

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP INVITATION

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Opportunities in East Texas

January 9th, 2024 - Lufkin, Texas

Water Finance Exchange (WFX) and RSAH2O, in partnership with T.L.L. Temple Foundation, Communities Unlimited, and the Angelina & Neches River Authority, are hosting an invitation-only workshop, *Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Opportunities in East Texas*, of public and private sector leaders to discuss the needs and opportunities to support communities in need of financial and technical assistance for water and wastewater infrastructure.

This one-day workshop will focus on the water infrastructure and economic development challenges of rural communities in East Texas. We would like to extend an invitation to attend this workshop, which will be held in the Pitser Garrison Convention Center in Lufkin, Texas. The address for the event is 601 N 2nd Street, Lufkin, TX 75901.

The workshop will be on January 9th, 2024 beginning at 9:00 am. A draft agenda for the workshop can be found below. Speakers and panelists will include state and federal agency officials, community representatives, and other thought leaders in the water and wastewater sectors.

This workshop will be an intimate conversation of 50-75 water sector leaders, communities seeking to address sustainable water management needs, and public officials. The informational exchange will identify primary challenges facing smaller and underserved East Texas communities, outline financing opportunities, and generate ideas for collaboration going forward.

Registration Instructions

- [Click here](#) to go to the registration page
- In the dropdown menu labeled “Workshop”, select **East Texas - Lufkin, Texas - Jan. 9th, 2024**
- Fill in the remaining information on the page
- Click “Send”
- We will contact you with further information and updates as the event gets closer

If you have any other questions on the workshop, please reach out to Josh Clement, WFX’s Director of Programs and Development, at Jclement@waterfx.org or 763-226-3461.



AGENDA*

* Agenda subject to change based on availability of speakers

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Opportunities in East Texas

January 9th, 2024 - Lufkin, Texas

9:00 – 9:20 am: Welcome, Introductions, and Meeting Objectives

- Wynn Rosser, Ph.D, President & CEO, T.L.L. Temple Foundation
- Hank Habicht, Managing Co-Founder, Water Finance Exchange

9:20 – 9:45 am: Keynote Remarks

- Texas Water Development Board Leadership

9:45 – 10:45 am: Breakout Session – Challenges and Solutions

Solicit feedback from group on three key questions:

- How would you define the differences and challenges confronting water infrastructure in East Texas?
- How do those challenges inhibit potential economic development opportunities?
- What is lacking from existing resources and what additional resources are needed to help rural communities in East Texas access safe, clean water and wastewater treatment infrastructure?
- How can sustainable infrastructure solutions contribute to economic opportunities in East Texas?

10:45 – 11:00 am: Break

11:00 – 12:00 pm: Panel 1 - Local and Federal Resources Available to Communities

- Panelists representing the United States Department of Agriculture, Texas Water Development Board, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas Wellspring Fund, and Texas Department of Agriculture

12:00 – 12:45 pm: Luncheon and Keynote Presentation

12:45 – 1:45 pm: Panel 2 - Implementing Sustainable Solutions for Texas Communities

- Panelists representing the challenges and opportunities that Texas communities and water systems face, including leaders from Communities Unlimited, Texas Rural Water Association, Angelina & Neches River Authority, Deep East Texas Council of Governments, and Texas Public Utilities Commission.

1:45 – 2:15 pm: Technical Assistance Opportunities and Workshop Wrap-Up

- Hear from Technical Assistance providers on their roles in helping communities address water and wastewater infrastructure challenges.

2:15 – 3:00 pm: Networking and Engagement with Technical Assistance Providers and Funding Agencies

ABSTRACT

Water Finance Exchange (WFX) and RSAH2O, in partnership with T.L.L. Temple Foundation, Communities Unlimited, and the Angelina & Neches River Authority are hosting a workshop of East Texas public and private sector leaders to discuss the new federal investments in water and wastewater infrastructure and work directly with communities and public water systems that are seeking sustainable water infrastructure solutions.

This workshop builds upon the excellent initial Water Infrastructure Summit hosted by the T.L.L. Temple Foundation and USDA Rural Development at Stephen F Austin University. That event identified key challenges and partnering opportunities and helped establish a pathway for further engagement. The Foundation has also spearheaded other valuable initiatives focused on regional economic development.

The Texas Legislature, and Texans, have recognized the need for assistance to small, rural, and underserved communities, as evidenced by the Proposition 6 results to establish the Texas Water Fund. This new fund will support new water supply development and address existing infrastructure needs such as water loss. WFX and RSAH2O believe that water infrastructure is about more than pipes and pumps. Instead, it serves as a catalyst for regional economic growth and ensures public health. Sustainable, affordable water infrastructure is a gateway to economic development in communities throughout Texas.

The workshop aims to bring the East Texas water infrastructure and economic development community up to date on federal water-oriented funds and investment priorities. This workshop will identify partnerships to leverage public, private, and philanthropic funds toward affordable, sustainable water infrastructure in economically healthy regions where water serves as the cornerstone for economic development priorities.

Additionally, Texas grapples with inherent challenges to rural water infrastructure, as decentralized water and wastewater systems pose further complications for sustainable management, while reducing the ability to implement economy of scale solutions and partnership opportunities among nearby communities. Regional governance solutions may offer opportunities for communities to implement sustainable infrastructure.

Funding is available for systems through the state and federal agencies, but many of these communities lack the capacity, debt service, or rate tolerance to pursue the necessary water management solutions alone. Additionally, small, rural, and underserved communities across East Texas are more likely to have water quality compliance burdens, further increasing challenges to sustainable water resources.

In 2021 and 2022, WFX and RSAH2O held conferences in El Paso, San Antonio, and McAllen to discuss replicable models for community water infrastructure. Since then, WFX has been working with communities across the state to implement resilient and sustainable water infrastructure projects, as well as regional solutions. WFX has assisted communities in Texas to access over \$100 million of funding and financing for sustainable infrastructure projects.

Texas is home to many experts and innovative organizations focusing on infrastructure and quality of life. This workshop is designed to build on existing ideas and more directly connect public and private leaders in the water sector. The goal we all share is to increase the number of funded projects delivering sustainable water infrastructure across the state. WFX and RSAH2O believe that successful partnerships will attract funding and support to achieve these results at significant scale, highlighting the position of Texas as a national leader in water management.