

The Growing Need for Water and Wastewater Services

Providing safe, clean, and reliable drinking water is a critical city service. Investments in drinking water and wastewater systems protect public health, aid in protecting the environment, provide fire protection, and ensure that there is an adequate water supply to support the state's growing population, businesses, and industries.

Adequate water supply is often a determining factor in economic development opportunities. Businesses and industries are going to choose locations with a stable and sufficient water supply over those states or regions without quality water supplies.

A recent assessment found that America's drinking water systems alone will have to invest up to \$335 billion over the next 20 years in order to keep up with the growing demand for drinking water and the nation's aging drinking water infrastructure. Over the next decade, Texas cities will have to expend millions of dollars on waste and wastewater systems to keep pace with the tremendous population growth in Texas. In addition to meeting the growing demands for water services and replacing aging infrastructure, the investment is also necessary to ensure compliance with the federally mandated Clean Water Act and Safe Water Drinking Act.

Many water utilities in Texas were built decades ago. Some systems have come to the end of their useful life span, and upgrades may no longer be sufficient. Some cities are even faced with having to completely replace these essential utilities. Upgrading or replacing a water and wastewater system is an extremely expensive undertaking that requires the commitment of large sums of capital investment. However, the return is generally well

worth the large expenditure.

Municipal wastewater treatment plants prevent billions of gallons of pollutants from reaching our rivers and lakes each year. In addition, the provision of safe drinking water to our suburban areas has allowed our state to grow at unprecedented levels.

Unfortunately, many Texas cities are struggling to keep up with the costs of complying with increasingly stringent federally and state mandated regulations. The budget pressures associated with meeting these new standards or facing stiff fines from regulating agencies often force cities to delay needed expansion of their water utility systems.

Texas Cities Are Taking the Lead on Water Conservation Efforts

Cities throughout the state have developed water conservation programs to promote water-saving practices among residents and businesses, and the issue of water conservation has come to the forefront of water utility issues. The heart of the water conservation issue is that, while everyone agrees that water conservation is important for Texas, city officials do not wish to be forced to implement a blanket, statewide program that does not take into account the needs, financial and otherwise, of different parts of the state.

One statewide program that addresses water conservation requires a city that operates a retail public utility to perform a water audit in order to obtain any financial assistance from the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). In addition, cities that hold water supply permits must establish quantifiable goals for drought contingency plans.

The major news in water conservation is the continued enactment of the policies and programs created by the



2011 Regional Water Plan						
State Summary of Water Demand Projections for 2010-2060 (in acft*)						
TEXAS						
Category	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060
Municipal	4,851,201	5,580,979	6,254,784	6,917,722	7,630,808	8,414,492
Manufacturing	1,727,808	2,153,551	2,465,789	2,621,183	2,755,335	2,882,524
Mining	296,230	313,327	296,472	285,002	284,640	292,294
Steam Electric	733,179	1,010,555	1,160,401	1,316,577	1,460,483	1,620,411
Livestock	322,966	336,634	344,242	352,536	361,701	371,923
Irrigation	10,079,215	9,643,908	9,299,464	9,024,866	8,697,560	8,370,554
Texas Total	18,010,599	19,038,954	19,821,152	20,517,886	21,190,527	21,952,198

* An acft is the amount of water to cover one acre with one foot of water and is equal to 325,851 gallons.

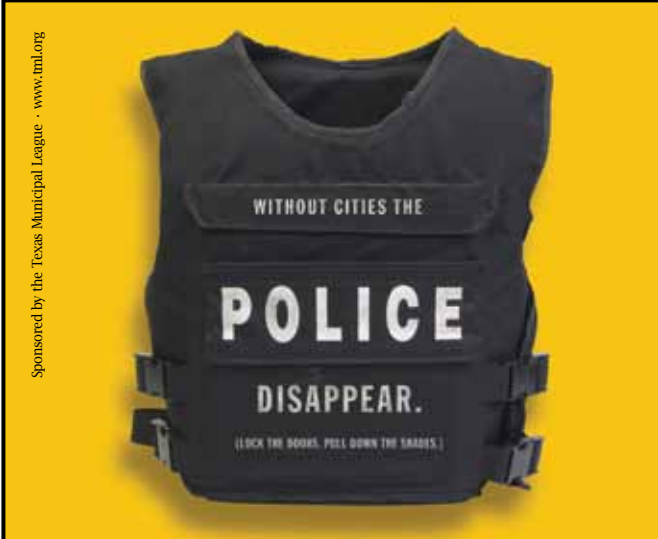
legislature during the 2007 legislative session through H.B. 4, S.B. 3, and H.B. 1656. Those bills outlined new conservation requirements for cities, which have been enacted through agency rules over the past three years. State law now requires each water utility with 3,300 or more connections to submit to the Texas Water Conservation Board a water conservation plan and a report on its progress in carrying out the plan. The TWDB must also, when considering applications for water infrastructure funds and other state water development and conservation funds, give priority to water supply projects and entities that have already demonstrated significant water conservation savings or will achieve significant water conservation savings by implementing the proposed project.

Additionally, any city with a population of 20,000 or more must now require an installer of an irrigation system to be licensed by the state and to obtain a permit before installing an irrigation system in the city or its extraterritorial jurisdiction. Cities must also regulate the design, installation, and operation of irrigation systems in accordance with state law and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality agency rules.

TML's position has historically been in support of local control over water conservation, with a focus on avoiding unnecessary and unfunded mandates on city staff and budgets.

Each city has a unique perspective and resulting priority for expending public funds to save water. Climate, population density, availability of water resources, and the ratio of industrial to residential use in the city are but a few of

the various factors that affect conservation decisions across the state. ★



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The things you don't think about, cities provide. Like streets, parks, utilities, and safety. But cities can't function with their hands tied by restrictive laws or unfunded state and federal mandates. Cities need options to build a better future. It's in everybody's best interest.

