

Case Study: Laying the groundwork for an historic, \$2 billion interregional water-sharing plan in Texas

Problem: A series of town hall meetings in 1995 surfaced deep hostility and suspicion in the Colorado River Basin about the possibility that the City of San Antonio would appropriate the river's available water. The steward of the water, the Lower Colorado River Authority, believed it would be legally and politically impossible to stop San Antonio from its intention. A negotiated settlement was the best answer, but public opinion opposed dialogue.

Solution: Develop public consensus that it would be acceptable to share water that San Antonio paid to develop within the Colorado River Basin. The terms of the agreement took into account the demands of multiple stakeholders and incorporated them into contract terms and legislation. A lengthy study period then proved whether the demands/contract terms/legal requirements could -- or could not -- be met, ultimately resolving San Antonio's claim on the Colorado River.



Process: Robert Cullick led a public information campaign that included media, leadership dialogue, and public involvement. After agreement in principle emerged, he participated in contract negotiations to assure that the conditions the basin leaders agreed to could be mapped to specific contract terms. Progress was tracked by both public and technical advisory groups. The team kept state and federal permitting groups aware of preliminary results.

Results: Key stakeholders and the general public accepted the results of the scientific studies.

LCRA/San Antonio Water System Decision Timeline

Fall 1995 - Town hall meetings in five cities along river reinforce challenge of protecting water

Spring 1997 -- Texas Legislature passes SB 1, establishing a new "bottom-up" water planning process

Fall 1999 -- The first San Antonio Regional water plan identifies 13 options to take surface water and groundwater from the Colorado River basin. LCRA opposes it and offers to explore solutions with San Antonio

2000 -- Extended meetings with local officials and the public produces a list of five key concerns for the Colorado River basin

May 2001 -- After successful communications to the Legislature of LCRA's intent, HB 1629 allows LCRA to negotiate a water-sharing agreement with San Antonio consistent with key concerns

December 31, 2001 -- San Antonio, LCRA complete contract negotiations with embedded concerns

February 27, 2002 -- Agreement signed by Boards. Study period begins.

March 2009 -- LCRA determines project not feasible because contract terms cannot be met. San Antonio sues, but loses in District Court