

East Texas Regional Water Planning Group (Region I)
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The East Texas Regional Water Planning Group (Region I) will submit to the Texas Water Development Board a \$231,510 budget for planning purposes in 2008 and 2009.

The budget includes \$88,050 for population and water demand projections, the identification of water needs, the selection of water management strategies, and the impact of the strategies on water quality.

The 20-county region's planning efforts will also include \$10,000 for conservation and drought management, \$10,000 for ways to achieve consistency in long-term protection of natural resources, \$15,000 for the identification of unique reservoir and stream segments, \$9,400 for water infrastructure and funding, and \$109,000 for the adoption of the plan, administration and public participation.

The Group also discussed ways to identify "small water users" in a category of their own, but agreed the region needs more information. Group chairman Kelley Holcomb of Lufkin said the challenge "is that there is no cohesive strategy to track small water groups or their usage."

Temple McKinnon of the Texas Water Development Board said the state agency is "getting better" at tracking small water usage, but doesn't survey the users and doesn't have sufficient information.

Group members agreed there isn't enough data from farming, poultry, cattle uses and other agriculture users to develop strategies.

In outlining the Group's seventeen planning strategies, engineering consultant Gary Graham of Beaumont said he has identified 186 water users in the region. He said 56 of the users have deficiencies in water supplies and 18 have deficiencies in water storage facilities.

The \$231,510 budget will be submitted to the state agency, but the Legislature will have to approve the funds during its 2009 session starting in January.

In other business, the Group:

- Heard a presentation on groundwater management from Len Luscomb of the Rusk County Groundwater Conservation District. Luscomb said groundwater planning is difficult "because it is only an approximation" and depends on variables such as rainfall amounts, evaporation, transpiration, spring flows, pumpage, and the aquifers' recharge abilities.
- Gave approval to the City of Diboll for seeking an amendment to its water management strategies. City Manager Kenneth Williams said the city wants to

seek permission to use groundwater from the Yegua-Jackson groundwater aquifer at Eason Lake northwest of the city to supplement the city's current water supplies.

- Reviewed copies of water management strategies by the TWDB. Group chairman Holcomb said "while the strategies may be good for other parts of the state, but are not necessarily good for East Texas."

Holcomb also introduced Lila Fuller and Stacey Corley from the City of Nacogdoches, which has become the Group's administrator, replacing the Deep East Texas Council of Government in Jasper.

Holcomb also called the Group's attention to its new web site: etexwaterplan.org, and selected Wednesday, June 4 for its next meeting at the Nacogdoches Recreation Center.

Region I serves all or parts of Anderson, Angelina, Cherokee, Hardin, Henderson, Houston, Jasper, Jefferson, Nacogdoches, Newton, Orange, Panola, Polk, Rusk, Sabine, San Augustine, Shelby, Smith, Trinity and Tyler counties.