Report Argues Texas Must Consider Water & Energy Policies Together

Recent report from University of Texas and Environmental Defense Fund suggests improved energy efficiency will reduce water needs

April 13, 2009

Acknowledging the links between water treatment, power generation and energy use will be key to clean water and electric reliability for Texas in the future, according to a joint report, "Energy-Water Nexus in Texas," released recently by the University of Texas and the Environmental Defense Fund, according to *E&E Land Letter.*

The report urges state lawmakers to consider water management and energy development together, or risk compromising both resources.

"Policies that address both energy and water can increase efficiency and reduce costs for Texans," said Michael Webber, the report's co-author and associate director of the University of Texas Center for International Energy & Environmental Policy. "Failure to consider the links between water and energy could undermine both resources, where constraints in water become constraints in energy, or vice versa."

In Texas, thermoelectric generating plants churn out a combined 400 terawatt-hours of electricity per year but consume 157 billion gal of water from streams, reservoirs and underground aquifers to cool and condense the plants' steam, the report says. Sewage treatment and drinking water facilities use 3.2 to 4.9 terawatt-hours annually, enough electricity for about 100,000 people for a year.

According to the report, cutting back on energy use will reduce water demand at power plants, and at the same time, water conservation will eliminate the need for producing the power to treat the water in the first place.

"Improving water conservation will reduce power demand, and improving energy efficiency will reduce overall water needs," said Amy Hardberger, co-author of the report and an attorney with the Environmental Defense Fund's Texas office. "This is key to stretching finite supplies of both while reducing costs for Texans."

The report suggests state laws should be changed so that applications for power plants require a thorough analysis of the water-use implications of various types of cooling technologies, taking into consideration factors such as regional climate, fuel types and in-stream flow requirements.

Source: *E&E Land Letter* April 13, 2009