

GROUNDWATER ISSUES SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
TEXAS GROUNDWATER PROTECTION COMMITTEE
RECORD OF MEETING
Third Quarter Meeting, Fiscal Year 2025

Meeting Date: March 12, 2025
Meeting No.: 41

Place: videoconference
Room: N/A

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MEETING ATTENDANCE

Subcommittee Members

Kathy McCormack (Co-Chair)
Chris Heiligenstein (Co-Chair)
Rebecca Storms
Omar Valdez
David Villarreal
T.J. Helton

Stephanie Keith
Justin Thompson

David Gunn
Linzy Foster
Carly Rotzler
Ken Rainwater

Affiliation

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC)
Texas Water Development Board (TWDB)
Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)
Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA)
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB)
Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts (TAGD)
Bureau of Economic Geology of The University of Texas at Austin (UTBEG)
Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR)
United States Geological Survey (USGS)
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)
Texas Tech University (TTU)

Agency Staff

Stanley Aniagu

Travis Bartos
Abiy Berehe
Katie Brice
Alan Cherepon
Kristin DeBone
Larry Estrada
Dan Hannah
Cindy Hooper
Chris Hooyboer
Natalie Houston
Peggy Hunka
James LaManna
Robert Nail
James-Eric Simon
Bryan Smith
Kory Talcott
Scott Underwood
Phillip Valladolid
Scout Vanderwal

Affiliation

TCEQ	Toxicology, Risk Assessment, and Research Division
TCEQ	Water Availability Division
TCEQ	Water Availability Division
TCEQ	Water Availability Division
TCEQ	Water Availability Division
TCEQ	Water Quality Planning Division
TDLR	
TCEQ	Radioactive Materials Division
TCEQ	Water Availability Division
TDLR	
USGS	
TCEQ	Water Availability Division
TCEQ	Water Supply Division
TCEQ	Radioactive Materials Division
TCEQ	Water Availability Division
TCEQ	Radioactive Materials Division
TCEQ	Water Availability Division
TCEQ	Water Availability Division
TWDB	
DSHS	

Interested Parties

Lawrence Jackson

Affiliation

Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA)

MEETING HANDOUTS

1. Texas Groundwater Protection Committee (TGPC) Groundwater Issues (GWI) Subcommittee Meeting Agenda, March 12, 2025
2. TGPC GWI Subcommittee Meeting Record, December 4, 2024
3. TGPC Agricultural Chemicals (AgChem) Task Force (TF) Status Report, March 12, 2025
4. TGPC Publications Status Report, March 12, 2025
5. Water Monitoring and Tracking Essential Resources (WATER) Data Improvement Act, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/5770>
6. *McAllen Public Utility Secures Nearly \$10M Federal Grant for Brackish Groundwater Desalination Project* news article, <https://texasborderbusiness.com/mcallen-public-utility-secures-nearly-10m-federal-grant-for-brackish-groundwater-desalination-project/>
7. *West Texas carbon capture project could help the climate, but some worry about potential local environmental risks* news article, <https://www.texasstandard.org/stories/occidental-petroleum-stratos-carbon-capture-facility-odessa-tx/>
8. Updated Draft TGPC GWI Subcommittee Fiscal Year 2026 – 2027 Activity Plan
9. Texas 89(R) Legislative Session Senate Bill (SB) 1387, <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/Text.aspx?LegSess=89R&Bill=SB1387>
10. Texas 89(R) Legislative Session SB 2124, <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/Text.aspx?LegSess=89R&Bill=SB2124>
11. World Water Day, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/water-day>

MEETING RECORD OF MARCH 12, 2025

1. PRE-MEETING REMINDERS

Before the meeting started, Chris Heiligenstein (RRC) provided the attendees with some tips that would facilitate a productive videoconference.

2. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

The TGPC approves all Subcommittee products and designated TGPC members attending this Subcommittee meeting participated as an employee or representative of their agency or organization, not as a designated TGPC member. Therefore, this Subcommittee meeting was not subject to the Open Meetings Act and it was held 100% virtually. The public was also able to attend this meeting via videoconference or teleconference at no cost.

Chris Heiligenstein (RRC), Co-Chair of the GWI Subcommittee, called the meeting to order at approximately 9:35 AM CDT and then called the roll of GWI Subcommittee members. The representatives from Texas A&M AgriLife Research (AgriLife Research) and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (AgriLife Extension) were not present at the meeting. David Gunn (TDLR) announced that he would be retiring at the end of March 2025.

3. STATUS REPORTS

Agricultural Chemicals Task Force

Alan Cherepon (TCEQ) reported on the Agricultural Chemicals Task Force:

- TWDB would be sampling the Gulf Coast and Yegua-Jackson aquifers in 2025, typically from April through August.
- TCEQ's spectrophotometer was repaired, and on November 11, 2024, immunoassay (IA) analyses were completed for 81 Cooperative Monitoring samples, but they exceeded holding times by 2 – 3 weeks and had been qualified as such in the TCEQ Interagency Pesticide Database (IPD). On December 20, 2024, these results were provided to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in an updated Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 report.
- On December 4, 2024, Alan Cherepon (TCEQ) met with Eric Nystrom (the new Region 6 U.S. EPA Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) Grant Liaison) and others to familiarize them on what was being done at TCEQ under that Performance Partnership Grant (PPG).
- On December 10 – 11, 2024, Alan Cherepon (TCEQ) attended the annual Texas Plant Protection Conference in Bryan and provided a tabletop exhibit from which FIFRA grant-related information and other materials of the TGPC were distributed.
- On December 17, 2024, the annual Pesticides of Interest Tracking System (POINTS) Pesticide Assessment Database update was completed.
- On March 11, 2025, Alan Cherepon (TCEQ) conducted the annual IA refresher training for TWDB.
- On May 13 – 14, 2025, the annual U.S. EPA/States/Tribes FIFRA Spring grant meeting for FY 2025 was scheduled to be held in Austin with TDA as the host.

TGPC Publications

Cindy Hooper (TCEQ) reported on the following TGPC publications:

- *Joint Groundwater Monitoring and Contamination Report – 2024* (“*Joint Report*”, TCEQ publication SFR-56)
 - Staff were working on the 2024 *Joint Report*.
- *Activities and Recommendations of the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee: Report to the 89th Legislature* (“*Legislative Report*”, TCEQ publication SFR-47)
 - The *Legislative Report* was distributed to the 89th Texas Legislature in December 2024.

Cindy Hooper (TCEQ) also reported on the following groundwater-related TCEQ publications:

- *Groundwater Assessment* (TCEQ publication AS-465) for the 2024 *Texas Integrated Report of Surface Water Quality for Clean Water Act Sections 305(b) and 303(d)* (“*Texas Integrated Report*”)
 - The published Groundwater Assessment was included in the 2024 Texas Integrated Report which TCEQ’s commissioners approved on June 26, 2024.
 - U.S. EPA approved the 2024 Texas 303(d) List on November 13, 2024.
- *Priority Groundwater Management Areas and Groundwater Conservation Districts, Report to the 89th Texas Legislature* (“*PGMA/GCD Legislative Report*”, TCEQ publication SFR-53)
 - The *PGMA/GCD Legislative Report* was transmitted to the 89th Texas Legislature in January 2025.

4. SET FUTURE MEETING DATE

The next TGPC GWI Subcommittee meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, June 18, 2025, at 9:30 AM CDT and it was planned as a videoconference.

5. DISCUSS CURRENT GROUNDWATER ISSUES

Oil and Gas Produced Water

On January 23, 2025, Kelly Mills (TCEQ and TGPC Designated Chair) sent an email to the TGPC GWI Subcommittee regarding their interest in beginning the development of a white paper on treated oil and gas (O&G) produced water. Members were advised to participate as individuals or representatives of their agency in Texas’ current efforts to examine the issues associated with O&G produced water through the Texas Produced Water Consortium (TxPWC, <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/research/tx-water-consortium/>, 806-834-0795, txpwc@ttu.edu) which had recently started holding monthly Stakeholder Advisory Council meetings.

Omar Valdez (DSHS) asked if the Subcommittee could explore this topic further, and Kathy McCormack (TCEQ) indicated that they could, but not via a white paper at this time. Justin Thompson (UTBEG) asked about the overlap and distinction between the TGPC and TxPWC charges, and Kathy McCormack (TCEQ) indicated that this would need to be researched.

Emerging Chemical and Biological Contaminants

Carly Rotzler (TPWD) reported on the recent Johnson County disaster declaration regarding the land application of biosolids and subsequent finding of Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) contamination of agricultural land, water, and livestock. Justin Thompson (UTBEG) noted that there had been a presentation on PFAS at the Texas Water Association (TWA) 2025 Annual Convention on March 5 – 7, 2025 in Austin.

Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR)

Rebecca Storms (TWDB) reported that their *Preliminary ASR and AR Assessment for the Lower Valley Water District* in-house ASR study for the Lower Valley Water District in El Paso County was in final review and would be published shortly.

Dan Hannah (TCEQ) and Bryan Smith (TCEQ) reported that three ASR-related bills had been filed during the current Texas legislative session.

Abandoned Water Wells

Kathy McCormack (TCEQ) reported that Texas 89(R) Legislative Session House Bill (HB) 4526, <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/Text.aspx?LegSess=89R&Bill=HB4526>, had been filed on March 12, 2025, regarding a TDLR grant program financed through the general revenue fund which would cover up to 50% of the cost of plugging abandoned or deteriorated water wells. Grant recipients would include Groundwater Conservation Districts (GCDs) or landowners outside of a GCD, and confirmation of the plugging would be approved by TWDB. The TGPC's Legislative Report first recommended this in 1993, and it had been a recommendation in every report since 1999.

Cindy Hooper (TCEQ) reported that they were working on a rule adoption for a leaking water wells grant program (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/groundwater/groundwater-planning-assessment/grants-for-leaking-water-wells>) as required by HB 4256 from the previous legislative session (<https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/text.aspx?LegSess=88R&Bill=HB4256>). This rulemaking would create a new Title 30, Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 353, to provide grants to permanently plug qualifying water wells in certain counties, establish grant and project eligibility requirements, establish criteria for prioritizing projects eligible to receive grant funding, and establish criteria for well plugging. The anticipated adoption date was June 6, 2025.

Groundwater Quality Monitoring

On December 24, 2024, a federal bill regarding the Water Monitoring and Tracking Essential Resources (WATER) Data Improvement Act was signed which reauthorized the USGS's groundwater monitoring program through FY 2028, including the National Groundwater Monitoring Network (NGWMN, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/5770>). The NGWMN is a compilation of selected groundwater monitoring wells from federal, state, and local groundwater monitoring networks across the nation, and its online data portal contains

current and historical data including water levels, water quality, lithology, and well construction. Rebecca Storms (TWDB) added that they were a data provider to NGWMN and had received NGWMN grant funding for 2025.

Rebecca Storms (TWDB) reported that TWDB would sample the Gulf Coast and Yegua-Jackson aquifers in 2025, with activities beginning in April, for radiochemistry (primarily gross alpha), and that sites would be selected for radium 226/228 based on previous gross alpha concentrations. TWDB would additionally participate in a joint study as part of the Springs Monitoring Program with TPWD (<https://www.twdb.texas.gov/groundwater/data/springs.asp>) – selected springs from a 2005 study would be revisited during critical and non-critical index periods. TWDB would be monitoring for water quality (standard field and TWDB suite parameters, with possible isotopes at the two new locations) and flow rate, and TPWD would conduct biological assessments. Alan Cherepon (TCEQ) noted that USGS had water quality data from springs.

Cindy Hooper (TCEQ) asked about TWDB's historical radiochemistry data, and Phillip Valladolid (TWDB) explained that the constituents had changed over time based on funding availability. Bryan Smith (TCEQ) offered to provide assistance in understanding the various aspects of radionuclide sampling. Alan Cherepon (TCEQ) added that the National Uranium Resource Evaluation (NURE) program assessed the uranium potential for the nation, including Texas, and it may have some useful groundwater quality data, including radioactivity.

Brackish Groundwater

The City of McAllen was recently awarded a nearly \$10 million grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation for Phase 1 of a McAllen Brackish Groundwater Treatment Facility (<https://texasborderbusiness.com/mcallen-public-utility-secures-nearly-10m-federal-grant-for-brackish-groundwater-desalination-project/>). The funds would be used for the construction of four test wells for the project which was ultimately estimated to cost \$180 million.

Bryan Smith (TCEQ) reported that they had recently been involved in several discussions about the treatment of brackish groundwater for inland Public Water Systems (PWSs), especially in west Texas. In these areas, Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM) in brackish groundwater was a particular issue, along with disposal options for the reject material.

Rebecca Storms (TWDB) reported that they had contracted with INTERA to document the available information for the deep Glen Rose Formation in South Texas, also known as the Maverick Basin Aquifer. The final report, *Conceptualization of Groundwater in the Glen Rose Formation, Maverick Basin, Texas*, was available at https://www.twdb.texas.gov/groundwater/special_projects/maverick/index.asp, and it was intended to serve as a foundational document for future research on this potential water supply. The report included:

- Background information on the discovery of the Maverick Basin Aquifer;
- A geologic background summarizing relevant stratigraphic and structural information from the literature;

- Data that was available for understanding this water resource;
- Challenges and future work discussing the unknown factors and risks in producing water from this source; and,
- An appendix with the relevant water quality data.

Evapotranspiration Networks

Rebecca Storms (TWDB) reported that they were watching the legislative session and hoping that an exceptional item request would be approved which would include funding for a statewide evapotranspiration network dataset.

Justin Thompson (UTBEG) reported that they were working on a few projects that involved deploying additional various sensors at their field network sites.

Others

Occidental Petroleum hoped to build a carbon capture facility in 2025 outside of Odessa (<https://www.texasstandard.org/stories/occidental-petroleum-stratos-carbon-capture-facility-odessa-tx/>). This carbon sequestration project would be the first in Texas, and it would require a Class VI injection well permit from the U.S. EPA, as well as the monitoring of various parameters. Bryan Smith (TCEQ) noted that Occidental Petroleum was also seeking RRC permits, they had another facility in the King Ranch, and Class I disposal wells were associated with these projects, as well. Bryan Smith (TCEQ) added that there were almost 30 Class VI applications in Texas that had been submitted to the U.S. EPA, and TCEQ was reviewing 10 Class VI applications.

6. BUSINESS DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

Draft TGPC GWI Subcommittee Fiscal Year 2026 – 2027 *Activity Plan*

Chris Heiligenstein (RRC) noted that the GWI Subcommittee *Charge* (https://tgpc.texas.gov/wp-content/themes/responsive/subcommittees/gwissues/GWI_SubComm_Charge12Jul2023.pdf) required the development of, and adherence to, biennial *Activity Plans*. The GWI Subcommittee's current *Activity Plan* (https://tgpc.texas.gov/gwissues/activity_plans/TGPC_GWI_FY2024_2025_ActivityPlan_12Jul2023.pdf) indicated that work should have begun on the next edition of the *Activity Plan* at the previous meeting, and then it would be discussed again at this meeting, approved at the June 2025 meeting, and presented to the TGPC for approval at their July 2025 meeting so that it would be in effect as of September 1, 2025. Several updates to the previous draft FY 2026 – 2027 *Activity Plan* were reviewed (i.e., the child care operations white paper was added to the Accomplishments list, ASR was replaced with the more general topic of Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR), and two URLs in the References were updated) and no additional changes were suggested.

Discussion of White Papers Under Development

There was no discussion of this topic at the meeting.

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chris Heiligenstein (RRC) provided the following announcements:

- The annual National Groundwater Awareness Week was underway, and information and resources were available on the TGPC homepage (<https://tgpc.texas.gov/>).
- SB 1387 (<https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/Text.aspx?LegSess=89R&Bill=SB1387>) had been introduced which amended Texas Water Code (TWC) Chapter 26.403(c) regarding the membership of the TGPC. The bill added the executive director of TPWD as a new member of the TGPC which had been a recommendation in the TGPC's Legislative Report since 2013. The bill also updated the names of two members listed in the original statute to their current names – “state health services” (i.e., the Texas Department of State Health Services), and “Texas A&M AgriLife Research”.
- SB 2124 (<https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/Text.aspx?LegSess=89R&Bill=SB2124>) had just been filed which amended TWC Chapter 26.406(c) regarding the publication deadline for the TGPC's annual *Joint Report*. Since 2015, a recommendation in the TGPC's Legislative Report had been to move the date from April 1 to June 1, and the bill reflected this recommendation.
- World Water Day (<https://www.un.org/en/observances/water-day>) was an annual United Nations observance held on March 22nd which highlighted the importance of fresh water. The day is used to advocate for the sustainable management of freshwater resources, and the 2025 theme was glacier preservation.

Rebecca Storms (TWDB) announced that their Springs Monitoring Program webpage (<https://www.twdb.texas.gov/groundwater/data/springs.asp>) had recently been updated.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment at the meeting.

9. ADJOURN

Chris Heiligenstein (RRC) adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:56 AM CDT.