



The Water Source

Summer 2013

COMMISSIONER STAPLES, COMMISSIONER RUBINSTEIN OUTLINE ACTIONS TO COMPEL MEXICO TO RELEASE WATER OWED TO TEXAS



In a concentrated effort to acquire much-needed water for South Texas, Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Commissioner Carlos Rubenstein recently co-authored a call-to-action report, titled “Addressing Mexico’s Water Deficit to the United States,” detailing specific actions the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) should take to compel Mexico to deliver Rio Grande water owed to Texas. In addition, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service released an analysis detailing the economic impact of irrigation water shortages to the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) region, which total nearly \$395 million dollars in economic output and more than 4,800 jobs. Below, find a shortened version of the press release explaining these reports.

“Enough is enough,” Commissioner Staples said. “When two countries sign a treaty, compliance with the treaty’s terms should not be a point of negotiation decades later. Even worse, Texas should not have to prove to the U.S. and Mexican governments the severity of the impacts of Mexico’s failure to comply with its water delivery requirements. But that’s unfortunately where we stand today, and this report provides a dire warning on the devastating impact Mexico’s water deficit is having on the Lower Rio Grande Valley.”

Agricultural production in the LRGV region relies heavily on irrigation water for its crop production. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service estimates the lack of irrigation water has cost \$229.2 million in crop revenue loss, which will ultimately contribute to an estimated \$394.9 million loss in economic output for the region and the loss of 4,840 jobs that depend on the production and sale of LRGV crops.

As many parts of Texas continue to recover from the 2011 drought, the impact of Mexico’s ongoing water deficit will be substantial for farmers and residents in South Texas. At least 10 cities in the LRGV have been notified that if conditions persist they will run out of water by August.

According to the terms of the 1944 bi-national Water Management Treaty (Treaty), Mexico is required to release one-third of the water from its Rio Grande tributaries and reservoirs to the United States for agricultural and municipal use. The agreement calls for Mexico to deliver a minimum of 350,000 acre-feet of water to the U.S. annually.

“AgriLife’s analysis verifies our fears and provides concrete evidence of the magnitude of the effects that Mexico’s non-compliance with the 1944 Treaty has on agricultural interests in the Lower Rio Grande Valley,” TCEQ Commissioner Rubenstein said. “The analysis clearly highlights the tremendous impact this water has on the U.S. economy, yet our own federal government has failed to protect these resources. We have warned the IBWC repeatedly since November 2012 that this deficit would happen if nothing was done, and now, we are pleading with the IBWC and the State Department to undertake serious negotiations with Mexico to protect U.S. interests.”

To read the full press release, [click here](#). For more details on the solutions offered from Commissioner Staples and Commissioner Rubenstein in the “Addressing Mexico’s Water Deficit to the United States” report, [click here](#). The full text of the Texas A&M AgriLife analysis is available [here](#).



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Water was a hot topic during the 83rd Legislative Session at the Texas State Capitol. Funding a portion of the state’s water plan was a popular priority among many legislators following Texas’ record drought. However, deciding how much and from where to fund the water plan was a more divisive issue. The solution came through the passage of two bills and a joint resolution, which means voters will have the opportunity to weigh in on funding by voting on a proposed constitutional amendment this November.

If approved by voters, [Senate Joint Resolution 1](#) (SJR 1) would constitutionally create two funds for the implementation of water projects in the state water plan: the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT) and the State Water Implementation Revenue Fund for Texas (SWIRFT). These funds would be administered by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to provide ongoing funding for water infrastructure and conservation projects.

[House Bill 4 \(HB 4\)](#) authored by Rep. Allan Ritter and Sen. Troy Fraser provides for organizational changes at TWDB and outlines the mechanics of SWIFT and SWIRFT. Among other provisions, the bill establishes how to prioritize projects soliciting state funding at the regional and state levels. Priority consideration will be given to projects that serve large and diverse populations, encourage regionalization and meet a high percentage of the water supply needs of users who will be served by the project.

The final piece of the puzzle is [House Bill 1025 \(HB 1025\)](#), a supplemental appropriations bill that includes \$2 billion for water funding from the state’s Rainy Day Fund. If voters approve the use of \$2 billion from the Rainy Day Fund as a constitutional amendment, HB 1025 is the vehicle that will appropriate the funds to the SWIFT and SWIRFT as designed in HB 4.

THE WATER SOURCE: NEW ONLINE TOOL CONNECTS TEXANS TO STATEWIDE WATER, DROUGHT RESOURCES

Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples has launched “The Water Source,” a new online resource that serves as a one-stop information portal for Texans to learn various facts about the ongoing drought, statewide water resources, wildfire prevention and disaster assistance.

“The Water Source’ is a comprehensive site that compiles helpful data and facts on water resources from various agencies and organizations,” Commissioner Staples said. “With so many valuable resources for water information, bringing many of them together in one place will help Texans easily access the specifics about our water situation.”

Texas Department of Agriculture water stakeholders also receive a quarterly edition of the Water Source newsletter.

Visit “[The Water Source](#)” today.

EVENTS

31

July 31-August 2:
South Central Membrane
Association Annual Conference
in San Antonio

27

August 27-29:
Texas Association of Ground-
water Districts Groundwater
Summit in San Marcos

12

September 12-13:
Texas Desal Association
Conference in Austin

TEXAS WATER SMART

The Texas Water Smart coalition enjoyed a busy spring preparing Texans for the hot weather! Conservation awareness events were held in Dallas, Fort Worth, El Paso, Wichita Falls, Austin and San Antonio. The coalition’s water conservation and public awareness efforts also were honored by the Texas Legislature with Senate Resolution 593 written by Sen. Troy Fraser and House Resolution 1149 by Rep. Allan Ritter.

To kick off the summer, Sea World/Aquatica San Antonio featured Texas Water Smart signage on their new condensate harvest tanks. The Texas Rangers welcomed the coalition to a baseball game where they played a video from Commissioner Staples inside the stadium and exhibited Texas Water Smart promotional items and conservation tips in the concourse.

The coalition also welcomed several new members over the past few months including Texas Farm Bureau, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Ducks Unlimited, Denton Master Gardeners, City of Wichita Falls, Independent Insurance Agents of Texas, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, Rain Harvest Resources, City of Waco, Southern Botanical and McAllen Public Utility. For a full listing of members and sponsors, please visit www.TexasWaterSmart.com.

To receive regular email updates about Texas Water Smart or to sign up as a member, contact Jenny Griffin by email at Jenny.Griffin@TexasAgriculture.gov.

Summer Watering Tips

- Wash your pets or rinse off your outdoor furniture on your lawn
- Empty leftover ice from coolers and iced beverages into your lawn or garden
- Use a timer to monitor the time you leave a hose on to fill your swimming pool or water features
- Drink plenty of water yourself – you need more hydration per day than your lawn does

