



June 22, 2017

A Productive Legislative Session for CTWC

June 22nd marks the six-year anniversary of the CTWC's founding, and it's fitting that we pause to recognize this achievement by reflecting on the organization's success during the recently concluded 85th regular session of the Texas Legislature. It was an unusual session, dominated by divisive social and political issues and disagreements between the House and Senate. In the end, business leaders were bewildered, but despite the distractions CTWC was able to make a difference on legislation that will have a favorable effect on responsible water management. Here are a few of the highlights.

Increased Transparency and Participation in Water Planning

Our bill requiring greater transparency and public participation in regional water planning committees PASSED! Senate Bill 347 was sponsored by Sen. Kirk Watson and Rep. Dade Phelan. It was signed by the governor and becomes effective September 1, 2017. The legislation was proposed by CTWC and we were pleased that Sen. Watson agreed to make it a priority for his office. The new law will allow additional input from the public and groups like CTWC in our Region K Group as well as regional planning groups across the state. This was a huge WIN for CTWC and responsible water management. This happened because of CTWC's efforts.

Sunset Review of River Authorities

We spent a HUGE amount of time during the session opposing a bill that would have removed river authorities from sunset review. Thanks to the help of CTWC supporters, we were able to stop it, for now. But with a July 18 special session scheduled to address sunset review of other state agencies, the river authority issue could return. We'll be ready and may be calling on you for help. Here's some insight. ...

Texas has a law known as the Texas sunset review that requires governmental entities to undergo periodic evaluations to ensure they are operating effectively, efficiently and in the interest of the public they serve. In 2015, legislation was passed requiring that the state's river authorities undergo such a review. Since the law's passage, four smaller river authorities have already been reviewed.

Those reviews resulted in positive steps that would enhance transparency and accountability in water management, and included recommendations to require better records retentions and address conflicts of interest.

With Texas river authorities playing such a pivotal role serving communities and managing the state's water, assessing their performance seemed to be a logical step as Texas' population continues to expand.

Remember, it's not just the drought, it's the management of the water we do have that's important.

We don't know what may come up during the special session, but you can be assured that we will be working and watching for any water issues important to Highland Lakes and you. We believe the sunset review of river authorities can be a valuable tool to ensure responsible water management, and we'll oppose efforts to change that.

Watch for an ACTION ALERT that will let you know if we need you to contact your legislators. The voices of CTWC supporters made a difference during the regular session. We may be calling upon you again to speak up!

CTWC's Big Presence at the Texas Capitol Water Day

The success of our efforts during the session started with another highly successful Water Day at the Texas Capitol on March 22. During the day, CTWC volunteers visited 150 of the 181 legislative offices, meeting with legislators and staff, leaving behind material and encouraging responsible management of Texas lakes. State Rep. Paul Workman honored CTWC with the passage of a House resolution recognizing the organization's efforts as a leading advocate on water management issues.

Other CTWC Work

We are attending meetings with TCEQ regarding a watermaster option for the Colorado River. We were shocked to hear TCEQ say it was not their purpose to keep a river flowing, and that they do not address population growth or the environmental impacts of rivers. It appears NO ONE is looking at water from a statewide perspective. Interestingly, our governor VETOED a bill PASSED by both the House and the Senate to study water availability. We were puzzled!

CTWC continues to meet with firm customers and the Texas Water Roundtable Group, and we have been invited to join CAPCOG, the Capital Area Council of Governments, Special Water Issues Committee. It is encouraging to see groups other than CTWC working on the big-picture water issues. It's gratifying when they recognize CTWC as an effective and growing voice for responsible water management.

We have already begun preparing for the NEXT Water Management Plan session, which is set to begin in January 2018. Looking forward to working with the other stakeholders to address needed changes to the existing Plan based on the updated hydrology.

Please visit our website and support our efforts with a donation and receive updates from us. We truly could not do everything we do without YOUR SUPPORT!!

Jo Karr Tedder, President CTWC

www.CentralTexasWaterCoalition.org

