



**DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE**  
**RESEARCH & EXTENSION**

*University of Arkansas System*

## **Arkansas State Water Plan Focus Group Input**

**October 29 and 31, 2024**

**UADA Extension Service, Little Rock State Office, Classrooms 2 and 3**

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# Arkansas State Water Plan Focus Group Input

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# **October 29 and 31, 2024, Four Focus Groups**

## **UADA Extension, Little Rock State Office, Classrooms 2 and 3**

### **Introduction**

Two focus groups were hosted by Director Chris Colclasure and Mr. Tate Wentz. Hunter Phillips Goodman and Kristin Netterstrom Higgins served as facilitators for October 29. Julie Robinson and Steve Siegelin facilitated the two October 31 sessions. The two October 29 groups focused on 1) Surface Water and 2) Ground Water. The two October 31 groups focused on 1) Water and Wastewater and 2) Navigation, Levee, Dam, and Conveyance.

Each focus group developed responses to four questions and offered unfiltered recommendations.

1. Are the issues brought forward in 2014 still a current issue?
2. What, if anything, has been done to resolve the issue?
3. What pertinent information is relevant to this issue now that may not have been in 2014?
4. Are there any emerging issues in 2024?

### **Methodology**

Colclasure and Wentz served as hosts, historical resources, and experts. They provided a status update covering past water plans and goals for this plan. Goodman, Higgins, Robinson, and Siegelin served as neutral facilitators for the purpose of guiding the participants to develop collective responses to the four guiding questions. This input will be utilized to guide the development of the next Arkansas State Water Plan.

The two October 29 groups utilized the following process. In the morning focus group, participants discussed their ideas in teams with one group discussing ideas in the round. Every participant noted their idea on a post-it note. The post-it notes were taped to the wall on large sheets of paper. Participants brainstormed each question collaboratively. In the afternoon, participants discussed each question in teams of 3-4 people. Ideas generated by group were added to a shared sticky wall for discussion and prioritization. The process described was the same otherwise.

Participants prioritized the ideas by voting on the ideas using multi-colored dots based on question 1, 2, 3, and 4. All ideas provided are captured while the ideas with the most votes are noted. Participants asked questions, added ideas, and clarified the meaning of points discussed. The results were the themed responses developed with the consensus of the whole group.

The two October 31 groups utilized the following process. The participants were divided into four groups of two to three people somewhat randomly. Groups were assigned a station where they brainstormed ideas or responses for one of the questions. One idea per 5" by 8" card was written down and taped to the wall. The groups rotated to the next

question until they had developed ideas for all four questions (approximately 35 minutes total).

Upon rotating back to their first station, they grouped cards into themes and titled the themes. Each group reported the results from the idea generation process and the themes they developed. Other participants asked questions, added ideas, and clarified meanings of ideas. The results were the themed responses developed with the consensus of the whole group.

To prioritize the themes a two-phase voting process was used. Phase 1 provided each participant with four dots that were red, yellow, green, or blue. Each guiding question was identified by one of those colors. Participants were instructed to vote for the most important idea within each question by placing the appropriately colored dot on the idea card. Votes for all ideas in a theme are documented below. Phase 2 provided each participant with four navy blue dots of (different than colors from Phase 1). They were instructed to place these dots on the four highest priority ideas for which they had not already voted. They were not restricted to the guiding questions beyond not double voting for an idea. The results below show the results of each phase of voting and the combination of the phases.

After reviewing the results of the voting process, the groups were given two minutes to make recommendations for the future. The groups rotated through all stations, adding recommendations to those offered by preceding groups.

In facilitation terminology: groups were formed arbitrarily and participated in rotating sticky wall idea generation (four stations using host identified prompts); groups grouped and themed ideas at their first prompt; reported results to the entire group and made agreed upon refinements; sticky dot voting, as described above; and unfiltered recommendation development completed the process.

# Surface Water Focus Group

Participants did not place multiple votes here.

## Are the issues brought forward in 2014 still a current issue?

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Surface Water Quantity</b>			<b>4</b>
Reallocate corporate lake uses Increase water reliability (interconnections) Address river dredging Capture when water going over spillway			

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Water conservation and storage</b>			<b>5</b>
Climate consideration for water availability and sustainability. Need more robust stream gaging. Capture when water going over the spillway. Ensure water infrastructure has minimal loss. Regarding impoundments, seek other uses besides drinking, flood control, hydropower etc. such as: 1) Flows to maintain navigational depths. 2) Reallocation from corporate reservoirs			

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Funding and Incentives</b>			<b>1</b>
Look at the cost of the replacement water source. Rate payer is the same.			

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Water Law and Policy</b>			<b>1</b>
25% non-riparian diversion rule should be challenged to be replaced with a more scientific method			

*Recommendations: Are the issues brought forward in 2014 still a current issue?*

Participants affirmed that the four theme areas presented in 2014 remain relevant.

- Challenge the 25% non-riparian diversion rule and replace with a more scientific method.
- Look at the cost of the replacement water source.
- Examine water infrastructure for minimal water loss.
- Reallocate corporate lake uses.

**What, if anything, has been done to resolve the issue?**

*Recommendations: What if anything has been done to resolve the issue?*

- There was no discussion or recommendations about actions taken to resolve the issue. Participants focused on ideas for the future based on the 2014 focus areas.

**What pertinent information is relevant to this issue in 2024?**

*Note, participants had multiple votes to place on the ideas here. Hence the numbers are larger in the total column than the number of participants.*

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Financial Resources</b>			<b>11</b>
Funding that supports the initiatives in the plan, so it is actionable. Economics as the factors impacting funding availability.			

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Water Quality</b>			<b>8</b>
Protect and enhance water quality of surface water. Protection of lake watershed. Stormwater management in developing areas (particularly NWA). Point source water quality control into controlled reservoirs and lakes. Reuse of treated wastewater			

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Allocation</b>			<b>15</b>
Examine trade use between corporate lakes. Re-examine USAEC storage allocation, processes, and procedures. Eliminate supply grabs for we are currently “trapping” supply with inefficient allocations and/or infrastructure. Focus on USAEC for more water supply allocation. Review existing non-riparian permits for actual usage or need. Add flexibility that adjusts specific limits, allocations, and requirements, as climate conditions change.			

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Impoundments</b>			<b>1</b>
New impoundments are still needed. Alternative uses to help fund impoundments (hydro power, etc.)			

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Economics</b>			<b>5</b>
<p>Agricultural living is \$20+ billion a year to AR.  Fish, wildlife, and recreation \$7 billion to \$13 billion per year.</p>			

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Long-term Planning</b>			<b>13</b>
<p>Long-term sustainable use and availability of water resources.  If new resources are constructed for things such as drinking water and they use architectural watersheds, the existing resources must be considered when designing the water treatment process. Do not restrict existing watershed activities in the process.  Give serious consideration of changes in climate to long-term planning and sustainability.  Set a sustainability goal for conservation practices that includes water use targets per crop type. The goal should be a sustainable aquifer.  Encourage state plans to link with federal farm bill program to protect watersheds for water quality improvement. <i>(Note: originally in education category).</i></p>			

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Regional Collaborative</b>			<b>5</b>
<p>Regionalization is key. Water providers working together for long-term planning.  Regionalized water resource planning efforts to reduce current and future issues.  Explore ways we can proactively prevent problems by working together.  Address surface water issues by region.</p>			

*Recommendations: What pertinent information is relevant now in 2024?*

- Give serious consideration to changes in climate and its impact on surface water.
- Set a sustainability goal for conservation that includes water use target per crop type. The goal should be a sustainable aquifer.

- Prioritize regional partners where water providers work collaboratively to prevent problems.

### **What are emerging issues in 2024?**

- Need to accurately report water use data.
- Need to further incentivize private sector investment.
- Build pathways for greater regional collaborations and partnerships.
- Examine methods for conservation.
- Design and implement new systems with long-term planning and utilization in mind.

*Recommendations: Are there any emerging issues?*

Focus group members grouped recommendations for action in three categories: policy, funding, and programs.

#### ***Policy***

- Incentivize producers to accurately report water use data.
- Include private sector investment due to incentivized markets for sustainably grown crops (COVID included).
- Work with the US Army Corps of Engineers for the reallocation of lake resources for drinking water and State to fund White River study.
- Ensure due process-input from all stakeholders.
- Implement more flexibility in the tax credit application.
- Incentivize producers to accurately report water use data; this could include private sector investment due to incentivized markets for sustainably grown crops.
- Incorporate online water use reporting.
- Adopt policies that strongly encourage and incentivize ground water conservation.
- Revamp the tax credit program (use those recommendations as a new policy.)
- Require or incentivize data reporting.
- Remove from law that water allocation will be based upon previous reported water use.
- Re-evaluate allocation values based on site specific needs and current water quantity and quality.
- Consider regionalization for large and small systems.
- Examine water policy protection through a policy lens.
- Change verbiage and rule out the General Assembly “should” and move to a more collaborative effort for non-riparian excess water use.
- Examine the water allocation process to ensure that critical electrical power is maintained less than 25% in some areas.
- Encourage state plans to link with the federal Farm Bill to protect watersheds for water quality improvement.

## ***Funding***

- Examine water revenue spent on water.
- Fund effective collaboration models.
- Increase awareness and/or marketing of the water issue(s) to attract private investment.
- Emphasize water use reporting incentives.
- Use state tax credits to drive adoption and examine tax incentives (2024 flow meters.)
- Incorporate funding for incentives and program implementation.
- Pursue long-term funding sources for water infrastructure projects.
- Facilitate fund discussion concerning Beaver Lake reallocation for public drinking water use.
- Return surplus state funds through infrastructure spending versus and income tax cut.
- Examine water reliability (interconnections) and replace aging infrastructure.
- Subsidize loans for surface water projects.
- Fund the programs that already exist (ie: TNC well timer).

## ***Program***

- Emphasize program for a long-term plan that is both proactive and reactive.
- Add State-funded programs for producer conservation education and practice/tool adoption.
- Build programs for long-term planning and regionalization.
- Incentivize program for farmers who share water use data.
- Emphasize conservation in all areas.
- Conduct scientific evaluations to determine if 25% is appropriate limit on excess surface water.
- Develop tiered planning recommendation with stronger recommendations in the near term. The long-term planning may need more flexibility.
- Create programs that farmers can use to take advantage of private or corporate dollars.
- Develop water reporting improvements (possibly a network of monitoring for more accurate results.)
- Examine usage and efficiency improvements,
- Produce incentives/education that lead to conservation.
- Understand the total water storage in AR and explore how much of that water storage has been allocated. Derive the cumulative projected need.
- Consider Arkansas' needs before reviewing other states non-riparian requests.
- Examine long-term shifts in climate that include CDA uses to preserve water quality adequately. Be proactive in preventing issues. Design our future.
- Include modeling climate change into regional efforts due to Arkansas' 6 major eco-regions throughout long-term planning.

- Re-examine USACE More in-depth regional planning requirements.
- Understand agriculture water use to deploy and scale low-cost water conservations in agriculture to maintain production and conserve surface and groundwater resources. Help producers transition. Avoid costly transitions to surface water by more efficient use.

## Ground Water Focus Group

**Are the issues brought forward in 2014 still a current issue?**

*Participants did not place multiple votes here.*

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Ground Water Quantity</b>			<b>5</b>
<p>Declining ground water levels across various areas of the State.</p> <p>Accurate water measurements are needed.</p> <p>Ground water levels appear to be declining but surface water diversion may be helping.</p> <p>Overhaul the water user database</p> <p>We do not have any data showing that land leveling saves water.</p>			
<b>Water Conservation and Storage</b>			<b>1</b>
<p>Sparta decline in the South has reversed somewhat but shouldn't be ignored.</p>			
<b>Funding and Incentive Issues</b>			<b>3</b>
<p>Deep wells are not affordable.</p> <p>Tax incentives are not effective for large scale adoption and water conservation.</p> <p>There are not enough state resources or funding for conservation efforts.</p>			
<b>Water Law and Policy</b>			<b>4</b>
<p>Ground water is still declining but we don't know the effect of interventions made in recent years.</p> <p>Reporting is inconsistent. We need a focused effort to measure water use.</p> <p>We need education on how to market transferability of tax credits</p> <p>Assistance for farmers to apply for tax credits and programs.</p>			

*Recommendations: Are the issues brought forward in 2014 still a current issue?*

- Develop educational programming regarding market transferability of tax credits.
- Provide assistance for farmers to apply for tax credits and programs.
- Review the water use database.
- Examine funding for conservation efforts.

**What, if anything, has been done to resolve the issue?**

We have seen an increase in the adoption of tools like moisture sensors and flow meters, but we do not know how they impact actual water use and aquifer decline.

Conjunctive use and groundwater decline. We want to understand

- 1) How the State is still experiencing declines in the NWA/Ozark Highlands aquifer.
- 2) What impacts from conservation practices need to be better understood and quantified? How many reservoirs are there and where are they located?
- 3) How much has the State improved the accuracy of water measurements?

*Recommendations - What, if anything, has been done to resolve the issue?*

- Participants focused on ideas for the future based on the 2014 focus areas rather than providing specifics about what has been done to resolve the issues raised previously.

**What pertinent information is relevant to this issue in 2024?**

*Note, participants had multiple votes to place on the ideas here. Hence the numbers are larger in the total column than the number of participants.*

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Conservation</b>			<b>12</b>

Target application sustainability for each crop.  
Minimize foreign export of water and agricultural products.

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Funding</b>			<b>13</b>

Transferability: Tax credits for water conservation.  
Practice implementation needs to be addressed.  
Incentivizing private sector investment in conservation.  
Return surplus state funds through infrastructure spending continued income tax cuts.  
More state investment in conservation.  
Establishment of water markets to help pay for conservation.  
Review tax credit program to look at tax credits vs. direct subsidy to increase conservation adoption.

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Water Reporting</b>			<b>16</b>

Improved flow meter adoption.  
Water use database with more detailed reporting.  
Forecast affects on water use data including corporate type, usage, and irrigation rates.  
Farmer/landowner education about water data collection and reporting.  
Online water reporting.  
Improve ground water monitoring network.  
Need an incentive for producers to accurately report water use.  
Water levels still declining but improved. Reporting of usage is important.  
Adjust non-riparian surface water availability.  
Septic pollution of karst ecosystems.  
Supply chain, operation, maintenance, mechanical or electrical.

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Communications and Education</b>			<b>6</b>

Educate producers on assistance available to them via conservation districts.

Increase communication between farmers and state.

Develop conservation education focused on master irrigator.

*Recommendations: What pertinent information is relevant to this issue in 2024?*

- Improve ground water monitoring network.
- Need an incentive for producers to accurately report water use.
- Educate producers on assistance available to them via conservation districts.
- Establishment of water markets to help pay for conservation.
- Review tax credit program to look at tax credits vs. direct subsidy to increase conservation adoption.
- Target application sustainability for each crop.
- Minimize foreign export of water and agricultural products.

**Are there any emerging issues?**

*Recommendations: Are there any emerging issues?*

- Conservation issues and challenges were discussed as emerging issues for the future. Participants noted that water levels continue to decline though efforts are in place to impact this.

# Navigation, Levee, Dam, and Conveyance Focus Group

**Are the issues brought forward in 2014 still a current issue?**

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Planning</b>			<b>14</b>
Citizens need equal access to clean drinking water, sewer systems should be compliant	4	4	8
Process still needed for prioritization	1	2	3
Population growth planning needed for California evacuees moving to rural areas	1	1	2
Big problem in NWA, stormwater management needs system plans, not based on individual developments		1	1
Enlist new residents to address problems in rural areas			
	6	8	
<b>2014 Issues* 3, 4, 5</b>			<b>6</b>
All are still issues, issue 3 needs to be addressed systematically	4	2	6
	4	2	
<b>Framework for planning</b>			<b>0</b>
Is conformance still an issue? And what is the harm?			
	0	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	

- *2014 AWP Issue 3 Impaired drainage and floodwater damages are continuing to affect agricultural production in Arkansas, Issue 4 There is insufficient infrastructure to deliver and distribute water from areas of surplus to areas in need, Issue 5 Growth without adequate planning contributes to both flooding and water quality problems*

**Recommendations - Are the issues brought forward in 2014 still a current issue?**

*In no particular order*

- Assess needs & barriers to clean drinking water sanitation
- Education and training
- The state should pay for infrastructure, drinking water and sewer
- Regional authorities on state funds for #3
- Regionalization of W.W. & D.W. entities

**What, if anything, has been done to resolve the issue?**

<b>Theme/Idea</b>	<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Funding</b>			<b>16</b>
Authority strengthened via legislation and federal funding	6	3	<b>9</b>
Not enough. Not enough/anything for levees and dams		4	<b>4</b>
Grants? Hazard mitigation? BRIC?	3		<b>3</b>
With Federal funds for repairs, structured for infrastructure			
Large Federal investments, ARPA & IIJA have provided critical funding to communities in need			
	9	7	
<b>Infrastructure</b>			<b>1</b>
No, not a lot of progress on infrastructure issues		1	<b>1</b>
Opportunity to assess problem areas in drainage districts. ID solutions. Use district revenue to implement “sustainable” solutions			
More needed but NRCS project addressing			
	0	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	

**Recommendations - What, if anything, has been done to resolve the issue?**

*In no particular order*

- Statewide vote on infrastructure tax similar to ARDOT’s sales tax (with an added comment, “sales tax is regressive”)
- More statewide oversight on infrastructure needs (i.e. levees, dams)
- New bond authority to match Federal dollars
- Citizen education campaign
- Work with Federal delegation to secure funding for AR infrastructure
- Present needs to local/regional prep committees (LEPC, REPC)

**What pertinent information is relevant to this issue in 2024?**

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Technology</b>	1		<b>10</b>
Technologies for capturing excess water and redistributing for other uses.	3	2	5
Advances in hi-res remote sensing, increase feasibility to assess problems, create solutions	2	1	3
Forever chemicals	1		1
Competing priorities and uses of water with emerging/increase push for green energy (i.e. hydroelectric uses). Attached comment “This will require potentially hundreds of millions in new infrastructure”			
Lithium extraction in south Arkansas			
	7		
<b>Environment</b>			<b>6</b>
Rainfall variation	3	3	6
Climate change			
	3      3		
<b>Funds</b>			<b>2</b>
Need more money and more detailed inventory	1	1	2
	1      1		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	

**Recommendations - What, if anything, has been done to resolve the issue?**

*In no particular order*

- Encourage development of tech
- Using tech to improve infrastructure
- More streamflow and rainfall monitors
- Form partnerships to address questions & problems (USGS, TNC, State, etc.)
- Update plans & strategies if new science or tech will change the direction of strategy

**Are there any emerging issues?**

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Infrastructure Planning</b>			<b>12.5</b>
2019 river flood lessons learned (levee deficiencies)	2	2	4
Funding shortfalls identified/left behind after infrastructure funds run out		3	3
Need for nature-based solutions to improve gray infrastructure resiliency		2	2
Significant population shifts to Arkansas cities has changed usage of water	1	0.5	1.5
Deepening of navigation channels are viable solutions		1	1
Can we handle a hurricane Helene, multiple storms in a row	1		1
	4	8.5	
<b>Climate Change Impacts and Planning</b>	2		<b>6.5</b>
Climate change is rendering much infrastructure inadequate or obsolete		2	2
Significant population shifts to Arkansas cities has changed usage of water	1	0.5	1.5
Climate change equals worse storms, more damage to infrastructure		1	1
	3	3.5	
<b>Planning for Solutions</b>	1		<b>5</b>
Shifting population demographics. Locally led solutions?	1	1	2
Holistic regional planning. More drainage will exacerbate flooding		1	1
Regionalization → new philosophy of control	1		1
Stormwater infrastructure not systematically plan and enforced in growth markets			
Delta region: Agriculture drainage districts lack science and planning to address deferred maintenance			
Lack of local board leadership. Tax base not understood			
	3	2	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	

**Recommendations - Are there any emerging issues?**

*In no particular order*

- Climate change incorporated in planning and infrastructure designs. What needs replaced?
- Multi-sector planning for infrastructure needs

- Using past events to help with future.
- Multi-disciplinary planning committees/commissions(?)

## Water and Wastewater Focus Group

### Are the issues brought forward in 2014 still a current issue?

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Funding</b>			<b>14</b>
Needed infrastructure repairs, replacement, and maint. Need associated funding, including more grants	5	2	7
Need State funded grant funding	3	2	5
Grant funding of independently owned utilities	1		1
Lack of grant funds – maintained 605 requirements, regionalization may not be connection	1		1
Rural development funding takes too long, no engineers want to use			
	10	4	
<b>Workforce</b>			<b>4</b>
Operate and Maintain systems (water, wastewater, levee, irrigation, drainage). Need staff who are checking on (regulating) O&M		4	4
	0	4	
<b>Act 605 2021</b>			<b>1</b>
Wastewater needs Act 605 and oversight		1	1
	0	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	

### Recommendations - Are the issues brought forward in 2014 still a current issue?

*In no particular order*

- Funding – grant, low interest loans
- Agency to regulate, required audits/lin.(?), statements for all systems -> ensure meeting revenue – O & M
- The state needs to provide annual dedicated state water and wastewater funding
- Expand 605 requirements

**What, if anything, has been done to resolve the issue?**

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Compliance</b>			<b>8</b>
Act 605 (need to add for W&W)	4	2	6
Regulatory changes, unfunded mandates		1	1
State authority to seek receivership for water/wastewater systems to merge or regionalize or other to be viable and meet compliance standards	1		1
Emerging contaminants (PFAS-PFOA, LCRR-LCRT)			
	5	3	
<b>Funding</b>			<b>9</b>
ANRC loans & principal forgiveness	2	1	3
Maintained lower interest loans 1.75%/20 yrs for ARPA match and unsuccessful ARPA applications	2		2
LIHWAP, water sales tax		2	2
ARPA funding and project prioritization/selection	2		2
IIJA & BIL funding, Federal			
DW & CW SRF project priority lists used for ANRC/NRD funding			
Private – Investment in community WWTP			
GO bond funding authorized for irrigation & other projects			
	6	3	
<b>Feasibility</b>			<b>0</b>
Levee taskforce -> statewide study			
	0	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	

**Recommendations - What, if anything, has been done to resolve the issue?**

*In no particular order*

- Continued legislative focus on water/wastewater issues
- Identify/enhance funding sources/resources
- State appropriated funding – separate for large and small systems
- More annual funding allocated for LIHWAP
- Prioritize the value of water compared to other government issues
- Implementation of system restructuring, regionalization, consolidation

**What pertinent information is relevant to this issue in 2024?**

<b>Theme/Idea</b>	<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Planning Asset Management</b>			<b>10</b>
Aging infrastructure, further deferred maintenance, it's 10 years from pan to install	10		10
Small systems haven't identified its infrastructure (GIS)	10	0	
<b>605 Next Steps</b>			<b>6</b>
What to do with systems that can't comply with Act 605		4	4
Act 605 fiscally distressed, now what		2	2
	0	6	
<b>Regulatory</b>			<b>3</b>
New mandates, LCRI, potential regionalize		3	
Chlorine removal from wastewater (New DEQ permit requirement)			
Biosolids reuse			
	0	3	
<b>Workforce</b>			<b>3</b>
Retirements, recruiting, retaining, salary ranges		3	3
	0	3	
<b>Financial</b>			<b>3</b>
Inflation (available contractors and materials), interest rates		1	1
Supply chain, operation, maintenance, mechanical or electrical	1	1	2
	1	2	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	

**Recommendations - What, if anything, has been done to resolve the issue?**

*In no particular order*

- NRD should seek authority to address non 605 compliant systems
- State appropriation for Act 605, non-compliant system loan or grant?
- Promotion of water as a career path (trade programs for students), workforce development, college-vocational programs
- Tell a better story about value of water

**Require addressing aging infrastructure and asset management. Are there any emerging issues?**

Theme/Idea	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>O &amp; M Planning</b>			<b>11</b>
Rapid connections, emergency response and planning, bypass and transfer switch, solar farms	1	2	3
Some small systems no longer sustainable but opposed to regional consolidation	2	1	3
Asset renewal planning, aging and failing infrastructure	2	1	3
Cyber security		1	1
Impacts of and how to address significant population shifts +/-		1	1
Adaptability to increasing level of uncertainty (weather economy, policy)			
Higher Peak flows at WWTP, more I&I??			
	5	6	
<b>Workforce</b>			<b>8</b>
Workforce, (safety ??) (Marijuana) significantly impacted by lack of licensed operators and field staff/technical	2	5	7
Unawareness, need for more education, training to obtain compliance, manage		1	1
	2	6	
<b>Workforce</b>			<b>7</b>
Emerging contaminants, PFAS, etc., future (opioids, narcotics), treatment aspects for water, wastewater, stormwater	4		4
What to do with biosolids with new requirements, does landfill take it?		2	2
Lead and copper rule		1	1
	4	3	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	

**Recommendations - Are there any emerging issues?**

*In no particular order*

- Require asset management plan, share publicly
- Communication of upcoming regulation/requirements well in advance
- Regional infrastructure planning
- Continue communication among state associations, formalize

# Summary

The focus group members collaborated well, working together and independently to develop ideas. The facilitated discussion helped members understand each other's input and ideas and provided clarification where abbreviations or jargon were not clear to the group. Expert and historical input and answers to questions were provided by Colclasure and Wentz. Participants also answered questions and helped improve understanding within the group. In summary, each group developed core categories and recommendations based on four guiding questions.

## Surface Water

From the 2014 plan, there are areas that need continued attention as identified within the four themes of surface water quantity, water conservation and storage, funding and incentives, and law and policy. Participants in the Surface Water focus group noted the following six categories as pressing topics in 2024. Additionally, focus group members provided recommendations based on programs, policy, and funding that could be addressed by the state in the next Water Plan.

Topic Area	Total Votes
Allocation	15
Long-Term Planning	13
Financial Resources	11
Water Quality	8
Economics	5
Impoundments	1

## Ground Water Focus Group

There are areas that need continued attention, from the 2014 plan, as identified within the four themes of ground water quantity, water conservation and storage, funding and incentive issues, and water law and policy. Participants in the Ground Water focus group noted the following six categories as pressing topics in 2024.

Topic Area	Total Votes
Water Reporting	16
Funding	13
Conservation	12
Communications and Education	6

## ***For the Water and Wastewater and Navigation, Levee, Dam, and Conveyance Groups***

The multi-phase voting allowed members to pick most important issue within each question provided to the group (Phase 1 voting). The free voting where participants could

place votes within any of the four prompt areas as long as they didn't duplicate a vote was informative.

### Navigation, Levee, Dam, and Conveyance Focus Group

When considering which themes were most important within the four major prompts:

- The group was focused on the prompts that moved on from the 2014 plan.
- Fourteen (14) votes fell under the prompt “What pertinent information is relevant to this issue now that may not have been in 2014?”
- Fifteen (15) votes fell under the prompt “Are there any emerging issues?”.
- The other two prompts received six and nine votes, respectively, in Phase 2 voting.

Topic Area	Total Votes
Technology	10
Environment	6
Funds	2

### Water and Wastewater Focus Group

The participants in this focus group worked well together, finding common ground on many issues. The discussions within the sub-groups and main group helped strengthen the ideas they developed.

- This group voted more closely between their Phase 1 and Phase 2 votes with 10 votes cast in each phase for the prompt *Are the issues brought forward in 2014 still a current issue?*
- Nine and eight votes were cast in Phase 1 and Phase 2 voting for the prompt *What, if anything, has been done to resolve the issue?*
- There was a greater disparity for the prompt *What pertinent information is relevant to this issue now that may not have been in 2014?*
  - with 10 Phase 1 votes (most important within the prompt) and seven Phase 2 votes (votes could be placed in any prompt, but no duplicate voting allowed).
  - This indicates that participant may consider the themes in this prompt more resolved than themes in other prompts.
- Contrary to the previous prompt, participants identified emerging issues (prompt 4) as the most important with 14 votes in Phase 2 and 10 votes in Phase 1.

Topic Area	Total Votes
Planning Asset Management	10
605 Next Steps	6
Regulatory	3
Workforce	3
Financial	3

