



WATER: Lawmakers Seek Funds to Expand Supplies, Ease Growing Demand

Texas' increasing thirst for water can't continue. Demand is projected to rise 5.4 percent by 2020 while supply contracts 3.3 percent, according to the Texas Water Development Board, the agency responsible for water planning and data collection.

State lawmakers will ask voters in November to fund \$2 billion in water conservation and infrastructure improvements that backers say would increase supplies 50 percent by 2060.

Farmers use the most water in the state, about 56 percent, while urban areas account for 27 percent of consumption.

Texas water comes from two sources. Surface water in lakes and rivers supplies 62 percent of municipal water, and groundwater drawn from underground aquifers supports 80 percent of farm use.

The state owns surface water, holding it in trust for the public. Residents and water authorities apply for the right to use the water. Rights holders then sell the surface water to the public, pricing it to reflect purification and transportation costs, but not its scarcity.

The state does not assign rights to groundwater, which largely depends on rain for replenishment. Aquifer water becomes private property once landowners draw it from the ground and hold it.

—Edward Rodrigue



IMMIGRATION: Border Apprehensions in Rio Grande Valley Surge

For the first time in almost 50 years, the Rio Grande Valley sector is the most active section of the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border for migrant apprehensions. While arrests along the entire border were down 78 percent in 2012 from a peak in 2000, apprehensions in the border's easternmost section rose 55 percent in the October 2012–June 1 period, compared with a year earlier. The Border Patrol arrested 282,414 crossers over the length of the Mexican border in the recent period, 94,305 of them in the Rio Grande Valley sector, which extends 120 miles and includes McAllen and Brownsville, Texas.

Border Patrol statistics suggest the South Texas crossers are not the same migrants who came in through the Arizona desert, previously the most active section of the border. Migrants from countries other than Mexico have traditionally favored the lower Rio Grande Valley; Reynosa, across the border from McAllen, is the endpoint of a railroad that Central American migrants ride from southern Mexico. Apprehensions of migrants from countries other than Mexico accounted for half of all Rio Grande Valley sector apprehensions in fiscal 2012, approaching levels last seen in 2006.

A lack of economic opportunities in Central America, along with increasing drug violence and instability, has prompted young workers to migrate, even as some of those factors have ebbed in Mexico.

—Melissa LoPalo



TRADE: Along Texas Gulf, Exports Pick Up as Oil Imports Decline

Oil imports, including crude oil and refined products such as gasoline and diesel, totaled 52 million barrels at the Houston–Galveston Customs District in June 2013, the latest U.S. International Trade Commission data show. The amount has declined by 20.4 million barrels, or 28 percent, since the beginning of 2012, and was off 8.4 million barrels from January 2013, a 14 percent decrease. Oil imports accounted for more than half the total value of all district imports in June 2013. The customs district is made up of the ports of Corpus Christi, Freeport, Galveston, Houston, Port Lavaca and Texas City.

By themselves, crude oil imports to the district totaled 44.3 million barrels in June 2013, down 10 percent from the beginning of the year and 29 percent from January 2012. The decrease in oil imports comes amid rising domestic crude production, particularly in Texas and North Dakota.

Increased domestic crude production has led to sharply higher exports of petroleum products. Product exports from the district reached 32.2 million barrels in June 2013—up 10 percent since June 2012. U.S. exports of petroleum products have consistently exceeded imports since June 2011. Total U.S. exports reached 82.6 million barrels in May 2013—a 14 percent increase from January 2012, according to U.S. Energy Information Administration data.

—Amy Jordan