

Accelerating Conservation Analysis in Texas

Outline of Ideas & Opportunities

Municipal Work Group Discussion

Background:

Formal program analysis is one of the hardest things to achieve in conservation program implementation. The data is complex, there are many confounding variables making it difficult to draw clear conclusions, and completing formal write-ups of analysis is time-consuming. For all of these reasons program analyses are either not done or completed and not shared in a way that benefits other conservation practitioners. This situation can be changed with a program aimed at encouraging analysis and sharing of results.

Opportunities:

- Texas has unusually progressive utilities pursuing water efficiency programs and education initiatives. There is a wide pool of programs to look at and share successes and lessons learned.
- Water efficiency networks have been developed in three regions that allow facilitate sharing of program ideas and even development of regional initiatives.
- An on-line resource for conservation planning savetexaswater.org is maintained by the TWDB as a location for sharing information among conservation practitioners.
- Academic programs in Texas Universities exist where undergraduate and graduate students are gaining the skills needed to complete in-depth analyses and formal reports. Often these students and their academic advisors are seeking hands-on experience for their students to apply what they are learning.
- Internship programs that have taken place in some utilities have demonstrated that qualified students can enhance the ability of a utility to document their program progress.

What Is Missing?

- Utilities are always careful with funding for staffing and most cannot manage a consistent funded internship program.
- Academic programs have an interest in water conservation, but need access to data and some financial support to ensure that faculty time can be dedicated to its analysis and reporting.

Proposal:

- Create a program structure for paid internships that would be a cost-share between a funding source and utilities.
- Internships would be competitive for both utilities which would have to specify what interns would work on and how they would receive support from staff and for students who would have to demonstrate the academic rigor and faculty support necessary for them to be effective resources.
- Experienced utility conservation practitioners would provide a “peer review” component of the program evaluation plans and reports.

Potential Partners:

Texas Water Foundation
AWWA Texas Water Conservation & Reuse
Texas Living Waters
Alliance for Water Efficiency
Municipal Utility Districts
Texas Universities and Institutes

Question:

Is this something the WCAC would like to support as a project of the Municipal Working Group?