



# **Chapter 10**

## **Plan Adoption and Public Participation**

## Plan Adoption and Public Participation

The first purpose of this chapter is to describe the various public participation, information, outreach, and education activities conducted by the Panhandle Water Planning Group (PWPG). All activities and events discussed in this section were performed in direct support of the regional water planning effort and serve to support the PWPG's dedication and commitment to ensuring that the public is provided with timely, accurate information regarding the planning process and that opportunities to provide input to the planning process are available as often as possible.

The second purpose of this chapter is to detail the plan adoption process followed by the PWPG. The process explains the required hearing, receipt of comment, comment response, and final adoption of the PWPA's Regional Water Plan.

### 10.1 Panhandle Water Planning Group

The PWPG was created in accordance with and operates under the auspices of SB1 (1997), updated with SB2 (2001), and under the requirements of SB3 (2007). The enabling legislation and subsequent TWDB planning rules and guidelines established the basis for the creation and composition of the regional planning groups. The original statute listed eleven required interest groups that must be represented at all times on the planning groups. To these original eleven interest groups, the PWPG has elected to add an additional group to adequately ensure that the interests of the region are fully protected. The following lists the twelve interest groups represented by the 22 voting members of the PWPG:

General Public	Small Business
Counties	Electric Generating Utilities
Municipalities	River Authorities
Industrial	Water Districts
Agricultural	Water Utilities
Environmental	Higher Education (added interest group)

Table 10-1 lists the voting members of the PWPG, their respective interest groups, and their principle county of interest. Table 10-2 lists the seven former members of the PWPG who also participated in the planning process. The PWPG appreciates the contributions of these individuals and would like for their efforts to be recognized along with the current members.

**Table 10-1. Panhandle Water Planning Group - Voting Members**

<i>PWPG Member</i>	<i>Interest Group</i>	<i>County of Interest</i>
Janet Guthrie	General Public	Hemphill
Vernon Cook	Counties	Roberts
Emmett Autrey	Municipalities	Potter/Randall
David Landis	Municipalities	Ochiltree
Bill Hallerberg	Industrial	Potter
Denise Jett	Industrial	Hutchinson
Ben Weinheimer	Agricultural	Region
Kendal Harris	Agricultural	Collingsworth
Janet Tregellas	Agricultural	Lipscomb
Joe Baumgardner	Agricultural	Collingsworth
Dr. Nolan Clark	Environmental	Potter/Randall
Grady Skaggs	Environmental	Oldham
Cole Camp	Environmental	Potter/Randall
Rusty Gilmore	Small Business	Dallam
Gale Henslee	Electric Generating	Utility Region
Jim Derington	River Authorities	Hansford
Steve Walthour	Water Districts	Moore
C.E. Williams	Water Districts	Carson
John Williams	Water Districts	Hutchinson
Tom Baliff	Water Districts	Childress
Charles Cooke	Water Utilities	Hutchinson
Dr. John Sweeten	Higher Education	Region

**Table 10-2. Panhandle Water Planning Group - Former Members**

<i>PWPG Member</i>	<i>Interest Group</i>	<i>County of Interest</i>
Dan Coffey	Municipal	Potter/Randall
Rudie Tate	Agriculture	Collingsworth
B.A. Donelson	Agriculture	Sherman
Inge Brady	Environmental	Potter/Randall
Bobbie Kidd	Water Districts	Donley
Jenny Pluhar	Environmental	Potter/Randall
John Schmucker	Agriculture	Moore County

In addition to the 22 voting members, the PWPG has six ex-officio positions in accordance with the appropriate regulations governing the process. Table 10-3 lists the six ex-officio positions on the PWPG and their respective interests:

**Table 10-3. Panhandle Water Planning Group Ex-Officio Positions**

<i>PWPG Member</i>	<i>Ex-Officio Position</i>	<i>Interest Group</i>
Virginia Sabia	Texas Water Development Board	TWDB (Rules)
Steve Jones	Texas Department of Agriculture	TDA (Rules)
Robert Kincaid	Region B Liaison	Region B
Kent Satterwhite	Region O Liaison & 357.4G4	Water Districts
Mickey Black	USDA/NRCS	Agricultural
Charles Munger	Texas Parks & Wildlife Department	TPWD (Rules)

### **10.1.1 Panhandle Water Planning Group Public Information and Education Commitment**

The PWPG is firmly committed to ensuring the activities of the Planning Group are open and accessible to all interested parties. In addition, the PWPG has worked diligently to ensure that the public throughout the region is afforded every opportunity to participate in Planning Group activities and to receive timely information regarding the planning process. These efforts are spearheaded by the Public Participation Committee chaired by Judge Vernon Cook, Roberts County. Committee members are Charles Cooke, Janet Tregellas, Dr. John Sweeten, Kent Satterwhite, Kendal Harris, Bill Hallerberg, Jim Derington, and Cole Camp. Participation in the Regional Water Planning Effort by local entities and the public was excellent throughout the process. Public Participation opportunities were afforded to the region through the following broad categories. The Committee targeted efforts towards public involvement in the following broad categories:

- Special Regional Water Planning Presentations – Working primarily through the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC), the PWPG provided speakers to interest groups throughout the planning process. PWPG members also provided presentations to various civic organizations throughout the planning process. Presentations were given throughout the region and no invitations to speak were declined.
- Media – Media throughout the region were provided notification of all Planning Group activities. Media outlets participated in various planning activities throughout the process, with Planning Group representatives appearing at media events as well as routine press in regional newspapers. In addition, regional radio stations provided recaps of PWPG activities on occasion.
- Electronic Communication – Web Access to Planning Information - The PWPG has developed and placed on-line a dedicated project website. The site, [www.panhandlewater.org](http://www.panhandlewater.org), has been available to the public 24 hours a day since June of 1999. The site is updated on a regular basis and provides the general public with quick, reliable access to planning data at any time. A comprehensive website redesign was completed in Fall of 2009 to make accessing PWPG documents easier.

- **Public Information Meetings** – The PWPG held all meetings in accordance with the open meetings act and encouraged public attendance at the meetings.
- **Symposiums and Forums** – PWPG membership has provided technical expertise to several symposiums and forums during the planning process. Included among these are Panhandle 20/Twenty, The High Plains Irrigation Conference, The Ogallala Aquifer Program Workshop, County Extension Agent Trainings, 4H, Lions Clubs, Texas Panhandle Groundwater Workshop in Borger, Retired School Administrators Association, Texas A&M University Graduate Program, and other public forums.
- **Required Public Meeting** – One public meeting was conducted to solicit input and comments on the scope of work for development of the updated regional water plan. This meeting was held in Amarillo at the PRPC office on April 16, 2008.
- **Required Public Hearing** – One formal hearing was conducted during the planning process to present and review the Initially Prepared Plan to the Region on April 28, 2010. An excess of 30 people were in attendance of this public hearing.
- **Panhandle Water Planning Group Meetings** – The PWPG conducted 12 meetings. While most meetings were held in Amarillo at the offices of the PRPC, meetings were also conducted in Plainview, Texas to focus on joint-planning with Region O. Sub-groups of the PWPG met 13 times throughout the planning process. All meetings of the PWPG are conducted as open meetings and public attendance has been as high as 50 plus people at one time.

## **10.2 Public Participation Activities**

Specific details on public participation activities conducted during the Regional Water Planning Process are summarized and detailed in this section.

### **10.2.1 Special Regional Water Planning Presentations**

Special Regional Water Planning Presentations – PWPG members delivered numerous presentations to various interest groups throughout the region. The scope and content of these presentations was tailored specifically to each unique interest group. In order to accurately document that special presentations are reaching the appropriate interests, presentations were tracked by category to ensure that the public outreach activities being conducted are achieving maximum effectiveness. To this end, special presentations have been broken down and analyzed in the following specific categories: Civic Groups; Special Interest Groups; Agricultural Groups; and Government Entities.

#### **A. Civic Groups:**

This category is comprised of traditional civic clubs, organizations, and other similar entities. Organizations of this nature provide an excellent vehicle to reach a broad segment of the general public in each particular location. Examples of organizations in

this category include Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, and Chambers of Commerce.

**B. Agricultural Groups:**

The largest single water user group in the PWPA is the Agricultural sector, which accounts for approximately 91% of all water used. The PWPG felt that outreach to this segment was vital to ensure that the plan adequately addressed all issues and protected all interests. In order to reach the agricultural sector, the PWPG targeted ag-specific groups for special presentations.

**C. Government Entities:**

A key focus of SB1 was on municipal water use, the PWPG also undertook an effort to reach those entities with specific responsibility to provide water for municipal use.

**10.2.2 Media Events and Coverage**

Media Events: The PWPG has since its inception in 1997 held a commitment to communicate with and be available to the local media. While media coverage of the regional water planning process has declined with each cycle of planning, it is advantageous to continue receiving both print and video news coverage. The detail below lists several of the many media avenues enjoyed by the PWPG. The PWPG would like to specifically thank the many local media outlets which provided excellent assistance and coverage of this effort.

**A. Television Coverage of Meetings and Events:**

All local television stations were notified of each meeting and were invited to attend. PWPG representatives were on occasion interviewed in association with the regular meetings that were held.

**D. Radio Coverage:**

Radio coverage of PWPG activities has been greatly appreciated. Several stations throughout the region have provided event notification, including KGNC, KEYE, and KGRO.

**E. Newspaper Coverage:** Regional newspapers have been a great assistance to the PWPG in providing notice and coverage of events. In addition, the largest regional circulation newspaper, Amarillo Globe News, has provided various feature reports with reporter Kevin Welch attending many PWPG meetings. Smaller newspapers throughout the region have also provided articles, publication notices, and features on water planning. Livestock Weekly regularly included news from PWPG meetings in its articles on state water issues.

### **10.2.3 Electronic Outreach**

Electronic Communications: The PWPG recognizes the importance of electronic communications as a means to keep the public informed and provided with regional planning documents. Accordingly, the PWPG included the development and maintenance of a project website as a public participation goal. The website was developed and placed online in June of 1999 and has been in operation continuously since that time. The website has proved to be an excellent communications tool and has been updated an average of at least twice per month since its inception. Information contained on the website includes general descriptions of the regional water planning process, listings of all PWPG members, regional water demand and projections information, an on-going calendar of events, and a large download section. The download section contains meeting minutes, regional maps, aquifer maps, public presentations, and the current PWPA Regional Water Plan, including public comments, references, appendices, and the Executive Summary. Of recent addition to the site is a comprehensive Groundwater Management Area #1 (GMA 1) link providing meeting notices, minutes, and work documents from the GMA 1. In the fall of 2009 the site was comprehensively updated to make use easier and more user friendly. Additionally, in April of 2010 the site began employing the use of Issuu technology that makes reviewing draft plans and large documents like reading a book online. The website contains links to numerous water-related entities and has produced responses from as far away as Canada. The PWPG's project website is located at [www.panhandlewater.org](http://www.panhandlewater.org) and is served by a comprehensive 2009 Server Upgrade.

### **10.2.4 Formal Public Hearing and Public Modeling Committee Meetings**

Public Hearing and Public Modeling Committee Meetings: The PWPG has conducted a public hearing providing the general public an opportunity to comment on the Initially Prepared Plan and three Public Modeling Committee Meetings at which Groundwater Availability Model (GAM) information was discussed. These meetings have been conducted at key milestones in the process and were designed to keep the region informed and to ultimately solicit input at important junctures in the plan from citizens and stakeholders.

#### **A. Public Modeling Committee Meetings:**

On August 7, 2009 the Modeling Committee conducted a public meeting at which the specifications and guidelines to be utilized in the Northern Ogallala GAM for the 2011 Regional Water Plan were outlined. Members of the public were in attendance at this meeting and contributed their insight into the methodology. On November 19, 2009 the Modeling Committee held a public meeting at which the progress on the GAM update and availability modeling was laid out in detail with members and the public commenting to engineers regarding how best to proceed with the GAM for regional water planning. On January 19, 2010 the Modeling Committee met a final time in a public forum to review the finalizing of the 2011 Intera GAM. These meetings dealt with the details of

the updates to Northern Ogallala GAM and provided the public an opportunity to comment on the process as it progressed.

#### B. Public Hearing:

The Public Hearing was conducted on April 28, 2010 to relay information regarding the Initially Prepared Regional Water Plan. The hearing was attended by 30 people including representatives from agriculture, municipal, industrial, and other interest groups from the region.

### 10.2.5 Surveys

Surveys: In addition to the activities described above, the PWPG also undertook a series of surveys to assist local entities in participating in the planning process.

Throughout the planning process, the PWPG conducted three surveys. The first was to collect information from wholesale water providers regarding historical water use and confirm the projected water use demands and recommended strategies that were used for the 2006 water plan. A second survey was prepared for each identified municipal water user group in the region. The information obtained during this process was used to validate water supply data and to confirm recommended water management strategies as applicable. The third survey conducted by the PWPG was the IFR survey, which targeted the cost associated with meeting the needs as specified in Task 9 Infrastructure Finance Reports. Only wholesale water providers and municipal water users with an identified capital expense were sent an IFR survey.

### 10.3 Panhandle Water Planning Group Functions

Members of the PWPG have been quite active and very committed to the planning process. Through the course of the functions detailed below, Planning Group members have contributed approximately 1,202 non-reimbursed hours of time. In addition, PWPG members have traveled over 32,700 miles. This level of participation by these Planning Group members speaks very highly of not only the commitment of the people of the region to the water planning process but also to the intense effort and dedication to the process. As mentioned previously, the PWPG has not reimbursed any members for the time they have committed to the process and only a very small amount (less than approximately 2,000) of the miles traveled have been reimbursed through use of local funds. This fact becomes quite important when the membership of the PWPG is analyzed. Of the 28 members, four are from either state or federal agencies and seven represent entities whose primary responsibilities are water resources. Three members represent entities that provide end-user water. The remaining 14 members do not hold employment with organizations who traditionally provide water to end-users or who are normally involved in water resource management or planning. Appendix L details functions conducted by the PWPG or their committees while Appendix M details the commitment in terms of hours and miles traveled of the PWPG members.

### **10.3.1 Panhandle Water Planning Group Meetings**

Through the 60 month planning process, the PWPG has conducted 12 formal, Planning Group meetings. Attendance at the meetings by the 28 member PWPG (including voting and ex-officio members) has been excellent, with appropriate quorums in attendance far exceeded at all meetings. PWPG meetings have been conducted in Amarillo and Plainview, with the majority of the meetings being held in the office of the political subdivision, the PRPC. Frequency of PWPG meetings has averaged one per five months. The frequency of PWPG meetings has declined from the previous two cycles for two reasons. First, PWPG members have a greater understanding at this point of how to meet planning objectives more efficiently now that they have two cycles of experience. Second, the GMA process has shared some of the responsibility in groundwater modeling and setting desired future conditions. GMA 1 has held over 20 meetings in the same 60 month period and is monitored very closely by PWPG membership with regular reports presented at PWPG meetings.

### **10.3.2 Panhandle Water Planning Group Committee Activities**

To further enhance the regional planning process, the PWPG has established a committee structure to assist in evaluating planning progress and to provide recommendations to the PWPG. The committees, as authorized, serve only in an advisory capacity. In addition, committee membership includes, where appropriate, PWPG members as well as nonmembers.

The PWPG has authorized five active and three standing but non-active committees. The active committees are composed of the Executive Committee, Public Participation Committee, Municipal and Industrial Demands & Projections Committee, Agricultural Demands & Projections Committee, and Groundwater Modeling Committee. The three additional standing committees are the Consultant Selection Committee, Scope of Work Committee, and Contact Committee (local funding). The committee structure as described has been very effective in assisting the Regional Planning Process. Throughout the process, 13 committee meetings have been held, for a frequency of approximately .22 per month.

Appendix N contains a full listing of the PWPG committees and their membership.

### **10.3.3 Interregional Coordination**

As part of the planning process, the PWPG determined that coordination with adjacent Region B and Region O water planning groups was necessary. The PWPG appointed a board member to be the liaison between each respective region and charged them with the assignment of attendance of their region's meetings. Coordination was made with the notice and exchange of meeting agendas and when necessary, attendance and participation in their meetings was provided by additional PWPG Board members and staff. At every regular meeting of the PWPG, the liaison reported to the Board the activity of their respective planning group's activity. Communication among the Board

Chairmen and Board members was also utilized and allowed for a secondary line of exchange of information to take place.

Further, in 2006 and 2007 three meetings were held in Plainview, Texas where PWPG and Region O members met together to discuss joint planning activities. In both PWPA and Region O's interim studies digital communication options were explored that could improve further interregional coordination.

#### **10.4 Local Participation in the Regional Water Planning Process**

Participation by local entities in the Regional Water Planning process was quite commendable. Local funds were necessary to provide for the maintenance and operation of the PWPG, fiscal accountability, meeting costs, posting costs, etc. The PWPG estimated that \$63,000 annually in local funds would be needed to cover these costs. Working through the public participation committee, the original formula from the first round of planning was implemented to attempt to spread these costs equally throughout the region. Possible participants were divided into the following categories: municipalities, counties, water utilities, groundwater districts, surface water districts, and solicited contributions. Entities and organizations in each of these categories were contacted by mail requesting their pro-rata share of the local planning cost. Solicitations were made once, and these various entities and organizations provided almost \$340,000 for regional water planning over the 5 year planning cycle. Ninety percent of funds solicited were received over the planning cycle. The PWPG believes this is a strong indicator of the local commitment to water resource planning throughout the region.

The PWPG would like to thank and recognize all those entities and organizations who contributed funds to the regional water planning effort.

In addition to the local funds received, the PWPG adopted a policy whereby all local water use groups are considered to have participated in the Regional Water Plan by virtue of their inclusion in the plan.

Appendix O contains a full listing of the entities and organizations who voluntarily contributed to the regional planning process.

#### **10.5 Plan Adoption Process**

Plan Adoption: In accordance with Texas Administrative Code Ch. 357 and the relevant rules governing the water planning process, the PWPG conducted a formal process for the adoption of the Regional Water Plan. Activities under this section are primarily along two main lines. The first series of activities are directly related to the adoption of the Initially Prepared Plan and the second series of activities are related to final adoption of the completed Regional Water Plan.

### **10.5.1 Public Hearing**

Required Public Hearing: The PWPG conducted the required public hearing on April 28, 2010. The hearing was held at the Texas A&M Research and Extension facility in Amarillo, Texas. All required notifications for the hearing were posted prior to the 30-day cut-off. Over 200 direct mail notices were sent to interested parties, interest groups, agencies, individuals, water rights holders, public utilities, and local officials. Copies of the Initially Prepared Regional Plan were placed in the County Clerks office of each of the 21 counties in the region and were also placed in the primary public library in each of the 21 counties. In addition, full posting requirements regarding County Clerks, Mayors, Judges, and all interested parties were conducted. Finally, the newspaper of general circulation in each county ran the Hearing Notice over 30 days prior to the Hearing. Attendance at the Hearing totaled over 30 individuals. Oral comments were received at the hearing and written comments were received through Monday, June 28, 2010.

### **10.5.2 Initially Prepared Plan Adoption**

IPP Adoption: The PWPG conducted a formal Planning Group meeting prior to the Public Hearing on February 22, 2010. Twenty-two of the 28 PWPG members (including ex-officio members) were in attendance and the IPP was given unanimous approval for submission to the TWDB.

### **10.5.3 Response to Comments**

Response to Comments: Overall, the PWPG received comments from multiple agencies and individuals regarding the IPP. Comments with draft responses were distributed to the PWPG in July. The PWPG carefully considered the comments and proposed responses at the meeting held in August 2010. Formal responses to all comments were made and were added to the plan as directed by the entire board. Overall, comments received from the public were generally favorable, and many covered items already addressed in relevant sections of the IPP. In addition to the comments from the public, the PWPG also addressed comments provided by the TWDB and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department on the various plan components submitted in the IPP submission. Comment responses were handled by the entire Planning Group, and approved comments are included in the Regional Water Plan. A summation of the comments received and the approved responses is included in Appendix P.

### **10.5.4 Final Regional Water Plan Adoption**

The PWPG adopted the final Regional Water Plan for the PWPA on August ##, 2010 and approved the same for submission to the TWDB. The Plan was adopted by a unanimous vote.

## **10.6 Conclusion**

The PWPG has maintained a high level of commitment to public participation throughout the planning process. The PWPG believes that public information and participation activities are at least as important to the success of regional planning initiatives as is the data accumulated and analyzed. A key recommendation of the PWPG is to continue to fund and encourage public information activities throughout all subsequent planning processes.