

3.0 Evaluation of Water Resources

Development of this plan was greatly influenced by the strategic direction provided by the Citizens Committee on Water Policy (CCOWP) in their 1994 *Framework Report* (Appendix 12.3). A significant element of that report is the identification of criteria that should be used in evaluating water resource policies, plans and projects.

3.1 Criteria of the Citizens Committee on Water Policy

The criteria carefully crafted by the CCOWP include the following:

- *Trust and Credibility* - San Antonio's water policy development process should be credible, open, and inclusive to earn the trust of the community and the region.
- *Community Unity* - San Antonio's water policy should promote a sense of unity within the community.
- *Availability and Reliability* - San Antonio's water policy should respect sound planning practices. It should identify specific sources of water, how much water can reasonably be derived from those sources, and conditions and constraints, if any, on securing water from those sources. Access to adequate supplies of high quality water with a high degree of reliability should be integral to the policy.
- *Economic Opportunity* - San Antonio's water policy should provide for economic opportunity and sustainable growth for all parts of San Antonio and be compatible with regional needs.
- *Environment and Sustainability* - San Antonio's water policy should contribute to a healthy local and regional environment, stretching from the catchment basin to the bays and estuaries.

- *Efficiency and Affordability* - San Antonio's water policy should consider the total economic impact of implementation strategies and encourage a reasonable approach for allocating those costs and benefits.
- *Governance and Control* - San Antonio's water policy should consider the relationship between regional and local cooperation and governance and the role natural processes play in the relationship.
- *Fairness and Equity* - San Antonio's water policy should be based on principles of fairness and equity. It should distribute benefits fairly within the San Antonio area and uphold the principles of fairness and equity in the region. It should not unilaterally discriminate against any interest group in the region, including San Antonio.

The CCOWP concluded that each criterion was as important as all the others and that water resource decisions should fully address all of the criteria in order to ensure that the needs of the entire community are addressed.

3.2 Findings and Conclusions of the Citizens Working Group

SAWS fully accepted the CCOWP criteria in the development of the Water Resource Action Plan in April 1997. However, when SAWS attempted to use the criteria to evaluate water resource initiatives, it soon became apparent that more definition was needed in both content and process in order to apply the criteria to the projects being considered.

Therefore the SAWS Board appointed the Citizens Working Group to explore and more fully elaborate the criteria. The Citizens Working Group developed a series of "benchmarking questions"

to be answered for all water resource policies, plans and projects. Their benchmarking questions (see Appendix 12.4) will be applied to this plan as well as to other policies, plans and projects this plan may generate.

3.3 Additional Technical Criteria

In addition to the criteria and benchmarks recommended by the two citizens committees, SAWS must use some technical criteria to evaluate the various options. These include:

- *Firm Yield* – The amount available in a drought of record.
- *Average Yield* – The average amount available over the historic period of record.
- *Engineering Feasibility* – The ability to design and operate the project within known and accepted engineering practices.
- *Constructability* – The ability to construct the project within a reasonable cost, with minimal environmental impacts, and without major construction obstacles.
- *Regulatory Acceptance/Permitability* - The ability to acquire all local, state and federal permits required to build the project.
- *Timing* - The ability to construct the project within a reasonable timeframe to meet the needs of a growing community.
- *Financial Feasibility* – The ability to permit, design and construct the project at a reasonable cost to the ratepayer.

3.4 Methodology

Evaluation of a plan or policy will thus have two components: technical evaluation and application of the criteria and benchmarks. The technical evaluation will determine whether the project or policy

is feasible from a multidisciplinary perspective including engineering, geology, biology, ecology, environment, finance, economics and regulatory/legal aspects. Then the benchmarking assessment will be conducted, as recommended by the Citizens Working Group and as refined over time. This two-stage assessment is intended to facilitate choices among projects as well as to help determine the acceptability of a single project.

The SAWS Board of Trustees will make their determination regarding a policy, plan or project upon the completion of both the technical and the benchmarking analyses.