

**Water Conservation
In-Depth Interviews Summary**

Research Objective

The primary objective is to benchmark existing attitudes and perceptions regarding water conservation in Texas now and in the future among key stakeholder groups.

Research Methodology

One hundred stakeholders were interviewed individually by telephone during the weeks of July 12 through August 7, 2004. The stakeholders were selected at random from a list compiled by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). The list included individuals who are actively involved in water issues and represent a cross section of water regions across Texas and across several major stakeholder groups including:

- Municipalities
- Agriculture
- Industry
- Environmental Groups
- Regional Water Planning Groups
- Federal and State Officials
- Professional Water Conservation Agencies

Figure 1 is a matrix that shows the breakdown of stakeholders by affiliated stakeholder group and by water region. A copy of the questionnaire used in the interviews is included at the end of this section.

Figure 1: Stakeholders by Group and Region	
GROUP	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS
Agriculture	12
Environmental	13
Municipalities	8
Industry	9
Counties	11
Water Districts	13
Water Utilities	6
Public Members	6
Electric Generating Utilities	5
River Authorities	7
State Agencies	3
Small Businesses	6
Other (Regional Water Planning Group)	1

Figure 1: Stakeholders by Group and Region, continued

REGION		NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS
N	Coastal Bend	5
O	Llano Estacado	6
A	Panhandle	7
E	Far West Texas	5
F	West Texas	7
H	Houston Area	7
D	North East Texas	7
B	North Texas	5
I	East Texas Region	7
C	Dallas Area	9
G	Brazos Region (Waco, etc.)	6
J	Plateau Region (Kerrville Area)	6
K	Lower Colorado Region (Austin)	7
M	Rio Grande Region (Laredo, Brownsville)	5
L	South Central Texas Region (San Antonio)	7
P	Lavaca Region	4

Executive Summary

The primary findings from this report are:

Concern about water quantity in Texas runs very high among those most involved in water issues. This issue ranks number one among stakeholders when asked what the biggest environmental problem in Texas is now and will be in the future.

All but one of the stakeholders believe water conservation is important for Texas. However, no one reason alone is driving its importance.

Some of the reasons water conservation is necessary included drought response, the need to develop new water sources and as part of a comprehensive water policy.

Seventy-seven of the 100 respondents are aware of local water conservation strategies in their area.

Stakeholders believe the state is most responsible for ensuring Texas has enough water. However, they also believe the state needs to work closely with local governments, consumers and “everyone else” to get the job done.

Attitudes are mixed regarding whether the State Water Plan places sufficient emphasis on water conservation.

The most important actions state level officials can do include:

- Provide funding, incentives and/or penalties to encourage conservation
- Create stronger laws and mandates

Ninety-six of the 100 stakeholders want to see a statewide educational campaign similar to “Don’t Mess with Texas” for water conservation.

Ninety of the 100 stakeholders are interested in the state providing funding for water conservation. More than half support fees on bottled water sales and almost half support a flat fee on all water meters. Figure 2 is a matrix showing how much support exists for specific funding mechanisms.

Figure 2: Support for Specific Funding Mechanisms	
Fees on bottled water	57%
Flat fee imposed on all water meters	48%
Fee on out of state water suppliers	28%
Increasing the state portion of the sales tax	27%
Using money from the water infrastructure fund	25%
Fees on plumbing fixtures	19%
Fees on water industry goods and services	16%
No support for any funding source	16%
Fee based on water consumption	11%
Write in support for other funding sources	8%

In terms of specific water conservation strategies, a simple index from the results was created that combines stakeholder awareness and perceived effectiveness of nine different strategies, ranked in order as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Water Conservation Strategies Index			
Strategy	Aware	Effective	Index
Public information and outreach	97	94	191
Irrigation practices for agriculture*	94	91	185
Financial/technical support	96	89	185
Land management*	91	83	174
Use of greywater	91	84	175
Agriculture water use management*	80	82	162
Large user strategies	69	82	151
Rainwater harvesting	85	63	148
Individual meter replacement/ Deployment	61	76	137

**Note that irrigation practices for agriculture refer to the efficiency of the technology and systems used to irrigate. Land management designates practices such as brush control or conversion to dryland farming. Agriculture water use management includes water audits.*

Of these nine strategies, all were perceived to be effective by more than two-thirds of the stakeholders, and all but one were perceived as effective by three-quarters.

In addition, when asked separately what the single, most effective strategy for water conservation would be, 38 stakeholders focused on education and public awareness and 29 focused on pricing or rate structures. The remainder was spread among nine other strategies.

Conclusions from the Stakeholder Research

1. Water conservation is the most critical environmental issue in Texas among stakeholders. People who are actively involved in water issues are most concerned about conserving it.
2. Stakeholders believe the state is most responsible for ensuring the water supply in Texas, but they are not convinced the State Water Plan is focused enough on water conservation.
3. Virtually every stakeholder wants to see a statewide campaign to educate the public about the need for water conservation. In fact, education is considered the top strategy for taking conservation to the next level in Texas.
4. Funding for water conservation is highly desirable, with strong support for a bottled water tax and a flat fee on all water meters.
5. Each of the nine water conservation strategies included in the research are favored by most stakeholders. Outside of these strategies, education and public awareness, and pricing or rate structures are preferred by most stakeholders.

See enclosed CD-ROM (disk) at the end of this report for matrix containing complete details on in-depth interviews.