

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****June 4, 2013**

Page 1 of 1

SUBJECT: PUBLIC INPUT ON UPDATE TO DROUGHT AND CONSERVATION PLANS

Every five years water utilities are required by Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Rules to review their Drought Contingency Plan and their Water Conservation Plan. These are two separate documents. Public input is required as part of the Drought Contingency Plan process.

The Water Department has sought customer input into both plans through questions in a customer phone survey and an online survey. In addition, TRWD conducted telephone opinion surveys in the cities of Arlington and Fort Worth in March. In each city, citizens were surveyed regarding their attitudes about water conservation. Although the Fort Worth survey focused on several water issues in addition to conservation, respondents in both surveys demonstrated a strong desire to conserve water, showed significant support for permanent twice-a-week outdoor watering restrictions and had a better-than-expected sense of the long-term benefits of water conservation.

Additionally, Fort Worth, Tarrant Regional Water District, Arlington, Mansfield and the Trinity River Authority are meeting with representatives of various commercial stakeholder groups (irrigators and landscapers, power washers, golf courses, car washes, etc.) to learn about those operations and seek input on the elements of the various stages that may affect these industries.

Additional public input is planned in June. The Water Department will conduct three public meetings in the last two weeks in June – one in north Fort Worth, one in central to south Fort Worth and one digital meeting using cable and web-based technology. During these meetings, participants will be provided overview information on water supplies – current and proposed – and water efficiency programs already in place. Feedback will be obtained to assess attitudes about what measures should be in a conservation plan – things that should be done all the time and are long-term – versus what measures should be in a drought plan – things only in place when water supplies are low and are short-term. Larry Schooler of the City of Austin and P3 Partners will facilitate these meetings with Freese and Nichols providing technical support for material development and documentation of results. All available media will be used to publicize these meetings, including the City website, social media, City News, Fort Report, e-mails to neighborhood associations, churches and other maintained lists, and traditional news releases.

Finally, the major water suppliers in the Metroplex have been meeting for the last several months to common drought plans for the entire region. The goal is to have the same number of stages and the similar actions in each stage. Because of differences in water supply sources, this does not mean the entire region will be in the same stage at the same time nor have the same trigger level. The goal is to make the actions at each stage uniform so it is easier to communicate required actions and gain compliance.

Staff plans to present you the results of all these public engagement efforts related to water conservation at a Pre-Council meeting in late July. Should you have any additional questions, please contact Frank Crumb, Water Director at 817-392-8207.

**Tom Higgins
City Manager**