

## Drought Response Information, Activities, and Recommendations in Regional Water Plans

Regional Water Planning Groups (RWPG) are required to compile and present regional drought information and resources in their Regional Water Plans (RWP), including information about

- droughts of record in the regional water planning area,
- uncertainty and drought(s) worse than prior drought of record (DWDOR),
- current drought preparations and responses,
- drought response triggers and actions,
- existing and potential emergency interconnects,
- drought management water management strategies,
- emergency responses to local drought conditions or loss of municipal supply, and
- region-specific drought response recommendations and model drought contingency plans.

### Droughts of Record in the Regional Water Planning Area

RWPGs must present and summarize information regarding the current drought(s) of record for the region and any other relevant sub-regional or basin-specific drought of record periods that impact their existing water supplies. Providing associated maps or figures is helpful but optional.

### Uncertainty and DWDOR

During plan development, the generated values of planning factors (supplies, demands, population) all have associated uncertainty. Although assessments of the likelihood of droughts potentially worse than the drought of record are not required, RWPGs may consider scenarios and/or qualitatively address uncertainty and potential future DWDOR in their region. These scenarios or qualitative assessments can be used to more explicitly recognize or acknowledge the relative uncertainties in planning factors and the potential risks without necessarily modifying the plan to mitigate those risks. The 2026 RWPs will be required to include a summary of how

the RWPG incorporated planning for uncertainty into its RWP and what planning measures are included to address a potential DWDOR, if utilized by the RWPG.

### Current Drought Preparations and Responses

RWPGs are required to provide a description of how water suppliers both identify and respond to the onset of drought. Planning groups may rely on information in water suppliers' drought contingency plans in performing this assessment.

RWPGs are also required to identify "unnecessary or counterproductive variations in specific drought response strategies, including outdoor watering restrictions, among user groups in the regional water planning area that may confuse the public or otherwise impede drought response efforts."

Planning groups must, at a minimum, review and summarize drought responses for neighboring communities including the potential differences in the implementation of outdoor watering restrictions.

### Drought Response Triggers and Actions

RWPGs must identify drought response triggers and actions applicable to existing groundwater and surface water sources in the region. The RWP must identify specific factors to be considered in determining whether to initiate a drought response, including specific recommended triggers, as well as identify actions to be taken as part of the drought response. Actions must be identified for the managers of each water source (such as water providers, reservoir operators, groundwater conservation districts) and the entities relying on each source (self-supplying entities, customers). The identified triggers and actions may consider existing triggers and actions included in water suppliers' existing drought contingency plans.

### Existing and Potential Emergency Interconnects

MAY 2023

RWPGs are required to collect information on existing major water infrastructure facilities that are already interconnected or that may be interconnected in the event of an emergency need of water. Pertinent information includes identifying the potential user(s) of the interconnect and the potential supplier(s). Information regarding facility locations must remain confidential. Information on existing interconnects is available through publicly available information from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

### **Drought Management Water Management Strategies**

Drought management water management strategies are temporary measures that reduce water use by restricting normal economic or domestic activities, such as car washing and lawn watering during times of drought or emergencies. Such strategies are not recommended to meet long-term growth in demands, but rather act as means to minimize the temporary adverse impacts of water supply needs during drought. The RWP must present all drought management strategies that were considered or evaluated as potentially feasible, recommended in the RWP, or included in the RWP as alternative strategies.

### **Emergency Responses to Local Drought Conditions or Loss of Municipal Supply**

In addition to regional or statewide droughts, entities may experience localized drought conditions or loss of existing water supplies due to infrastructure failure, temporary water quality impairment, or other unforeseen conditions.

Planning rules require RWPGs to evaluate potential emergency responses to local drought conditions or loss of existing supply for two groups: 1) water user groups with a population of 7,500 or less that rely on a sole source of water supply and 2) all “county-other” water user groups. The evaluation assumes that each entity has only 180 days or less of supply remaining and alternative sources must be found. The purpose of this evaluation is to identify potential alternative water sources that may be considered for emergency use if the existing water supply sources become temporarily unavailable. This analysis may serve as a guide for identifying

potentially vulnerable water user groups and suitable emergency response options.

### **Region-Specific Drought Response Recommendations and Model Drought Contingency Plans**

RWPGs may develop and present drought response recommendations for existing sources on which the region relies. Recommendations can relate to content of and implementation of local drought contingency plans, and drought triggers and responses for water sources on which the region relies. The RWPG may also make any other general recommendations regarding drought management in the region or state.

The Texas Drought Preparedness Council is composed of representatives from multiple state agencies and plays an important role in monitoring drought conditions; advising the governor and other groups on significant drought conditions; and facilitating coordination among local, state, and federal agencies in drought-response planning. Additionally, the Council has developed the State Drought Preparedness Plan, which sets forth a framework for approaching drought in an integrated manner to minimize impacts to people and resources. RWPGs must consider any recommendations from the Drought Preparedness Council, and RWPGs may also make recommendations to the Council or recommendations on the State Drought Preparedness Plan.

RWPGs must also develop region-specific model drought contingency plans and present them in the RWP. Two model plans must be presented, and they may be based on different water use categories, user sizes, and/or types of water source. The types of model plans presented is at the discretion of the RWPG, but it is recommended that RWPGs develop plans that would be of use to the types of water users within the region.

### **Additional Resources**

[2022 State Water Plan, Chapter 3](#)

[Water Data for Texas Drought Dashboard](#)

[www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/index.asp](http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/index.asp)