

Public Attitudes on Drought and Water Management in Texas

Arnold Vedlitz, Ph.D.

Bob Bullock Chair in Government and Public Policy
Director, Institute for Science, Technology and Public Policy
Texas A&M University



TEXAS REGION C WATER PLANNING GROUP MEETING

November 9, 2009

Grand Prairie, Texas

Public Attitudes on Drought and Water Management in Texas

NOAA National Weather Service Project – Texas Public Survey *Climate Change, Drought and Policymaking in the U.S. Southern Region*

- ❑ Conducted January 17-March 12, 2008
- ❑ Sample – 600 randomly selected Texas citizens, over age 18
- ❑ 88 questions took about 25 minutes to complete
- ❑ Completion rate - 78.95%

Demographics of Public Survey

		Survey		Census
		Frequency	Percent	Texas Population
Gender	Male	249	42%	50%
	Female	350	58%	50%
Age	18-24	19	3%	14%
	25-34	66	11%	20%
	35-44	105	18%	20%
	45-64	292	50%	31%
	65 and over	105	18%	14%
Race	White	465	82%	70%
	Black or African American	31	5%	12%
	American Indian and Alaskan Native	12	2%	1%
	Asian	6	1%	3%
	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0%	0%
	Some other race	39	7%	13%
	Two or more races	16	3%	2%
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino	90	15%	36%
	Not Hispanic or Latino	496	85%	64%
Education	High School Graduate or Less	119	20%	49%
	Some college, no degree	124	21%	20%
	Associate's degree	46	8%	6%
	Bachelor's degree	184	31%	17%
	Graduate or Professional Degree	122	21%	8%

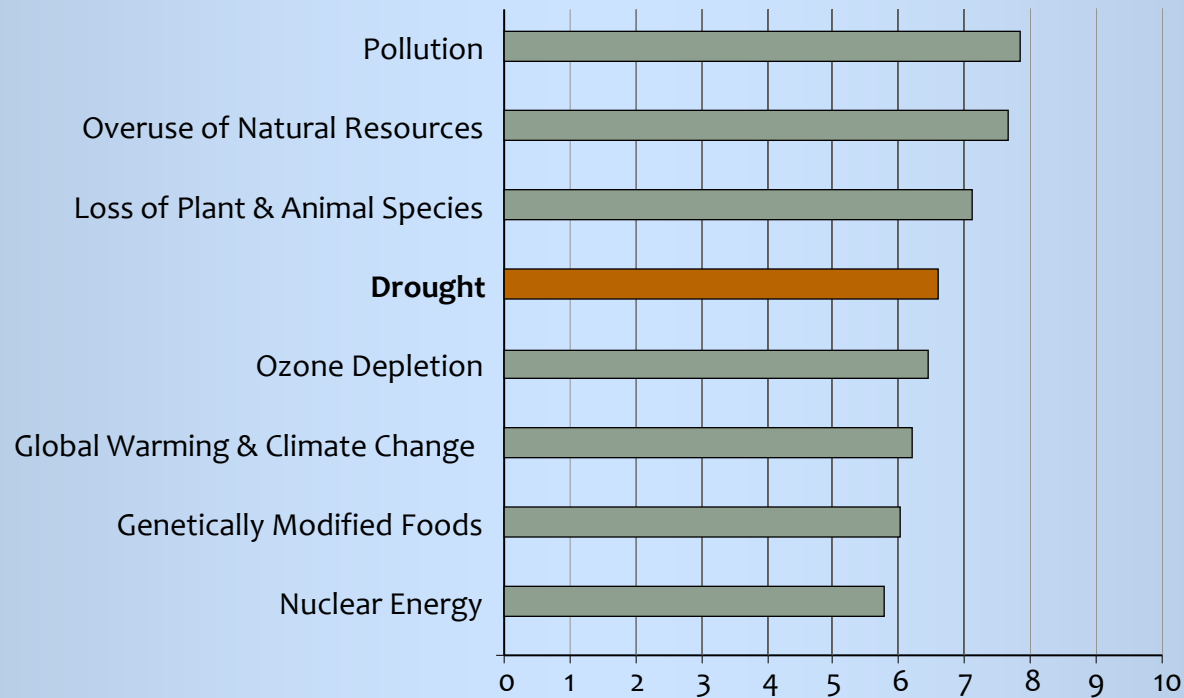
Survey Question – Drought Frequency

How often do you experience drought?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Rarely	166	37	37
Some of the time	172	38	75
Often	92	20	95
Always	21	5	100
Total	451	100	

Drought as an Environmental Issue

Environmental Issues – Level of Concern

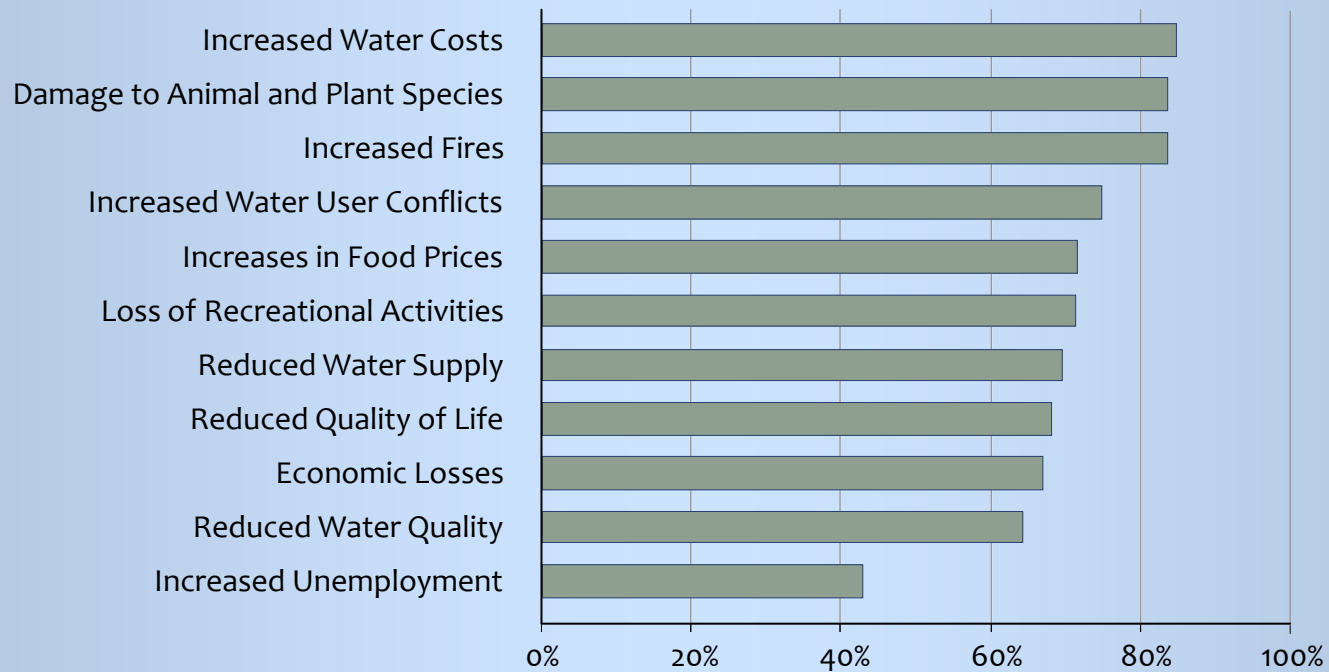


Among environmental issues of concern to Texans, drought is ranked 4th

On a scale from 0 to 10, the average Texan gives drought a concern level of 6.6

Drought Hazards

Likely Regional Impacts of Drought



93.2% of Texans believe it is at least somewhat likely that a drought would negatively impact their region.

Agriculture is the sector believed to be most affected by drought (67.4%).

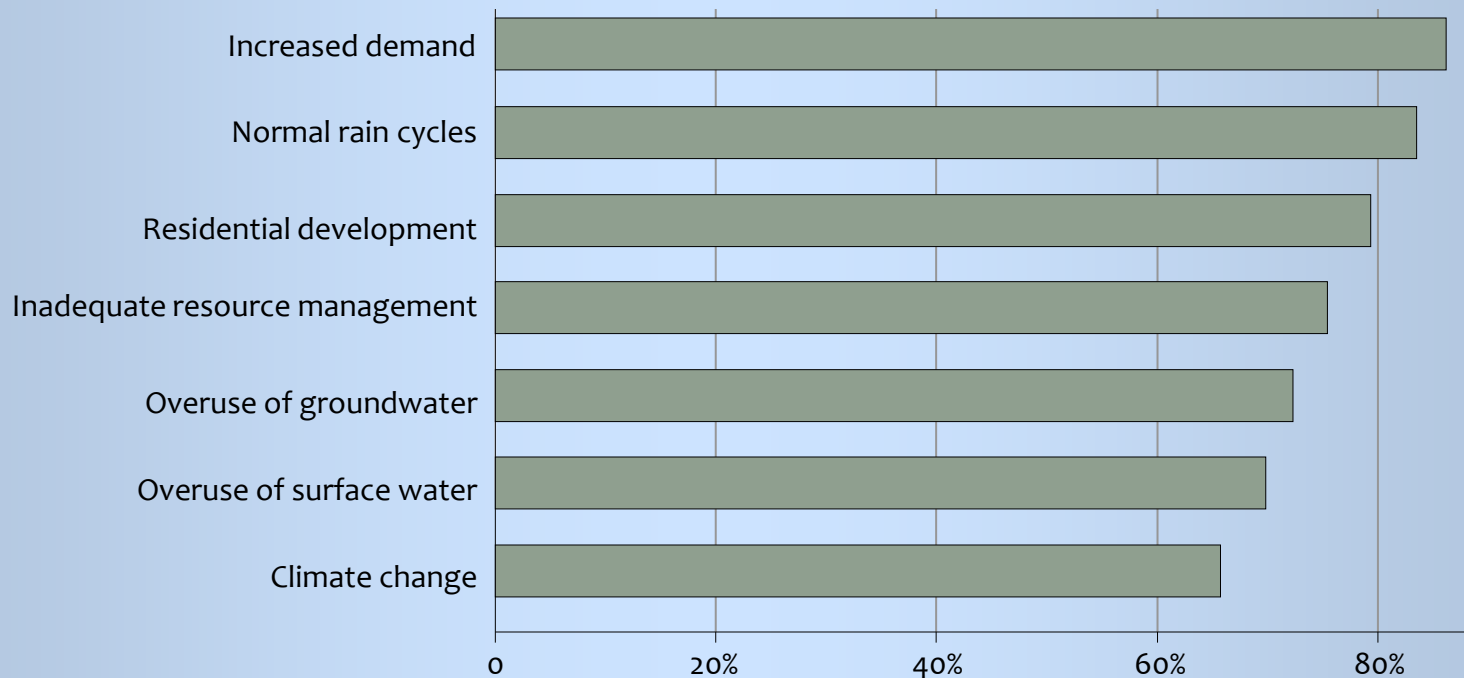
Where Do Texans Get Information About Drought?

Source of Information	Frequency	Percent
newspapers	279	47
television news	206	35
the internet	35	6
national weather service	15	3
personal experience and observation	9	2
government agencies	7	1
magazines/journals	6	1
radio	4	1
scientific research reports	4	1
personal scientific research	4	1
work/place of business	4	1
city departments	4	1
non-profit organizations	2	0
books	2	0
water bill	2	0
research conferences	1	0
interpersonal relations	1	0
environmental interest groups	1	0
other interest groups	1	0
school/college/university	1	0
Total	588	100

Is Drought Linked to Climate Change?

When asked about water scarcity in their region, over half of Texans (66%) agree or strongly agree that climate change is a cause.

However, other potential causes of regional water scarcity received more attention than climate change.

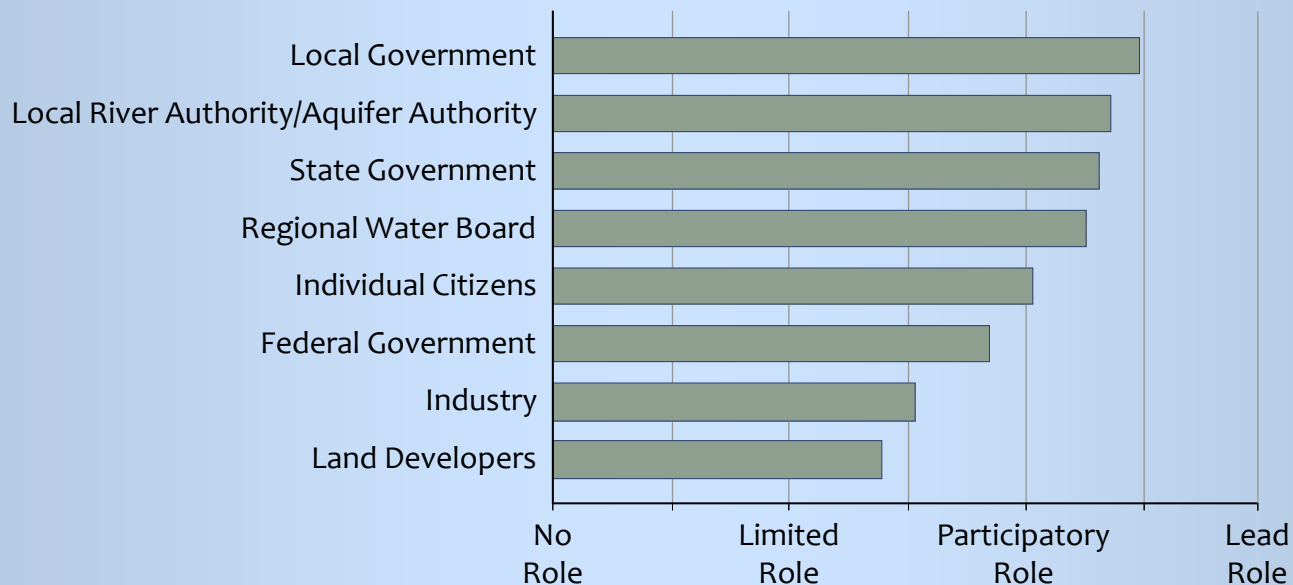


Where Should Solutions Come From?

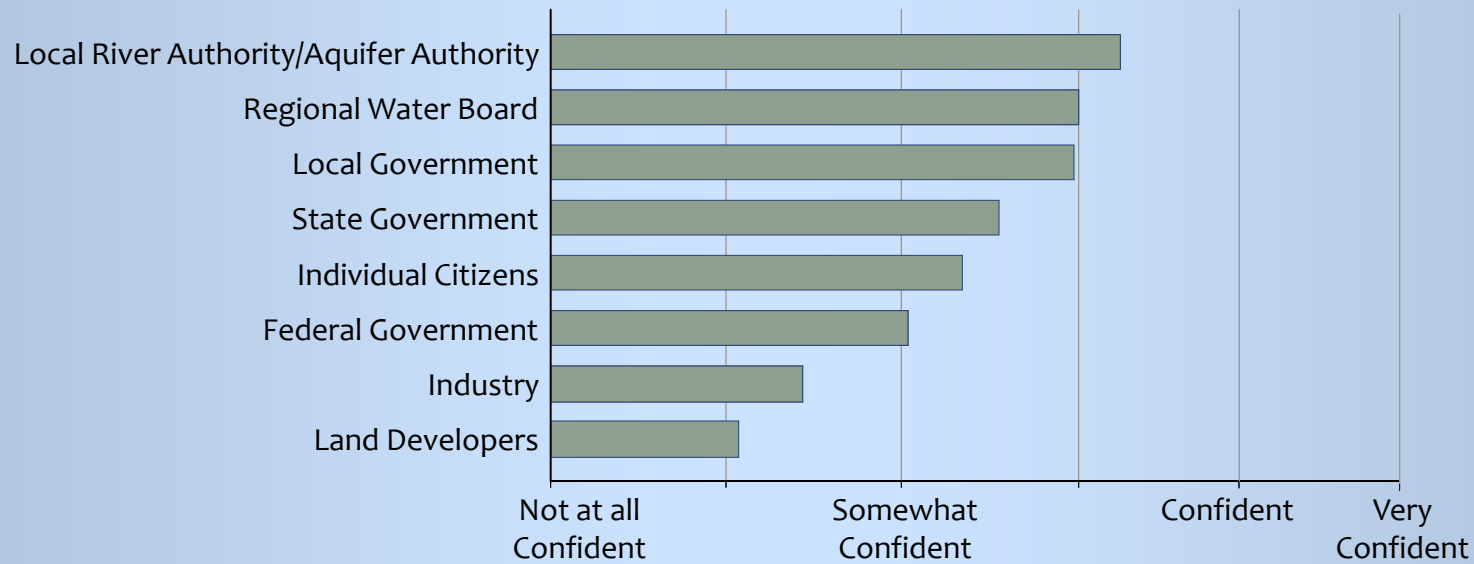
Texans would like drought management to be focused at the local level.

When asked what role stakeholders should play in managing drought, the leading roles were allocated to local government with decreasing authority given to more broadly focused institutions.

The least authority is allocated to private industry and land developers.



Confidence in Sources of Solutions



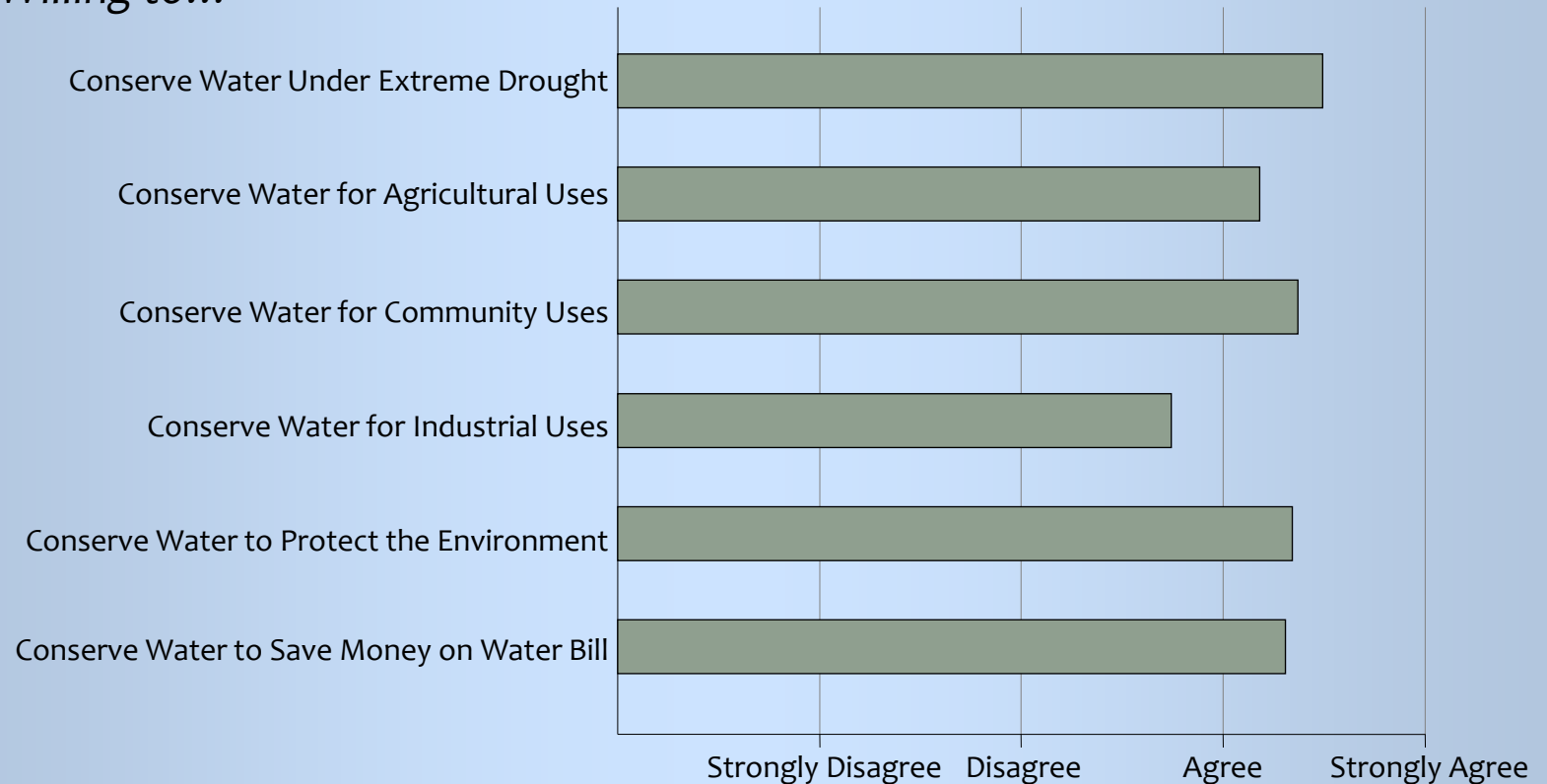
Confidence in each of the stakeholders is low overall.

On average, Texans are not confident in any of the stakeholders to manage water resources.

Respondents have very low confidence in private industry or land developers to manage water.

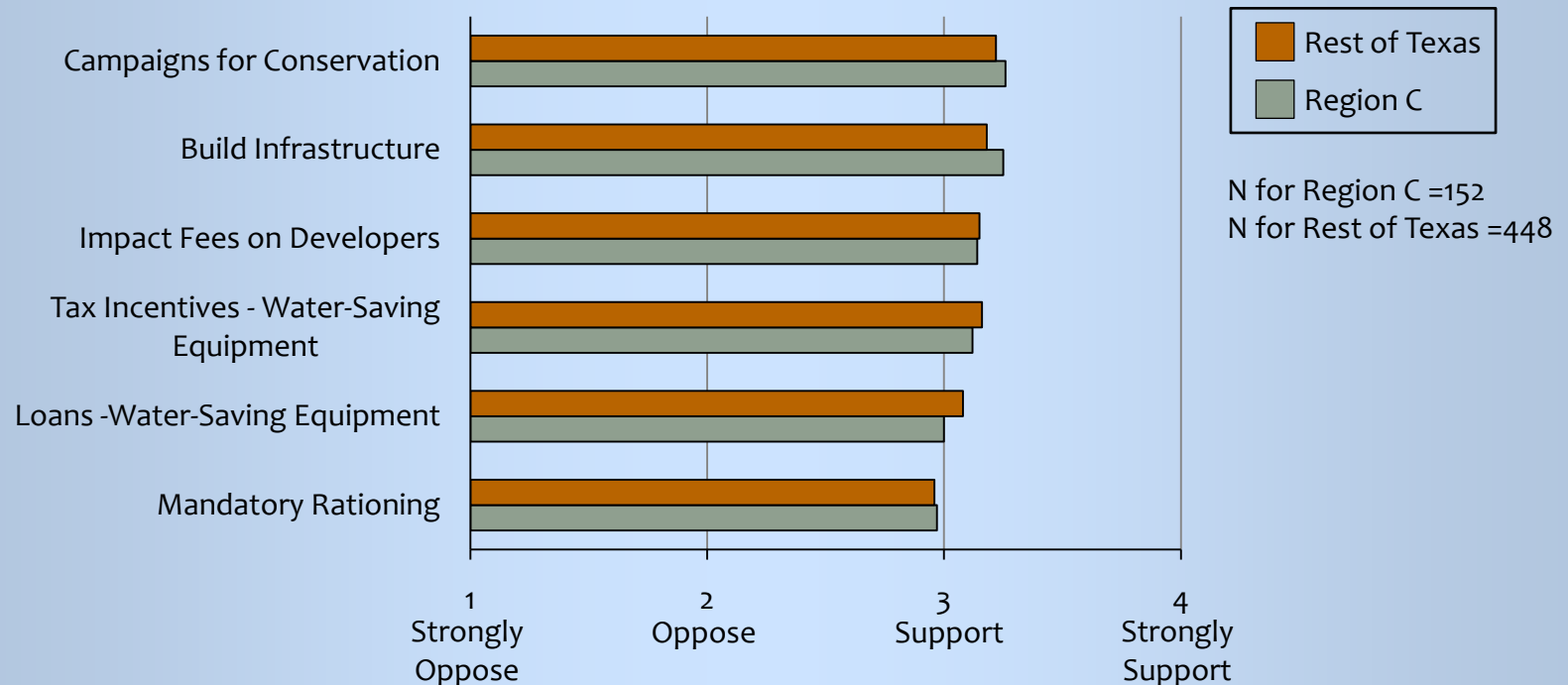
Willingness to Conserve Water

Willing to...



Support of Policy Options

Region C public opinion compared to respondents in the rest of Texas.



Region C is made up of all or part of 16 counties: Collin, Cooke, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Fannin, Freestone, Grayson, Henderson (Trinity River Basin portion), Jack, Kaufman, Navarro, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant and Wise.

Please note, survey responses include all of Henderson County.

Conclusions

- ❑ Texans are very concerned about drought
- ❑ They see climate change as relevant, but less important than other factors
- ❑ There is an attitudinal base of support for policy initiatives to deal with drought
- ❑ Greater emphasis is placed on local authority for solutions

For Additional Information

Arnold Vedlitz, Ph.D.

Director, Institute for Science, Technology and Public Policy

Bob Bullock Chair in Government and Public Policy

Bush School of Government and Public Service

Texas A&M University

4350 TAMU

College Station, TX 77843-4350

avedlitz@bushschool.tamu.edu

979.845.2929