Section 8
Unique Stream Segments/Reservoir Sites/ Legislative Recommendations [31 TAC §357.7(a)(8-9); 31 TAC §357.8; and 31 TAC §357.9]

8.1 Identification of Unique Ecological Stream Segments and Reservoir Sites

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department identified three stream segments in the Llano Estacado Region that it has classified as ecologically significant. Two pass through Caprock Canyons State Park in Briscoe County. They are: (1) North Prong Little Red River, and (2) South Prong Little Red River. The third is Prairie Dog Town Fork Red River from SH 70 crossing at the Briscoe/Hall County line upstream to the Briscoe/Armstrong County line.

The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group did not elect to identify any unique ecological stream segments or reservoir sites in the region.

8.2 Legislative and Administrative Recommendations

1. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group urges the Legislature to continue the regional water planning effort with adequate funding to continue to:
    a. Pay the administrative costs associated with the regional water planning effort;
    b. Pay for the collection, assimilation, and analysis of basic data needed to assess the ground and surface water resources of each planning region of the state to a 90 percent accuracy level;
    c. Pay for the development and maintenance of a basic data network adequate to maintain a current inventory of the ground and surface water resources of the state;
    d. Pay for development and maintenance of computer models that will utilize the data described in "b" and "c" above to quantify the groundwater resources in each aquifer in the state and project future availability based on historical net changes in storage (i.e., the average annual net change in storage that occurred during the past 10 years, plus any known increases in water use or decrease in water use that may be achieved through conservation efforts). This should provide a reasonably accurate estimate of future water availability when used in the model projections. Using net depletion eliminates the need to use estimates of pumpage and natural recharge, neither of which are well documented and can easily be over- or underestimated; and
    e. Pay for costs associated with ongoing efforts to educate the public about the regional water planning process, water management strategies, and conservation needed within the 16 respective water planning regions.

2. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group urges the Legislature to authorize and provide funding for the following water conservation programs and activities:

   a. Implementation of a statewide public awareness program for water conservation;

   b. Implementation of a tiered local/regional/statewide public recognition program for water conservation achievements;

   c. Establishment by the Texas Water Development Board of a Water Conservation Advisory Council and a water conservation resource library; and

   d. Provision of funding for water conservation incentives for all water user groups – agriculture, municipal and industrial.

3. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group urges the Texas Water Development Board to develop standardized methodologies, definitions, and data for characterizing and computing per capita daily water use (gpcd) that will ultimately allow municipalities and other public water suppliers to set realistic, meaningful, and achievable local water conservation targets and goals. To be of any value it is imperative that the methodologies be able to recognize demographics, climate, hydrology, geology, and other local and regional factors.

4. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group urges the Texas Water Development Board to make major improvements in the accuracy of irrigation and livestock water use/demand information needed for regional water planning purposes.

5. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group concurs with the Legislature that underground water conservation districts are the preferred method of managing groundwater in the State of Texas.

6. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group urges the Legislature not to empower the regional planning groups with any water management, regulatory or legislative authority.

7. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group supports the creation and operation of underground water conservation districts that are organized and function under Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code.

8. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group supports the Rule of Capture as modified by the Rules and Regulations of existing underground water conservation districts.

9. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group does not support a transport fee for surface or groundwater transported within the State of Texas.

10. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group recommends a modification of the SB1 restrictions on TWDB financing and TCEQ permitting to include "alternative water management strategies," provided that the alternatives are

developed under the same evaluation criteria as selected strategies and the alternatives are included in the RWPG's adopted regional water plan.

11. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group recommends funding research programs and studies to achieve a better understanding of the recharge mechanisms of the Ogallala Aquifer, including the role(s) of playas, as follows:
    a. Identification and quantification of the recharge mechanisms for the Ogallala; and
    b. Identification and description of the impact of playa basin siltation on recharge.

12. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group urges the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, federal and state agencies, the Playa Lakes Joint Venture and other habitat and wildlife organizations to pursue rehabilitation of playa basins in the Southern High Plains of Texas through silt removal and habitat management on the property of willing, cooperating landowners.

13. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group supports and encourages the development and voluntary use of Best Management Practices to improve recharge and to protect playa basins from siltation, including creation and preservation of native grass buffers on land surrounding playas to maintain their water holding capacity.

14. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group supports the practice of controlling aquatic vegetation as a water conservation practice, and particularly supports and encourages the Canadian River Municipal Water Authority's efforts of controlling salt cedar along the Canadian River drainage above Lake Meredith as a means to increase water flow to the reservoir for water supply and environmental purposes. Further, the Planning Group encourages similar controls be applied to other watersheds of the Region, including those of Lakes Mackenzie, White River, and Alan Henry.

15. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group supports voluntary protection of springs and seeps as they exist and encourages landowners to use best management practices to maintain remnant springs and seeps in the region.

16. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group supports and encourages the continued use of working groups of ranching and farming organizations, environmental groups, state and federal biologists and private landowners to arrive at best management practices to conserve and manage species proposed for listing as threatened or endangered.

17. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group recommends that the Legislature provide adequate funding for the implementation of water management strategies in the plan, including loans for public water supplies, precipitation enhancement, brush management, water conservation, and research and development of drought tolerant species and more efficient irrigation technology.

18. The Llano Estacado Regional Water Planning Group recommends that the Panhandle Regional Water Planning Group (Region A) join with Region O in a cooperative effort to develop a "groundwater supply water management strategy" in both Region O and Region A, such effort to be planned and performed during the first year of the next planning cycle. The LERWPG further recommends that the completed "groundwater supply water management strategy" be considered as an amendment to each respective Regional Water Plan.