

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 study by the Environmental Protection Agency found that over the next 20 years, America's drinking and wastewater systems will have to invest up to \$26 billion a year more than current investments in order to keep up with the growing demand for water and wastewater services. 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 federal 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. Recently, 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.

Current law requires a city that owns 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 number of bills passed during the 2007 legislative session that outlined



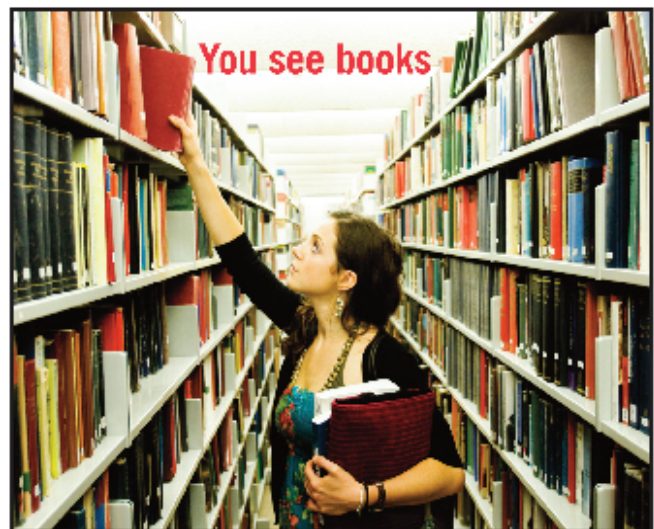
2006 Regional Water Plan
Summary of Water Demand Projections for 2000-2060 (in acft¹)
TEXAS

Category	D2000	D2010	D2020	D2030	D2040	D2050	D2060
Municipal	4,047,661	4,770,501	5,483,790	6,120,377	6,739,592	7,450,792	8,258,942
Manufacturing	1,559,912	1,825,686	2,004,666	2,163,421	2,319,913	2,452,107	2,578,582
Mining	278,624	270,845	280,815	285,964	276,054	276,931	285,573
Steam Electric	561,394	755,170	886,580	1,030,212	1,174,170	1,339,733	1,533,556
Livestock	300,441	344,495	374,724	381,241	388,243	395,945	404,397
Irrigation	10,228,528	10,345,131	9,980,301	9,585,833	9,206,620	8,843,094	8,556,224
Texas Total	16,976,560	18,311,828	19,010,876	19,567,048	20,104,592	20,758,602	21,617,274

¹) An acft is an amount of water to cover one acre with one foot of water and equals 325,851 gallons.

new conservation requirements for cities. H.B. 4 and S.B. 3 required each water utility with 3,300 or more connections to submit to the state a water conservation plan and a report on its progress in carrying out the plan. Additionally, H.B. 1656 required any city with a population of 20,000 or more to 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. The bill also requires a city to regulate the design, installation, and operation of irrigation systems in accordance with state law and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality agency rules. S.B. 3 also requires the TWDB, when considering applications for water infrastructure funds and other state water development and conservation funds, to 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. 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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