

## Summary of Minutes

Water Conservation Advisory Council Workgroup Meeting and Conference Call  
Workgroup: Agriculture

Date: November 30, 2023  
Time: 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Location: Remote (GoToMeeting)

<u>Members/Alternates</u>	<u>Interested Parties</u>	<u>TWDB Staff</u>
John Bender (Meeting Chair)	Dan Hunter	Mala Heger
Mitch Conine	Jay Bragg	Antonio Delgado
Leah Martinsson	Amy Graham	Jaclyn Buck
Stacy Pandey	Daniel Nix	Taylor Nickell
Whitney Milberger	Corey Perry	Denise Livingston
David Villarreal	Darren Turley	
Wayne Halbert		

Links from meeting conversation:

[Status and Trends of Irrigated Agriculture in Texas – Texas Water Resources Institute](#)

I. Introduction of Participants

II. Approval of Gate Automation BMP. Stacy Pandey explained the gate automation BMP. Several irrigation districts have already adopted the gate automation BMP and it is becoming a standard practice. Gate automation takes existing structures and adds automation that regulates the water flow into canal systems. The automate surface water irrigation system is tied into a Skeeter network and can then be monitored remotely to regulate flows better.

The cost estimate portion of the BMP needs to be updated prior to the BMP going to full council for approval. Wayne Halbert and Stacy will work with Tom McLemore, Harlingen Irrigation District, to finalize estimates.

There was consensus from the work group to approve the BMP with updated costs and move to Council for further action.

III. Legislative Recommendations. John reviewed past legislative recommendations issued in 2022.

- Replenish funding in the Agricultural Water Conservation Fund sufficient to support TWDB's grant and loan program for the next ten years. (\$15 million). **Adopted in the House but not the Senate.**
- Continue agricultural water conservation grant funding at or above the current level of \$1,200,000. **Funding increased to \$1,500,000.**
- Expansion of the agricultural water conservation program through an increase in funding and additional TWDB staff to support program expansion. **Funding received and 1 FTE for 2024 and 1 FTE for 2025 approved.**
- Provide the TWDB with authority and financial resources sufficient to incorporate a statewide ET network into the existing TexMesonet program mission. **HB 2759**

**authorized TWDB to establish the TexMesonet Hydrometeorology Network and the TexMesonet Advisory Committee.**

Leah Martinsson proposed renewing the recommendation to continue funding agriculture water conservation grant.

Leah will follow up on the status of TexMesonet and determine appropriate recommendation and funding level.

No new recommendations at this time.

IV. Other Discussion – Discussion was held on creating the agriculture report section of the legislative report. What are current trends, issues, practices, conservation successes? Any promising research?

A sub-committee was created to help compile the report to legislature. Participants include Antonio Delgado, Jaclyn Buck, Jay Bragg, Amy Graham, Leah Martinsson, David Villarreal, Wayne Halbert, and John Bender.

Leah also recommended getting other field experts involved, i.e., Dana Porter, Jordan Bell, Katie Lewis.

Discussion was held about including a few manufacturers. WCAC may want to mention in the report companies that are working on developing new technologies.

Jay mentioned that there was a past status of agriculture report done several years ago that can be used as a template. [Status and Trends of Irrigated Agriculture in Texas – Texas Water Resources Institute](#)

VI. Future meeting to be held prior to February WCAC meeting - to be determined.

VII. Adjourn