



We are all affected.

**WATER IS CRITICAL,
NOT POLITICAL.**

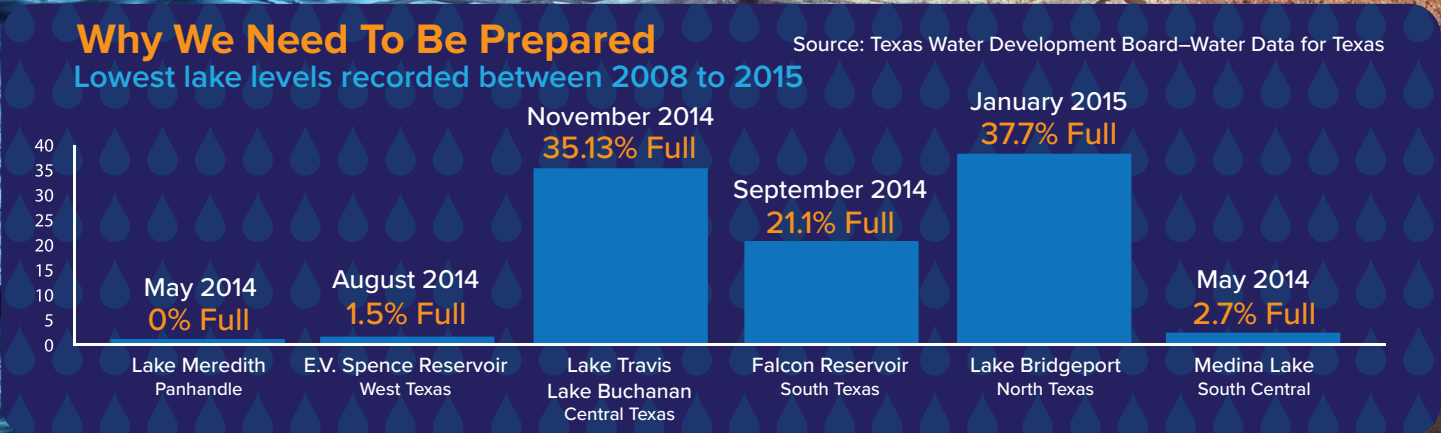
Now is the time to plan



Virtually no part of the state escaped the historic drought experienced from 2008 to 2015. Its effects were unprecedented, impacting the lives of most Texans. Many are still recovering.

San Antonio’s emergency conservation plans were put to the test as levels in the Edwards Aquifer dropped. Restaurants and other businesses along the Highland Lakes in Central Texas closed as the lakes dried up, costing more than \$185 million and 3,648 jobs in Burnet and Llano Counties alone. Austin’s high-tech giants worried about the stability of their water supply.

Abilene’s Hubbard Creek Reservoir — the primary water supply for all the Big Country — almost dried up completely. City officials in Wichita Falls spent \$50,000 a month on cloudseeding efforts. Water planners in the Panhandle worried as soil moisture levels reached critical conditions. And cattle ranchers, unable to feed and water their herds, slaughtered or moved them to other states.

The rains did come and the lakes are full again. That’s why now — when we’re not running out of water — is the best time to plan for future droughts.



Existing Water Supplies*	 2010 16,983,205 Acre-Feet	 2030 16,015,972 Acre-Feet	 2060 15,270,535 Acre-Feet
Texas State Population**	25,145,561 	33,712,020 	46,323,725 

*Projected existing surface water, groundwater, and water from water reuse supplies.

**2010 population is the official population count from the U.S. Census Bureau; 2030 and 2060 represent project population uses in the Texas Water Development Board’s 2012 State Water Plan.

Why we must plan

Texas’ population continues to explode. Data indicates the state is getting hotter and drier, but our water resources are not keeping up with the increased demand. What actions we take now will determine if the Texas Economic Miracle dries up or survives the next inevitable drought.

By 2020, more than 29.5 million Texans will be competing for the same water resources that were almost depleted by 27.7 million Texans in 2015.

By 2030, those same lakes and rivers will have to serve more than 33.6 million Texans. That’s almost 6 million more than there were in 2015.

Texas will suffer another drought. Wisely planning now — when the lakes are full — will avert a future economic disaster of lost jobs and devastated lives the next time our water resources are put to the test.

Planning for the Future:

POLICY ROADMAP

Transparency ~

The most critical water planning decisions in Texas are made by 16 regional water planning groups. Transparency for these groups is vital. In 2013, the Legislature established the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT) and funded it with \$2 billion to support water projects statewide. Proposed water projects must be included in regional water plans and then in the State Water Plan to be eligible for SWIFT funding. This makes the regional groups more influential than ever. But the open government principles of the Texas Open Meetings and Public Information Acts are not always followed within the committees, subcommittees and work groups of the regional water planning groups. The regional water planning process should be transparent and accessible for all Texans.

RECOMMENDATION: Support SB 347 and HB 3027 to ensure the Texas Open Meetings and Public Information Acts apply to all meetings and work of the state's 16 regional water planning groups.

Economic Impact ~

When water resources dry up, economic activity evaporates. But current Texas law does not allow its water agencies to consider economic impacts when they make water management decisions. This puts local tax revenues at risk, threatens the growth of job-creating industries and stresses regional drinking water resources for millions of Texans.

RECOMMENDATION: Support HB 605, which will allow the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to consider the economic impacts on employment, changes in projected revenue of state and local governments, and impacts on businesses and industry when issuing permits.

Desalination ~

Texas is expected to double its population in the next 50 years, and increasing the supply of fresh drinking water will be critical to the state's future. Texas' abundance of brackish groundwater and its 367-mile Gulf Coast makes desalination a critical component to meeting future demands.

RECOMMENDATION: Support HB 2219, which adds desal projects to the list of properties eligible for tax benefits under Section 313 of the Tax Code, and HB 2894/SB 1430, to expedite processing of desal applications at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

New Technology ~

An exploding population and a relatively fixed supply of water resources make it vital that Texas embrace new technologies that save water.

Best practices should be encouraged for all water users. Set water conservation goals for municipal, industrial and agricultural water users. Set water rate structures to encourage conservation and careful stewardship of all water. Consider benefits of outdoor watering ordinances, offering retrofit programs to encourage homeowners to replace leaky toilets and install low-flow showerheads. Encourage recycling and reusing water whenever possible. Utilize new technologies to increase irrigation efficiency, such as drip irrigation, subsurface irrigation, lined canals and water metering.

RECOMMENDATION: Support programs that encourage the reduction of municipal, agricultural and industrial water use, the state's top water use categories.

Updated WAMs ~

Texas water agencies should have the most accurate, up-to-date information available when making critical decisions about our state's future. As Texas gets hotter and drier, it is critical that the hydrological data that provides the basis for predictive water modeling be current, not decades old. Updated studies should be conducted to guarantee Water Availability Models (WAMs) are based on the most current hydrological data.

RECOMMENDATION: Support SB 696, which would update WAMs for the Brazos, Guadalupe, San Antonio and Trinity River Basins. Additionally, water availability models should be updated for all river basins in Texas. Support HB 4006, which updates WAMs for all river basins in Texas.

Water Pricing and Conservation ~

Texas homeowners — who pay the highest water rates in the state — have made vast strides in conserving water. For example, the city of Austin may buy raw water for \$145 per acre-foot, while rice farmers buy raw water from the same entity for about \$11.50 per acre-foot. The higher price for residential customers has encouraged conservation, as evidenced by a 22 percent drop in per-capita consumption for Austin residential customers from 2007 to 2013. Meanwhile, downstream rice farmers, who use the same outdated methods of irrigation, purchase massive quantities of cheap water to kill weeds by flooding their fields. Total water usage for this customer group does not show reductions over time, as there is little incentive to do so when water is cheap. In addition to the inefficient use promoted by the low pricing to agricultural customers, more water is lost through evaporation and seepage on its way to those rice fields, including in their canals. Such losses can total as much as 75 percent of the water that the city of Austin uses in a year. No one pays for the water that is lost, and therefore no one has an incentive to reduce these losses.

RECOMMENDATION: Water pricing should encourage conservation and efficient use; revenues from agricultural user rates could fund basic conservation measures such as lining canals.

Sunset Review of River Authorities Brings Accountability to Management of State's Water Resources

Texas has a tradition of straight talk and open government. That's because Texans aren't shy about standing up for their rights. And we know, to keep rights secure, the actions of decision makers cannot be concealed from Texans.

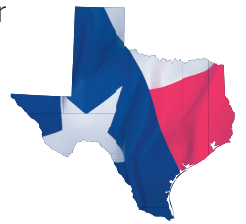
It's in this tradition that the **Central Texas Water Coalition supports the continuation of "Sunset" reviews for Texas' river authorities.**

The laws that created river authorities also entrusted them with specific powers and duties regarding management of vital state resources. The decisions of the appointed boards of these powerful entities affect generations of Texans, yet citizens have had difficulties obtaining information from them and have had little recourse to dispute their actions.

Subjecting these powerful entities to Sunset review encourages good management as well

as providing recommendations for positive changes. Following the passage of SB523 in 2015, the Sunset review for river authorities has already resulted in positive steps toward providing meaningful accountability and transparency to the river authorities that have been reviewed.

Overall, the reviews found that some of the river authorities lacked procedures that would enhance transparency and accountability and suggested measures to ensure compliance with state law. The Sunset Review Commission recommended tangible legislative and executive changes, including adding more opportunity for public testimony at board meetings, better records retention, addressing conflicts of interest in statute and more. These recommendations can improve crucial water management decisions.



Sunset Reviews should be conducted on all Texas river authorities to allow the public and elected officials to discuss their governance and efficiency.

HB 2802 would remove river authorities from the Sunset review process.



The Central Texas Water Coalition is a nonprofit organization advocating for water policies that will preserve the Highland Lakes as irreplaceable natural resources supplying water for two million Central Texans and providing an important economic engine for the State of Texas. Coalition partners include more than 3000 Texas residents, businesses, local government representatives, property owner associations, environmental interests and concerned citizens. All are united by their commitment to protect our future through responsible water management and conservation policies.

centraltexaswatercoalition.org