

Current Issue Oral Presentation Question:

Currently, the north Atlantic is in a warm phase. When this happens, Texas experiences drought and the Gulf Coast and Florida have more hurricanes. Currently, the drought is spreading northward across the Rio Grande from the Chihuahua Desert in northern Mexico as it did in the 1950s. There have been many wildfires burning thousands of acres with loss of life (human, cattle, horses, and wildlife) over the last year. Entire towns have been burned to the ground and little rain has fallen over the year.

With this in mind, many governmental agencies have been discussing the possibility of water rationing and water rights of individuals and industry. The Texas water laws differ from other states, particularly in the east where water rights have not been important, and in the west where they have been very important. Texas has a new law authorizing the formation of water use boards that have the power to regulate water use in their area.

Your team will develop strategies in order to mitigate the consequences of an extended drought in the state. The recommendations will be given to the Governor of Texas and should address the following: drought conditions and historical aspects, the water right issues impacted by a long-term drought, water conservation efforts and infrastructure influences on conservation, and the impact of population growth in the state. In addition, your recommendations should consider and address the economic, the environmental, the societal, and the political impacts on the citizens of Texas.

Your team's recommendations should be economically and politically feasible.

The recommendations should focus on:

- Drought-- How bad is it, will it continue? Have there been severe droughts in the last century, last 1000 years? What happened to the Anasazi in NM?
- Legal--How is water in Texas regulated? What boards have been set up, and how will they regulate water usage.
- Conservation--Most of us use far more water than necessary. How much are we using per person in Texas? How can the usage be reduced? What infrastructure is in place for conservation, what can be improved?
- History-- Texas has faced severe drought in the past, the last was in the 1950s. How did we cope then? What has changed?
- Population and land use--How do they influence water use? How does the population differ in different parts of the state?