

2012 Watermaster Evaluation for the Brazos and Colorado River Areas

Staff has completed the initial evaluation of the Brazos and Colorado areas and presents the following for comments by stakeholders. This is staff's initial draft for the Colorado Area.

Colorado Area:

In 2011, the TCEQ received eight (8) priority calls for water in the Colorado River Basin. In the San Saba there were six (6) calls from D&L users which resulted in the suspension of 65 water rights. There was one (1) priority call on the Llano River which resulted in the suspension of 69 water rights and one (1) call on the main stem of the Colorado that resulted in the suspension of fourteen (14) water rights. A total of 148 water rights were suspended in 2011. It should be noted that TCEQ received no priority calls below Lake Buchanan nor in the Colorado-Lavaca Coastal Basin.

Options based on the Colorado findings:

Option 1: Conditions were such in 2011 that water users who felt their senior water rights were threatened placed senior calls which resulted in 148 suspensions. Water right holders in this area may petition the Commission for a watermaster.

Option 2: This option would establish a watermaster in the Colorado River basin above Lake Buchanan and would also include the Llano River watershed to the confluence of the main stem of the Colorado River. This option is based on the priority calls that resulted in 148 suspensions of water rights in 2011 in the Colorado and Llano River watersheds.

Option 2 Cost Estimate

The estimated operating costs for Option 2 would be **\$610,977.00** for the first year and approximately **\$464,768.00** each year thereafter. These figures are based on the current operating costs for the South Texas Watermaster Program. Option 2 is based on 941 water right permits, and while there are 1197 in the South Texas Program, the operating costs and cost per acre-foot would be comparable.

The estimated average cost per water right holder would be calculated on a cost per acre-foot of authorization based on the municipal and consumptive industrial rate, which is the highest. The current cost per acre-foot in South Texas is approximately **\$0.20 per acre foot**. However, this rate may vary with use. For example, while a permit for municipal or consumptive industrial use would pay the **\$0.20 per acre-foot**, a permit holder for irrigation use would pay 80% of the municipal rate, or **\$0.16** per acre foot of authorization. There is also a base fee that has historically been **\$50.00**.

***Note:** These estimates would be subject to change should a full assessment be done based on the differences in the types of use in any given basin or portion of a basin in accordance with 30 TAC Section 304.62(a), Determination of Assessment Rates.*

Option 3: This option would establish a watermaster in the San Saba River watershed only. This option is based on the six (6) priority D&L calls that resulted in 65 suspensions of water rights in 2011.

Option 3 Cost Estimate

The estimated operating costs for Option 3 is **\$112,554.00** for the first year and **\$77,041.00** each year thereafter. These figures are based on the current operating costs for the Concho River Watermaster Program. Option 3 is based on 163 water right permits, and while there are 285 in the Concho Program the operating costs and cost per acre foot would be comparable.

The estimated average cost per water right holder would be calculated on a cost per acre-foot of authorization based on the municipal and consumptive industrial rate, which is the highest. The current cost per acre-foot in the Concho is approximately **\$0.58 per acre foot**. However, this rate may vary with use. For example, while a permit for municipal or consumptive industrial use would pay the **\$0.58 per acre foot** a permit holder for irrigation use would pay 80% of the municipal rate or **\$0.46** per acre foot of authorization. As in Option 2 there is also a base fee that again has historically been **\$50.00**.

Note: *These estimates would be subject to change should a full assessment be done based on the differences in the types of use in any given basin or portion of a basin in accordance with 30 TAC Section 304.62(a), Determination of Assessment Rates.*

Option 4: Staff is soliciting input from the water right holders on potential options not covered in 2 and 3.