

A Message from the Executive Director



By Carol Batterton, Executive Director

Planning for the 81st Legislative Session

The 81st Session of the Texas legislature begins on January 13, 2009. WEAT's officers and Government Affairs Committee have begun the planning process to ensure that WEAT has a presence at the Capitol monitoring issues that are important to our members.

Issues that we expect to be following during this upcoming session include funding for state water programs and infrastructure, direct reuse, compliance history, and regional water quality standards. As in previous sessions, our goal is to be involved as a resource for technical information to the members of the legislature. We want to ensure that legislators have all the technical information necessary and available to them to make sound decisions on bills that are before them.

We will be partnering again with the Texas Association of Clean Water Agencies (TACWA) in our legislative activities. We anticipate making visits to the offices of key members and holding another workshop/luncheon to help increase legislative staff awareness on the issues related to water quality and wastewater treatment.

Key dates for the upcoming session include:

- Monday, November 10, 2008 – Pre-filing of bills begins
- Tuesday, January 13, 2009 – Session begins
- Friday, March 13, 2009 – Bill filing deadline
- Monday, June 1, 2009 – Last day of session

Liquid Assets Update

Liquid Assets is a public media and outreach initiative that seeks to inform the nation about the critical role that our water infrastructure plays in protecting public health and promoting economic prosperity.

Combining a ninety-minute documentary with a community toolkit for facilitating local involvement, Liquid Assets explores the history, engineering, and political and economic challenges of our water infrastructure, and engages communities in local discussion about public water and wastewater issues.

The WEAT Liquid Assets work group has been busy notifying Texas PBS stations about the availability of the Liquid Assets documentary for broadcast in Texas. To date, the documentary has been scheduled to air in following cities:

Austin, KLRU, October 18 at 2:00 PM
Lubbock, KTXT, October 22 at 8:00 PM
Dallas, KERA, October 26 at 4:30 PM

Corpus Christi, KEDT, November 11 at 9:30 PM
and November 23 at 3:00 PM
Waco, KWBU, November 20 at 9:00 PM
Additional airings in other locations are expected in November, December, and January.

The 3 minute preview was shown at a hearing of the Texas Legislature's Joint Interim Committee on Water Funding on Oct. 21. You can see an archived video at <http://www.senate.state.tx.us/avarchive/> starting at around minute 48 and running to about 58. The charge for this very important interim committee is to identify potential funding mechanisms for the water infrastructure needs identified by the State Water Plan and other state water projects.

We want to encourage utilities to take advantage of this opportunity to increase your customers' awareness of the issues related to infrastructure rehabilitation and expansion. If you haven't viewed the Liquid Assets trailer on line, we encourage you to do this by going to: <http://liquidassets.psu.edu/>

If you would like to join us in our promotion of the documentary, we would be happy to assist you with securing the resources necessary. Recommended activities include:

- Contacting your local PBS station to ensure they will broadcast the documentary in your area
- Sharing information on the documentary with your employees
- Promoting the documentary in your local newspaper
- Showing the four minute or sixteen minute trailer (available on the website) to your elected officials and civic groups
- Arranging to have the documentary broadcast in segments should your city have a local access station
- Writing an opinion article on the documentary for your local newspaper
- Hosting a viewing and panel discussion

Of course, WEAT has resources to support your promotional activities and is happy to provide them. Resources available from the Liquid Assets website (www.liquidassets.psu.edu) include a Liquid Assets toolkit and advertising materials; assistance with organizing local panel discussions, forums, or screenings; and aid in obtaining state elected official participation. We hope many of you will take advantage of this opportunity to leverage Liquid Assets to enhance your community's dialogue on local water infrastructure issues.