

**Texas Secretary of State
Legislative Questionnaire – November 2007
Texas Water Development Board**

1. *From your agency's point of view, what regulations can be reduced to improve communications between federal, state and local governments within the Texas-Mexico border region?*

ANSWER: The Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) is not a regulatory agency and as such does not have regulations that would address issues raised in your question.

2. *What are the main trade issues between the United States and Mexico that you have identified as having an impact (both positive and negative) on your agency or your area of work?*

ANSWER: Because TWDB contracts with political subdivisions of the state to finance water and wastewater infrastructure projects, the escalating price of materials and labor is a concern.

3. *Having studied the flow of commerce at ports of entry between this state and Mexico, including the movement of commercial vehicles across the border, what actions would you establish to aid that commerce and improve the movement of those vehicles.*

ANSWER: Not applicable.

4. *How do you work with federal officials to resolve transportation issues involving infrastructure, including roads and bridges, to allow for efficient movement of goods and people across the border between Texas and Mexico?*

ANSWER: Not applicable.

5. *How does your agency work with federal officials to create a unified federal agency process to streamline border crossing needs?*

ANSWER: Not applicable.

6. *Has your agency identified problems involved with border truck inspections and related trade and transportation infrastructure? What are those? What solutions/recommendations does your agency propose?*

ANSWER: Not applicable.

7. *How do you work to increase funding for the North American Development Bank to assist in the financing of water and wastewater facilities?*

ANSWER: The TWDB has a Governmental Relations Liaison who works on federal issues. TWDB provides information, as requested, to Congress as they deliberate funding needs for federal agencies that provide funding for water and wastewater facilities.

8. *Has your agency explored the sale of excess electric power from Texas to Mexico? What are your findings?*

ANSWER: Not applicable.

9. *Has your agency identified any areas of environmental protection that need to be addressed cooperatively between Texas and the Mexican states? If so, which are those areas and what type of protective measures need to be taken?*

ANSWER: Not applicable.

10. *Has your agency identified common challenges to health care on which all border states can collaborate? If so, what are those challenges and how can all border states collaborate to overcome them?*

ANSWER: Not applicable.

11. *Has your agency developed any recommendations to address border challenges in general? If so, what are they?*

ANSWER: The 80th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature successfully addressed many of the TWDB's Exceptional Item requests for funding of water and wastewater infrastructure in economically distressed areas. The TWDB is currently implementing those changes and does not have recommendations for statutes or appropriations changes for the 81st Regular Session in 2009.

12. *What programs and services does your agency offer to border communities?*

ANSWER:

Water Planning

Water is a precious and finite resource that must be managed efficiently and effectively in order to meet the future needs of Texas – a state whose population is projected to nearly double by 2050. Water planning must be a continuous process in order to respond to changing climate, environmental, and socioeconomic and demographic conditions, in one of the most diverse areas in the United States. To respond to these changes, Texas water law requires that new Regional and State Water Plans be prepared every five years.

The 16 Regional Water Planning Groups, review, revise, and refine their plans to respond to changed conditions that may impact estimated demands for water, water supplies, or recommended water management strategies.

Three groups cover counties located on the Texas-Mexico border. Region E (Far West Texas) covers El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, Presidio, Brewster and Terrell counties. Region J (Plateau) covers Val Verde, Kinney, Edwards, Real, Kerr and Bandera counties. Region M (Rio Grande) covers Maverick, Webb, Zapata, Jim Hogg, Starr, Hidalgo, Willacy and Cameron counties.

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Agriculture Water Demonstration Initiative project, located in Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy counties, will integrate state-of-the-art irrigation water distribution network control and management and on-farm irrigation technology and management systems in a large-scale demonstration of cost effective technologies that maximize water use efficiency. The Harlingen Irrigation District, partnering with Delta Lake Irrigation District, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A&M-Kingsville, Texas Cooperative Extension Service in Weslaco, and Lower Rio Grande Valley agricultural producers, is conducting this project. The project will demonstrate, document, and incorporate the Districts' ongoing conservation projects, and provide coordination between the Districts' staff, agricultural water users, and state and federal technical agencies. The project includes construction of a meter calibration facility, maximizing the efficiency of flood irrigation, demonstration of the effectiveness of major irrigation technologies and showcasing how to implement the beneficial findings from the field demonstrations to irrigation districts and farmers. For more information on this project, visit the Harlingen Irrigation District's website at <http://www.hidcc1.org/Projects/adi.htm>

Resource Information Program

The Texas/Mexico Borderlands Data and Information Center (BIC) is a clearinghouse and referral center for information about both sides of the Texas/Mexico border (100 Km. either side of the border). The BIC was created in 1993 by the Texas Natural Resource Information System task force. The BIC has the following objectives:

- To make data and information related to the natural resources and demographics of the border available in a timely and efficient manner to researchers, planners, and others with responsibilities for protecting the environment, public health and well being of the borderlands region.
- To promote closer ties, communication, and data sharing among entities with borderlands responsibilities and thereby reduce redundancy in data collection and project activities.

Project Finance and Construction Assistance Program

The Project Finance and Construction Assistance Program administers several financial assistance programs targeted at economically distressed areas, which were commonly found in counties located along the Texas-Mexico border.

The Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP) provides financial assistance in the form of a grant, a loan or a combination grant/loan to provide water and wastewater services to economically distressed areas that meet the minimal needs of residents. The program includes measures to prevent future substandard development.

The Colonia Plumbing Loan Program (CPLP) is a low-interest loan program available to assist low-to-moderate income colonia residents with financing plumbing connections to water and wastewater (sewer) systems and with installation of necessary plumbing improvements within their homes.

The Colonia Self-Help Programs provide financial assistance to grass roots initiatives in economically distressed areas. The TWDB provides grant assistance for the actual cost to get water and wastewater systems to provide adequate service to colonias where the local residents provide volunteer labor (sweat equity) to construct the facilities, and/or donate equipment, materials, and supplies.

13. What are some regulatory and/or legislative recommendations to eliminate duplication and combine programs and services?

ANSWER: TWDB participates in several coordination groups with the Secretary of State. TWDB is also currently working with several agencies (Office of Rural Community Affairs, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Secretary of State, U.S. Department of Agriculture—Rural Development, and Community Resource Group (non-profit organization) to create an Interagency Working Group in an effort to accomplish the following:

Regular and timely exchange of project information for the projects of each agency including but not limited to the following information:

- 1) Name of applicant;
- 2) Project descriptions;
- 3) Project application cycle and funding schedule; and
- 4) Other agreed information.

Sharing program information and develop common template to identify:

- 1) Eligibility criteria;
- 2) Application requirements;
- 3) Funding Capacity and Cycles;
- 4) Financial Assistance Capability; and
- 5) Other agreed information.

Exploring the potential to integrate program resources and eliminate duplication of effort through:

- 1) Common project priority lists;
- 2) Common application information;
- 3) Common project funding cycles: and
- 4) Joint funding cycles.

14. Please share any considerations from your agency regarding the effect of policies instituted by the federal government impacting the border region.

ANSWER: Because the TWDB partners with several federal agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency, the North American Development Bank, the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Federal Division of Emergency Management, and others on various projects and programs, the continuation of funding is always a concern.

15. Please give a brief summary of all your agency's activities related to the Border and/or Mexico.

ANSWER: The Texas Water Development Board:

- Supports the development of regional water plans and incorporates them into a statewide water plan for the orderly and responsible development, management, and conservation of the state's water resources.
- Provides loans to local governments for water supply projects; water quality projects including wastewater treatment, municipal solid waste management, and nonpoint source pollution control; flood control projects; agricultural water conservation projects; rural and small community water and wastewater projects; and groundwater conservation district creation expenses.
- Provides grants and loans for the water and wastewater needs of the state's economically distressed areas.
- Provides agricultural water conservation and water-related research and planning grants.
- Conducts studies of the occurrence, quantity, quality, and availability of the state's surface water and groundwater, including development of groundwater availability models for the state's major and minor aquifers.
- Collects data and conducts studies concerning the freshwater needs of the state's bays and estuaries. In conjunction with other natural resources agencies, maintains an instream flow data collection and evaluation program. This includes conducting studies and analyses to determine appropriate methodologies for determining flow conditions in the state rivers and streams necessary to support a sound ecological environment.
- Facilitates the state's efforts to determine the feasibility and to identify the requirements for implementation of large-scale seawater desalination projects, and supports their implementation as appropriate. Supports ongoing desalination research and the sharing of technological information to enhance brackish groundwater and seawater desalination activities throughout the state.

- Maintains a centralized data repository of information on the state's natural resources called the Texas Natural Resources Information System (TNRIS) and manages the Strategic Mapping (StratMap) Initiative, a Texas-based, public and private sector cost-sharing program to develop consistent, large-scale digital base maps describing surface water, elevation, transportation, aerial photography, and other information.
- Tasked with coordinating the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) within the State. The NFIP state coordinator acts as the liaison between the federal component of the program and the local communities, with the primary duty to provide guidance and education to the communities to assist in meeting the federal eligibility requirements for entrance into the NFIP, and also assist the communities with maintaining their participating status in the NFIP. In addition to coordinating the NFIP in Texas, the TWDB also provides funding assistance in the form of grants and loans for flood mitigation planning, as well as flood control projects.