

2019 Watermaster Evaluation

Neches River and Sabine River Basins

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Why are we here?

- State law requires TCEQ to evaluate each basin that does not have a watermaster program at least once every five years.
- We must report the findings and make recommendations to the Commission.
- The findings and recommendations must be included in the Biennial Report to the Legislature.

Ways a Watermaster May be Established

- The Executive Director (ED) may appoint a watermaster to an established water division.
- A watermaster may be court appointed.
- The Commission may appoint a watermaster on its own motion if senior water rights have been threatened.
- Twenty-five (25) or more water right holders in a river basin or segment of a river basin may petition for a hearing on whether a watermaster should be appointed.

Functions of a Watermaster

- Allocate water between water right holders on the basis of seniority.
- Minimize the potential impairment of senior water rights.
- Prevent waste or use in excess of quantities to which water right holders are entitled.

Functions of a Watermaster

- Monitor stream flows, reservoir levels, and water use
- Archive data
- Investigate complaints
- Respond quickly
- Report in real time

Evaluation Criteria

- In September 2011, the Commission established the following criteria to be considered during the evaluation process:
 - Has there been a court order to create a watermaster?
 - Have there been petitions requesting a watermaster?
 - Have senior water rights been threatened, based on either the history of senior calls or water shortages within the basin or the number of water right complaints received on an annual basis in each basin?

What are Senior Water Rights?

- “First in Time, First in Right”
 - Oldest (senior) water rights must be satisfied before the later (junior) water rights.
 - The priority date of a water right establishes that place in line of junior and senior water rights.

How Does a Priority Call Happen?

- If a water right is not getting the water they need which is authorized under their permit, they may make a priority call.
- The TCEQ will evaluate the call and make a determination as to whether or not suspending water rights will provide additional water that can be beneficially used.
- If the agency determines that suspensions would provide the water right with additional water, then junior water rights that are suspended will be notified.

Evaluation for Neches River & Sabine River Basins

- No court orders to create a watermaster
- No active or approved petitions
- No priority calls

Evaluation – Options

- Option 1 – No watermaster recommended for any basins.
- Option 2 – Create a watermaster program encompassing both basins.
- Option 3 – Create a watermaster program encompassing the Neches River Basin.
- Option 4 – Create a watermaster program encompassing the Sabine River Basin.

Administration Costs

- State law requires that water right holders in a Watermaster area pay for the costs of administering the program.
 - Annual Fee
- Each account will have base fee, plus a fee based on permitted amounts and uses.

Examples of Costs

- Overall program costs for new watermaster programs are estimated by comparing expenses of existing watermaster programs.
 - Number and location of water rights

Examples of Costs

- Estimated operating costs for covering both basins. (“**Option 2**”)
 - \$506,008 for the first year, and \$399,168 for each year thereafter
- Estimated operating costs for watermaster program in Neches River Basin. (“**Option 3**”)
 - \$374,032 for the first year, and \$297,832 for each year thereafter
- Estimated operating costs for watermaster program in Sabine River Basin. (“**Option 4**”)
 - \$372,338 for the first year, and \$296,081 for each year thereafter

Feedback Requested

Comments must be received at TCEQ by:
Friday, June 19, 2019 @ 5:00 p.m.

Mail comments to:

TCEQ, Water Availability Division

Watermaster Section, MC 160

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Or e-mail comments to:

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More Information?

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