



# Question & Answer with Heather Harward

*H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>TEXAS Coalition promotes state water plan implementation*

The 2012 State Water Plan: Water for Texas was delivered to the governor by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) in January 2012. The report conveys a somber message: In drought conditions, Texas does not have enough water, according to a press release on the TWDB website. The state water planning process ensures the state's water resources are reviewed regularly, and the process ends with the development of a state water plan every five years. The state water plan addresses the water supply challenges Texas faces by identifying potential water shortages and recommending strategies to create additional supplies, according to the TWDB release.

A relatively new nonprofit organization, the H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>TEXAS Coalition, focuses on raising awareness of the importance of implementing the plan to ensure adequate water supplies in the future. We talked with the executive director of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>TEXAS, Heather Harward, to learn more about H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>TEXAS' goals, mission, plan and how it came about.

*Q: First, tell me about H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>TEXAS. When was it established? How do you hope to accomplish your purpose?*

A: It was established in July of 2010. We are a diverse coalition of partners interested in full implementation of the Texas state water plan. Through that diverse partnership, we educate Texans statewide about the state water plan because in many cases folks don't know that we have a state water plan that's the envy of the nation, nor do they understand the consequences of not implementing the plan. Texas' water planning process serves as a model for other states, but without implementation, it's only a plan.

We are conducting a statewide public education and awareness campaign hoping to invigorate

Texans at the grassroots and get them energized about the plan's implementation. In order to achieve full implementation, we ultimately need to come up with a dedicated source of revenue—a difficult measure to advance, as all revenue measures are difficult to achieve. Our diverse partnership will help us accomplish that goal.

*Q: What is the mission of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>TEXAS?*

A: It's important to recognize that our mission is focused, like a laser. We're not trying to get bogged down in all water policy issues because that ends up fracturing a coalition like ours. What we've learned over time is that the one water policy issue uniting us is the state water plan. What we're trying to do, in a very focused manner, is achieve full implementation of the plan by establishing a dedicated source of revenue. The beauty of the coalition is that we're bringing all these different stakeholder points of view together to try to come up with a revenue source that will be acceptable to a broad collection of constituencies. To achieve full implementation of the plan, we need to get Texans energized about the state water plan and calling for implementation. Having the backing of Texans is important to a Legislature that will ultimately make the decision.

*Q: How many partners are currently involved?*

A: We have about 65 partners, and we're growing. We have both public and private partners; we have water suppliers as well as water customers.

*Q: How long have you been involved with H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>TEXAS, and what is your role?*

A: I'm the executive director, and I've been involved since the coalition's inception. I'm the only full-time employee, although we do have a number of partners who help on a contract basis.



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I am involved with everything from the daily operations, fundraising, public outreach and education to our communication delivery system, which includes a number of tools ranging from the website to social media, traditional media and stakeholder outreach, including educating decision-makers at both the state and local levels.

*Q: I understand H2O4TEXAS is a 501c3. What is that and how is it advantageous?*

A: Yes, it's a 501c3 nonprofit corporation, which is also referred to as a charitable organization. That means that contributions are tax-exempt. From a business perspective, the nonprofit model has been appealing, especially during a struggling economy; it's a good investment. From a policy perspective, the IRS' requirements for a 501c3 nonprofit fit our mission because we must be and are an education-based entity.

*Q: What has H2O4TEXAS done to this point?*

A: First and foremost, I couldn't be more proud of the group of partners that we have. Diversity was our number one goal from the beginning because we knew from the history of this issue that getting something done would take the perspective and constituencies of entities from all sectors of Texas' economy, including the industries that are considered economic drivers, water users and those public entities that provide water. It's going to take all of us working together in order to accomplish this goal.

Since our establishment, we have proven ourselves to be the go-to entity when people have questions on implementation of the plan. We get calls from decision-makers and media outlets around the state asking for our position on various issues related to the water plan.

One of the most exciting developments is the broadening of our membership base to include institutions of higher education. Texas A&M University and the Texas Water Resources Institute have led the way by helping us reach out to other institutions of higher education. That kind of expansion is exciting because it will provide new resources and expertise that we didn't have before. Texas A&M has been the leader in that regard, and we're grateful for their help.

*Q: What are future goals of H2O4TEXAS?*

A: Our immediate focus right now is our subcommittee on revenue, which is looking at collecting data and doing research on possible revenue streams. We're using the expertise of the coalition

to look at some revenue solutions and come up with some suggestions that we believe would be the most viable.

Among our areas of research are the water-energy nexus, or the interconnectivity and interdependence of water and energy. You need water to produce energy, and water cannot be cleaned and delivered without energy. So first we're looking at that and trying to expand the dataset, and then we are addressing that subject on a more micro-level, looking at the water-energy nexus to see if there are any potential solutions for revenue within that concept.

Our ability to get Texans to listen to our educational efforts is obviously improved when we're feeling the repercussions of drought, so that will continue to be part of our educational campaign leading up to the next legislative session, which begins in January of 2013.

*Q: What are some ways you communicate the message?*

A: The first thing we've been trying to capitalize on and continuously develop is electronic communication and social media. Because we were a new organization with limited resources, we've done as much as we can through electronic communication—e-mails, Internet and so on. We've also worked closely with traditional media, where we find a lot of Texas journalists and thought leaders who understand the issue and want to help.

We would like to have the ability to spread our message through print, radio and television advertising, and that is part of our 2012 plan and beyond, as long as the resources are there, and our fundraising efforts continue on that front.

Grassroots communications have been our most effective tool to date, in my opinion, and our partners have done a great job helping us get the word out.

*Q: What take-home message would you like to relay to the public regarding water and the Texas state water plan?*

A: The Texas state water plan is the envy of the nation, and our plan provides an opportunity to ensure that our most basic need—water—is available and affordable now and in the future. Without an adequate supply of clean, affordable water, public health and our economy break down within days. We need water to ensure continued economic growth and prosperity. We must, must make implementation of the plan our number one priority for the great State of Texas. 💧