

2020 Watermaster Evaluation Canadian and Red River Basins

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Why are we here?

- State law requires TCEQ to evaluate each basin, which does not have a watermaster, at least once every five years.
- We must report the findings and make recommendations to the TCEQ Commission.
- The findings and recommendations must be included in the TCEQ 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,
 - 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 holder is not getting the water they are 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 holders who are suspended will be notified.



Evaluation for Canadian River & Red 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 either basin.
- Option 2 – Create a watermaster program encompassing the Canadian River and Red River Basins.
- Option 3 – Create a watermaster program encompassing the Red River Basin.



Administration Costs

- State law requires that water right holders in a watermaster area pay for the costs of administering the program.
- Each account, within a watermaster area, has an annual base fee plus a fee connected to permitted amounts and uses.



Examples of Costs

- Overall program costs for new watermaster programs are estimated by comparing expenses of existing watermaster programs. Comparisons are made based on:
 - Number of water rights
 - Location of water rights



Examples of Estimated Costs

- Option 1: No watermaster
 - No cost
- Option 2: Estimated operating costs for covering both the Canadian River and Red River Basins
 - \$491,035 for the first year
 - \$380,806 for each year thereafter
- Option 3: Estimated operating costs for a watermaster program in the Red River Basin
 - \$487,722 for the first year
 - \$377,447 for each year thereafter



Feedback Requested

Comments requested by:
June 30, 2020

Mail comments to:

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More Information?

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