

A Message from the Executive Director

By Carol Batterton, Executive Director



Legislative Update

WEAT, in association with the Texas Association of Clean Water Agencies (TACWA), held a workshop for Texas legislators and their staff on February 13, 2009, at the State Capitol. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce members of the Texas Legislature to WEAT and TACWA as resources on wastewater treatment and water quality issues. Raj Bhattarai, City of Austin, presented an overview of the wastewater treatment process and infrastructure. Betty Jordan, Alan Plummer and Associates, followed with a summary discussion of water quality issues such as microconstituents, non-point source pollution, and TMDLs.

Approximately 25 legislators and staff members attended along with over 30 utility representatives from WEAT and TACWA. The workshop provided an excellent opportunity for legislators and staff members to ask questions and interact with Texas water quality professionals in a small group setting.

WEAT is already tracking a number of bills that have been filed so far in the 81st Session of the Legislature. Recent filings on the WEAT tracking list include:

HB 595 Leibowitz - Relating to a restriction on permits authorizing discharges of sewage effluent into any water in the contributing or recharge zone of the San Antonio or Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer.

HB 826 Gattis - Relating to the relationship between the amount of an administrative penalty imposed by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the economic benefit of the violation to the alleged violator.

WEAT's complete tracking list can be viewed on the web at <http://www.weat.org/governmentalaffairs.htm>.



Raj Bhattarai speaking at the Legislative Briefing at the Capitol

Regulatory Update

TCEQ has initiated rulemaking to add E. coli or Enterococcus effluent limits to TPDES permits that cover domestic wastewater and industrial wastewater that have a domestic component. This rulemaking has been initiated as the result of an agreement between TCEQ and EPA.

TCEQ held a stakeholder meeting on this issue on January 23, 2009. At that time staff solicited input on several topics including what limits will be, monitoring frequencies, bacteria sample holding times, and laboratory availability. TCEQ anticipates proposing rules in May 2009 with adoption projected for October 2009. Brad Castleberry is coordinating several of WEAT's knowledge committees as they formulate comments on this rulemaking. More information is available on TCEQ's website at http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/permitting/water_quality/stakeholders/WQ_advisory_group.html#bacteria.

WEAT is also following TCEQ's rulemaking to revise the consolidated water quality fee, the public health service fee, and the water use fee. Under the proposed rules, some of the current fees would double. However, the cap on the consolidated water quality fee remains at \$75,000 unless the Texas Legislature changes the cap.

The consolidated water quality fee funds administration of water quality programs at TCEQ, including inspection and enforcement at wastewater treatment plants, and also the Clean Rivers Program. TCEQ states that the fee increases are necessary to make up funding from General Revenue that is no longer available to the agency.

WEAT's Watershed Management Committee has just completed an extraordinary effort developing comments on TCEQ's draft surface water quality standards rules and implementation procedures. This Committee has set the bar for other knowledge committees. WEAT's comments are posted at the WEAT Regulatory Affairs website listed above.



Attendees at the Legislative Briefing (photo by Cheryl Smith)