
WEST HARRIS COUNTY
REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY
PARTNERS
IN PROGRESS
SUMMER 2026 NEWSLETTER
West Harris County Regional Water Authority
whcrwa.com

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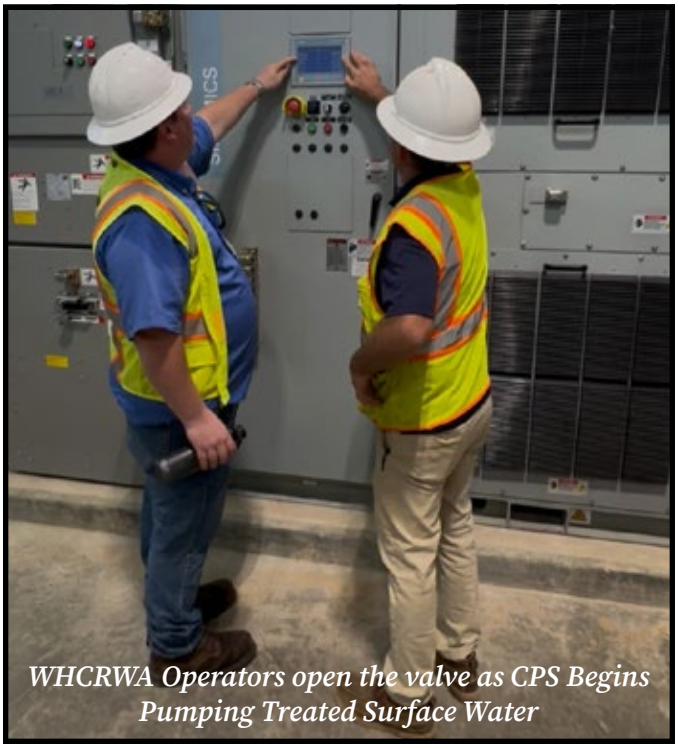
Central Pump Station Begins Pumping Treated Surface Water into WHCRWA System



WHCRWA Operators open the valve as CPS Begins Pumping Treated Surface Water

The West Harris County Regional Water Authority has achieved a major milestone in its long-term surface water conversion program.

At approximately 11:15 a.m. on June 2, 2026, the Central Pump Station "opened the valve" and began pumping treated surface water originating from the Northeast Water Purification Plant at Lake Houston into the WHCRWA system for delivery to Municipal Utility District customers' water plants, and ultimately to end users.

The Central Pump Station is a major component of the Surface Water Supply Project, which supports WHCRWA's long-

term conversion from groundwater to surface water. This regional effort helps reduce reliance on groundwater, meet Harris-Galveston Subsidence District requirements, and strengthen future water supply reliability for communities within WHCRWA's boundaries.

The water now being pumped through the Central Pump Station is part of a much larger regional water system. Lake Houston receives inflows from the Upper San Jacinto River Basin and additional raw water through the Luce Bayou Interbasin Transfer Project, which pumps water from the Trinity River at the Capers Ridge Pump Station through dual 96-inch pipelines and an earthen canal system to Lake Houston. Lake Houston water is then treated at the Northeast Water Purification Plant Expansion Project before being delivered through the Surface Water Supply Project and pumped through WHCRWA's Central Pump Station into the Authority's internal distribution system.

As Eric Hansen, President of the West Harris County Regional Water Authority, explained, "Switching to surface water is essential in the Houston region because of subsidence, the gradual sinking of the ground as aquifers are depleted. This large effort to convert from groundwater wells is part of the long-term strategic planning for the viability of the region as a whole."

From there, the water is delivered to Municipal Utility District customers' water plants for distribution to homes, businesses, schools, and communities within WHCRWA's boundaries.

This milestone reflects decades of planning, engineering, construction, coordination, and investment by WHCRWA and its regional partners. While the moment may be marked by the opening of a valve, it represents a significant step forward in WHCRWA's ongoing work to provide reliable water for today, tomorrow, and generations to come. ♦

Wayne Ahrens Honored for 25 Years of Service at WHCRWA Board Meeting

At its June 10 meeting, the WHCRWA Board of Directors adopted a resolution honoring Wayne Ahrens for 25 years of service to the Authority. The resolution recognized his leadership as Program Manager and engineer, his role in the planning and construction of major infrastructure projects—including the $1.4 billion Surface Water Supply Project—and his consistent dedication, professionalism, and service above and beyond the call of duty. Ahrens retired at the end of June 2026.

Read the resolution and watch the video at https://www.whcrwa.com/2026/06/12/wayne-ahrens/

From the First Study to Flowing Water

A handful of Harris County legal and engineering experts were at the core of the leadership team who shared a vision of a regional approach for securing a long-term supply of potable water. The planning and organizing effort involved **Jim Boone**, **Dan Sallee** and **Alex Garcia** and an early study connected to **Jim Dannenbaum** and **Wayne Ahrens**. This group was involved with the West Harris County nonprofit water supply corporation and helped move the study and discussion toward the formal Authority structure.

Once the Authority was created, the first engineering question was also the most important one: where would the water come from?

That question shaped nearly every decision that followed. WHCRWA had to identify a practical source of surface water, determine how that water could be delivered to west Harris County, prepare a Groundwater Reduction Plan (GRP) for approval by the Harris-Galveston Subsidence District, and begin planning the infrastructure needed to serve municipal utility districts within its boundaries.

The early work considered several possible water supply options. **Allens Creek Reservoir** was evaluated as a potential source. The Authority also looked at the possibility of using **Brazos River** water and developing its own treatment plant. Those options helped define the scale of the challenge, but neither became the practical path forward. Over time, the **City of Houston** became the logical long-term source because it held the major water rights and had existing facilities that could support the Authority's initial conversion needs. That decision helped set the direction for the system WHCRWA would spend the next two decades planning, funding, and building.

Ahrens' role was not limited to designing facilities. His work was tied to the larger engineering judgment required to turn a regional water supply concept into a functioning system. He was involved in groundwater reduction planning, route evaluations, water supply strategy, phasing, regional coordination, and the practical question of how to move treated surface water across a developed region to meet future demand.

One early policy question was whether WHCRWA should become a retail water provider or remain a wholesale supplier to local districts. The distinction mattered. A retail system would have placed the Authority in the position of serving individual customers directly, bringing a different set of regulatory and operational responsibilities. WHCRWA ultimately remained focused on wholesale water supply, allowing local districts to continue serving their own customers while the

Wayne Ahrens and Gary Struzick during the SWSP B3 Tunnel Tour - August 2024

CMAA Houston Honors SWSP Segment B3 with BEST 2025 Project of the Year - November 2025
Left to right, Eric Hansen, Wayne Ahrens, Mike Thornhill, and Chase Juhl

Authority developed the regional supply system needed to support groundwater reduction.

As the program grew, WHCRWA's long-term water supply strategy became connected to a chain of major regional projects: the **Luce Bayou Interbasin Transfer Project**, the expansion of the **Northeast Water Purification Plant**, the **Surface Water Supply Project**, and **WHCRWA's internal distribution lines**.

Ahrens also served as project manager for the design of the **Capers Ridge intake and pump station**, which was built on the Trinity River as part of the Luce Bayou Interbasin Transfer Project. That assignment connected his work on WHCRWA's local water supply challenge to one of the larger regional water supply efforts serving the Houston area.

For WHCRWA, those regional projects became part of a system planned to move treated surface water from Lake Houston across the region to the Central Pump Station in the Katy area and beyond. The work required major transmission lines, pumping, storage, coordination with regional partners, and facilities large enough to support long-term growth.

That work is now moving from decades of planning and construction into operation. With the **Central Pump Station** beginning to pump treated surface water into the WHCRWA system, one of the Authority's most important long-term goals is becoming visible in a new way.

For **Wayne Ahrens**, the vision has come full circle: from early planning and water supply studies before WHCRWA formally existed to the infrastructure now serving west Harris County has become a working system. ♦

Meet the WHCRWA Board

Eric Hansen
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and Precinct 3 Director

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Assistant Vice President
and Precinct 7 Director

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Visit whcrwa.com/board to learn more about the WHCRWA Board of Directors.

WHCRWA Panel Discussed Groundwater Conversion at 2026 AWBD Annual Conference

The West Harris County Regional Water Authority was represented at the 2026 AWBD Annual Conference at the Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center in Grapevine, Texas. WHCRWA President Eric Hansen, attorney Alia Vinson, and Program Manager Melinda Silva, P.E., presented a seminar titled "**Gulf Coast Regional Conversion from Groundwater to Surface Water**."

The presentation was given to a large audience of several hundred attendees and focused on the regional effort to reduce reliance on groundwater and transition to surface water. The panel discussed land subsidence, regulatory requirements in the Harris-Galveston Subsidence District, and why long-term planning and regional coordination are essential for MUDs and other water providers.

The presentation also highlighted WHCRWA's role in helping meet groundwater reduction requirements through major infrastructure investments, including regional pump stations, large-diameter water transmission lines, distribution system improvements, and coordination with the City of Houston and regional partners. These projects are part of a long-term effort to support reliable water delivery, reduce subsidence risk, and help serve the future needs of West Harris County.

Interactive Booth Highlights WHCRWA Projects and 25th Anniversary

In addition to the conference presentation, WHCRWA once again hosted a booth in the AWBD exhibit hall. More than 450 visitors stopped by the booth during the conference to visit with WHCRWA directors and representatives, pick up informational materials, and learn more about the Authority's ongoing work.

This year, WHCRWA also introduced an interactive ViewBoard display — a large touch-screen monitor featuring project maps, photos, videos, and other visual materials. The display allowed representatives to walk attendees through major infrastructure projects, including regional water lines, pump stations, and the Authority's broader surface water conversion efforts.

The booth also featured WHCRWA's 25th anniversary branding and giveaway items, including 25th anniversary hats and other WHCRWA materials. The booth provided another opportunity to share the Authority's story, highlight the progress made over the past 25 years, and connect with water professionals from across the state.

The People Behind the Progress Video Series

“The People Behind the Progress” is a video series featuring interviews with board members, consultants, engineers, operators, and project partners who helped shape the West Harris County Regional Water Authority over its first 25 years. Through personal stories and firsthand perspectives, the series highlights the planning, partnerships, challenges, and accomplishments behind one of the region’s most significant water infrastructure efforts.

You can watch the series on Mondays and Wednesdays on all WHCRWA social media accounts or by visiting whcrwa.com/people-behind-the-progress

whcrwa.com/people-behind-the-progress


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Staying Hydrated in the Gulf Coast Heat

The dog days of summer are upon us, with soaring temperatures, long days, and plenty of humidity. Staying hydrated is a critical part of maintaining good health, but many people do not get the fluids they need each day.

Dehydration is especially common among older adults, with adults 60 and older at greater risk. As temperatures rise, it is important to pay attention to hydration before symptoms begin.

If you're struggling to drink enough water each day, there are several compelling reasons to make hydration a priority. Even mild dehydration — as little as 2 percent fluid loss — can affect memory, mood, concentration, cognition, and feelings of anxiety.

Consider drinking water throughout the day rather than waiting until you are thirsty. If you're working or playing outdoors, drink water before heading outside, keep water with you, and take regular breaks in the shade or air conditioning.

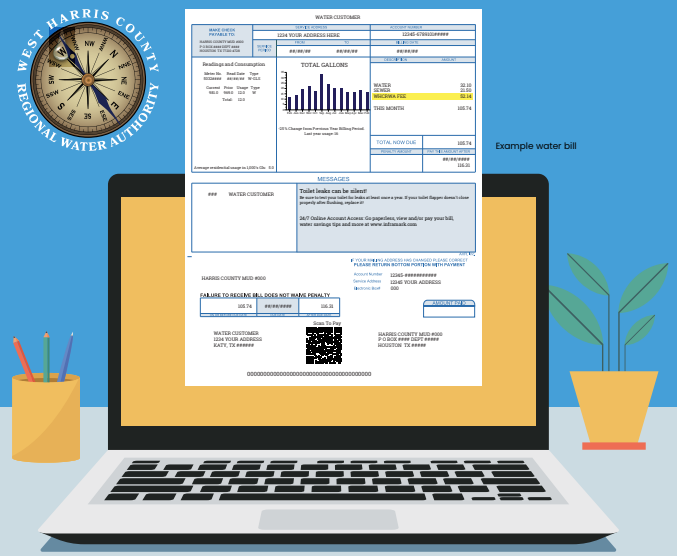
"Stay hydrated" is more than a summer reminder. Signs of dehydration or heat stress can include headache, dizziness, fatigue, muscle cramps, heavy sweating, nausea, or confusion. Severe symptoms, including confusion, fainting, or disorientation, may require immediate medical attention.

A few simple actions can make a difference.

- Drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- Avoid strenuous activity in the middle of the day.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Take regular cooling breaks in the shade or air conditioning.
- Carry water when enjoying outdoor activities.
- Be aware of children, senior adults, and pets in extreme heat, and watch for heat stress symptoms.

Staying hydrated is not just a summer thing. It is a critical part of staying healthy in the sweltering Gulf Coast heat.

What is the West Harris County Regional Water Authority (WHCRWA) Fee on my water bill?



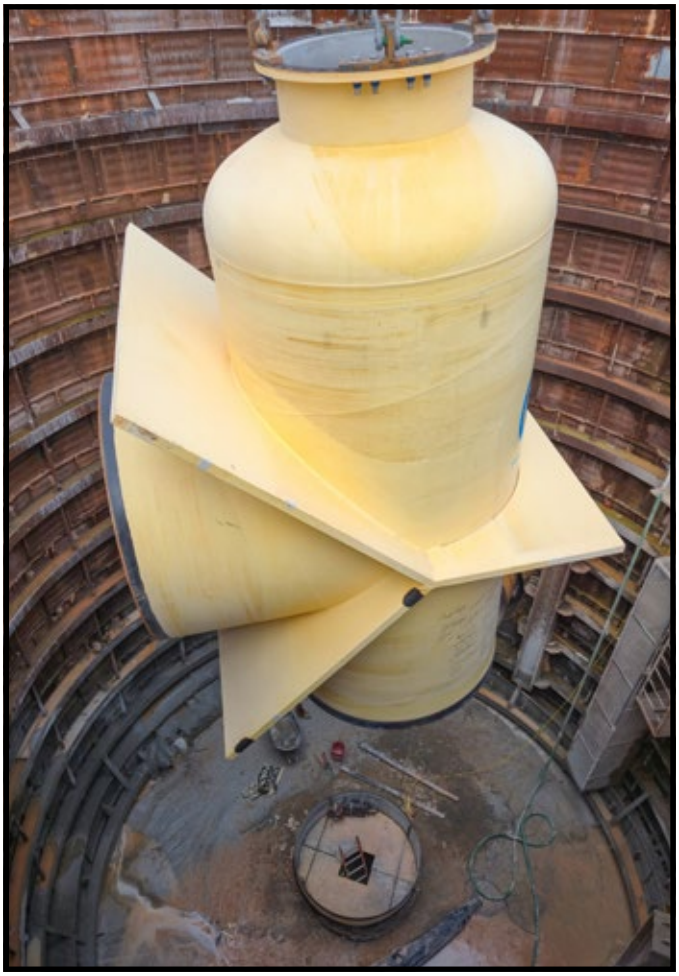
The WHCRWA fee that appears on many home and business water bills is a fee that pays for the State mandated conversion to surface water from lakes and rivers to address the significant subsidence problems affecting the region of Harris County and other surrounding Counties.

To learn more scan the QR Code to watch a short video or visit the URL below

whcrwa.com/fee

Final Pipe Installed for Segment A of Surface Water Supply Project

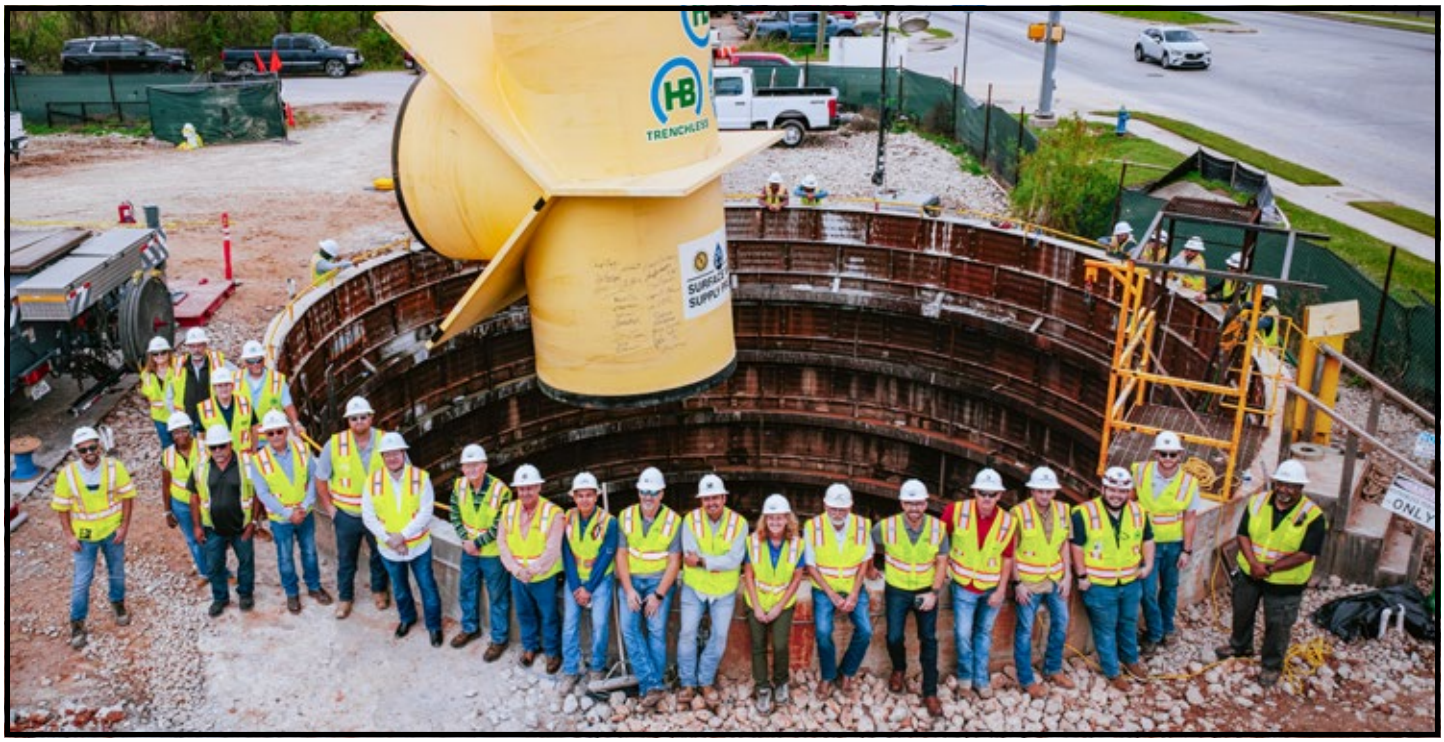
Construction of Segment A of the Surface Water Supply Project (SWSP) has reached an important milestone with the installation of the final section of pipe.



Segment A is a key part of the regional transmission system that will deliver surface water from the Northeast Water Purification Plant (NEWPP) to water providers within the West Harris County Regional Water Authority (WHCRWA) and North Fort Bend Water Authority (NFBWA) boundaries. The segment includes approximately 10.7 miles of 96-inch-diameter pipeline.

Segment A consists of two sections:

- A1: Hopper Road to west of the Union Pacific Railroad
- A2: Union Pacific Railroad to the Northeast Water Purification Plant



Together, these segments form a critical connection between the NEWPP and the broader distribution system.

The Surface Water Supply Project is designed to provide a long-term, reliable water supply for West Harris County and North Fort Bend County, Texas, while meeting the Harris-Galveston Subsidence District's groundwater reduction requirements.

Once complete, the system will deliver treated surface water from Lake Houston through an extensive network of large-diameter transmission lines and pump stations, helping ensure a reliable water supply for today, tomorrow, and generations to come. ♦

Native Plants for Houston Home Landscapes

Plant It and Forget It
Texas Tough - Mother Nature Approved

Native plants are the perfect choice for Houston-area gardens. They are naturally water-wise, already adapted to our climate and soils, and need little attention once established. These plants provide food and shelter for pollinators and wildlife, while standing up to our hot summers, heavy rains, and even the occasional freeze — all while adding color, texture, and beauty to your yard.

Below you'll find a curated list of native plants that are widely available in Houston-area nurseries. These are tried-and-true selections that homeowners can feel confident planting, knowing they'll thrive with minimal care.

Possumhaw Holly
Ilex decidua

Yaupon Holly
Ilex vomitoria

Chaste Tree
Vitex agnus-castus

Dwarf Yaupon Holly
Ilex vomitoria 'Nana'

American Beautyberry
Callicarpa americana

Turk's Cap
Malvaviscus arboreus var. drummondii

Butterfly Weed / Milkweed
Asclepias tuberosa

Plains Coreopsis
Coreopsis tinctoria

Purple Coneflower
Echinacea purpurea

Indian Blanket
Gaillardia pulchella

Pink Evening Primrose
Oenothera speciosa

Blazing Star / Gayfeather
Liatris spicata

Black-eyed Susan
Rudbeckia hirta

Scarlet Sage
Salvia coccinea

Autumn Sage
Salvia greggii

Gulf Muhly
Muhlenbergia capillaris

Switchgrass
Panicum virgatum

Little Bluestem
Schizachyrium scoparium

Silver Ponyfoot
Dichondra argentea

Frogfruit
Phyla nodiflora

Inland Seaoats
Chasmanthium latifolium

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For more plant details and gardening resources, visit: whcrwa.com/nativeplants

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Available to retail water providers within WHCRWA boundaries while supplies last.

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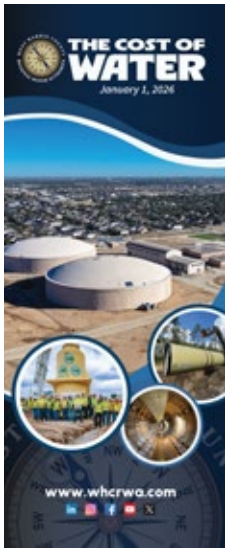
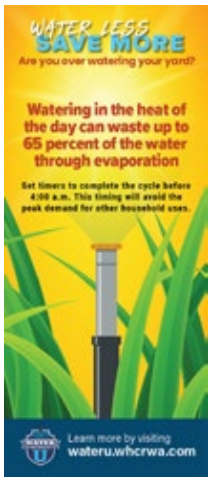
Brochures and billing inserts are available FREE to retail water providers within the WHCRWA boundaries.





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You can rely on WHCRWA to supply water for today, tomorrow, and generations to come.

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