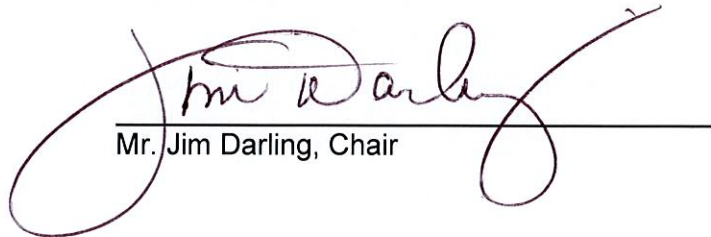
Ms. Georgina Burmea, Rio Grande Watermaster, was recognized and provided the February 18, 2023, reservoir report which was included in the meeting packet. She also announced that they are now fully staffed with the recent addition of Mr. Daniel Guerra, their new Assistant Watermaster.

8. Consideration and Action to Schedule Next Business Meeting

It was the consensus of the Group to schedule the next meeting for Wednesday, June 7, 2023, at 9:30 am.

9. Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Group, Chairman Darling adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m.



Mr. Jim Darling, Chair