

TCEQ Interoffice Memorandum

To: Commissioners

Thru: Laurie Gharis, Chief Clerk

From: Kim Nygren, Deputy Director, Water Availability Division
Jose Davila, Section Manager, Watermaster Section
Angela Sander, South Texas Watermaster

Date: August 8, 2025

Subject: Docket No. 2025-0679-BGT: Fiscal Year 2026 Assessment of Annual Costs for Watermaster Operations in the South Texas Watermaster Program

The Executive Director (ED) requests that the Commission approve the proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 South Texas Watermaster Program budget and issue an order assessing the annual costs for the program to water right holders owning determined and adjudicated water rights that are administered by the Watermaster. FY2026 begins September 1, 2025, and ends August 31, 2026. The proposed budget and order are included with this filing.

The South Texas Watermaster Program consists of the Nueces, San Antonio, Guadalupe, and Lavaca River Basins, as well as the Lavaca-Guadalupe Coastal Basin, the San Antonio-Nueces Coastal Basin, and the Nueces-Rio Grande Coastal Basin, except that part in Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy, and Starr Counties.

The Commission is required to pay the compensation and necessary expenses of a watermaster, assistant watermasters, and other necessary employees. Water right holders owning determined and adjudicated water rights that are administered by a watermaster are required to reimburse the commission for the annual costs for watermaster operations. Annual costs include the compensation (salaries and benefits) and necessary expenses (operational costs) of a Watermaster, assistant Watermaster, and other necessary employees.

A general summary of requirements and process associated with the annual assessment of costs and levy of assessments to water right holders is as follows:

- The ED must develop a proposed fiscal year budget for each watermaster program that details the annual costs associated with the watermaster program.
- The ED furnishes the proposed fiscal year budget to the program's Watermaster Advisory Committee (WAC) for comment. This must occur at least 30 days before the notice of the proposed fiscal year budget and public hearing is provided to water right holders.
- The WAC reviews and comments on the budget.
- The ED provides notice of the proposed fiscal year budget to all water right holders at least 30 days prior to the Commission Agenda (public hearing) on the proposed fiscal year budget.
- The Commission considers the ED's proposed fiscal year budget and determines the assessment of costs for the watermaster program at a Commission Agenda.

August 8, 2025

- Following the Commission Agenda, the Commission issues an order assessing the annual costs against water right holders.
- The ED calculates the assessment (fee) for each water right and mails individual assessments to water right holders in October.
- Fees are due 30 days from the date of the invoice. Penalties and interest apply to late or installment payments.

The statutory and TCEQ rule requirements that apply to the annual assessment and levy of costs for the South Texas Watermaster Program include: Texas Water Code (TWC) § 11.329 and 30 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §§ 12.1, 12.3, 12.5, 304.61, 304.62, and 304.63.

The ED has estimated the FY2026 operational costs for the South Texas Watermaster Program operations at \$963,073.19. In FY2025, the South Texas Watermaster Program had an assessment collection rate of 100 percent. Using a 100 percent collection rate, the South Texas Watermaster has developed a proposed FY2026 budget for the South Texas Watermaster Program \$963,073.19.

The ED furnished copy of the proposed budget to the South Texas WAC for comment on June 25, 2025. The WAC discussed the proposed budget in its July 9, 2025 meeting and recommended approval of the proposed budget by unanimous vote. The ED mailed notice of the proposed budget and public hearing to water right holders on August 8, 2025. Documentation that the proposed budget was furnished to the WAC and that notice of proposed budget and public hearing was mailed to water right holders is included with this filing.

The ED proposes to calculate and levy assessments to water right holders as follows:

- The ED will use a base charge for each assessment account of \$50.00 (Fifty Dollars).
- The ED will calculate assessment rates for each assessment account consistent with TWC § 11.329 and 30 TAC § 304.61 and in accordance with the procedures set forth in 30 TAC § 304.62.
- The ED will assess costs and levy of assessments for each account in accordance with procedures set forth in 30 TAC § 304.63.
- The ED will assess penalties and interest as set forth in 30 TAC Chapter 12.
- The reinstatement fee for delinquent assessments includes the assessment, penalties, and interest.

The following documents are included with this filing:

- Proposed FY2026 South Texas Watermaster Program budget
- AN ORDER Assessing the Annual Cost of Operation for the South Texas Watermaster Program for the fiscal year beginning September 1, 2025, and ending August 31, 2026: Docket No. 2025-0679-BGT; South Texas Watermaster
- Electronic Mail record dated June 25, 2025, furnishing the proposed FY2026 South Texas Watermaster Program budget to the WAC
- Public Meeting Notice to Water Right Holders in the South Texas Watermaster Program, Docket No. 2025-0679-BGT, Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Proposed Assessment for the South Texas Watermaster Program and affidavit

South Texas Watermaster Operations

Annual Appropriation Information

Fund Balance as of 9/1/24	\$ 672,679.16
Projected Fund Balance as of 9/1/25	\$ 632,883.51
6 Month Operational Baseline-FY25 Budget	\$ 442,437.36
FY25 Collection Rate	100%
FY25 Assessment needed based on Collection Rate	\$ 884,874.66
FY25 Revenue as of 06/01/2025	\$ 881,829.31

FY25 Assessment Compared to Proposed FY26 Assessment

Budget Categories		FY25 Assessment	Proposed FY26 Assessment	Difference between FY26 to FY25
Salaries		\$544,999.39	\$545,327.27	\$327.88
Longevity		\$7,835.40	\$7,330.60	(\$504.80)
Salary Enhancements	(1)	\$10,899.99	\$10,906.55	\$6.56
Salaries Subtotal		\$563,734.78	\$563,564.42	-\$170.36
Fringe	(2)	\$147,613.72	\$149,509.21	\$1,895.49
Employee Retirement-State Contribution	a) \$43,599.95		\$43,626.18	\$26.23
Employee Insurance-State Contribution	b) \$31,629.81		\$34,043.91	\$2,414.11
State OASI Matching Contribution	c) \$32,699.96		\$32,719.64	\$19.67
Retiree Payroll Health Contribution	d) \$39,684.00		\$39,119.48	(\$564.52)
Additional Insurance and Retirement	(3)	\$8,456.02	\$8,179.91	(\$276.11)
SORM	(4)	\$484.77	\$573.58	\$88.81
SWCAP	(5)	\$3,812.77	\$6,722.48	\$2,909.71
Employee Benefits Subtotal		\$160,367.28	\$164,985.18	\$4,617.90
LAR Capital	(6)	\$0.00	\$52,000.00	\$52,000.00
Professional/Temp Services	(7)	\$63,489.60	\$63,489.60	\$0.00
Travel In-State	(8)	\$6,400.00	\$6,585.00	\$185.00
Travel Out-of-State		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Training		\$1,400.00	\$1,400.00	\$0.00
Rent - Building	(9)	\$30,001.00	\$48,331.00	\$18,330.00
Postage		\$2,400.00	\$2,400.00	\$0.00
Phone/Utilities		\$13,754.00	\$13,940.00	\$186.00
Supplies - Consumables		\$800.00	\$800.00	\$0.00
Other Operating Expenses	(10)	\$2,340.00	\$2,340.00	\$0.00
Fuels/Lubricants		\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$0.00
Rent - Machine & Other		\$3,188.00	\$3,188.00	\$0.00
Facilities, Furniture & Equip	(11)	\$12,000.00	\$15,050.00	\$3,050.00
Capital Equipment - Non LAR	(12)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Operating Expenses Subtotal		\$160,772.60	\$234,523.60	\$73,751.00
Total Budget		\$884,874.66	\$963,073.19	\$78,198.53

FY26 Salaries Subtotal of FY26 Total Budget	58.52%
FY26 Employee Benefits Subtotal of FY26 Total Budget	17.13%
FY26 Operating Expenses Subtotal of FY26 Total Budget	24.35%

FY26 Proposed Assessment Calculation

FY26 Operating Budget Needs:	\$963,073.19
Assessment Needed Based on Collection Rate: 100%	\$963,073.19

Historical Assessment Comparison

	FY24	FY25	FY26
Total Assessment:	\$874,543.60	\$884,874.66	\$963,073.19
Municipal Rate (per AF)	\$0.2324	\$0.2335	\$0.2477

Notes:

- (1) Salary Enhancements are calculated at 2% of FY26 budgeted salaries. These are projections only; actual expenditures will vary based on salary actions approved by management.
- (2) Fringe includes employee benefits such as health insurance, social security insurance, and retirement. Fringe is calculated at 27.4% of total salaries. Fringe will vary year-to-year based on actual costs.
- (3) Additional Health Insurance (1%) and Retirement (0.5%) as required under Article IX, Sections 17.04 and 17.08 of the General Appropriations Act.
- (4) State Office of Risk Management (SORM) is a fee that is charged annually to the TCEQ. The amount is estimated during budget development and actual expenditure may vary.
- (5) Statewide Cost Allocation Plan (SWCAP) is a fee that is charged annually to the TCEQ for central services. The amount is estimated during budget development and actual expenditure may vary.
- (6) Legislative Appropriation Request (LAR) Capital includes all items exceeding \$100,000 in total agency cost (for example: vehicles, computers, monitoring equipment), and must have legislative approval.
- (7) Professional/Temp Services includes but is not limited to software development costs, summer interns, and temporary employees.
- (8) Travel In-State maximum amounts are established at an agency level; an increase in WM travel funding cannot be accommodated without a corresponding decrease in travel funding in another agency program.
- (9) A proportionate share of the annual TCEQ Regional Office building rent is charged to the Watermaster Program.
- (10) Other Operating Expenses includes items designated by the Texas Comptroller's Office that do not fall into any remaining budget category (for example: annual vehicle inspection fees, vehicle decals, etc.).
- (11) Facilities, Furniture & Equipment (FFE) includes but is not limited to non-LAR equipment less than \$5,000 in cost, non-consumable supplies, vehicle maintenance and repairs, etc.
- (12) Capital Equipment - Non LAR includes capital items with a cost between \$5,000 and \$24,999.

TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



AN ORDER Assessing the Annual Cost of Operation for the South Texas Watermaster Program for the fiscal year beginning September 1, 2025, and ending August 31, 2026: Docket No. 2025-0679-BGT; South Texas Watermaster

On September 10, 2025, after proper notice and public hearing as provided in Texas Water Code § 11.329, came to be considered by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (Commission) the matter of cost for the South Texas Watermaster Program for the fiscal year beginning September 1, 2025, and ending August 31, 2026. After reviewing the supporting documentation, the Commission finds as follows:

1. The South Texas Watermaster Program consists of the Nueces, San Antonio, Guadalupe, and Lavaca River Basins, as well as the Lavaca-Guadalupe Coastal Basin, the San Antonio-Nueces Coastal Basin, and the Nueces-Rio Grande Coastal Basin, except that part in Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy, and Starr Counties.
2. Pursuant to Texas Water Code (TWC) § 11.329 and 30 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) § 304.61, the holders of determined or adjudicated water rights administered by the Watermaster shall reimburse the Commission for the compensation and necessary expenses of a Watermaster, assistant Watermasters, and other necessary employees.
3. Pursuant to TWC § 11.329, the Executive Director (ED) has developed a proposed budget for South Texas Watermaster Program operations showing the amount of compensation and expenses that will be required for program administration for the fiscal year beginning September 1, 2025, and ending August 31, 2026. The compensation and necessary expenses of a Watermaster, assistant Watermaster, and other necessary employees will require \$963,073.19 (Nine Hundred Sixty-Three Thousand, Seventy-Three Dollars and Nineteen Cents) in assessment income. Based on a collection rate of 100 percent, the ED has proposed an amount to be assessed in the sum of \$963,073.19 (Nine Hundred Sixty-Three Thousand, Seventy-Three Dollars and Nineteen Cents).
4. Pursuant to TWC § 11.329(b) the proposed budget was furnished to the South Texas Watermaster Advisory Committee for comment on June 25, 2025.
5. Pursuant to TWC § 11.329(b), notice of the proposed budget and public hearing was mailed to water right holders on August 8, 2025.
6. Pursuant to 30 TAC § 304.61, the ED filed a copy of the proposed budget with the Commission.
7. 30 TAC §§ 304.61-304.63 set forth the basis, formulas and procedures for the assessment of costs of the Watermaster operations in the South Texas Watermaster Program.
8. Pursuant to TWC § 11.329(g) and 30 TAC § 304.61, the Commission shall not assess costs against a holder of a non-priority hydroelectric right that owns or operates privately-owned facilities that collectively have a capacity of less than two megawatts.
9. Pursuant to TWC § 11.329(g), the Commission shall not assess costs against a holder of a water right placed in the Texas Water Trust for a term of at least 20 years.
10. The ED has proposed a base charge for each assessment account of \$50.00 (Fifty Dollars).

11. 30 TAC Chapter 12 sets forth the requirements regarding penalties and interest for delinquent fees.
12. Pursuant to 30 TAC § 304.63(c), water may not be diverted, taken, stored, by any diverter or agent while any assessment payment is delinquent.
13. Pursuant to 30 TAC § 304.61, the ED has proposed that the reinstatement fee for delinquent assessments include the assessment fee, penalties, and interest.
14. The assessment, charges, fees, formulas for assessment rates, and method for assessing and levying costs, assessments, penalties, and interest approved below are consistent with 30 TAC §§ 304.61-304.63 and 30 TAC Chapter 12 and constitute an equitable apportionment of costs, as required by Texas Water Code § 11.329.
15. All requirements of Texas Water Code § 11.329 and 30 TAC §§ 304.61-304.63 have been met.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED BY THE TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY:

1. That the amount of \$963,073.19 (Nine Hundred Sixty-Three Thousand, Seventy-Three Dollars and Nineteen Cents) is approved as the total amount to be assessed for annual costs of operations of the South Texas Watermaster during the fiscal year beginning September 1, 2025, and ending August 31, 2026, and that such amount is assessed against the water rights holders in the South Texas Watermaster Program in the manner described in this order and pursuant to 30 TAC §§ 304.61-304.63.
2. That the following charges, rates, fees, formulas for assessment rates, and method for assessing and levying costs, penalties, and interest are approved and shall be implemented by the Executive Director:
 - a. A base charge for each assessment account of \$50.00 (Fifty Dollars);
 - b. Assessment rates for each assessment account are to be calculated by the Executive Director consistent with TWC § 11.329 and 30 TAC § 304.61 and in accordance with the procedures set forth in 30 TAC § 304.62;
 - c. Assessment of costs and levy of assessments for each account are to be in accordance with procedures set forth in 30 TAC § 304.63;
 - d. Penalties and interest are to be assessed as set forth in 30 TAC Chapter 12;
 - e. The reinstatement fee for delinquent assessments includes the assessment, penalties, and interest; and
 - f. The Executive Director shall specify dates by which an assessment pursuant to this order shall be paid or postmarked.

Texas Commission on
Environmental Quality

For the Commission

Date Signed

From: [Angela Sander](#)
To: [Cameron Ocker](#); [Charles Hickman](#); [Chase Clark](#); [Esteban Ramos](#); [Greg Rodriguez](#); [Gregg Eckhardt](#); [Gregg Tieten](#); [Jeffrey Holt](#); [John Byrum](#); [Mario Escobar](#); [Michael Pawelek](#); [Michael Short](#); [Pablo Martinez](#); [Ryan Bayle](#); [Scott Hartl](#); [Steven Metzler](#); [Stuart Barron](#)
Cc: [Jose Davila](#); [Kim Nygren](#); [Iliana Spaeth](#); [Stephen Kinal](#); [Ashley Miller](#)
Subject: South Texas Watermaster Advisory Committee Meeting
Date: Wednesday, June 25, 2025 9:14:17 PM
Attachments: [STWAC Agenda_07.09.2025.pdf](#)
[south-texas-wac-bylaws.pdf](#)
[2024_07_11_minutes_south_texas_water_master_advisory_committee.pdf](#)
[Draft - STWAC Bylaws.06.25.2025.docx](#)
[Draft - STWAC Bylaws.06.25.2025.pdf](#)
[FY26 South Texas Watermaster Proposed Budget.pdf](#)

Dear committee members and prospective members:

Attached you will find the following documents in advance of the July 9, 2025, WAC meeting. TCEQ's watermaster section reviewed the bylaws of all watermaster programs and observed there were differences among them, and concluded some of the terminology in them was unclear, and asked TCEQ legal team to review. The programs subsequently decided to suggest that the WACs revise their bylaws in order to ensure regulatory consistency and to clarify terms that seem unclear or outdated.

- Minutes
- Agenda
- FY26 Proposed Budget
- Current Bylaws (PDF), Draft Bylaws with revisions noted (MS Word), and one version of the draft bylaws with revisions accepted (PDF)

Thank You,



Angela Sander
South Texas & Concho Watermaster
TCEQ - 14250 Judson Rd, San Antonio, TX 78233
210-416-3997 (Cell)

Brooke T. Paup, *Chairwoman*
Bobby Janecka, *Commissioner*
Catarina R. Gonzales, *Commissioner*
Kelly Keel, *Executive Director*



TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Protecting Texas by Reducing and Preventing Pollution

TO: Water Right Holders in the South Texas Watermaster Program

**RE: Docket No. 2025-0679-BGT
Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Proposed Assessment for the South Texas Watermaster Program**

The above-referenced matter will be considered by the commissioners of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) during the public meeting on **September 10, 2025**. The meeting will begin at **9:30 a.m.** The agenda meeting may be held in person in **Room 201S of Building E** at the Commission's office located at **12100 Park 35 Circle in Austin, Texas**, virtually, or both in person and virtually. For information on how to participate, please visit the Commissioners' Agenda webpage at https://www.tceq.texas.gov/agency/decisions/agendas/comm/comm_agendas.html eight days before the Agenda.

This item is Docket No. 2025-0679-BGT, Consideration of the assessment of annual costs for Watermaster operations in the South Texas Watermaster Program which consists of the Nueces, San Antonio, Guadalupe, and Lavaca River Basins, as well as the Lavaca-Guadalupe Coastal Basin, the San Antonio-Nueces Coastal Basin, and the Nueces-Rio Grande Coastal Basin, except that part in Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy, and Starr Counties.

The compensation and necessary expenses of the South Texas Watermaster Program for FY 2026 is **\$963,073.19**. Of this amount, **\$728,549.60** are needed for program staff base salaries and benefits (including costs of longevity, salary enhancements, fringe, additional insurance, retirement, State Office of Risk Management, and statewide cost allocation plan) and **\$234,523.60** are needed for program operating costs. Based on a 100% collection rate, these necessary expenses require a total assessment of **\$963,073.19** with a municipal rate of **\$0.2477**.

This notice is provided to all holders of water rights as required by the Texas Water Code § 11.329. Notice of the South Texas Watermaster Advisory Committee (WAC) budget meeting was given on June 6, 2025; the South Texas WAC members were provided the proposed assessment and budget on June 25, 2025; and the WAC budget meeting was held on July 9, 2025.

If you have any questions or would like a copy of the proposed budget, please contact the South Texas Watermaster's Office at (800) 733-2733 or (210) 403-4041, or via email at southtexaswm@tceq.texas.gov.

Español al reverso

Brooke T. Paup, *Presidenta*
Bobby Janecka, *Comisionado*
Catarina R. Gonzales, *Comisionada*
Kelly Keel, *Directora Ejecutiva*



COMISIÓN DE CALIDAD AMBIENTAL DE TEXAS

Protegiendo a Texas Reduciendo y Previniendo la Contaminación

PARA: Titulares de Derechos de Agua en el Programa South Texas Watermaster

RE: N.º de expediente 2025-0679-BGT
Tasación propuesta para el año fiscal 2026 para el programa del comisionado del agua del Sur de Texas, conocido como South Texas Watermaster

El asunto mencionado anteriormente será considerado por los comisionados de la Comisión de Calidad Ambiental de Texas (TCEQ) durante la reunión pública del **10 de septiembre de 2025**. El encuentro comenzará a las **9:30 horas**. La reunión de la agenda puede llevarse a cabo en persona en la **Sala 201S del Edificio E** en la oficina de la Comisión ubicada en **12100 Park 35 Circle en Austin, Texas**, virtualmente, o tanto en persona como virtualmente. Para obtener información sobre cómo participar, visite la página web de la Agenda de los Comisionados en https://www.tceq.texas.gov/agency/decisions/agendas/comm/comm_agendas.html ocho días antes de la Agenda.

Este punto es el Expediente No. 2025-0679-BGT, Consideración de la tasación de los costos anuales de las operaciones de Watermaster en el Programa Watermaster del Sur de Texas, conocido como South Texas Watermaster, que consiste en la Cuenca del Sur de Texas que incluye las Cuencas de los Ríos Nueces, San Antonio, Guadalupe y Lavaca, así como la Cuenca Costera Lavaca-Guadalupe, la Cuenca Costera San Antonio-Nueces y la Cuenca Costera Nueces-Río Grande, excepto esa parte en los condados de Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy y Starr.

La compensación y los gastos necesarios del South Texas Watermaster para el año fiscal 2026 es de **\$963,073.19**. De esta cantidad, se necesitan **\$728,549.60** para los sueldos y beneficios básicos del personal del programa (incluidos los costos de antigüedad, mejoras salariales, complementos, seguros adicionales, jubilación, Oficina Estatal de Administración de Riesgos y plan estatal de asignación de costos) y **\$234,523.60** para los costos operativos del programa. Con base en una tasa de recaudación del 100%, estos gastos necesarios requieren una tasación total de **\$963,073.19** con una tasa municipal de **\$0.2477**.

Este aviso se proporciona a todos los titulares de derechos de agua según lo requerido por el Código de Aguas de Texas § 11.329. El 6 de junio de 2025 se dio aviso de la reunión presupuestaria del Comité Asesor del South Texas Watermaster (WAC); el 25 de junio de 2025, los miembros de South Texas WAC recibieron la tasación y el presupuesto propuestos; y la reunión presupuestaria del WAC se llevó a cabo el 9 de julio de 2025.

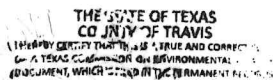
Si tiene alguna pregunta o desea una copia del presupuesto propuesto, comuníquese con la Oficina del South Texas Watermaster al (800) 733-2733 o (210) 403-4041, o por correo electrónico al southtexaswm@tceq.texas.gov.

The seal of the State of Texas, featuring a five-pointed star in the center, surrounded by a wreath of olive and oak branches. The words "THE STATE OF TEXAS" are inscribed around the perimeter of the seal.

COUNTY OF TRAVIS

Laurie Harris

SEAL



ALL 08 2025

UPON COMPLETION OF JUDICIAL MY HAND AND THE
SEAL OF THE COURT

LAURENCE H. JAMES, AICL CLERK
TECHNICAL ASSISTANT, ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY