



The State Water Plan & The Coastal Bend Water Crisis

State Bar of Texas Environmental Superconference

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TEXAS 2036

The Coastal Bend Water Crisis

A Texas City Bet Big on Industry. Now It's Running Out of Water.

Rising demand, municipal dysfunction and drought have pushed Corpus Christi to the edge of a water emergency, offering a cautionary tale to the rest of the country.

By Lauren McGaughy and Meridith Kohut

MAY 13

ECONOMY

After a decade of missteps, Corpus Christi careens toward water catastrophe

City officials expect to reach a "water emergency" within months and may halt jet fuel deliveries to Texas airports, hike gas prices and trigger a local precedent, former officials say.

BY DYLAN BADDOUR, [INSIDE CLIMATE NEWS](#)

LOCAL NEWS

City of Sinton protests Evangeline water permits as board vote nears

With a key vote days away, Corpus Christi is pushing for support on the Evangeline water project as Sinton formally protests groundwater permits.

U.S.

This Texas Town Is an Energy Powerhouse. It's Running Out of Water.

A severe drought has Corpus Christi scrambling to meet growing demand from companies like Exxon and Tesla that have invested billions of dollars in the region.

By [Benoît Morenne](#) / Photography by Kaylee Greenlee for WSJ

Corpus Christi at risk of running out of water by Spring 2027

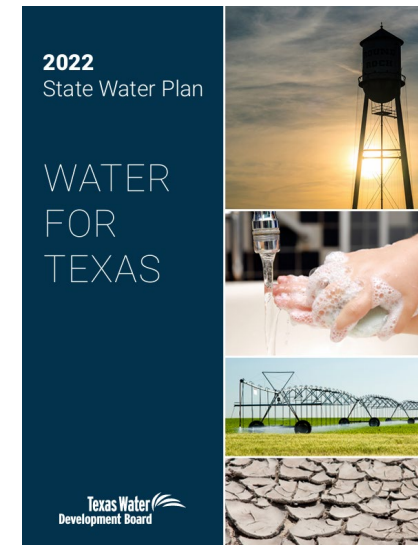
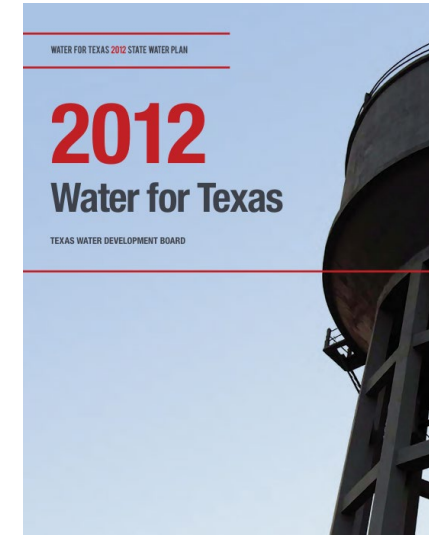
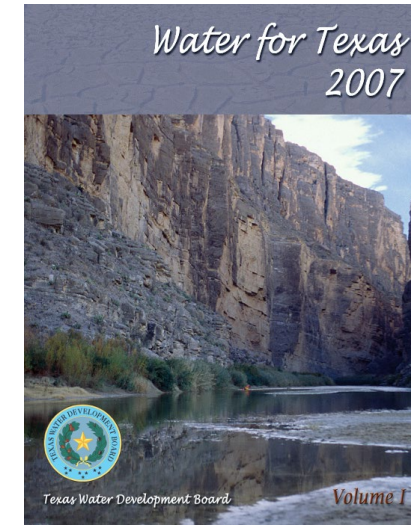
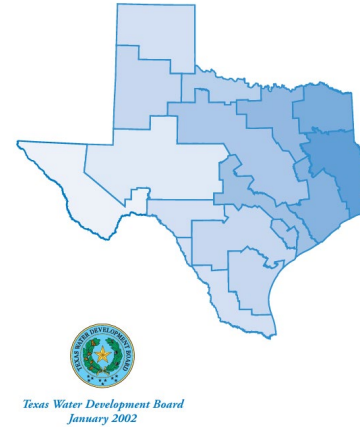
Corpus Christi is on pace to not meet water demand by April 2027. KIII 3NEWS explores the causes of this situation, who's using our water and possible solutions.

Wes Wilson, Kristin Walla, Bill Churchwell, Alan Holt, Jonathan Munson

The State Water Plan

- Created by Senate Bill 1 (1997)
- “Bottom-up” design that incorporates data and recommendations from 16 planning regions
- Two planning objectives:
 - “provide for the orderly development, management, and conservation of water resources” and
 - “response to drought conditions”

Water for Texas – 2002

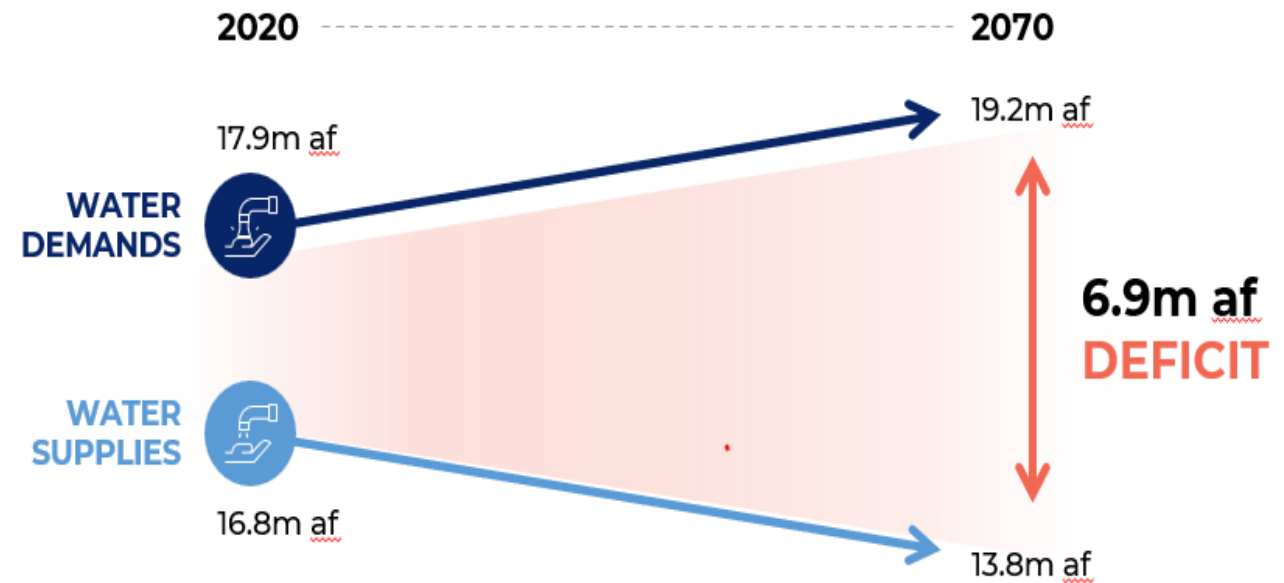


The Legal Operation of the State Water Plan

- Serves as “a guide to state water policy.” (§16.051(b))
- Instructs other state water policies, including:
 - Surface water regulation
 - State water quality standards
 - Groundwater regulation
 - State financial assistance programs
 - Other planning processes

The Practical Operation of the State Water Plan

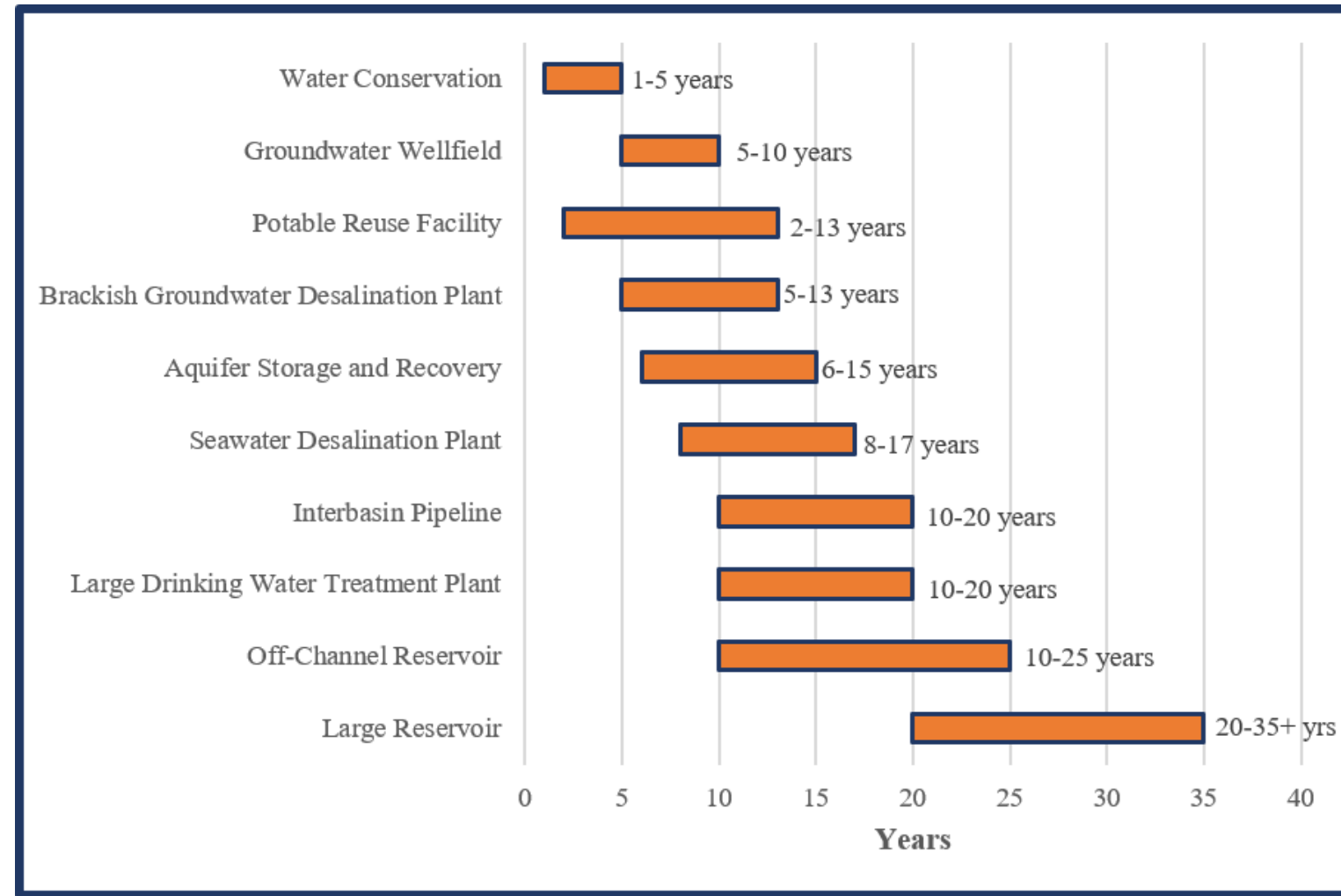
- Projects for each 50-year planning horizon:
 - Water demands
 - Available water supplies under drought conditions
 - Statewide, regional, and local water deficits
- Recommends water management strategies to answer projected deficits
- ***Each plan sends a critical signal for when water supply projects must be built***



Source: 2022 Texas State Water Plan

Water Infrastructure Development Timelines

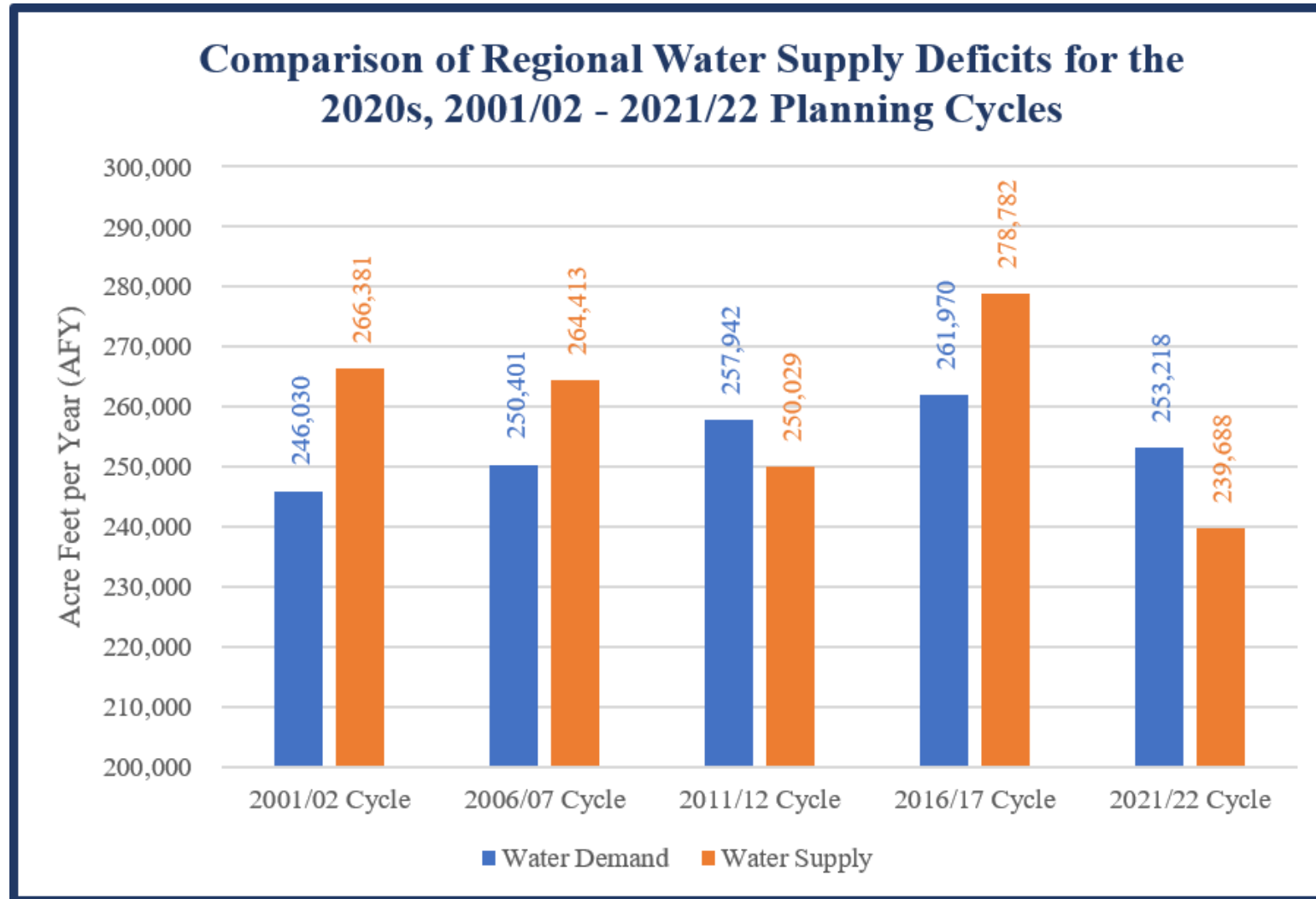
Water infrastructure projects take years, often decades, to complete.



Key Questions for Analysis

- Did the state water plan ever warn of a potential water crisis in the Coastal Bend during the 2020s?
- If shortages were projected for the 2020s, what water supply strategies were recommended to answer these demands?
- Of these strategies, which were delivered in time to improve the region's resilience to drought?
- Did the state water plan and the planning process initiated by SB 1 work?

Inconsistent Regional Signals



“No shortages are projected”

- Corpus Christi
- Aransas Pass
- Rockport
- Beeville
- Alice
- Kingsville
- Odem
- Bishop
- Driscoll
- Gregory
- Ingleside
- Mathis
- Taft
- Sinton

Inconsistent Recommended Strategies

Water Management Strategy	2001/02 Cycle	2006/07 Cycle	2011/12 Cycle	2016/17 Cycle	2021/22 Cycle
Additional groundwater wells and pumping	1,322	13,535	2,535	2,466	12,008
Irrigation water conservation	1,383	52	52	1	561
Manufacturing water conservation	1,187	1,418	1,418	1,081	2,210
Mining water conservation		548	626	106	76
Municipal water conservation		353	353	3,370	20
Brackish groundwater desalination	715			3,363	2,369
Reclaimed wastewater supplies		250	250	2,240	
Voluntary redistribution/reallocation	5,428	999	738	340	
Water treatment plant improvements			40,048	35,485	2,818
Interconnection	631			1,204	
Local balancing storage				1,583	4,058
Garwood (Mary Rhodes) Pipeline			35,000		
Recycle and reuse of groundwater	718				
Seawater desalination			28,000		
USCOE Feasibility Study		25,000			
Total yield by cycle:	11,384	42,155	109,020	51,239	24,120

Limited Water Strategy Implementation

Planning Cycle Strategy Implementation Reports				
Planning Cycle (Reporting Cycle)	Total Recommended Strategies for the 2020s	2020s Strategies Reported Implemented	Reported Construction, Design, or Study	2020s Strategies Receiving Financial Assistance
2011/12 Planning Cycle (2016/17 cycle)	20	3	3	0
2016/17 Planning Cycle (2021/22 cycle)	17	4	5	2
2021/22 Planning Cycle (2026/26 cycle)	50	1	0	1

The water plan didn't work, so then what?

Disclosures:

Texas must have a state water plan and a regional water planning process.

TWDB & regional planners followed the law.

Recommendations for the 90th Legislature:

- Plans should be longitudinal documents that track changes and implementation progress across planning cycles.
- Recommended strategies should be organized into an actionable implementation framework.
- The planning process should stress test for droughts worse than the drought of record.

Thank You!

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