

**RIO GRANDE REGIONAL
WATER PLANNING GROUP**

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Ray Prewett
Texas Citrus Mutual, Mission

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Oscar Garza
Hidalgo County Commissioner, Edinburg

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Central Power & Light, Laredo

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Sierra Club, Mercedes

INDUSTRY

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

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

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Attorney, McAllen
James R. Matz
Mayor, Palm Valley
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Sonny Hinojosa
*Hidalgo County Irrigation District #2,
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WATER UTILITIES

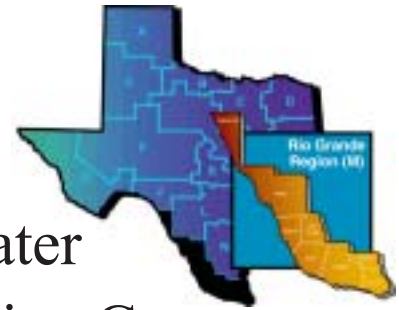
Charles W. Browning, Jr.*, Vice-Chairman
*North Alamo Water Supply Corp.,
Edinburg*

*Executive Committee

Rio Grande

Regional Water

Planning Group



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New Interest in Brackish Groundwater Spurs Proposals to Amend Water Plan

Almost half of the 63 municipal water user groups (WUGs) in the Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Planning Group (RWPG) have asked that the 50-year water plan be amended to show desalination of brackish groundwater as a recommended water management strategy for their communities. Thirty municipal WUGs intend to pursue desalination projects within the next two years; an additional 12 say they are likely to turn to desal as an option in the future. Water projects must be consistent with regional water plans in order to be considered for state funding and permitting.

The plan developed by the Rio Grande RWPG in 2000 and approved by the State of Texas in 2001 specifies groundwater development as a recommended strategy only for the City of Laredo.

Since then, the costs of securing additional surface water supplies have steadily increased while costs of engineering and operating reverse osmosis facilities for brackish groundwater have declined. In addition, many municipal water suppliers are teaming up to develop regional facilities, creating economies of scale for all involved. The price tag for developing brackish groundwater supplies now stands in the range of \$300 to \$350 an acre-foot (AF). This cost is comparable to or better than other recommended water management strategies for municipal needs, including non-potable reuse; converting agricultural water to municipal use; or purchasing additional surface water supplies. Only conservation is a more economical strategy.

The public is invited to review and comment on the proposed amendments. Copies will be available for review June 16 to July 16 at county courthouses and public libraries across the regional planning area (see page 2).

A public hearing on amending the plan will be held at the McAllen Airport East and West Conference Rooms on July 16, 2003, at 10 am. The hearing will include opportunities to comment on the proposed amendments. Written comments may be submitted at the hearing or through July 16 to:

Ken Jones, Executive Director
Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
311 N. 15th Street, McAllen, TX 78501-4705
Fax: 956-631-4670; E-mail: info@lrgvdc.org



Public Comment Invited on Proposed Amendments

Copies of the proposed amendments to the long-range water plan for the Rio Grande Region are available for public inspection and comment beginning June 16, 2003, at the following locations:

City	Location
Alamo	Lalo Arcaute Library, 502 Duranta
Brownsville	Arnulfo Oliveira Library, 80 Fort Brown Brownsville Public Library, 2600 Central Blvd. Cameron County Clerk, 964 E. Harrison Street
Donna	Donna Public Library, 301 S. Main Street
Eagle Pass	Maverick County Clerk, 500 Quarry, Ste., #3
Edinburg	Edinburg Public Library, 401 E. Cano Hidalgo County Clerk, 100 N. Plosner University Library, 1201 W. University Drive
Harlingen	Harlingen Public Library, 410 76th Drive TSTC Library, 1902 North Loop 499
Hebronnville	Jim Hogg County Clerk, 102 E. Tilley
Hidalgo	Hidalgo Public Library, 710 E. Tejano Drive
La Feria	La Feria Library, 412 S. Main Street
Laredo	Webb County Clerk, 1000 Houston St., 1st Floor
McAllen	Lower Rio Grande Development Council, 311 N. 15th St. McAllen Memorial Library, 601 N. Main Street South Texas Community College Library, 3201 W. Pecan Blvd.
Mercedes	Mercedes Memorial Library, 434 S. Ohio
Mission	Speer Memorial Library, 801 E. 12th Street
Pharr	Libreria El Alfarero, 816 N. "I" Road Pharr Memorial Library, 200 S. Athol Street
Port Isabel	Port Isabel Public Library, 213 Yturria Street
Raymondville	Reber Memorial Library, 193 N. Fourth Street Willacy County Clerk, 190 N. 3rd Street
Rio Grande City	Starr County Clerk, 401 N. Britton Ave.
San Benito	San Benito Public Library, 101 W. Rose Street
Weslaco	Weslaco Public Library, 525 S. Kansas
Zapata	Zapata County Clerk, 605 N. U.S. 83



“Push Water” Needs Analysis, Water Planning Tools

Results of a comprehensive “push water” analysis will be released at the July 16 meeting of the Rio Grande RWPG, following the public hearing (see page 1).

The term “push water” refers to extra flows needed to move municipal and industrial (M&I) supplies down the river and through the canals during times of drought, when irrigation water is curtailed. Normally, M&I waters piggyback on the much greater irrigation flows. But when irrigation is shut down to preserve water for M&I uses (as required by state law), water deliveries to some M&I users may be compromised. Some towns have had to build emergency interconnects with other systems in order to receive their raw water deliveries.

Drought is not the only factor creating push water needs. Water levels in the Amistad/Falcon reservoir system continue at near-record lows in large part because of Mexico’s continued failure to honor its commitments to allow inflows from the Rio Conchos into the Rio Grande. Mexico currently owes Texas farmers more than 1.4 million acre-feet of water.

Widespread problems with hydrilla and water hyacinth are further exacerbating push water needs. These aquatic weeds clog the river channel, in some areas extending even into canals. Extra water is required to move releases through the thick growths.

The push water analysis will generate a model for determining losses and volumes needed to charge canal systems. Contributors include R.J. Brandes & Co., Texas A&M University, and NRS Consulting Engineers.

A new *Brackish Groundwater Manual for Texas Regional Water Planning Groups* has just been released by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). The manual is designed to serve as a tool for planning groups and help municipalities understand and evaluate the potential for and costs of groundwater desalination.

The manual identifies brackish groundwater resources within each planning area, and ranks them according to availability, productivity, and source water production costs. It also provides formulas to help estimate the costs of proposed groundwater desalination projects.

To access the manual, log on to www.twdb.state.tx.us, click on “Regional Water Planning Information,” then search under “What’s New in Regional Water Planning.” The manual is divided into sections that pertain to each planning group. The manual was prepared by LBG-Guyton Associates in association with NRS Consulting Engineers.

* * *

With the TWDB’s *Water Planning Information Tool*, you can get quick answers to questions such as: Where does my water come from? Does my community have enough water to meet its needs? Does it have a plan to secure water supplies for the future? Simply select the category of information you want; the tool then searches through a Water Planning Database TWDB developed with information from the 2002 State Water Plan. To access the tool, go to: www.twdb.state.tx.us/assistance/rwpg/DB02/index.asp.

In Memoriam

Lee Kirkpatrick, charter voting member of the Rio Grande RWPG, died February 5, 2003, in an airplane crash. Lee also served on the Rio Grande RWPG Executive Committee, first as Secretary and then as Vice-Chair. In a resolution memorializing Lee’s contributions both to the group and the region as a whole, the Rio Grande RWPG noted that he “worked tirelessly to maintain and improve the natural resources of this region, often above and beyond the call of duty,” providing “thoughtful and strong leadership,” always with “the best interests of the region at heart.” The Lower Rio Grande Valley Region is forever indebted to Lee Kirkpatrick for outstanding service that has resulted in substantial benefits and contributions to the citizens of this region.

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.