

1998 TEXAS WATER MONITORING CONGRESS



In 1996, the first Texas Water Monitoring Congress was held for the purpose of bringing water-resource professionals from around the State together to address the problems of data collection and dissemination and to find ways to work more efficiently together to improve the usefulness of water information in Texas. Topics of discussion covered the provision of guidance to entities with data-collection programs, development of systematic collection and dissemination of water data, and approaches and responses to future water data needs of the State. Specific recommendations from the 1996 Texas Water Monitoring Congress were:

- Coordinate water monitoring plans to eliminate redundancies, inefficiencies, and inadequacies in existing data programs by creating a Texas Water Monitoring Coordination Council
- Support funding which is adequate to develop and maintain coordinated data-collection programs, including the Clean Rivers Program, and the provision of supplemental funding for new legislative mandates, such as the proposed StratMap Initiative.
- Adopt and promote the principles and objectives of the Intergovernmental Task Force on Monitoring Water Quality, including standard protocols for data collection, storage, analysis, and quality assurance.
- Ensure continuous availability of water information coordinated by the Texas Natural Resources Information System (TNRIS); provide multiple outlets, including Internet links, for access to real-time and historical water data; and develop standard data storage and exchange formats that include metadata (data about data).

In 1998, the second Texas Water Monitoring Congress was held in Austin, Texas during September 21-23, 1998. The Congress was sponsored by the newly formed Texas Water Monitoring Council and hosted over 180 attendees from around the State. Invited speakers from the Texas legislature and national and state offices of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, Texas Water Development Board, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department addressed the status of water-resource legislation, accomplishments made in water monitoring since the 1996 Congress, and new and on-going challenges faced by water-resource professionals in the State. Four focus groups met in day-long sessions to discuss topics including Water Data Collection Networks, Data Management, Quality Assurance,

and Public Outreach. The results and recommendations for each focus group were presented to the entire Congress and are summarized in the Congress proceedings and this summary document.

Recommendations from the 1998 Texas Water Monitoring Congress are:

- Improve communication of water resources conditions in Texas based on a Data Collection Network that utilizes the Internet to provide access to water data.
- Create a Distributed Data Clearinghouse, including an Internet List Server, linking the TWMC Web page to other Web pages.
- Develop a consistent consensus-based framework for the development of water monitoring QA/QC programs and plans in Texas.
- Through a centralized Internet Web site, develop a dynamic inventory of contacts and information related to water resources in Texas.
- Promote an umbrella organization to coordinate water related educational activities. Develop partnerships to restore adequate resources and support for volunteer monitoring opportunities, and survey specific groups to identify water information and data needs.

Congress Sessions

The first day of the Texas Water Monitoring Congress featured speakers from the Texas legislature and representatives from major agencies that collect and disseminate water information in Texas. State representative Ron Lewis spoke about Senate Bill 1 and how it will help address water challenges the state is facing. He stressed the importance of accurate water data and information.

John Burt, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Temple, discussed how management should be more involved with discussions of monitoring. He stated that NRCS data can be used to assist in assessment of monitoring locations and data collection.

Lewis Wade, Assistant Chief Hydrologist for Information, USGS, Washington DC, discussed the National Water Information System of the USGS. He discussed the

architecture of the system and explained how customers can interact with it. Planned modifications, particularly in the area of water quality data were outlined.

Chip Smith, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Washington DC, spoke of the COE's strategy for moving into the 21st century. He stated that the army civil works will lead in the development, management, protection, and restoration of our nation's water resources, but stressed that the Corp's resources are not limitless and that cooperative involvement in the stream gaging program is a must. The future mission for the Corps is to help achieve an environmentally and economically sustainable future for the nation and the world

Jeffrey Saitas, Executive Director, Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission, Austin, said that the TNRCC is responsible for the protection, restoration and efficient use of Texas' water resources through the Texas Clean Rivers Program and other water monitoring programs. The information has many uses including evaluation of water supplies and watershed management decisions, development of standards to protect public water supplies and aquatic habitat, identification of water systems for additional or reduced monitoring, and support of the State's regional water planning initiative.

Craig Pedersen, Executive Administrator, Texas Water Development Board, Austin, stated that water monitoring in Texas is a very important and complex endeavor. He commented on how recommendations from the 1996 Water Monitoring Congress resulted in some significant new legislative initiatives including the formation of the Texas Water Monitoring Council, the TNRIS StratMap initiative, and the TWDB's Network Optimization Program. These and other related programs emphasize the importance of basic water data and the need for cooperative involvement and cooperation from all stakeholders. The TWDB is focused on carrying these principles forward with a commitment to continued improvement and support of monitoring priorities.

Larry McKinney, Senior Division Director for Aquatic Resources, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Austin, pointed out that at the TPWD, good science and hard data are utilized to manage water resources and protect the environment. With the population of Texas projected to double by the year 2040, the one certainty is that healthy aquatic ecosystems will need clean, abundant water.

The second day of the Congress consisted of four focus groups meeting in day-long sessions to address specific issues that are key to developing a systematic and integrated approach to the collection, dissemination and use of water data. Each focus group reviewed recommendations made by the 1996 Congress, assessed progress, and developed recommendations for future goals and actions. Topics addressed were:

- Data Collection Networks
- Data Management
- Quality Assurance
- Public Outreach

On the third day of the Congress, the participants gathered and heard presentations of the findings and recommendations from the focus group sessions held the day before. The major recommendations are outlined in this document and additional recommendations and details of the session discussions are presented in individual sessions reports.

Detailed reports from the focus group sessions and a summary of the entire 1998 Texas Water Monitoring Congress can be found in the Proceedings and Summary Reports. This document is available on the Internet at the Texas Water Monitoring Council Web site (address given below). Included in this document are listings of all participants, Water Monitoring Council members, and vendors.

Planning and Focus Group Subcommittees

Representatives from the following water-monitoring organizations comprised the planning and focus group subcommittees that planned the 1998 Texas Water Monitoring Congress:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Geological Survey
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Texas Water Development Board
Texas Water Resources Institute
Brazos River Authority
Lower Colorado River Authority
Sabine River Authority
Galveston County Health District
Houston-Galveston Area Council

Further Information

Information about the 1998 Texas Water Monitoring Congress, including the Proceedings and Summary Report, can be found at this Internet address:

<http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/>

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