

Chapter 10

Public Participation and Adoption of Plan

Regional water planning in Texas is a public process, requiring strategy for ensuring that the region's citizens are able to participate in the process. Rules in 31 TAC Chapter 357.12 define the notice and public participation requirements of the process. These rules include the following requirements:

- A public meeting prior to preparation of the regional water plan.
- Ongoing opportunities for public input during preparation of the plan.
- A public hearing following adoption of an initially prepared plan (IPP).

In addition, opportunities for public participation and input have specific requirements regarding public notice and open meetings in the State of Texas. The rules call for the following:

- Public meetings and hearings noticed and held in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.
- Agendas, meeting notices, IPP, and final regional water plan published on the internet.
- Copies of the IPP made available for public viewing.

This chapter addresses the ETRWPG's strategy for public involvement and participation in the development and adoption of the 2011 Plan¹. The strategy included regular meetings of the ETRWPG, consultation with representatives of the major water user groups, publication of a region newsletter, distribution of regular press releases, and maintenance of a website for the ETRWPA. In addition, the regional planning process

¹ Chapter 10 may be revised, as necessary, during and subsequent to the public comment period.

requires holding a public hearing to introduce the 2011 IPP and accept public comment. A description of the ETRWPG and the process follows.

10.1 East Texas Regional Water Planning Group Members

Original legislation for SB1 and the TWDB planning guidelines establish regional water planning groups to manage the planning process in their respective regions. The regional water planning groups include representatives of eleven specific community interests. Table 10.1 lists members of the ETRWPG and the interests they represent.

Table 10.1 Voting Members of the East Texas Regional Water Planning Group and Group Representation

Member	Interest
David Alders	Agriculture
Jeff Branick	Counties
David Brock	Municipalities
George P. Campbell	Other
Jerry Clark	River Authorities
Josh David	Other
Judge Chris Davis	Counties
Dr. Michael Harbordt	Industries
William Heugel	Public
Kelley Holcomb	Water Utilities
Bill Kimbrough	Other
Glenda Kindle	Public
Duke Lyons	Municipalities
Ernest Mosby	Small Businesses
Dale R. Peddy	Electric Power
Judge Hermon Reed	Agriculture
Monty D. Shank	River Authorities
Darla Smith	Industries
Scott Hall	River Authorities
Worth Whitehead	Water Districts
Dr. J. Leon Young	Environmental
Vacant	Small Businesses

The ETRWPG appointed a Technical Committee comprised of individuals within the planning group. The charge to the Technical Committee was to work with the East Texas Region consulting team to develop recommended population and water demand projections, review work product of the consulting team, and provide technical advice to the planning group. Members of the Technical Committee include:

- Dr. Michael Harbordt
- David Brock
- George Campbell
- Chris Davis
- Glenda Kindle
- Monty Shank

The ETRWPG also worked closely with water planning staff at the TWDB during the planning process. TWDB water planning staff provided valuable technical and regulatory guidance to the ETRWPG regarding the 2011 Plan.

10.2 Preplanning for the 2011 Plan

Rules in 31 TAC Chapter 357.6 define tasks that must be performed prior to development of the regional water plan. These rules include the following requirements:

- A public meeting to discuss recommendations and suggestions of issues that should be addressed in the regional or state water plan.
- Prepare a scope of work including a detailed description of tasks to be performed.
- Designate a political subdivision as a representative of the regional water planning group.

The ETRWPG held a public meeting on June 4, 2008, to discuss issues and provisions important to the ETRWPA that should be included in the regional water plan. As a result of this public meeting, a scope of work was prepared by the consulting team.

The scope detailed tasks and activities to be performed during the planning cycle, including expense budgets, schedule, and description of reports to be developed as part of the planning process. The City of Nacogdoches was designated as the political subdivision representative of the ETRWPG, responsible for applying for financial assistance for the scope of work and regional water plan development.

10.3 Opportunities for Public Input

The ETRWPG utilized various types of media and outreach to keep the public informed and to receive input throughout the development of the 2011 Plan, including the following:

- Water user group involvement
- Press releases
- Newsletters
- ETRWPA website – www.etexwaterplan.org
- Public meetings
- Public hearings

These means of media and outreach are described below.

10.3.1 Contact with Water User Groups. The ETRWPG made special efforts to contact WUGs in the region and obtain their input in the planning process. Chapters 1 through 4 of the 2011 Plan cite specific instances of contact with WUGs.

10.3.2 Public Media and Press Releases. Press releases were sent to approximately 105 media entities within one week of each regularly scheduled RWPG meeting. Releases were frequently published in area newspapers, and more in-depth stories were occasionally written by newspaper staff. Copies of news releases and newspaper articles concerning water planning in the ETRWPA are included in Appendix 10-A.

10.3.3 Newsletters. The ETRWPG published newsletters to periodically inform the public of the progress of the planning process and to provide other relevant news. Newsletters were posted on the ETRWPA website <http://www.etexwaterplan.org>, and digitally and/or physically mailed to the following:

- Members of the ETRWPG
- Elected officials in the region
- Cities in the region
- Counties in the region
- Individuals who requested to be on the mailing list

Copies of newsletters produced since February 2009 are provided in Appendix 10-A.

10.3.4 East Texas Regional Water Planning Area Website. The ETRWPA website, www.etexwaterplan.org was regularly updated to inform the public of scheduled meetings and to provide minutes, agenda, press releases, newsletters, presentations, and memoranda.

10.3.5 Regular Meetings of the East Texas Regional Water Planning Group. In execution of its duties as the water planning organization for the region, the ETRWPG held regular meetings during the development of the 2011 Plan, received information from the region's consultants, accepted public comment on issues relevant to water planning, reviewed proposed planning elements, and made decisions on planning efforts. ETRWPG meetings were open to the public, with notice made in accordance with the ETRWPG By-Laws and the Texas Open Meetings Act. Regular meetings were held on the following dates:

- January 23, 2008
- April 9, 2008
- June 4, 2008

- August 13, 2008
- November 5, 2008
- February 11, 2009
- April 8, 2009
- July 8, 2009
- October 14, 2009
- December 9, 2009
- February 17, 2010

The IPP was adopted by the ETRWPG at its regularly scheduled meeting on February 17, 2010.

10.3.6 Public Hearings for the Initially Prepared Plan. The IPP will be published for public review, and public hearings will be scheduled to receive comments. Appropriate public notice will be provided for these hearings. Transcripts, presentations, and minutes from the public hearings will be included in Appendix 10-B after adoption of the final 2011 Plan.

10.4 Public Comment

As a public planning process, the ETRWPG must accept comments by the public and state agencies regarding the plan. The public are invited to provide comments at each regularly scheduled meeting of the ETRWPG. Likewise, comment in the form of letters, emails, or by telephone may be received.

Comments received through the end of the public comment period will be reviewed and evaluated by the ETRWPG and consulting team. The ETRWPG will modify the IPP as necessary, in response to comments. Copies of written comments will be provided in Appendix 10-C.

10.5 Final Adoption of the 2011 Plan

The ETRWPG will convene following the public comment period to review comments and proposed modifications to the IPP. The final 2011 Plan will then be adopted by the ETRWPG and published on the internet for public viewing. The final 2011 Plan will be submitted to the TWDB by September 1, 2010.

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