



Water Management in Central Texas

Envision Central Texas Summary and Statement of Position

October 2010

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Summary and Statement of Position

In 2001, Envision Central Texas (ECT) was created to assist in the public development and implementation of a regional vision addressing the growth of Central Texas. Our ongoing role is to serve as a catalyst for regional cooperation and planning in order to realize the common Vision elements as appropriate across the many communities of Central Texas. These elements focus on preserving and enhancing our natural resources, economic vitality, social equity and overall quality of living. The principles articulated in the regional Vision include:

- An effective transportation system that improves mobility throughout the region, increases choices of how we get around, including roads, rail, trails and bikeways, and is coordinated with land use planning.
- **Protection of our environment and natural resources so we will have the open space, parks and trails that people cherish, preserve our ecologically sensitive land and ensure sustainable clean water and air for future generations.**
- A diverse and thriving economy with a robust base of businesses throughout the region and quality job opportunities for our citizens.
- A variety of housing choices that are affordable for everyone in the region and offer a mix of styles, such as neighborhoods with pedestrian-friendly streets or housing within walking distance of transit and stores.
- Preservation of our region's unique character by protecting and enhancing our neighborhoods, towns, rural areas, historic sites and special sense of place.
- An understanding that social equity and racial harmony are core values that strengthen us and actions that foster respect, civility and opportunities for all.
- **A region-wide understanding that our fortunes are tied together requiring planning, participation and collaboration by stakeholders throughout our region to ensure a successful and livable Central Texas in the future.**

Over the last few years, as ECT has promoted a change in the way growth is viewed and managed in our region, water has become an increasingly dominant concern. With our population doubling approximately every 20 years and recent severe drought conditions, the need for conservation, efficient use and planning of this finite resource has become increasingly urgent. In addition to growing demand and limited supply, issues such as funding challenges, aging or insufficient infrastructure, conflicts over control and authority, and water quality degradation all impact whether or not we will have enough clean water to support the economic and quality of life endeavors of our own and future generations. Because of the importance of water and the challenges inherent in the coordination and management of this resource in the region, the ECT Board of Directors recommended the creation of a working group to examine water issues and to develop a position statement.

In June 2010, ECT launched the Water Working Group, comprised of people who work on water issues every day across Central Texas, to discuss and highlight those water issues of greatest resonance

in our region. Guided by ECT's mission, we are striving to elevate the conversation about complex growth issues and help disparate groups work together toward solutions. Our intention is to add value to the conversation regarding water in the upcoming legislative session and beyond, while fully recognizing that this is a challenging issue that already involves many state and local agencies.

The ECT Water Working Group examined a diverse range of water-related issues, from data to public awareness to who has control, particularly as they apply to Central Texas. They did not attempt to cover all possible issues, or rank them in priority, but rather to capture the essence of those they felt were most significant at this time. The "Water Growth Management in Central Texas Working Group Report" summarizes the status of these issues, key concerns and relevance within our region. While this paper strives to lay out an ambitious legislative context for water issues that may arise in the upcoming 82nd Texas Legislative Session, clearly these are complex issues that can take years to work through. Rather than taking positions on particular legislative issues, the Working Group drew out key themes and recommended a set of principles that can serve to inform, and ideally be exemplified in, legislation addressing water issues in Central Texas.

ECT's interest is to elevate the conversation in a sincere and meaningful way and to establish a framework and approach that will foster ongoing, thoughtful dialogue in the region. With the issue summaries and key principles in mind, and with an awareness of the context of our moment in time, below is our position statement along with recommendations for ECT action steps for the coming legislative session. As with all ECT products, and central to the concept of a long-term regional Vision, these positions are dynamic – as we apply these principles to our actions and as we make progress on the Vision, our position statements will evolve appropriately in pursuit of the Vision.

ECT Position Statement and Action Steps

Envision Central Texas believes that improving how we manage water resources in Central Texas is as core to sustaining quality of life and economic competitiveness in our region as are improving land use and transportation. Water issues of every kind are ever present in ECT activities and our communities, urban and rural. ECT will seek opportunities to educate our supporters and legislators on the importance of water related legislation that exemplifies these key principles:

- Uses the best data and research possible on water resources;
- Promotes the long-term public interest in water policy implementation;
- Encourages and funds new strategies in water conservation and management;
- Coordinates for impacts across ecosystems and infrastructure.

During the upcoming 82nd Legislative Session, there will be limited but vital opportunities for various water related issues and legislation to be introduced and debated. Beyond the 82nd Legislative Session, improving how we manage water resources will continue to be an important and energizing

conversation. ECT will seek opportunities to highlight water planning and investment that exemplify these principles through our ongoing activities and public outreach efforts.

Water Working Group Members

Steve Box, Environmental Stewardship
John Burke, Region K Water Planning Group
Kent Butler, University of Texas at Austin
Heather Cooke, Austin Water Utility
Joe Cooper, Lost Pines Groundwater
Conservation District
Trey Fletcher, City of Pflugerville
Oscar Fogle, Guadalupe-Blanco River
Authority

Kirk Holland, Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer
Conservation District
Matt Hollon, City of Austin
Dick Kallerman, Sierra Club
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Resources/information provided by:

Steve Coonan, Alan Plummer Assoc.
David Fowler, Capital Area Council of Governments
Jeff Fox, Austin Water Utility

For any questions, clarifications or requests for further discussion on this Position Statement, please contact Sally Campbell, ECT Executive Director, at 512-916-6037 and scampbell@envisioncentraltexas.com.