
3 Public Participation Process

This chapter reports comments about the water transfer from the Lower Colorado River Basin to Williamson County. The comments included in this section relate to these issues only.

3.1 Overview of Public Process

There are four types of stakeholders targeted for contact during the public process: people who live close to the Highland Lakes, persons who farm and use irrigation water, water customers to the LCRA and persons with interest in the environmental quality of the lakes. Any individual can be a member of one or more of the four groups.

The public meetings were held at four different locations – Burnet, Marble Falls, Wharton, and Georgetown. A total of 103 people attended the meetings and provide a total of a total of 176 comments. Table 3.1 is a breakdown of number comments received from and after the first and second round of public meetings Attachments 7 and 11 provide presentation slides from the public meetings.

Table 3.1 Number of Comments

	# of Comments Received from the Public Meetings	# of Comments Received After the Public Meetings	Total Number of Comments
1st Round of Public Meetings	51	7	58
2nd Round of Public Meetings	113	5	118

Table 3.2 provides a breakdown of number of attendees based on location and round of public meetings. Attachments 5 and 6 include sign-in sheets and meeting notices from first and second round of public meetings.

Table 3.2 Number of Attendees

Location	Number of Attendees at the First Round of Public Meetings	Number of Attendees at the Second Round of Public Meetings
Burnet/Marble Falls	11	23
Wharton	27	13
Georgetown	18	11
Total	56	47

3.2 Comments from First Round of Public Meetings

This section is an evaluation of comments from the first round of public meetings in Burnet, Wharton, and Georgetown on June 28 and July 1, 2004. Attachment 8 provides verbatim comments from first round of public meetings. The comments are grouped under relevant titles, such as no net loss, water replacement strategies, surcharge rate, and other comments. Attachment 9 includes verbatim comments organized by subject matter.

3.2.1 No Net Loss

Of the 10 comments made on no net loss, four comments focused on how the concept of no net loss may be defined. These comments stated that the no net loss definition should be flexible, fair to everyone, and faithful to HB 1437. Comments asked that the definition of no net loss should take into consideration bed and bank losses, stream flows, and time of use. Other comments suggested that the definition should consider long-term mitigation effects, protection of future water use, but should not convert interruptible supply into firm yield.

Three comments identified priorities on how to implement no net loss in the Lower Colorado River basin. Two comments asked respectively that water be replaced at the point of diversion and the replacement volume should equal the volume of water transferred to Williamson County. Another comment suggested that on-farm water conservation options could be better in assuring no net loss and maintaining equal drawdown between Lake Travis and Lake Buchanan.

Two comments addressed concerns about how no net loss would be maintained. One concern was whether the volume of water transferred each year would take environmental conditions into consideration. The other comment questioned whether the replacement water will be “continual” if the source is “continual.”

One comment expressed support of the HB 1437-Designated Agricultural Water Conservation Fund Advisory Committee’s (Ag Committee) definition of no net loss. Table 3.3 includes Ag Committee’s definition of “no net loss.” Another comment expressed support for annual evaluation of water replacement strategies.

Table 3.3 The Ag Committee's Definition of "No Net Loss"

- I. The provision for alternative water supplies and or water conservation practices that, when taken in aggregate, replace in "real time" the diversions to Williamson County under HB 1437.
- a. "Real time" shall be considered to mean an appropriate averaging period consisting of 12 months.
 - b. Inflow is the volume of water conserved or supplied specifically for use by irrigation to comply with HB 1437. Outflow is the volume diverted from the Highland Lakes to supply Williamson County users authorized under HB 1437.
- II. The means and measures to conserve or supply replacement water for the diversions to Williamson County shall be assumed by the Advisory Committee to be in-place, operable and confirmed in their ability to conserve or supply the assumed volumes of water prior to any diversion to Williamson County.

Source: Unpublished letter from the HB 1437-Designated Agricultural Water Conservation Fund Advisory Committee to the LCRA Board, 2004.

3.2.2 Water Replacement Strategies

Of the 22 comments made on water replacement strategies, ten comments expressed preferences on water replacement strategies that should be considered or avoided. Six comments expressed strong opposition to the implementation of groundwater as a water replacement strategy.

Four comments expressed concern about two of the market-based water replacement strategies – purchase Colorado River irrigation water rights and reduced irrigation for second crop. These comments argued that reduced irrigation for a second crop would be feasible on a temporary basis only, and would have negative economic impacts in the long-term.

Six comments introduced either new strategies or expressed support for existing water replacement strategies. Among new strategies introduced were canal lining, reuse of storm water, changing the selection of grasses on recreation areas, and changing vegetative practices. One comment suggested that market-based water replacement options should be implemented as a follow-up to on-farm water conservation options. Another comment proposed Brushy Creek return flow as an option.

Three comments identified ways to implement particular strategies. One comment was that so-called "soft" strategies that do not provide a high reliability for water replacement should not be implemented. Another comment pointed out that several best management practices should be implemented and it should be a "win-win" situation for everyone. Other comments argued that strategies should be cost-effective, flexible and take long and short-term effects into consideration.

One comment questioned how precision land leveling can be used within the Region K Plan as well as being considered as a water replacement strategy for Williamson County. Another questioned whether Brushy Creek would dry up if the Brushy Creek Return flow strategy was implemented. A final question addressed the issue of firm yield and whether it would increase as a result of implementing strategies.

3.2.3 Decision Criteria

Of the seven comments made on decision criteria, four comments argued for some criteria over others. Among these criteria were ease of implementation, timing of implementation, timing of replacement water, and cost of implementation. One comment focused on how the decision criteria should be identified. The comment argued that decision criteria should be “infallible,” fair, reasonable, and accountable. Another comment suggested decision criteria be simple and keep long-term effects in consideration. Another comment expressed concern for whether the interests of the Williamson County would be paramount for deciding on which water replacement strategy to implement.

3.2.4 Surcharge Rate

Of the three comments made on the surcharge rate, one comment argued that a 25 percent surcharge rate would not be sufficient to replace the water transferred to Williamson County. One comment expressed concern on how the surcharge rate would be utilized to replace the transferred water. Another comment questioned if the surcharge rate is based on the volume of water used.

3.2.5 Other Comments

Other comments and questions raised at the public meetings varied in subject. Some of the important issues or questions raised were:

- Ag Committee members do not feel they were consulted on a regular basis;
- The LCRA should live up to its commitments to Williamson County and no net loss and not allow that water to go to San Antonio after a couple of years;
- The LCRA should consider Lake Travis as the most vulnerable component in this water transfer;
- The volume of water that is going to be transferred to Williamson County may exceed 25,000 acre-feet in the future;
- The LCRA should consider having a Williamson County representative on the Ag Committee.
- Is the 25-year model a requirement of the legislation?
- Will Williamson County transfer the 25,000 acre-feet of water from the beginning and save their water for other uses?
- Is buying water from the LCRA cheaper for Williamson County than developing water through other resources?
- How much water is available in the basin to be used for irrigation and contracted for water supply?

Comments from the public meetings did not provide consistent guidance on how to define “no net loss.” Comments mainly focused on the implementation process of “no net loss.” Some comments expressed support of the Ag Committee’s definition of no net loss, according to which water is replaced within a 12-month period.

No consistent water replacement strategy could be developed from the comments made at the public meetings. Comments indicated strong farmer opposition to groundwater development as a water replacement strategy.

Comments emphasized ease of implementation and cost as the most important decision criteria for choosing among water replacement strategies. The small number of comments on the surcharge rate makes it difficult to develop conclusions from commentary alone regarding what the surcharge rate should be.

Inferences from other comments that do not fall under the above-mentioned categories indicated that people in the basin do not feel that they are consulted by the LCRA on a regular basis. Concern for the vulnerability of the Highland Lakes stood out among the other comments.

3.3 Comments from Second Round of Public Meetings

This section is an evaluation of comments from the second round of public meetings in Wharton, Georgetown, and Marble Falls on August 24, August 26, and August 31. Attachment 12 provides verbatim comments from second round of public meetings. The comments are categorized under relevant titles such as cost or surcharge, water replacement strategies, water rights, water balance, Williamson County water demand, advisory committee, and other comments. Attachment 13 includes comments organized by subject matter.

3.3.1 Cost or Surcharge Issue

Of 22 comments on cost or surcharge issue, three comments expressed concerns about accuracy of surcharge calculations. One comment emphasized that precision land leveling might not necessarily lead to reduced water costs. Another comment addressed the uncertainties associated with recommended water replacement strategies and questioned if it would be “wise” to have a 30 percent maximum surcharge at this stage. A third comment questioned the accuracy of the costs for developing groundwater.

Three comments identified specifications for cost calculations. One comment suggested that depreciation on pumping of groundwater should be included in calculations. Another comment expressed interest in seeing a more detailed breakdown of costs, including operating costs, administrative costs, reporting costs, and capital costs. One comment questioned how many staff members were included in the administrative costs.

Two comments questioned the cost incentives of precision leveling for the farmers. One comment questioned what the cost incentives were for the farmers and how they related to the LCRA’s approval of increased water user rights for irrigation purposes. Another comment questioned if the cost of precision leveling was the only practical incentive for the farmers.

Six comments addressed the application of surcharge rates. One comment questioned who would pay for additional costs if the 30 percent surcharge rate does not cover the replacement. Another comment questioned whether a customer who is drawing water (as opposed to the customer who is not drawing water) would pay for the costs.

A third comment stated that surcharge rate would be applied both to the cost of reserving water and to the cost of using water. Another comment added that the surcharge rate would be applied to the total amount of water that can be withdrawn – 25,000 acre feet of water – either on the reserve or the “activated” rate. One comment questioned whether reserving the water would “offset anyone who is actually taking water.” Another comment questioned whether paying a surcharge while reserving the water would accumulate to a customer’s credit.

Three comments addressed factual questions. One comment questioned how much is budgeted for this project. Another comment questioned the meaning of capital cost for precision leveling per acre foot. A third comment asked how much money a 30 percent surcharge on 25,000 acre feet would generate annually.

Two comments provided recommendations to improve the surcharge system. One comment requested a system which would allow for modifications and changes along the way. Another comment recommended looking at precision leveling on an average year basis instead of a farm by farm basis to cut down reporting costs.

One comment expressed concern that there was too much emphasis on cost whereas the Legislation did establish cost as a priority criterion.

One comment expressed concern about paying for both the water and the cost to replace it.

Another comment confirmed that the money received to reserve water for the customers can be used for implementing water replacement strategies.

3.3.2 Water Replacement Strategies

Of the 30 comments on water replacement strategies, five comments emphasize alternative sources of water replacement. One comment expressed concern about the volume of water recommended strategies would produce. It added that if a better strategy is developed along the way, it should be implemented. Another comment emphasized that some water replacement strategies are not even considered since they are constrained by other contracts. A third comment expressed concern that none of the water replacement strategies focused on developing additional water sources within the Brazos Basin, but rather they focused on “fixing the Garwood Irrigation district problem.” One comment listed the water replacement strategies that can be considered within the Brazos Basin. These strategies include Carrizo water, Little River reservoir, the purchase of Texas waters investment in an existing well, raising the elevation of Lake Georgetown, the transfer of water from Lake Belton to Stillhouse Hollow, or raising the elevation of Lake Stillhouse Hollow. Another comment recommended building a canal from the Llano River to Lake Buchanan to prevent floods upstream and to fill Lake Buchanan to store the water in the highest place in the system, but concluded that this option would exceed the budget of this project.

Two comments addressed Williamson County’s water replacement options. One comment questioned why Williamson County is not replacing its own water. Another comment expressed concern about having to send water to Williamson County even if the water replacement options do not work.

One comment questioned how eliminating second crop would affect the economies of the irrigation districts.

3.3.2.1 Precision Land Leveling

Of the 16 comments on precision land leveling, six comments addressed uncertainties about precision land leveling. One comment questioned whether there would be any problems with precision land leveling if the land is located on a hillside. Another comment confirmed that the recommended period for precision land leveling – until 2007 – would be a test period for water savings. One comment recommended that more precision land leveling should be done in the early years since the water savings are uncertain and EQIP money is still available. Two comments questioned whether the possibility of reduced rice production or a change of farming practices have been factored in the estimation of water savings from precision land leveling. Another comment questioned if other water replacement strategies could be implemented if precision land leveling did not save enough water.

Five comments addressed implementation of precision leveling. One comment questioned whether the recommended 2,500 acres of land is available for precision leveling. Another comment questioned whether 2,500 acres was a small portion of the irrigated land and confirmed that this amount would be expanded over the years to save 25,000 acre feet of water. One comment expressed concern about the challenges of saving 25,000 acre feet of water considering the three-year rotation. Another comment stated that a total of 7,500 acres of land would have to be precision leveled in the first three years and that it is “a lot of land.” One comment addressed the issue of re-leveling the precision leveled land and asked how long a precision leveled land stays level.

Two comments reinforced the feasibility of precision land leveling for the farmers. The comments stated that farmers would be paying only a small portion of the costs of precision land leveling, which made it a desirable option compared to other options, such as groundwater development.

Two comments addressed how precision leveling for this project relates to the SAWS Project. One comment questioned whether water savings by precision leveling were being measured as a part of the SAWS Project. Another comment questioned whether water savings from precision leveling would be funded by the SAWS Project in the long-run.

One comment stated that recharging the aquifers should be a priority versus precision land leveling.

3.3.2.2 Groundwater Development

Of the six comments on groundwater development four comments expressed concern about developing groundwater as a contingency. One comment stated that it would be “very questionable to keep those [groundwater options] as high priority.” Another comment expressed concern that groundwater development may be the only strategy that could be used as Williamson County’s demand increases. One comment suggested that if a problem occurs in the Colorado aquifer, it may also affect Wharton and Matagorda Counties. Another comment expressed concern about the possible effects of groundwater withdrawal on surface water.

One comment asked for a better definition of groundwater replacement and where the water would come from.

One comment stated that development of groundwater as a contingency is “going beyond the definition of no net loss” and that is “inappropriate.”

3.3.3 Williamson County Water Demand

Six comments addressed Williamson County’s water demand. One comment confirmed that Williamson County’s water demand remains uncertain. Another comment questioned how much advance notice Williamson County had to give for their water demand according to the contract. One comment questioned what the problem was with Williamson County’s water systems and water authorities. One comment expressed concern about the potential growth of Williamson County’s water demand and questioned at what point they would be cut off. Another comment expressed concern that if Williamson County continues to demand water and there is no water, this would result in cutting off of the rice industry. One comment questioned whether the volume water that the Williamson County does not withdraw would be reflected in the total volume of water they can withdraw in the following year.

3.3.4 Water Rights

Five comments addressed water rights. One comment stated that it would be impossible to assure that everyone can access their water rights without any change after the water transfer to Williamson County. One comment stated that wholesale customers had water rights on the Colorado River and that this would limit LCRA’s actions beyond 25 years. Two comments stated that water rights and their uses are identified; if users decided to change the use of their water, the rights would be modified through the Water Board. Another comment expressed concern that more water rights are given away from the basin and this would increase the demand on water sources.

3.3.5 Implementation

Eight comments addressed the no net loss implementation process. One comment suggested that the LCRA should begin precision land leveling farms that would give the best yield instead of a first-come-first-served basis and added that farm-by-farm measurements of water savings may be too “onerous.” Another comment acknowledged that 12-month advance savings was reasonable, but cautioned that savings should not be 25,000 acre feet. One comment suggested that the implementation costs be paced. Another comment stated that the recommended implementation plan is too “complex.” One comment expressed concern about Round Rock’s possible demand for accelerated implementation and added that this would be “unfair” to other customers who are not withdrawing any water. Another comment confirmed that the second round presentation involved some recommendations on the implementation process. One comment questioned whether the SAWS Project would reimburse the LCRA for the implementation of this project. Another comment questioned how the decision-making process would be affected if SAWS pulls out of the LCRA/SAWS agreement.

3.3.6 Advisory Committee

Three comments addressed the advisory committee. One comment expressed concern about expanding the advisory committee and added that this recommendation was not consistent with the Legislation. Another comment expressed support for expanding the advisory committee to include Williamson County water customers and the Brazos River Authority. A third comment pointed out that unless Georgetown was selected as a wholesale customer it would not be represented in the advisory committee according to the wording of the recommendation.

3.3.7 Other Comments

Other comments or questions at the public meetings fell under four categories – definition of no net loss, the presentation itself, lake levels, and interruptible versus firm water.

3.3.7.1 Definition of No Net Loss

Six comments addressed the definition of “no net loss.” One comment expressed disappointment in the lack of specificity or clarity of the recommended definition of “no net loss” and added that the phrase “no net loss” should not have been used to define “no net loss.” Two comments stated that one acre foot of water diverted to Williamson County should not be considered as equal to one acre foot of water downstream in the definition of “no net loss.” Another comment expressed concern about how the 12-month advance replacement would work and what the procedure would be if the projected demand for water exceeds the actual demand. One comment suggested that the Williamson County should not be paying for the cost of replacing water since they are not withdrawing any water yet. Another comment stated that “no net loss” does not mean “no loss” and the word “net” should be given more significance.

3.3.7.2 Presentation

Of the three comments on the public meeting presentations, two comments stated that the presentation was too extensive and they needed at least a month to review the recommendations before they are finalized. One comment stated that the list of participants did not include the Brazos River Authority and that was “disturbing.”

3.3.7.3 Lake Levels

Of the six comments on lake levels, two comments expressed concern about sedimentation in the lakes and added that something needed to be done to reduce sedimentation. One comment asked about the actual average lake levels. Another comment questioned what 25,000 acre feet of water meant in terms of lake levels. One comment suggested that more water could be stored if Lake Travis was held at 691 feet instead of 681 or 682. Another comment questioned whether 12-month advance water savings meant holding the lake levels 6 inches higher than their average level.

3.3.7.4 Interruptible vs. Firm Water

Three comments addressed the issue of interruptible versus firm water. One comment questioned how interruptible water could be used to replace firm water as a water management strategy. Another comment expressed concern about using interruptible water to replace firm water and stated that a “drought-proof supply” should be implemented as

mitigation. A third comment expressed concern about cutting off the interruptible water supply, which would also eliminate water savings.

Comments that do not fall under any of the above-mentioned categories can be divided into two groups – LCRA policy related comments and HB 1437 related comments. These comments are listed below.

LCRA policy-related comments were:

- The LCRA wants to sell water, but in the case of a drought people are going to want water.
- How will the LCRA satisfy the demand for water if the SAWS Project does not work out? How would that affect the bays and estuaries?
- If San Antonio's water demand is greater than their expected demand in the long-run, will it be getting water from another source?
- Isn't San Antonio supposed to be getting water from the Lake Division?
- If study proves that the SAWS plan cannot be implemented without detrimental effects on the bays and estuaries, will the LCRA abandon the plan?

HB 1437-related comments were:

- Is there a three-year rotation in rice irrigation?
- How many gallons of water are in one acre foot?
- Does Garwood Division have a right to sell water to Corpus Christi? Can this excess water be used as replacement source for the HB 1437 project?
- How many acre feet of water are there in Lake Travis and Lake Buchanan?
- What will happen to the water that the Williamson County does not use?
- Is House Bill 1437 exempt from the Senate Bill 2 requirement that before water is exported out of a basin, the other basin users should have a successful water conservation program in place?
- Did Williamson County just provide a conservation plan or did it establish a program?
- The water users in the Colorado River Basin may be sore if the water is going to a municipality that does not have a water conservation program.
- What's the 2050 projection shortage?
- Are we in a seven-year bay and estuary planning stage?
- We are in the best area for freshwater. We have to save what we have.
- The Colorado River Basin does not have its recharge zone and the groundwater level is getting lower, thus the LCRA should not be selling water.

- How long will it take to get the transcripts from the second round of public meetings up on the website?
- The response I received from the LCRA did not specifically address my comments.
- The alliance water has been extremely important to Williamson County and to the Brazos River Authority. It has assured us of a water supply during a period during which we were busy developing other options.
- How many acres does Garwood division irrigate each year?

3.4 Website

The project website was launched on June 16, 2004. Attachment 15 includes a printout of the website homepage. Table 3.4 lists the HB 1437 Project website content.

The homepage of the website includes a map of LCRA’s service area as well as an introduction section. The website includes a fact sheet, which addresses frequently asked questions about HB 1437. Public meetings section provides information about the dates and locations of the public meetings as well as presentations and transcripts from the meetings.

CH2M Hill’s evaluation of the water replacement strategies considered was made available on the project website. The website has a direct link to Texas Legislature Online for an electronic copy of HB 1437. The references section provides a glossary of commonly used terms in the evaluation of water replacement strategies. The contacts section provides contact information of LBJ School and the LCRA staff.

Table 3.4 Website Content

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area map and introduction • Fact sheet • Public meetings • Water replacement strategies • HB 1437 • Reference • Contacts
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3.5 Comments after the First Round of Public Meetings

This section is an evaluation of comments received via mail, e-mail, phone, or fax after the first round of public meetings. Due to the limited number of comments received after the first round of public meetings, the comments are not grouped under relevant subject titles. Attachment 10 provides question/comment tracking forms for comments received after the first round of public meetings.

Six out of seven comments/questions sent after the public meetings were on water replacement strategies. One comment suggested partnering with some of the private and public interests currently purchasing water rights in Carrizo-Wilcox aquifer area. Two questions reflected concerns on the “Brushy Creek return flow” water replacement strategy.

One question asked how the integrity of Brushy Creek would be maintained. The other question addressed whether an environmental impact study would be done, if the “Brushy Creek return flow” water replacement strategy is implemented.

Two comments emphasized concerns with on-farm water conservation options. One comment asked whether farmers would be willing to cut back on their water use once precision land leveling strategy is implemented.

Another comment provided comprehensive feedback on the problems associated with on-farm water conservation and groundwater development strategies. The comment identified the following problems with on-farm water conservation strategies:

- losing flow anywhere in the basin is an adverse effect and needs to be mitigated.
- calling conserved water a “replacement” for water that will leave the basin is inaccurate.
- ...the water replacement strategy needs to be dependable every year, even during a drought of record.
- if on-farm conservation is used, the program may not rely on programs such as EQIP – a federal program that can now pay 50 percent of the costs of precision leveling land – (with its incentives funded by taxpayers) to cover part of the cost of mitigating the water transfer.

The comment also emphasized that groundwater development strategies are based on the assumption that “no net loss in HB 1437 means no net loss of surface water” (emphasis in the original). The comment added that the term should not be limited to “surface water” and no net loss should be “no loss of actual water to the basin.” The comment also recommended that the Williamson County should have a water conservation program in place prior to the water transfer.

Another comment emphasized issues that need to be considered while selecting a water replacement strategy. The comment acknowledged that water conservation is one of the “most cost-effective ways to extent water supplies,” but it added that water conservation would require on-going investments in order to assure long-term water savings. The comment expressed concern that water exports could adversely affect Austin’s water rights. The letter recommended that Austin be included in the process of selecting a water replacement strategy. It also recommended that the “timing of the transfers and compensation should be in a fair and reasonable manner” and the compensation plan should account for the changes in the volume of water exports.

One comment emphasized the definition of “no net loss” and the decision criteria to be used for selecting a water replacement strategy. The comment interpreted “no net loss” as “no impact to the users of the water.” The comment proposed the Ag Committee’s definition of “no net loss.” (See Table 3.3 for the Ag Committee’s verbatim version of the “no net loss” definition.) The comment recommended that cost, ease of implementation, permit requirement, and phased implementation should be considered for selecting a water replacement strategy.

3.6 Comments after the Second Round of Public Meetings

This section is an evaluation of comments received via mail, e-mail, fax, or phone after the second round of public meetings. Attachment 14 provides question/comment tracking forms for comments received after second round of public meetings.

Three out of five comments received after the second round of public meetings were on water replacement strategies. One comment suggested that increasing cost of water and land, the relative low rice selling price, and the shrinking of rice industry infrastructure would eventually free up irrigation water without any need for investment or expensive studies. This comment recommended using non-precision leveling instead of precision land leveling, since a significant percent of the land is not suitable for precision land leveling. Another comment opposed developing groundwater as a contingency and suggested giving farmers incentives to conserve water instead of implementing a particular water replacement strategy. A third comment stated that a Brushy Creek return flow water replacement strategy should not be implemented since it would decrease the flow of Brushy Creek and might eventually cause flood problems. This comment requested that another public meeting be organized for affected individuals along Brushy, Cottonwood, and Wilbarger Creeks.

One comment expressed disappointment in the representation of farmers' interests by the officials of Wharton and Colorado Counties.

One comment expressed concern about availability of freshwater in the Lower Colorado River Basin. The comment pointed out that sedimentation is a significant problem, which needs to be addressed immediately. The report attached to this comment is included in Attachment 14.

3.7 Summary of Public Comments

Table 3.5 provides a summary of public comments from the first and second round of public meetings as well as comments received after each round of meeting. This table is only a summary of comments and does not include all public comments.

Table 3.5 Summary of Public Comments

Subject Matter	Comments			
	First Round of Public Meetings	Post-meeting Comments	Second Round of Public Meetings	Post-meeting Comments
No Net Loss	<p>Comments mostly related to implementation of no net loss.</p> <p>Preference for “12 months” as an appropriate period for assessing the balance between water replaced and water exported.</p>		<p>Expressed support for 12-month advance savings.</p> <p>Expressed concern about using a first-come-first-served method in precision leveling.</p> <p>Expressed concern about an accelerated implementation.</p> <p>Some water customers were unsatisfied with the proposed definition of “no net loss.”</p>	
Decision Criteria	<p>The following decision criteria were emphasized to assure the balance between the water exported and the water replaced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of implementation • Impact of groundwater development • Cost <p>Three new decision criteria were recommended at the public meetings and one decision criteria was added after the public meetings; they add up to a total of 15 decision criteria to be considered.</p>	<p>Comments mostly expressed concern about the impacts of some water replacement options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brushy Creek return flow • Groundwater development strategies • On-farm water conservation strategies 		
Water Replacement Strategies	<p>Comments emphasized on-farm water conservation strategies.</p> <p>Strong farmer opposition to groundwater development as a water replacement strategy.</p>	<p>Some comments emphasized the following decision criteria for selecting among water replacement strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ease of implementation 	<p>Emphasized alternative sources of water replacement.</p> <p>Addressed implementation and feasibility issues regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precision land leveling 	<p>Recommended non-precision land leveling.</p> <p>Expressed concern about developing groundwater as a contingency.</p>

Subject Matter	Comments			
	First Round of Public Meetings	Post-meeting Comments	Second Round of Public Meetings	Post-meeting Comments
	Three new water replacement strategies were recommended to add up to a total 18 water replacement strategies to be considered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • permit requirement • phased implementation • fair and reasonable timing of water transfer and replacement • low cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundwater development 	Expressed concern about using Brushy Creek return flow as a water replacement strategy.
Cost/ Surcharge Rate			Expressed concerns about accuracy of surcharge calculations. Identified specifications for cost calculations. Addressed the application of surcharge rates.	
Williamson County Water Demand			Expressed concern about the uncertainty of timing and magnitude of demand.	
Other	Some water users in the basin did not feel they were consulted on a regular basis by the LCRA. Highland Lakes are vulnerable; absolute lake elevations and relative lake levels should be considered in choosing a water replacement strategy.		Expressed concern about the effects of the water transfer on water rights. Expressed concern about the potential effects of sedimentation on lake levels. Expressed concern about replacing interruptible water with firm water.	Expressed disappointment in the representation of farmers' interests by the officials. Expressed concern about availability of freshwater in the Lower Colorado River Basin.