



# GLENN ROGERS



TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE

*District 60*

## **Refreshing Texas' Water Supply**

As Texans, we can all agree that whether you are at my ranch on the Brazos River, patrolling the United States-Mexico Border on the Rio Grande, or vacationing on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, there is nothing as awe-inspiring as the natural beauty of Texas water.

Yet, as Texas's population and economy continues to grow exponentially, people are asking more frequently about the state of Texas's water infrastructure. With more and more gallons being pumped out of our state's wells, rivers, and aquifers into booming residential, commercial, and industrial developments, there is a fear that eventually, Texas is going to dry up. Fortunately, even with Texas's population projected to hit 50 million people in the next 50 years, our state's water infrastructure is well-prepared to weather the storm of the state's rapid expansion.

Between 1949 and 1957, Texas's total rainfall fell by almost half across the state, creating the most severe, prolonged drought ever recorded in the history of Texas. For seven years, rural and urban Texans alike struggled to get access to water for cooking, cleaning, and drinking. Over 100,000 farms and ranches went out of business, the rural population sharply declined, and the economic loss totaled over \$27 billion in today's money. When the drought ended in 1957, the Texas Legislature took decisive action to make sure that the state had a comprehensive water security system to prevent a tragedy like this from ever happening again.

Those reforms created the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), the Texas Water Rights Commission, and the Texas Water Quality Board. In the 1990s, these agencies were consolidated into a singular Texas Water Development Board. In 2013, the 83rd Legislature reorganized TWDB into a singular agency staffed by three full-time directors and expanded its ability to develop and finance water in the State of Texas. The most significant of those abilities, beginning in 1961, was to create a State Water Plan every five years to forecast the demands, supply, and

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necessary expansions of the water network for the next 50 years, ensuring the state has adequate water resources for all Texans. The plan must include enough water to protect the state in case of drought, measured against the severity of the 1950s disaster.

The Texas Water Development Board develops its five-year plan based on local proposals submitted by the state's sixteen regional water planning areas. These proposals include population projections, water demand projections, current water supplies, economic impacts, potential shortages, and possible projects to meet the increased demand. Currently, House District 60 is split between two planning regions: Region G, which includes Callahan, Eastland, Hood, Palo Pinto, Shackelford, and Stephens counties, and Region F, which provides for Brown and Coleman counties. Alongside these geographic planning regions, the TWDB utilizes an annual Water Use Survey, which gathers data from all entities that use Texas water to create accurate estimates of the current and future demand for water resources five decades in the future. The primary water using entities estimated by the state include — municipal, irrigation, manufacturing, livestock, mining, and steam-electric power.

Currently, Texas is operating under the 2022 State Water Plan, which was adopted in July 2021. This plan forecasts that Texas will need an extra 3 million acre-feet of water supplies by 2030. In the United States, water is measured in "acre-feet/year," which is around 325,851 gallons per acre-foot — about the size of an eight-lane swimming pool. This means Texas will need to supply an additional 800 billion gallons of water to meet the demand in the coming decade.

So, how does Texas plan to meet this increasing demand? TWDB operates as one of the largest central banks for cities and political subdivisions to finance water development operations. The Board approves a variety of low-interest loans, bonds, and financial assistance to political subdivisions under a wide range of specifications to fund municipal water projects. The

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development of these operations is known as "water development strategies." The low-cost loans are vital to making sure our cities and counties, especially in more rural areas, can effectively meet the pressing demand for water in their communities. In House District 60 alone, the total tab of recommended projects by the Texas Water Development Board is over \$580 million across our eight counties. That number only accounts for new projects in the state. As the years go on, water infrastructure, such as piping, requires replacement and maintenance to keep drinking water safe. These funds, grants, and authorized loans keep the water flowing in our communities.

As a result of planning and foresight by the State of Texas, even with over a thousand people relocating to Texas every day, our state is well on the way to making sure every family, factory, and business has access to enough water to stay afloat; however, there is always room for improvement. In Texas, legislative agencies are streamlined and reorganized by a process known as Sunset review. The Sunset Advisory Commission is made up of five state representatives, five state senators, and two members of the public. The Commission reviews Texas agencies and makes recommendations to the Legislature to be adopted in the following session. This year, the Texas Water Development Board is up for Sunset once again. The public is invited to submit comments about what works and what could be improved for the organization that oversees water in Texas. To submit testimony, you can email [sunset@sunset.texas.gov](mailto:sunset@sunset.texas.gov) or send comments online at [www.sunset.texas.gov](http://www.sunset.texas.gov).