



WATER TO THE WISE

FOR THE LONE STAR STATE, WATER IS THE FUTURE

BY COMMISSIONER TODD STAPLES



Among the hot-button issues of the 83rd Legislative Session are transportation, public education, tax policy, economic development, border security and WATER.

Texas is home to an estimated 26 million people and is expected to double in population by 2060. Projections from the 2012 Texas State Water Plan anticipate water demand will increase by 22 percent while our supply decreases by 10 percent.

The drought has provided a tangible example of the detrimental impacts of failing to meet our water demands. Cities are facing significant infrastructure costs; communities are paying to truck in water; outdoor water bans are threatening homeowner investment; and our state's agricultural economy alone has suffered a negative \$8.3 billion impact.

The solution? Plain and simple: Texas needs more water.

Too often the water debate centers on either-or-solutions, but we cannot ration and restrict our way to a stronger Texas. As the water debate heats up at the Capitol and in our city halls, we must remember that meeting our water needs is possible if we collaborate, conserve and construct the new resources needed to supply the growing population. Additionally, when legislators begin talking about water planning and funding, it is wise to remember most issues are best addressed at the local and regional levels. The role of the state is to assist in planning and research, partnering with local water providers on the funds to close the deal on projects that have local support and buy-in, and leveraging low cost financing options for local communities.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Major water bills that have been filed by the Senate and House Natural Resources Committee Chairs are SB 4 by Sen. Troy Fraser and HB 4 by Rep. Allan Ritter. These bills call for approximately \$2 billion from the Rainy Day Fund to be used to fund projects identified in the Texas Water Development Board's State Water Plan. You can find the full bill text and track progress of the legislation by visiting Texas Legislature Online at www.capitol.state.tx.us.

EVENTS

25

Comm. Staples was honored to speak about water and food safety at the Texas Ag Water Forum on February 25.

4

TDA joined the Texas Water Development Board for Collin County Day at the Capitol on March 4.

7

Comm. Staples was excited to be a keynote speaker at the Texas Water Conservation Association's Annual Convention on March 7.

28

Join the Texas Water Foundation for Texas Water Day at the Capitol on March 28 and visit the Texas Water Smart display!

TEXAS WATER SMART

Teaching homeowners and businesses how to conserve water in their lawns and gardens is the mission of a growing consumer education program called Texas Water Smart.

Texas Water Smart is a public-private partnership initiated by the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association, the Texas Retailers Association, Scotts Miracle-Gro and the Texas Department of Agriculture. Since spring of 2012, the program has been highly successful in raising awareness of ways homeowners and businesses can save green – in their landscapes and in their wallets.

Post-market research after just months of delivering digital, print, radio and television ads shows 80% of targeted consumers recall receiving a water conservation message with over a third attributing it specifically to Texas Water Smart. Consumers also report using at least 10% less water in the summer of 2012 than they did in the summer of 2011, due in part to Texas Water Smart and other successful conservation efforts.

Leaders of the Texas Water Smart Coalition met in Austin early this year to discuss the successes the consumer education program and to lay out a vision for 2013. The plan in 2013 calls for expanded consumer awareness efforts plus the development of education material for students. Coalition members are asked to participate by spreading the conservation message through social media and distribution of creative material or through in-kind or financial donations.

In addition to its founders, the Texas Water Smart Coalition is made up of nearly 300 businesses, associations, research organizations and state and local officials who have contributed to its growth and success. For a full listing and how you can help, visit www.TexasWaterSmart.com.

Texas Water Smart Tips

- Water just before sunrise to give your lawn time to fully absorb the water before evaporation begins
- Water deeply and infrequently to encourage deep, strong roots
- Consider adding mulch to your garden to help keep water in the soil
- Use a rain gauge to help determine how much additional water you need to provide your lawn and garden

