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INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning is one of the most effective approaches to ensuring maximum efficiency and effectiveness in reaching targeted organizational goals, especially in an ever-changing political and socio-economic environment of diverse interests and backgrounds. Strategic planning involves the development of a collective vision, mission, and corresponding strategic themes and goals. As a result, organizational activities and initiatives take on a clear focus and accomplishing important goals becomes more attainable.

The Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA), governed by a board of 15 elected and two appointed directors and operated by a medium-sized professional staff, is tasked with the mission of managing, enhancing, and protecting south-central Texas' primary water resource, the Edwards Aquifer. This multi-faceted mission focuses on managing withdrawals from the aquifer, including during critical periods of drought, enhancing the aquifer's ability to supply the water needs of an economically diverse region, and protecting the aquifer as a vital resource and ecosystem, which supports human life and provides habitat to a number of federally protected species. Therefore, balance between providing certainty to the region's water needs and protecting the resource underlies the EAA mission. To this end, this Strategic Plan is designed to serve as a *blueprint* for meeting the EAA's legislative mandate and overall mission. The plan, which covers a three-year period, is updated annually.

HISTORY

The EAA is a regulatory agency charged with managing, conserving, preserving, protecting, and increasing the recharge of and preventing waste and pollution, of the Edwards Aquifer in an eight-county region, including all of Uvalde, Medina and Bexar counties, plus portions of Atascosa, Caldwell, Guadalupe, Comal and Hays counties. The EAA was created by the Texas Legislature in 1993 with the passage of the Edwards Aquifer Authority Act (Act) to preserve and protect this unique groundwater resource. However, legal challenges prevented the EAA from operating until June 28, 1996. The Act created a 17-member board of directors that sets policy. The board consists of 15 elected members from the eight-county region, and two non-voting appointed members to carry out the duties set out in the Act. The Act also established the South Central Texas Water Advisory Committee (SCTWAC) made up of representatives from downstream counties and within the EAA's boundaries to interact with the EAA on how its actions affect downstream users.

As a result of the Act, the EAA performs a number of major functions. These include:

- Sustaining the aquifer as a natural resource;
- Sustaining the diverse economic and social interests dependent on the aquifer for water supply;
- Protecting terrestrial and aquatic life;
- Protecting domestic and municipal water supplies; and
- Providing effective control of the aquifer to protect the operation of existing industries and the economic development of the state.

In 2007, the Legislature amended the Act to, among other things, require a recovery implementation program for species listed as threatened or endangered under federal law and associated with the aquifer. Through this program -- a facilitated, consensus-based stakeholder process -- an Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP) was developed and subsequently approved by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Approval of this plan resulted in the issuance of a 15-year Incidental Take Permit in 2013 by USFWS to the EAA, San Antonio Water System (SAWS), Texas State University, the City of San Marcos, and the City of New Braunfels, providing the region protection in the event “incidental take” of protected species occurs. The EAHCP requires certain conservation measures to be implemented and sustained over the life of the Incidental Take Permit, beginning in 2013 and continuing until 2028.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

A number of external factors can potentially impact the EAA and its strategic planning process, including the following:

Texas Legislature: As a political subdivision of the state of Texas, the EAA is subject to legislative oversight and state policymakers remain very interested in the agency’s activities and regulatory actions. During legislative sessions, state lawmakers may pass amendments to the Act that can have a direct impact on the EAA and how it operates. For example, since its original passage in 1993, the Act has been amended by lawmakers in 1995, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2007, 2009, and 2013.

Other Governmental Entities: Governmental entities such as the courts and stakeholder groups with interests in water and the environment can affect the EAA. In particular, judicial rulings on issues concerning the Endangered Species Act and issues related to water and private property rights can have an impact on how EAA rules and policies are interpreted and administered.

Stakeholder Groups: There are many stakeholder interests in the Edwards Aquifer who are affected by the EAA mission and which may, from time to time, become engaged in the process of influencing EAA policy and programs through political or legal means. In particular, the regulation of groundwater in Texas and its impact on property rights remains the focus of yet-to-be-resolved litigation and may ultimately affect how the EAA fulfills its statutory mandates as outlined in the Act.

INTERNAL FACTORS

Just as there are external factors that may influence the EAA, there are also internal factors over which the EAA has greater control. The EAA board of directors is diverse and represents a wide range of geographic, economic, and political interests. In recent years, the board has worked collaboratively with respect to addressing wide-ranging issues facing the region. This working relationship is essential to the EAA’s success.

Internal factors, such as resources – human, physical and fiscal – generally fall within the influence of the EAA board of directors. Within these factors, the following have been identified as critical to the ongoing and future success of the organization and its mission.

Workplace: The recent development of new and upgraded facilities for office space should aid in creating an improved work environment for staff, which should translate into a more efficient and effective operation.

Staff: Developing and maintaining a professional staff remains an important factor. The success of the EAA's efforts is closely tied to work performed by a highly skilled group of employees. Support in the areas of continuing education, professional development, and competitive salaries and benefits remain crucial to retaining qualified staff and solidifying the organizational focus on strategic goals.

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

In 2005, a five-phase process was used to create the EAA Strategic Plan for 2006-2009. It was designed as a four-year rolling plan composed of four annual implementation plans consisting of performance measures related to the broad strategic goals. In 2007, the plan was refined and modified into a three-year rolling plan, which is updated annually.

Each year, consultants and EAA staff review the strategic goals in light of the previous year's progress in achieving those goals. EAA staff re-evaluates and re-adjusts the plan accordingly with the board's input through the annual work session and incorporating any legislative changes that may have been made during the year. The plan is then presented for board approval, and becomes effective on January 1 of the ensuing year. An executive summary highlighting the previous year's implementation plan accomplishments is prepared and presented to the board of directors at the end of each year.

VISION

A vision is an articulation of the organizational culture, structure, and direction. It represents an organization's targeted destination and includes the ability of members to perceive changes in the organization. As a result, the vision is a comprehensive description of how the organization will look in the future. Following is the EAA vision:

The Edwards Aquifer Authority is a premier water management agency and the authority on the Edwards Aquifer. The EAA achieves its statutory objectives through a creative, science-based aquifer management program, effective rule-making and enforcement, and an efficient administrative structure. The agency fosters region-wide understanding and cooperation among stakeholders, decision-makers, and citizens for the benefit and sustainability of biological and other natural resources and the people who depend upon the aquifer. The EAA sets the standard for regional water management agencies.

MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement represents a brief overview of an organization's purpose, identification of its clients, and statement of broad outcomes. It galvanizes the organizational culture and forms the organization's philosophy and direction. The EAA mission statement is presented below:

The Edwards Aquifer Authority manages, enhances, and protects the Edward Aquifer system.

CORE VALUES

The core values of the EAA are aspirational statements of "how" the people that comprise the agency view themselves and their role within the mission and vision of the organization as a whole. These core values, identified by staff through a deliberative and shared process, speak to standards of self-imposed accountability and expectation in attitude and conduct, which are to be demonstrated in the EAA's daily work. They are not descriptions of the work itself or the strategies employed to accomplish the overall mission, but they serve as foundational guideposts for how the EAA will go about accomplishing its work. The EAA core values underlie the agency's work, setting ideals of how staff will interact with each other, with customers and stakeholders, and with the diverse communities that their work touches every day.

Stewardship — Through our core value of Stewardship, the EAA manages, enhances, protects, and studies the Edwards Aquifer system to ensure the long-term sustainability of the resource for our communities and the environment.

Respect — Respect is to regard another or to be regarded with deference, esteem, and dignity. We respect all of our stakeholders, external and internal customers, treating them the way we would want to be treated, recognizing that actions express values.

Professionalism — Professionalism means having an interest in and a desire to do a job well, showing competence, skill, and a positive attitude towards both the profession and the workplace.

Collaboration — Collaboration means working together and communicating to ensure information is shared equally throughout the organization and the community we serve.

Science — Science is the fundamental tool used to understand the natural systems of the Edwards Aquifer and is the cornerstone in all our efforts. Sound scientific principles and practices provide a foundation for management strategies.

Integrity — Integrity is the adherence to a code or standard of values. Integrity is what we do, what we say, and what we say we do.

STRATEGIC GOALS

A strategic goal is a broadly-defined planned organizational accomplishment or outcome. A set of strategic goals becomes an organization's outward expression of commitment to its mission. Strategic goals provide the guidance necessary for developing concrete action steps and tasks aimed at addressing organizational issues over a prescribed period of time.

The EAA has eight major strategic goals that have been identified as the focus of the agency from 2014 through 2016. These are categorized into two thematic areas: aquifer conservation and protection; and operational support. Each strategic goal is described along with some general organizational outcomes that may result from goal implementation.

AQUIFER MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION

Aquifer conservation and protection are the two fundamental objectives of the EAA's statutory mission and they are prominently reflected in the agency's strategic goals. Underscoring the significance of these goals is the region's anticipated population growth over the next 50 years. This increased demand for water reinforces the importance of the EAA's role in effectively managing withdrawals from the aquifer as mandated by statute and the requirement to maintain compliance with the Incidental Take Permit issued by the USFWS to address the needs of natural habitats of federally protected species. Likewise, as population grows, protecting the quality of water in the aquifer will remain extremely critical to the region.

Goal A. Sustain Federally Protected Aquifer-Dependent Species

The EAA will work cooperatively with the USFWS and EAHCP Permittees and stakeholders to continue to implement and administer the EAHCP over the 15-year term of the Incidental Take Permit issued in March 2013. The goal of the EAHCP is to ensure the protection of the Covered Species associated with the aquifer through a repeat of the drought of record and in so doing provide certainty to the region that the aquifer will remain a sustainable and viable water resource under local regulation.

The following Strategic Priorities describe how the EAA will achieve this goal:

- 1. Take necessary measures to ensure continual compliance with the Incidental Take Permit issued by USFWS.**
 - In coordination with the EAHCP Permittees, implement all conservation measures in Chapter 5 and research activities in Chapter 6 of the EAHCP.
 - Maintain effective communication and coordination with USFWS to ensure successful implementation of the EAHCP.

- 2. Fully fund and implement the required programs of the EAHCP, while building the EAHCP reserve fund as required by the Funding and Management Agreement (FMA).**
 - Continue to fund the EAHCP Permittee Annual Funding Applications required to complete measures in EAHCP Chapter 5 and 6; using Table 7.1 of the EAHCP as a reference for the EAA obligated funding amount.
 - Ensure effective financial stewardship of EAHCP funds through multi-layered approach including: staff review, Science Committee review, EAHCP Permittee and Implementing Committee Review, and ultimately EAA Board approval.
 - Adjust, as may be necessary, EAHCP Program Aquifer Management Fees to fund required EAHCP activities and contribute to the EAHCP reserve without exceeding the EAHCP reserve cap of \$46 million established by the FMA. This should be accomplished with the intent of minimizing adjustments to the overall Aquifer Management Fee (AMF) assessed from year to year to achieve, to the extent possible, a consistent overall AMF.

- 3. Implement measures necessary to enroll targeted Edwards groundwater into the San Antonio Water System Aquifer Storage and Recovery facility (ASR), the Voluntary Irrigation Suspension Program (VISPO), and Regional Water Conservation Program (RWCP).**
 - Explore all opportunities to secure water to store in ASR to meet EAHCP goals.
 - Continue existing efforts to enroll irrigation groundwater and explore feasibility of enrolling other groundwater into VISPO.
 - Continue to work to find opportunities with EAA communities and EAA permit holders to develop effective water conservation programs.

4. Build greater understanding of value of the EAHCP among key stakeholders and general public.

- Develop proactive approach to communicate the purpose, activities, and benefits of the EAHCP.
- Maintain the EAHCP website and EAHCP listserv to ensure the general public has access to all EAHCP information and processes.
- Work with local and regional media to further understanding of EAHCP.

5. Compile all information, data, and research needed by the Implementing Committee, Science Committee, and Stakeholder Committee to make the most scientifically informed decision possible for the Strategic Adaptive Management (Phase II) decision.

- Evaluate/prioritize research initiatives as outlined in Chapter 6 of the EAHCP.
- Facilitate the EAHCP Committees to achieve consensus on a Phase II decision.
- Communicate consistently with USFWS regarding to Phase II decisions.

Goal B. Manage Groundwater Withdrawals

The EAA manages groundwater withdrawals from the aquifer for all conditions and levels. The EAA's challenge is to administer appropriate management strategies designed to complement the natural system while optimizing use of the aquifer. For the plan period, such strategies include the review and implementation of a revised water conservation grant program, a review of the critical period program for improved efficiency, and an initiative to analyze the effects of groundwater withdrawal permit transfers. The plan also addresses the EAA's efforts to improve efficiency in the administration and processing of permits, to include making permit data more accessible to permit holders via the EAA website.

The following Strategic Priorities describe how the EAA will achieve this goal:

- 1. Revise Groundwater Conservation Plan (GCP) requirements to become more incentive-based/service-oriented.**
 - Adjust current plan requirements to focus on the capabilities of the permit holder, rather than a prescriptive list of "one size fits all" best management practices.
 - Use the GCP to become a resource for time tested and emerging conservation practices.
 - Provide expert advice/consultation to permit holders desiring to find new ways to conserve groundwater or achieve access to available state resources.

- 2. Revise EAA groundwater conservation grant program to complement EAHCP program and refocus EAA grant opportunities/capabilities to core mission.**
 - Refocus the EAA's "institutional" conservation grant program to identify needs of permit holders with groundwater conservation plans in a way that complements the EAHCP by making conservation grants available to entities who may not qualify for, or be identified by, the Regional Conservation Program.
 - Reposition the EAA grant program as an aid to permit holders in achieving recommended GCP best management practices and to engage the general public in conservation.

- 3. Improve database management system(s) for tracking and sharing of permit information internally and externally.**
 - Continue development of updates to EAA's enterprise database to allow more efficient data storage and retrieval.
 - Initiate development of website applications to allow withdrawal permit holders to process many transactions online.

- 4. Implement limited capacity well rules.**
 - Assist permit holders in qualification determinations and in managing permits during any transition phase.
 - Develop and implement strategy to share information with those well owners most affected by new rules.

5. Complete finite element model development and upgrades to existing model for improved analysis of pumping impacts.

- Complete construction of the finite element model and refinement of the MODFLOW model by December 2014.
- Employ the new and refined models to evaluate critical period triggers for the Uvalde Pool and evaluate the effects of groundwater withdrawal permit transfers on springflow.

6. Review and revise (if necessary) the critical period management program to identify ways in which to make its requirements more effective and efficient.

- Assess and identify potential alternative approaches to administering the existing critical period program to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness.
- Consider possible changes to the Critical Period Management Plan to simplify compliance, while maintaining the intent of the EAA Act.
- Evaluate and implement, as necessary, more effective methods of communication with permit holders regarding critical period notices and reporting.

Goal C. Develop Recharge Program for Improved Aquifer Management and Springflow Maintenance

The physical characteristics of the aquifer are quite conducive to recharge. Historical data indicate that the mean annual recharge for the period 1934 – 2012 is 695,900 acre-feet, and the median annual recharge for that same period is 557,000 acre-feet. Several studies on the potential for enhanced recharge have concluded there is potential for increasing recharge to the aquifer. Constructing structures that directly recharge the aquifer is one alternative to enhance recharge. A prudent approach to achieving long-term success in a recharge program is to first ensure that the EAA's tools for evaluating recharge (computer groundwater models) are further refined such that they provide a greater level of certainty in simulating the effects of recharge (on an aquifer-wide scale). Such a modeling analysis may be appropriate once site-specific studies are completed. Pending the completion of groundwater model refinements, the EAA's recharge program will focus on reviewing recharge project opportunities presented to EAA and developing data regarding the aquifer's retention of water from specific recharge events. Additionally, carefully monitored pilot projects can also inform the EAA as to aquifer response, and will be considered as appropriate.

The following Strategic Priorities describe how the EAA will achieve this goal:

- 1. Develop policy recommendations regarding enhanced recharge projects.**
 - Develop a report on the availability of surface water rights, regional concerns of diverting additional surface water into the aquifer, and lessons learned from decades of operating existing EAA recharge structures.
 - Develop board consensus regarding the feasibility of additional EAA-funded recharge projects and projects presented to EAA by other entities.
- 2. Review/allocate resources necessary to evaluate potential projects based on policy direction.**
 - Provide the board with a report on resources required to develop potential new EAA-funded recharge projects.
- 3. Implement the use of surface water models for improved recharge calculations.**
 - Evaluate the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) Edwards Aquifer recharge (surface water) model, completed in 2013, to ensure functionality.
 - If the COE model is ready for use, initiate a transition process to incorporate the COE method, using it in parallel with the historic USGS methodology.

Goal D. Prevent the Pollution of the Aquifer

The Act charges the agency with preventing the pollution of water in the Edwards Aquifer. Protecting the aquifer's water from pollution will benefit the economy of the region and the aquatic species associated with the aquifer that are the focus of the EAHCP. To avoid duplication of effort and ensure the most reasonable application of water quality regulatory programs, the EAA will work to encourage a more collaborative approach with area regulatory agencies. Accordingly, the EAA will initiate regular meetings with area regulatory agencies to discuss programs and to encourage collaboration. Other initiatives within this plan include the continuation of well canvassing efforts across the region, continued funding of the abandoned well closure program, and a pilot program for the logging and assessment of certain abandoned wells.

The following Strategic Priorities describe how the EAA will achieve this goal:

- 1. Explore/develop improved working relations with agencies with overlapping jurisdiction on the recharge and contributing zones to more effectively and efficiently prevent pollution.**
 - Develop/enhance relationships with area regulatory agencies to better coordinate the regulatory programs of each entity.
 - Explore potential collaborative regulatory efforts to simplify compliance and maximize resources.

- 2. Continue well protection effort across region**
 - Focus Well Protection Program in Comal County through approximately 2016; perform well protection work in other counties as needed to address threats of unattended wells being destroyed.
 - Use the Abandoned Well Closure Assistance Program and Well Logging Program to assist well owners who cannot afford to close their abandoned wells.

- 3. Continue to ensure well owner compliance of abandoned/deteriorated wells.**
 - Improve outreach to owners of abandoned wells to encourage more rapid resolution of abandoned well cases.
 - Implement well logging pilot program and evaluate program to determine continued feasibility and resource requirements.
 - Continue well closure assistance program for abandoned wells with compliance issues.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

This thematic area relates to organizational effectiveness, which is addressed by four strategic goals. Underlying this thematic area is the idea that effective policy and regulation requires accurate and timely information. Therefore, the first goal focuses on collecting data and conducting directed research as the foundation of the EAA's aquifer management responsibilities. In order to accomplish the agency's strategic goals, there must be an infrastructure that complements these efforts. An infrastructure of professional staff and the supporting facilities is essential in this regard and is addressed in the second goal. The third goal in this area focuses on the public's knowledge of the aquifer and awareness of the agency, which together foster greater understanding of the resource and engagement with the organization through a relationship of trust. Lastly, the long term financial stability of the EAA is addressed focusing on a long-term approach to maintaining stability in the fee rate structure and appropriate reserves for funding the EAHCP.

Goal E. Conduct Research that Enhances Understanding and Effective Management of the Aquifer

The Act provides the EAA with the responsibility to collect data and perform research necessary to better understand and inform policy to effectively manage and protect the aquifer. The EAA performs research to better understand the controlling factors for recharge, occurrence, movement, and discharge of water from the aquifer. Work will continue throughout the plan period to further improve the EAA's capabilities and expertise in areas such as analysis of hydrologic conditions and groundwater modeling.

The following Strategic Priorities describe how the EAA will achieve this goal:

- 1. Evaluate/identify/prioritize research initiatives to address policy questions/direction.**
 - Develop/enhance relationships with other regional organizations to improve mutual understanding of current and future aquifer studies.
 - Develop decision criteria for selecting research projects to support EAA policy.
 - Evaluate statewide water resource issues for relevance/impact to the Edwards Aquifer and develop appropriate research response.

- 2. Continue research initiatives included in the Aquifer Science Research Program Plan (ASRPP).**
 - Major research initiatives include groundwater modeling and interformational flow research.
 - Major data collection initiatives to support ASRPP projects include data collection for evapotranspiration, recharge retention, emerging groundwater contaminants, and tracer testing.

- 3. Ensure reliability of the springflow gauging equipment for the Comal and San Marcos springs ecosystems in support of the EAHCP.**
 - Review existing gauging infrastructure at the Comal and San Marcos springs systems to determine if large-scale maintenance is needed.
 - Evaluate and install (if appropriate) EAA-owned redundant stream gauging equipment or develop other means of ensuring availability of springflow data currently collected through agreement with USGS.

Goal F. Develop a Diverse, Service-Oriented Organization

The EAA is committed to being a diverse, service-oriented agency, providing exceptional customer service to both internal and external clients in support of its overall mission and strives to serve as a regional resource for regional solutions. This will be accomplished through a positive work environment fostering an efficient and effective organization that is responsive to the needs of the various diverse communities and stakeholder interests the EAA serves. To maintain such an environment the EAA will ensure the staff receives a competitive wage and benefit for their work, nurture and develop advanced technical skills and proficiencies among its employees, integrate and uphold the organization's self-identified core values through high levels of accountability to the ideals of service, inclusiveness, and fairness. The purpose of this effort is to develop a multi-faceted and diverse workplace culture of great expectations and accountability that proactively seeks to serve the customer needs through its programs and policies.

The following Strategic Priorities describe how the EAA will achieve this goal:

- 1. Evaluate and revise, as necessary, policies and programs that support diversity in EAA operations.**
 - Explore and develop policy recommendations to articulate an institutional definition and priority of diversity in EAA operations.
 - Evaluate existing diversity-focused programs for effectiveness and relevance to the EAA mission.
 - Develop long-term strategy to position EAA as a role model of fair and equal opportunity in procurement and employment practices.

- 2. Continue implementation of organizational core values to enhance an EAA culture of excellence through service.**
 - Align training program with core values and evaluate specific training needs to reinforce core values.
 - Facilitate a workplace culture that fosters accountability to the organizational core values.
 - Develop program to acknowledge employee demonstration of core values.

- 3. Ensure a productive and rewarding EAA work environment.**
 - Identify and implement tools/protocols to regularly solicit employee input into the EAA workplace.
 - Establish and implement a schedule to evaluate the organization's position relative to the marketplace for wages and benefits, and recommend/implement appropriate adjustments to the EAA compensation and benefits program as may be warranted.
 - Improve the employee evaluation process by introducing new tools (such as a 360 assessment) to enhance employee professional development and advancement.
 - Create new opportunities for staff development through a leadership development program.

Goal G. Build Shared Value in the EAA Mission

Shared value is the idea that an organization's effectiveness or success in the marketplace and the wellbeing of the communities around it are mutually dependent. For the EAA, achieving shared value means building trust. This means identifying the shared ideals of the regulated community and then redefining how to connect with the community around those shared ideals to further the EAA mission. This requires promoting the dynamics of public engagement from a one-way to a two-way communication model that invites input and values diversity of viewpoints around issues pertinent to the EAA mission. This calls for a more open, inclusive process that will result in a higher level of engagement, with the goal of ultimately achieving greater understanding and trust. This will be achieved through education across all demographics, outreach, partnerships, service-oriented programs, and enhanced communication practices.

The following Strategic Priorities describe how the EAA will achieve this goal:

- 1. Establish a digital strategy to enhance the EAA's online presence and communication efforts and to improve accessibility of information.**
 - Develop and implement a strategy for the use of the internet, mobile devices, social media, and digital marketing to better engage the public in the EAA mission.
 - Identify ways to enhance the permit holder/stakeholder experience when transacting business with the EAA.
 - Solicit and evaluate stakeholder perceptions of EAA.

- 2. Develop/implement audience-specific strategies to educate and engage stakeholders in the EAA mission.**
 - Develop individual strategies for reaching members of the legislature, other elected officials, permit holders, and the general public.
 - Continue outreach to news media to enhance understanding of the Edwards Aquifer, the EAA, and the EAHCP.
 - Expand educational outreach through programs designed for all age groups and expanding the EAA's footprint at community events

- 3. Review and implement as necessary a revised compliance approach to be more effective.**
 - Continually review approaches and implement program changes as needed to achieve compliance with EAA rules.

Goal H. Sustain Fiscal Stability

Fiscal responsibility demands that the EAA explore and understand the various options for sustaining adequate funding of its mission over the long-term future, especially in light of uncertainty concerning various factors that may affect the agency's financial bottom line. The process requires continued transparency and accountability, in particular to the legislature and regulated community, as the EAA strives to further its mission. Therefore, the EAA will consider a financial planning model that takes into account potential future conditions, including various aquifer management fee rate scenarios and the sustainability of funded programs that could have an economic impact on the organization and its stakeholders. This also includes exploring and identifying potential alternative options for funding the implementation of an HCP and other projects and programs of the EAA. Accordingly, an initiative to explore the creation of a tax-exempt entity to support the mission of the EAA has been incorporated into Goal G of this Strategic Plan.

In addition to long-range financial planning related to EAA operations, staff will develop a long-range capital forecast. This forecast will quantify and schedule major capital outlays for replacement of EAA equipment (computers, vehicles, irrigation flow meters, etc.) and will identify new potential capital outlay needs.

The following Strategic Priorities describe how the EAA will achieve this goal:

- 1. Enhance long range financial forecasting tools.**
 - Develop the financial forecast that was introduced as part of the FY 2014 budget development to a strategic decision-making forecasting tool that can be used to evaluate an array of long-range opportunities to determine the impact on financial, staffing, and capital resources.
- 2. Implement a tax-exempt entity to assist the EAA in funding its mission.**
 - Establish the governing and operational structure of the tax-exempt entity.
 - Identify and solicit grant opportunities.
- 3. Identify/develop inter-agency partnerships where possible to cost share.**
 - Seek opportunities to develop intra-agency cooperative agreements to collaborate on programs and initiatives that serve the EAA's objectives and also provide proper stewardship of organizational resources through cost and other resource sharing measures.
- 4. Identify/develop intra-agency cooperation where possible to maximize staff capabilities.**
 - Examine opportunities whereby staff can augment their professional skill sets by job-sharing or other programs that call upon staff to seek and acquire knowledge or expertise they may not otherwise attain in the course of their present job.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

A strategic initiative as identified within this plan is an issue or area of concern that an organization intends to address over a protracted time period. Eventually, most strategic initiatives are transformed into strategic or operational goals and become another critical component of an organization's outward expression of commitment to its mission. Strategic initiatives provide the long-range guidance necessary for creating more concrete actions aimed at addressing organizational issues.

The EAA has identified several strategic initiatives that will assist in focusing the agency's planning for the period 2014 through 2023. These initiatives are summarized below. How the agency integrates these initiatives into its strategic planning process will be discussed at future strategic planning sessions.

Develop Board of Director Vision and Goals for Water Management

Against the backdrop of a changing landscape in groundwater management, it would benefit the EAA to continue to define its role within the overall resource management process. Creating such an overall vision for water management begins with education. Therefore, periodic briefings and updates regarding issues related to water planning, supply, resource management, among other things, should be considered for both the board of directors and staff members.

Examine the Impact of Climate Change on the Edwards Aquifer

Understanding how certain phenomena related to climate/weather may affect the aquifer and anticipating the consequences can be useful in the effective long-term management, enhancement and protection of the aquifer. Improved understanding in this regard could hold implications for policymakers at the local, regional and state level and therefore should be considered within the EAA's long-term research and policy development initiatives. Although climate experts generally predict continued warming of average global temperatures, experts do not agree if the Edwards Aquifer region will experience dryer or wetter rainfall patterns. Most do agree, however, that extreme weather events will be more common. Consequently, the agency should consider developing Edwards Aquifer region-specific climate models to inform the EAA about the water resource management implications of changes in runoff, stream flow, and aquifer recharge patterns; and/or initiatives to improve long-term forecasting to benefit critical period management administration and spring flow protection.

Assess Demographic and Population Growth Issues and Their Impact on the Edwards Aquifer

Understanding how a growing population with changing demographics may affect the aquifer in the future will be key to sustaining policies and programs that continue to further the agency's mission. Therefore, anticipated population and demographic changes should be considered in planning activities regarding the long-term future, particularly as it relates to aquifer issues such as water quantity and quality.

Perform a Reconnaissance Level Analysis for Additional Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) Project(s)

Aquifer storage and recovery is a key component of the currently proposed draft EAHCP in the form of the San Antonio Water System (SAWS) ASR trade off project. Based on the demonstrated effectiveness of the SAWS ASR project, the economic and operational feasibility of similar non-Edwards ASR projects that could be accessible to water purveyors in other areas of the aquifer system should be evaluated and considered.

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASR – Aquifer Storage and Recovery

ASRP – Aquifer Science Research Plan

COE – (U.S. Army) Corps of Engineers

CPM – Critical Period Management

DCM – Dual-Conductivity Model (Groundwater Model)

EAA – Edwards Aquifer Authority

EAHCP – Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan

EARIP -- Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program

EIS -- Environmental Impact Statement

ERPA – Environmental Restoration Project Area

ET – Evapotranspiration

FE – Finite Element groundwater modeling code

GCP – Groundwater Conservation Plan

GMP – Groundwater Management Plan

HSPF – Hydrologic Simulation Program Fortran (surface water modeling code)

MODFLOW – A Finite-Difference Groundwater Model

PPCP – Pharmaceutical and Personal Care Products

SAWS – San Antonio Water System

TCEQ – Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

USFWS – United States Fish & Wildlife Service

USGS – United States Geological Society



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