

TRWA

Texas Rural Water Association



www.trwa.org

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Assisting water and wastewater systems to ensure rural Texans have access to quality services and a sustainable supply of drinking water.

Who We Are

The Texas Rural Water Association is a statewide non-profit educational and trade association that represents the full spectrum of the rural water community.

We are dedicated to helping water and wastewater systems provide efficient service and clean, safe drinking water to their customers.

Since 1969, TRWA has been well-respected in the industry for the high-quality support we provide to the rural water industry in Texas. **Our mission** is to serve, represent and support member water and wastewater utilities, and **our vision** is to be a recognized leader on water and wastewater utility issues, to be the premier provider for education and expert assistance due to our well-qualified and knowledgeable staff, and to have an active and engaged membership.

We represent approximately 750 retail public utilities that provide water and wastewater service to 2.5 million customers throughout Texas. This membership is comprised of non-profit water supply and/or sewer service corporations, water districts, municipal utilities and privately-owned water utilities. We also have nearly 200 water/wastewater industry suppliers that make up our Associate Membership.

We are headquartered in Austin, Texas, and we also have staff located all over the state available to help systems in need. Because of their expertise, training, longevity with our association and dedication to the industry, our team members are the go-to experts for systems around the state on water and wastewater related issues.

We are governed by a 14-member Board of Directors who are elected by our membership. Each of our board members is the general manager of a retail public utility in the region of the state they represent.

The Texas Rural Water Association is an affiliate of the National Rural Water Association and is part of a nationwide network of State Rural Water Associations that serve all 50 states.

Advocacy and Legal Services

We are engaged in representing rural water and wastewater utility interests at both the state and federal legislative levels. Here are just a few of the ways we advocate for our members:

- We draft bills that represent our members' interests and work to secure sponsors in the legislature.
- We promote favorable legislation and defend against unfavorable legislation.
- We regularly meet with lawmakers to educate them about our issues and cultivate relationships at the Capitol.
- We provide testimony to state legislative committees on drinking water-related issues and concerns.
- We operate the Texas Rural Water Political Action Committee, pooling contributions to support candidates that champion our cause.

Some of the challenges we are working on during the 86th Texas Legislative Session include:

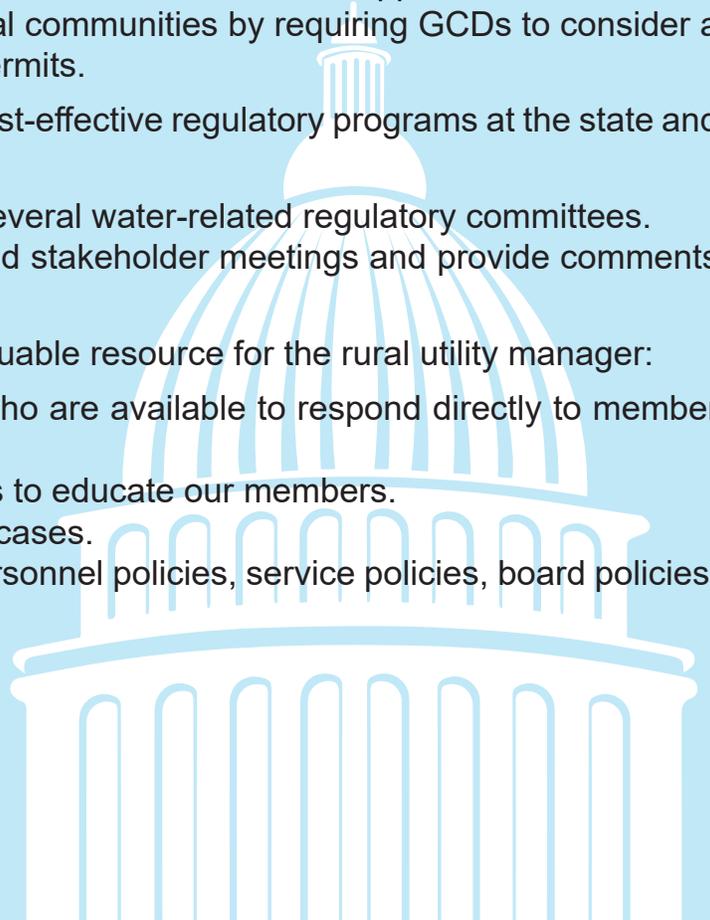
- **Certificate of Convenience and Necessity (CCN) decertification and compensation** – Laws passed in 2005 and 2011 have made it easier for landowners and developers to get out of a utility's CCN without considering a utility's investment and capability to serve the area. These laws have put utilities in a tough position because they're required by the state to invest and plan for future growth in their service area, but those investments are often being taken away, especially in high-growth areas, just as systems are about to realize their investment. We are working to ensure utilities are fairly compensated when these decertifications occur.
- **Groundwater permitting for rural water suppliers** – While many groundwater conservation districts (GCDs) issue permits to water systems based on the amount of water they need to serve households and businesses in their communities, others have begun issuing permits to all applicants, including water utilities, based upon the amount of land an applicant owns. We are working to protect the future water needs of rural communities by requiring GCDs to consider a utility's service area needs when issuing well permits.

We are also proud to be the voice for sensible and cost-effective regulatory programs at the state and federal level.

- Our staff sits on and actively participates with several water-related regulatory committees.
- We regularly meet with state agency staff, attend stakeholder meetings and provide comments on rule packages.

Our members agree that our legal services are a valuable resource for the rural utility manager:

- We employ a full-time attorney and paralegal who are available to respond directly to member inquiries and provide consultation.
- We publish articles and columns on legal issues to educate our members.
- We file amicus briefs in precedent-setting legal cases.
- We provide legal resources, such as sample personnel policies, service policies, board policies, a catalog of legal filing requirements, etc.



Financial, Technical and Managerial Assistance

We take pride in our onsite assistance programs that are highly regarded by the regulatory agencies and utilities across the state. These services are funded through state contracts with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT), and through federal contracts with the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA–RD) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Our experienced field staff are available year-round to provide systems with the water and wastewater financial, managerial and technical assistance they need. Some of the common issues we help with include:

- Water and wastewater system operations
- Regulatory compliance
- Board governance
- Treatment optimization
- Water loss
- Rate calculations and analysis
- Budget management
- Service policies
- Utility mergers and acquisitions
- Energy efficiency
- Source water protection



Emergency Assistance

TRWA is a partner of the Texas Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (TXWARN), which is a mutual aid network that provides emergency planning, response and assistance to Texas utilities. Our technical staff are trained first responders who assist systems that are impacted by emergencies and natural disasters. When a small system is in crisis, we deploy our team and equipment to help the system get back up and running. Additionally, we have seven regionally-housed generators that are available to our members for use in any local emergency situation. Systems in need can also call our after-hours emergency response hotline at 1-866-586-6480.



★ Training and Education



TRWA provides both online and classroom courses that are TCEQ-approved and specifically designed to meet the needs of water/wastewater operators, managers and board members.

We employ full-time instructors with advanced licenses in water, wastewater and customer service inspections; and a course development specialist.

Annually, our instructors conduct approximately 100 classes at 30 locations, reaching nearly

1,600 students. We have a training contract with one of the top 10 largest municipal utilities in the nation, the San Antonio Water System.

The TCEQ-approved training manuals we develop in-house are purchased by other training providers who use them to teach their courses.

We also host 6-7 conferences annually, each tailored for a specialized audience, including technical staff, utility managers, administrative staff, legal counsel and board members. Our conferences provide a great opportunity for utility professionals to earn continuing education credit while networking with their industry peers.



★ Resources and Publications

We have a library of over 30 publications, including salary and rate surveys, legal handbooks, training manuals, sample policies and tariffs, and guidebooks for system operators, managers and directors. We regularly revise these publications to ensure they provide updated and accurate information. We also produce a trade magazine, *Quench*, which is published bimonthly and features columns answering legal and technical questions from utilities, regulatory and legislative hot topics, Association news, rural system features and contributed articles from industry experts.

★ Texas Rural Water Foundation

The Texas Rural Water Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit that furthers TRWA's goals to promote our industry. One of our most successful Foundation programs is our Veteran Employment Program (VEP), which works to attract veterans to the rural water/wastewater industry, prepare them for their new career through basic training and educational resources, and match them with utilities with positions to fill. We have been successful in getting repeat grants from our state's Veterans Commission to help fund this program.

The VEP is part of a larger workforce initiative we are growing to speak to the need to attract new workers to rural water and wastewater jobs. This initiative aims to do this by promoting our industry to new audiences as an attractive and accessible career path. We have already developed resources that we provide to systems free of charge to be used to generate interest and recruit new personnel locally, and we plan to build on these efforts.

We also administer two Foundation scholarship programs—one for students who are pursuing higher education in areas benefitting rural communities, and another for utility personnel seeking professional development through continuing education credit.





Contact us:

info@trwa.org

Phone: 512-472-8591

Fax: 512-472-5186

1616 Rio Grande | Austin, TX 78701

