

RIO GRANDE REGIONAL WATER PLANNING GROUP

AGRICULTURE

Robert E. Fulbright*
Rancher, Hebbronville
Ray Prewett
Texas Citrus Mutual, Mission

COUNTIES

Mercurio Martinez, Jr.
Webb County Judge, Laredo
Commissioner Oscar Garza
Hidalgo County

ELECTRIC GENERATING UTILITIES

Jaime Gomez
Central Power & Light, Laredo

ENVIRONMENTAL

Mary Lou Campbell*, Secretary
Sierra Club, Mercedes

INDUSTRY

Jack Nelson
*Rio Grande Valley Sugar Growers,
Inc., Santa Rosa*

MUNICIPALITIES

John Bruciak
Brownsville Public Utilities Board
Roberto Gonzalez *
Water Works, Eagle Pass
Adrian Montemayor
Water Utilities Dept., Laredo

OTHER

Glenn Jarvis*, Chairman
Attorney, McAllen
Lee Kirkpatrick*, Vice-Chairman
Texas State Bank, Brownsville
James R. Matz
Mayor, Palm Valley

PUBLIC

Guadalupe Carlos Garza
Roma

SMALL BUSINESS

Donald K. McGhee
Hydro Systems, Inc., Harlingen
Xavier Villarreal
T & J Office Supply, Zapata

WATER DISTRICTS

Gordon R. Hill
*Bayview Irrigation District No. 11,
Los Fresnos*
Sonny Hinojosa
*Hidalgo County Irrigation District
No. 2, San Juan*

WATER UTILITIES

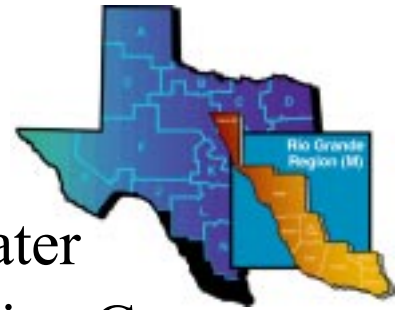
Charles "Chuck" Browning
*North Alamo Water Supply Corp,
Edinburg*

*Executive Committee

Rio Grande

Regional Water

Planning Group



Number 5

November 2002

Regional Water Planners Embark On New Five-Year Planning Cycle

The ink was barely dry on *Texas Water – 2002* as regional water planning groups across the state plunged into the next round of long-range planning activities that will extend through 2006.

In the spring of 2002, the 16 regional planning groups submitted Statements of Work and funding requests to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), the state agency charged with overseeing the planning process. In addition, each group also has submitted an *Infrastructure Financing Report*, detailing financing needs and options for the various water management strategies proposed in the first round of planning (see page 2). The groups also must review their population and water use projections and submit updated projections to the TWDB by the spring of 2003.

In Region "M," the Rio Grande Regional Water Planning Group will be focusing its Phase 2 efforts on the individual needs of different Water User Groups and developing achievable strategies for meeting those needs. The group must issue a draft plan for public comment by April 2005. The final plan must be adopted and submitted to the TWDB in January 2006. From the 16 regional plans, the Board will develop a new State Water Plan for submission to the Texas Legislature in January 2007.

Texas Water – 2002 was sent to the Texas Legislature by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) in January 2002. It is the first State Water Plan to incorporate regional water plans developed under the Brown-Lewis Water Management Act enacted by the Texas Legislature in 1997. The plan incorporates findings, recommendations, and detailed water supply strategies submitted by the 16 regional water planning groups in January 2001, and provides statewide policy recommendations. For a copy of the plan, contact TWDB at 512/936-0814 or log on to twdb.state.tx.us and click on "State Water Plan."



Region M Water Users Lack Funds for Infrastructure Needs

Municipalities, water supply districts, and irrigators in Region M will lack the financing to implement most of the water management strategies needed to meet identified water needs over the 50-year planning period. The funding shortfall amounts to almost \$2 billion for all Water User Groups (WUGs) combined, according to the *Infrastructure Financing Report* (IFR) submitted by the Rio Grande RWPG in May 2002 to the Texas Water Development Board. The report was prepared by NRS Consulting Engineers, which is managing the next round of water planning in Region M.

Here's how the deficit shapes up:

- *Municipalities* say they'll be able to pay for about 56 percent of the \$3.1 billion required to implement their water management strategies through 2050. Those strategies include advanced water conservation measures, transfer of water rights as a result of urbanization, purchase of additional Rio Grande water, reuse of non-potable water, and development of local groundwater supplies.
- *Water supply corporations* serving rural areas (classified at "County-Other") project they

can pay for about 43 percent of their \$830 million financing needs. Strategies for these WUGs mirror those for municipalities.

- *Irrigators* expect that only 10 percent of the \$200 million they need could be paid locally. Irrigation WUGs list two primary water management strategies: on-farm improvements and conveyance system improvements. Each of the strategies entails a multifaceted approach, but a lack of affordability is a common thread for both individual farmers and irrigation districts.

The IFR represents the first comprehensive assessment of funding needs for implementing long-term water management strategies in the Rio Grande Region. Each identified WUG was asked to complete a survey about its anticipated water supply needs; in follow-up visits, NRS verified the survey responses and financing plans.

Copies of the report are available from the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (956/682-3481) or through the Texas Water Development Board's website at twdb.state.tx.us/assistance/rwpg/twdb-docs/IFR/RegionMIFR.pdf.

The Rio Grande Regional Water Planning Group made the following policy recommendations in the *Infrastructure Financing Report* submitted to the Texas Water Development Board in May 2002:

- √ The State should provide funding through a combination of grants and low interest loans for entities that show the best available use of funds for the water supply.
- √ Higher grant/loan and low interest ratios should be given to entities that show the greatest return for water saved or generated.
- √ Emphasis should be on cost-effective systems that take advantage [of] economies of scale in capital costs and operational costs.
- √ The State should take a proactive role in assisting entities in forming regional groups . . . [to] provide services to an area.
- √ The State should [invest in] the regional concept and provide 100% upfront feasibility costs.



Rio Grande Update

The Rio Grande Region is expected to begin 2003 with water in the Amistad/Falcon reservoir system at or near the record low levels recorded in January 2002, according to the Rio Grande Watermaster with the Texas Department of Environmental Quality.

Prior to the rains of late October 2002, the U.S. combined ownership of waters in the Amistad/Falcon system stood at about 25 percent of conservation capacity or 837,463 acre-feet. This was the lowest level ever recorded for the month of October. In comparison, combined storage of U.S. waters in October 2001 stood at almost 31 percent, or about 1.025 million AF. (An acre-foot of water is equal to 325,851 gallons.) Information on reservoir levels is updated regularly at the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council website: www.lrgvdc.org.

The Rio Grande supplies more than 91 percent of the water used in the Region M planning area.

For the last 10 years, Mexico has not complied with a 1944 treaty with the U.S. specifying joint use of water resources between the countries.

In a statement released Oct. 2, 2002, in Washington, D.C., the U.S. State Department noted “the Government of Mexico has not delivered sufficient volumes of water from six Mexican tributaries to the Rio Grande to ensure compliance with its obligations under this Treaty and other related agreements.” The statement added that “the United States again urges

Mexico to address the outstanding deficit, which now totals almost 1.5 million acre-feet of water, and to adopt a regulatory framework to ensure that its treaty obligations are afforded the highest priority. Meaningful and rapid steps by Mexico toward these ends are essential for maintaining a viable framework for managing transboundary waters.” The massive water debt (almost 5 billion gallons) represents more than a year’s worth of water for the Lower Valley.

“The United States again urges Mexico to address the outstanding deficit, which now totals almost 1.5 million acre-feet of water, and to adopt a regulatory framework to ensure that its treaty obligations are afforded the highest priority.

Meaningful and rapid steps by Mexico toward these ends are essential for maintaining a viable framework for managing transboundary waters.”
U.S. Department of State, Oct. 2, 2002

Also on Oct. 2, the Texas Comptroller issued a report showing that the South Texas border region would have gained nearly 3,000 jobs and nearly \$80 million in personal income this year if Mexico had delivered the minimum amount of water required over the last 10 years through the 1944 treaty between the U.S. and Mexico. The study was conducted at the request of State Senator Eddie Lucio from Brownsville.

Based on the treaty’s guidelines, Mexico’s failure to deliver an annual 350,000 AF of water to the U.S. has cost the State of Texas some 448 billion gallons of water. According to the study, this much water would have created more than 3300 jobs and generated \$105.76 million in personal income statewide in 2002.

The study also projected that Texas would have gained more than \$100 million in gross regional product statewide in 2002 if the treaty had been fulfilled, a number that rises to \$121.4 million in 2007. Texans would have gained an additional \$143.5 million in personal income by 2007.

Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
311 N. 15th Street
McAllen, Texas 78501-4705
Tel: 956/682-3481; Fax: 956/631-4670

About the RGRWPG

The Rio Grande Regional Water Planning Group (Rio Grande RWPG) is one of 16 local bodies established under the Brown-Lewis Water Management Bill of 1997 (Senate Bill 1) to coordinate long-range water supply planning by bringing together stakeholders representing a variety of interests. The Rio Grande Regional Water Planning Area (also known as “Region M”) includes Maverick, Webb, Zapata, Jim Hogg, Starr, Hidalgo, Willacy, and Cameron counties.



In the first phase of statewide regional water planning, the Rio Grande RWPG assessed the adequacy of currently available water supplies in the eight-county region and forecast future water demands

for a variety of users, including agriculture, municipalities, manufacturing, mining, steam electric, and livestock. The planning group also identified future water supply needs of the user groups and began the process of developing strategies to ensure adequate and dependable supplies of water for the region through 2050.

The regional plan was included in the State Water Plan released in January 2002. Water projects must be consistent with regional water plans and the State Water Plan to be eligible for state loans or grants for water projects and for state water rights permits.

The second phase of regional water planning commenced in fall 2002.

To participate in the water planning process or provide comments, please contact the designated administrative agency for the regional planning effort:

Mr. Ken Jones
Executive Director
Lower Rio Grande Valley
Development Council
311 N. 15th Street
McAllen, Texas 78501-4705
Tel: 956/682-3481
Fax: 956/631-4670

Technical efforts for the Rio Grande RWPG are being managed by NRS Consulting Engineers, an engineering, planning, and project management firm based in Harlingen.