


# Celebrating 50 Years



*Texas Water Development Board  
makes impact on clean, adequate water*

**I**n December 2007, the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) will celebrate its 50th anniversary. As the state's water planning and water project financing agency, TWDB has made significant impacts during the last five decades on ensuring clean and adequate water for Texans.

TWDB was established by the citizens of Texas after a major drought from 1950 to 1957 to make certain that future droughts would not have the same devastating effects. Since 1957, TWDB has been charged with addressing the state's water needs to ensure the availability of sufficient water at a reasonable cost while protecting the state's agricultural and natural resources.

TWDB's mission is to provide leadership, planning, financial assistance, information and education for the conservation and responsible development of water for Texas. According to its Web site, TWDB's main responsibilities are threefold: collecting and disseminating water-related data; assisting with regional water planning and preparing the state water plan to develop the state's water resources;

and administering cost-effective financial programs for constructing water supply, wastewater treatment, flood control and agricultural water conservation projects.

In November 2006, the board adopted the 2007 State Water Plan and in January 2007, presented it to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and members of the Legislature. *Water for Texas—2007* is the eighth state water plan since 1957.

This plan suggests many water management strategies to ensure enough water for Texas during drought, including municipal and agricultural conservation, and building reservoirs, wells, and water reuse and desalination plants.

"As the state continues to experience rapid growth and declining water supplies, implementation of this state water plan is crucial to ensure public health, safety and welfare, and economic development in the state," said E.G. Rod Pittman, TWDB's chairman of the board.

In addition to developing state water plans, TWDB provides funding for water supply projects and water-related research in Texas through grants and loans. Each year TWDB provides hundreds of millions of dollars in financial assistance to water and wastewater service providers, including cities, water districts and other municipal utility districts. These programs are funded through state-backed bonds, a combination of state bond proceeds and federal grant funds, or limited appropriated funds.

George Farland, general manager of the Harris County Municipal Utility District No. 50, is a recent TWDB customer.

“The TWDB has provided very valuable services and assistance to us,” Farland said. “I had a great deal of personal assistance from their staff. They helped us through all the hurdles and provided this much-needed financial and technical assistance to help our community.”

Jim Conkwright, general manager of High Plains Underground Water Conservation District, said TWDB has provided funding for the district’s agricultural water conservation equipment loan program from 1985 to 2001 as well as the current Texas Alliance for Water Conservation Demonstration Project in Floyd and Hale counties.

“We have a great relationship with TWDB officials and staff. They have assisted us as we work to conserve the groundwater resources within the district’s 15-county service area,” Conkwright said.

Looking to develop “new” water sources, in April 2006, TWDB awarded \$1.3 million to the Brownsville Public Utilities Board to conduct a 12-month seawater desalination pilot plant. After completing this study in late 2007, the utilities board is expected to make a decision to construct a full-scale plant, which would be the first large-scale seawater desalination plant in Texas. All planning-level activities will be completed with the current pilot study. TWDB and Brownsville Public Utilities Board are presently exploring all funding options that will enable the utilities board to proceed with the design

and construction of the plant. If constructed, the plant will become operational by 2010.

Over the years, TWDB has provided various research grants to support the development of desalination, including desalination of brackish groundwater.

Through its involvement in rainwater harvesting, TWDB has published several documents with information and recommendations about how to implement the practice.

TWDB also maintains the Texas Natural Resources Information System (TNRIS), a database of information on the state’s natural resources. According to the Texas Water Code, this database is to provide a “centralized information system incorporating all Texas natural resource data, socioeconomic data related to natural resources, and indexes related to that data that are collected by state agencies or other entities.”

The governor appoints board members, who meet monthly in Austin to consider loan applications, award grants and other business such as approving regional water plans and adopting the state water plan. Current members are Dario Vidal Guerra, Jr., Thomas Weir Labatt, III, James E. Herring and William W. Meadows. The chairman is E. G. Rod Pittman and vice chairman is Jack Hunt.



### 2007 Water Summit

The Texas Water Development Board is hosting Reflections, Water Summit 2007 on December 2–4, 2007 at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center in San Antonio to coincide with the board’s 50th anniversary.

The summit will feature speakers on many water-related topics such as desalination, rainwater harvesting, innovative technology, landscape irrigation, agricultural irrigation in Texas and municipal water conservation.

For more information, visit <http://www.twdb.state.tx.us>.