

DRAFT MINUTES

**Lower Colorado Regional Water Planning Group
Water Management Strategy Committee Meeting
October 23, 2023**

Freese and Nichols, 10431 Morado Circle, Building 5, Suite 300,
Conference Room "Capital of Texas", Austin, Texas 78759
11:45 A.M.

Meeting Minutes:

1. Call to Order, Introductions and Roll Call – Lauri Gillam, Committee Chair

Meeting was called to order at 12:00 P.M. by Chair Gillam.

Attendance

Committee Members:

**Lauri Gillam, Committee Chair
Teresa Lutes, Municipalities
David Lindsay, Recreation
Mike Reagor, Small Municipalities
Barbara Johnson, Industry
Christianne Castleberry, Water Utilities
Carol Olewin, Public Interest
Tom Hegemier, alternate for River Authority (Committee Member Monica Masters)
Jennifer Walker, Environmental
Daniel Berglund, Small Business**

Other attendees:

**Earl Foster, alternate for Small Municipalities (Chair Lauri Gillam)
Jason Homan, alternate for Environmental
Lann Bookout, TWDB
Sue Thornton, alternate for Recreation
Gary Rabalois, Quiddity Engineering (supporting Aqua Water Supply)
Hollye Fain, Aqua Water Supply Corporation
Leonard Oliver, LCRA
Leslie Solo Sanchez, LCRA
Stacy Pandey, LCRA
Sara Eatman, Austin Water
Helen Gerlach, Austin Water
Emily Rafferty, Austin Water
Marisa Flores Gonzalez, Austin Water**

Robert Adams, Plummer
Adam Conner, FNI
Augusto Villalon, FNI
Neil Deeds, INTERA
Jon Albright, FNI
Cindy Smiley, CTWC

2. Welcome and Introductions – Chair Gillam

Attendees identified themselves and their affiliations.

3. Receive public comments on specific issues related to agenda items 4 through 5 - limited to 3 minutes per person

Gary Rabalois spoke on behalf of Aqua Water Supply Corporation. He noted that Aqua is seeing the need for a wide variety of water management strategies going forward, and wishes to engage with the committee in the process.

4. Non-feasible Strategies from the 2021 Region K plan: Update and discussion

Neil Deeds of the consulting team led the discussion of the evaluation of infeasible strategies from the 2021 RWP.

General discussion among the group about the types of water management strategies (WMSs) that should be evaluated for infeasibility. Some clarification from the TWDB representative on how these were being evaluated. Comments from others were made regarding particular strategies and how they might be considered. More discussion about WMSs that have one or more WMSPs, some of which are determined infeasible. Does that mean the entire WMS is considered infeasible? General consensus was that this is not the case.

Question about what constitutes major/minor amendment. The TWDB representative clarified this item, reading from guidance provided by TWDB. Major amendment creates overallocation or unmet need, or involves a reservoir. TWDB will determine major or minor, and what the level of effort is required for each.

One committee member asked that SWIFT funding be explained more generally at some point in the future.

5. Feasible strategies for the 2026 Region K plan: Proposed approach and discussion

Neil Deeds of the consulting team led the discussion of the proposed approach for determining feasible strategies for the 2026 Region K plan.

There was general discussion on this topic, with one member asking for more detail on the ramifications for SWIFT funding should a particular strategy be added or withheld from the plan. The committee generally agreed with the proposed approach, but one member suggested that

the approach explicitly include an assessment of the likelihood that a strategy might be deemed infeasible in the next round of planning. The consultant team agreed to add this as a part of the proposed process.

Chair Gillam and others noted the need to be very explicit about whether we are discussing infeasible previous plan strategies (2021 plan) versus feasible current strategies (2026 plan). One member suggested that symbology could be used to ensure we know which plan is being discussed for a particular topic. The consultant team noted this request.

5. Next meeting date

The next meeting date was set for the 15th of November at 2:00p at FNI offices.

6. Future Agenda Items

1. Infeasible strategy list
2. Updated process for identifying feasible strategies

7. Public comment

None

8. Adjournment

By Chair Gillam at 1:06 PM.

November 15, 2023

2:00 PM

Region K Water Management Strategy Committee Meeting



Agenda Item 4

Assessment of possible infeasible strategies from the 2021 Region K plan



October 2020

Region K
Lower Colorado Region

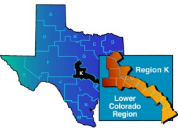
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Infeasible Strategies: Background

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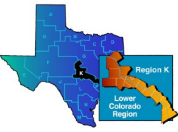
- A new ask for this cycle: “identify infeasible WMS in the 2021 RWP”
- At a minimum, review strategies/projects with an online decade of 2020
- Encouraged to review additional 2030+ WMS with long lead times
- Recommended strategies/projects for 2020 decade must be online and delivering water by January 5, 2023 or meet “affirmative steps” requirement
- Infeasible if:
 - Not currently implemented, and
 - Project sponsor not taken affirmative steps towards implementation (spending money, voting to spend money, applying for federal or state permits)
- Not required for strategies or projects that **do not require a permit or involve construction** (focus on reservoirs, desal, DPR, ASR, out of state transfers, etc)

Infeasible Strategies: Background

- TWDB provided data to each region
- Each region must review both **strategies** and **projects**
 - Strategies divided into “demand reduction” and “source-related”
 - Source-related may or may not have an associated **project**
- Acronym alert
 - WMS = water management strategy
 - WMSP = water management strategy project
- TWDB provided spreadsheets for potentially infeasible WMSs and WMSPs, with two basic categories
 - “We must review” - supplies in 2020 decade
 - “Recommended we review” – long lead time projects with supplies 2030+ decades

We'll cover these first

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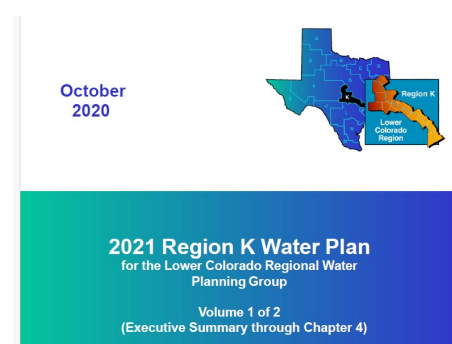


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Infeasible WMSPs: Findings

We're counting this number down over the next handful of slides

- **Summary: No projects were found to be infeasible**
- **Projects: 2020 decade – 91 projects to review**
 - 69 projects included data gathering or water loss control, these do not require construction or a permit and are therefore feasible



Project Components

- Conservation - Agricultural; Data Gathering/Monitoring Technology
- Conservation - Municipal (does not include meter replacement or water loss); Data Gathering/Monitoring Technology; Water Loss Control
- Conservation - Municipal (does not include meter replacement or water loss); Water Loss Control
- Data Gathering/Monitoring Technology; Conservation - Municipal (does not include meter replacement or water loss); Water Loss Control

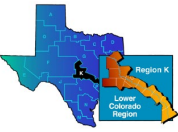
BONUS BACKUP CONTENT

For Ag Conservation; Data Gathering/Monitoring Technology

1. In 2020, LCRA worked with the University of Wisconsin to complete a Garwood savings verification study. Based on that study, LCRA updated the savings estimate to 0.33 acre-foot per acre in production, which was 6,859 acre-feet of savings in 2022.
2. LCRA is continuing to monitor savings from water measurement programs and land leveling programs implemented in the irrigation districts. These measurements are indicative of improved on-farm water management outside of the districts.

Infeasible WMSPs: Findings

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- Projects: 2020 decade – **22** projects remaining to review
 - 6 projects involved agricultural conservation, either on-farm or sprinkler implementation
 - The do not require a permit, whether they require “construction” is a grey area, however we reached out to stakeholders for information:

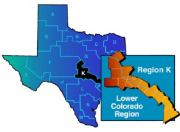
SEARCH

- (Select All)
- Irrigation Conservation - On Farm - Colorado County
- Irrigation Conservation - On Farm - Matagorda County
- Irrigation Conservation - On Farm - Wharton County
- Irrigation Conservation - Sprinkler - Colorado County
- Irrigation Conservation - Sprinkler - Matagorda County
- Irrigation Conservation - Sprinkler - Wharton County

1. In October 2022, the LCRA Board authorized funds for the land leveling recertification program. The initial response has been very positive with many famers taking advantage of the available funds.
2. Daniel Berglund reports that farmers are continuing to implement on-farm conservation (flood and sprinkler) in these counties, as it is a matter of survival. This is confirmed by reports from the NRCS offices in those counties.

Infeasible WMSPs: Findings

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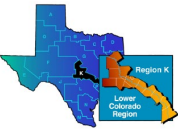
- Projects: 2020 decade – 16 projects remaining to review
 - 3 projects involved agricultural conservation, and refer to implementation of drip irrigation
 - These had county-wide project sponsors. TWDB acknowledged the challenges of reviewing strategies with no contactable sponsor
 - We reached out to the NRCS offices, and confirmed that farmers in all three counties are implementing water conservation improvements to sprinkler systems and adding drip irrigation.

WMS Project Name	Capital Cost	Online Decade	Project Sponsors
Irrigation Conservation - Drip Irrigation - Gillespie County	\$64,000	2020	Irrigation (Gillespie)
Irrigation Conservation - Drip Irrigation - Mills County	\$857,000	2020	Irrigation (Mills)
Irrigation Conservation - Drip Irrigation - San Saba County	\$834,000	2020	Irrigation (San Saba)

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Infeasible WMSPs: Findings

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- Projects: 2020 decade – 13 projects remaining to review
 - One project was the Buda ASR, which is confirmed active (they constructed a demonstration well and have applied for permits with TCEQ and Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer GCD)

Infeasible WMSPs: Findings

- Projects: 2020 decade – 12 projects remaining to review
 - 8 projects were groundwater based, involving development or expansion of groundwater supplies – again, county-wide sponsors
 - Fayette County GCD confirmed new supplies being developed
 - Coastal Bend GCD (Wharton County) reported 25 new wells in the last 3 years.
 - Coastal Plains GCD (Matagorda County) reported 26 new well permits in the last 3 years.
 - Colorado County GCD reported 9 new wells.

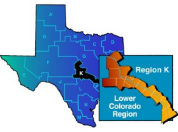
WMS Project Name	Capital Cost	Online Decade	Project Sponsors
Development of New Gulf Coast Aquifer Supplies - Matagorda County Irrigation	\$1,195,000	2020	Irrigation (Matagorda)
Development of New Sparta Aquifer Supplies - Fayette County-Other	\$6,056,000	2020	Municipal county-other (Fayette)
Expansion of Gulf Coast Aquifer Supplies - Colorado County Irrigation	\$14,680,000	2020	Irrigation (Colorado)
Expansion of Gulf Coast Aquifer Supplies - Matagorda County Irrigation	\$1,431,000	2020	Irrigation (Matagorda)
Expansion of Gulf Coast Aquifer Supplies - Wharton County Irrigation	\$11,049,000	2020	Irrigation (Wharton)
Expansion of Trinity Aquifer Supplies - Hays County Mining	\$2,409,000	2020	Mining (Hays)
Expansion of Trinity Aquifer Supplies - Mills County Irrigation	\$1,323,000	2020	Irrigation (Mills)
Expansion of Yegua-Jackson Aquifer Supplies - Fayette County Mining	\$5,463,000	2020	Mining (Fayette)

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Infeasible WMSPs: Findings

- Projects: 2020 decade – 4 projects remaining to review
 - One project involved reuse by Austin Water. [AW confirmed it was active as the Centralized Reclaim System](#)

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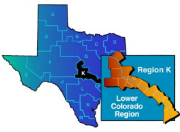


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Infeasible WMSPs: Findings

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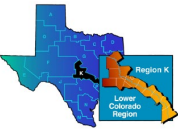
- Projects: 2020 decade – 3 projects remaining to review
 - Last three projects are surface-water based, conveyance improvements, with LCRA as sponsor
 - Consultant working on LCRA’s water supply resources report confirmed affirmative actions by LCRA

WMS Project Name
Irrigation Operations Conveyance Improvements - Colorado County
Irrigation Operations Conveyance Improvements - Matagorda County
Irrigation Operations Conveyance Improvements - Wharton County

1. LCRA completed implementation of a gate automation in the Gulf Coast Division in 2019. In 2022, overflow volumes (excess water not needed for irrigation that is released out of the end of canal lines) at the overflow measurement sites in use were negligible throughout the system as compared to estimates of 3,569 acre-feet of overflows before the gate rehabilitation project began. (Wharton and Matagorda County)
2. In 2020 LCRA added a 3-year project for gate automation in the Garwood Irrigation District. This project was added to the capital plan for 2021-2023. 18 sites were automated in 2022 and the 28 remaining sites in 2023. (Colorado and Wharton Counties)
3. In October 2022, the LCRA Board approved funding for the pilot Lakeside Canal system gate automation project. (Colorado and Wharton Counties)
4. LCRA has an ongoing project to assess cost and water savings that will results from canal lining. (Colorado, Matagorda, and Wharton counties)¹¹

Infeasible WMSs: Findings

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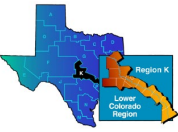
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- **Summary: No strategies were found to be infeasible**
- **Strategies (without projects): 2020 decade – 128 strategies to review**
 - 118 strategies were demand-reduction based, where short-term water restrictions would be implemented, requiring no construction or permit

Infeasible Strategies: Findings

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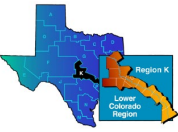
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- Strategies (without projects): 2020 decade – **10 strategies remaining to review**
 - 2 strategies involved mining conservation in Burnet and Bastrop Counties
 - The strategies did not require construction or permitting, but involved simply rerouting water inside the mining operation (at zero capital cost), and thus were deemed feasible

Infeasible Strategies: Findings

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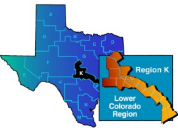
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- Strategies (without projects): 2020 decade – **8 strategies remaining to review**
 - 8 strategies were source-related, and required reaching out to sponsors/WUGs

	WMS Type	WMS Description	WMSId	WMS Name	WMS Sponsor and/or select WUG Beneficiary List
2					
7	Groundwater wells and other	Increase Groundwater Pumping Using Existing Wells	3272	Expansion of Current Groundwater Supplies - Gulf Coast Aquifer	County-Other, Fayette
					Lower Colorado River Authority - Unassigned Water
14	Indirect reuse	Non-Potable Reuse	3341	Downstream Return Flows	Volumes
16	Other direct reuse	Non-Potable Reuse	5011	Direct Reuse - Meadowlakes	Meadowlakes
17	Other surface water	Surface Water Yield Enhancement	3485	Austin - Lake Austin Operations	Austin
18	Other surface water	Surface Water Yield Enhancement	3342	Blend Brackish Surface Water in STPNOC Reservoir	Steam-Electric Power, Matagorda
19	Other surface water	Transfer/Transaction	2825	LCRA - Interruptible Water for Agriculture (LCRA WMP Amendments)	Lower Colorado River Authority
20	Other surface water	Transfer/Transaction	5050	New Water Purchase - Llano	Burnet
21	Other surface water	Transfer/Transaction	5047	Water Purchase Amendment - Barton Creek WSC	Travis County MUD 4
22					

Infeasible Strategies: Findings

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- Continued from previous slide: 8 strategies were source-related, and required reaching out to “sponsors”
 - Fayette County-Other groundwater expansion confirmed by FCGCD
 - Austin Lake Operations does not require construction or permitting
 - New water purchase – Llano is an emergency/contingency supply that could be implemented without construction (calls for trucking water)
 - Direct reuse – Meadowlakes
 - Meadowlakes utilizes 100% of water from the Meadowlakes WWTP and amended the agreement with the City of Marble Falls to take additional reclaimed water from the Marble Falls Purple Pipe system.
Downstream return flows – LCRA confirmed this strategy is used
 - Interruptible water for agriculture –in LCRA’s WMP, occurs depending on conditions
 - Blend Brackish Surface Water in STPNOC – consists of LCRA seeking relief from TCEQ in an emergency situation
 - Water Purchase Amendment - Travis County MUD: No response as of yet.

Agenda Item 4:

Possible action by committee to recommend findings be presented to the RWPG on December 1



Agenda Item 5:

Process for identifying feasible strategies for the 2026 Region K plan



Feasible Strategies for 2026 Plan: First Step



Approval of process for identifying potentially feasible water management strategies

- Consider TWDB guidelines on identifying potentially feasible strategies
- Water management strategies committee (WMSC) develops process for recommendation to Region K planning group
- Public Meeting (Scheduled for December 1, 2023)
 - Present process recommended by the WMSC
 - Allow discussion and comment by full Region K planning group
 - Take public comments on the Region K process for identifying potentially feasible strategies
 - RWPG to consider making any revisions to process, based on public comments and RWPG discussion
 - RWPG to take action to approve finalized process.

Feasible Strategies: Proposed Process



- Define groupings or common areas with supply deficiencies
- Develop a comprehensive list of potentially feasible strategies for each area
 - Recommended and alternative strategies from previous Region K Water Plan
 - Strategies documented in local plans
 - Suggestions from the public
- Meet with potential suppliers/WUGs for each area to determine current strategies under consideration
- Prepare qualitative rating based on cost, reliability, environmental impact, and political acceptability for the various strategies
- NEW: Add infeasibility rating to each strategy
 - Focus on those strategies that require **construction** or a **permit**: reservoirs, desal, DPR, ASR, out of state transfers, etc
 - Focus on strategies that provide water in the 2030 decade
- Select one or more additional strategies for each area, if appropriate
- Present proposed shortlist at Public Meeting during Region K Planning Group meeting for modification and/or approval

Agenda Item 5:

Possible action by committee to recommend process for identifying be presented to the RWPG on December 1

