

State task force discusses water conservation

By MATT JOYCE Associated Press Writer

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AUSTIN- A state with deserts, beaches, swamps, farms and major cities doesn't need a "one-size-fits-all" plan to save water, members of a task force said Monday.

The 32 members of the Water Conservation Implementation Task Force met to hammer out recommendations for how Texas can best regulate water conservation among its broad range of users.

"There are many areas in the state that will not have sufficient water supplies to meet future demands," said Bill Mullican, the deputy director for planning at the Texas Water Development Board, the agency overseeing the task force. "Every community can and should have water conservation as an important component of their portfolio for meeting water needs."

The task force, which meets monthly, on Monday adopted a recommendation that the state create a standing council to advise on new issues and technology related to saving water.

The task force also discussed how the state can best oversee communities' implementation of existing and proposed conservation rules.

Members questioned whether small towns should be subject to the same conservation guidelines as bigger cities with more resources. They discussed whether the state should help smaller communities in creating and applying conservation measures.

The task force also discussed proposed requirements ranging from installing water-saving toilets and shower heads to conservation-pricing incentives and golf course conservation measures. **The proposals are now open to public comment.**

"My view is that our water wall here, when we no longer have the luxury of ignoring water conservation, is only 10 to 15 years away," said Rusty Osborne, a project manager for the utilities and energy department at the University of Texas at Austin.

The task force, formed by the Legislature last year, is made up of representatives from various state and federal agencies, the environmental community, professional organizations, the utility industry, municipalities and groundwater conservation and irrigation districts.

The group is scheduled to finish its work by November and present its recommendations to state lawmakers.

On the Net: Water Conservation Implementation Task Force:
www.twdb.state.tx.us/assistance/conservation/taskforce.asp