



New Report Makes Recommendations For Future Water Planning in Texas

(Austin, Texas; **MAY 9, 2014**)

A report issued today by the non-profit Texas Center for Policy Studies (TCPS) finds that the current water planning process in Texas tends to over-estimate future water demand and under-estimate the potential for making better use of existing supplies. Richard Lowerre, TCPS Executive Director, said “This report shows that, with more reasonable demand projections and better use of conservation and drought management, the demand/supply gap in 2060 is less than one-half that predicted by the current 2012 State Water Plan issued by the Texas Water Development Board. That is, rather than an 8.3 million acre-feet/year gap between demand and supply in 2060, a more realistic gap is about 3.3 million acre-feet/year.”

The report, [Learning from Drought: Next Generation Water Planning for Texas](#), analyzes the methods used by the state and the 16 regional water planning groups to develop demand and supply projections. “The region-based Texas water planning process was groundbreaking when it first got off the ground 15 years ago. But, times and technologies have changed, and it’s appropriate to look at how the planning process can evolve to give us a better sense of real priorities,” said Mary Kelly, a consultant with Parula, LLC and one of the report’s co-authors. “This is particularly important as the state begins to look at how to spend the new \$ 2 billion water infrastructure fund authorized by voters in November 2013,” she added.

The report makes a number of recommendations for the future of water planning in Texas. For example, it recommends moving away from current “single scenario” forecasts to an approach that looks at a range of future scenarios. “A multiple scenario approach would allow a much more comprehensive look at the kind of choices we make about how water is used and the expense of building new infrastructure versus more efficiently using existing supplies,” said Joe Trungale, an water resources engineer and co-author of the report.

Other recommendations include:

- More reasonable assumptions about the need for water for future steam electric generation;
- Enhanced consideration of drought contingency planning as a supply strategy;
- More thorough consideration of brackish groundwater desalination as a supply strategy;
- Gathering and using more accurate data on current water use;
- Making healthy rivers and bays and vibrant rural economies co-equal with other goals of the water planning process.

“The drought has provided new insights into the vulnerability of communities whose needs have been ignored and into the willingness of Texans to adopt innovative and far-reaching water conservation practices. Combined with the developments in state water financing, a more prominent role for the Texas Water Development Board and heightened public interest in water, now is the time to examine whether we have a planning process that is up to the task,” added Mr. Lowerre.

The Texas Center for Policy Studies is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, founded in 1983. The report is available on the TCPS website at www.texascenter.org.