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November 23, 2026

Nueces River Authority Unveils STOW: South Texas Offshore Water

New identity distinguishes STOW from Corpus Christi's Inner Harbor proposal and highlights an offshore approach designed to protect sensitive coastal ecosystems

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas —Nueces River Authority (NRA) today announced South Texas Offshore Water (STOW) as the new name for its Harbor Island Seawater Desalination Project. The proposed plant would sit on Harbor Island near Port Aransas, with seawater intake and discharge offshore in the Gulf.

The new identity comes in response to confusion between NRA's Harbor Island project and the City of Corpus Christi's Inner Harbor Desalination Project, which called for seawater intake and discharge within Corpus Christi Bay.

STOW's plans for the site at the eastern end of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel include nearly seven miles of subsea tunnels extending into the Gulf for seawater intake and discharge. Designed to produce up to 100 million gallons of freshwater per day, STOW would be one of the largest proposed seawater desalination facilities in the Western Hemisphere.

"We want the public to understand that STOW is a different project with a different approach," said Eric Burnett, President of the NRA Board of Directors. "Our goal is to develop a scalable and sustainable water supply for South Texas that meets our region's growing needs while protecting the coastal environment."

An Offshore Approach Designed to Protect Coastal Ecosystems

The project's environmental approach includes:

- **Protecting sensitive bays:** Offshore intake and discharge are designed to avoid direct impacts from these operations within sensitive bay and estuarine ecosystems.
- **Improved brine dispersion:** Specialized diffusers at the discharge outlet are designed to promote rapid mixing of brine (concentrated saltwater) with surrounding seawater, reducing localized salinity concentrations.
- **Greater water circulation:** The open waters of the Gulf provide greater opportunities for dilution and dispersion than more confined coastal waterways.

NRA has also engaged JT Van Zandt, a local fly-fishing guide and conservation advocate, to serve as an advisor on protecting the region's fisheries, bays and coastal ecosystems as the project advances.

"Our bays are nurseries for fish, shrimp and countless other species that make this region special," said Van Zandt. "We need more clean drinking water, but not at the expense of our coastal ecosystems. Taking this project offshore gives us an opportunity to accomplish both."

In September 2026, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality approved the project's final remaining discharge permit, marking a significant regulatory milestone.

Building a More Reliable Water Future for South Texas

STOW represents a major investment in the region's long-term water security, with a planned regional conveyance system to deliver freshwater from the coast to communities farther inland.

NRA has partnered with IDE Technologies, a worldwide leader in desalination, to develop the facility. With more than 60 years of experience and more than 400 projects across 40 countries, IDE has developed major desalination facilities in the United States and abroad, including California's Carlsbad Desalination Plant.

STOW will remain publicly owned and controlled by NRA, with IDE serving as the project's development and treatment partner. NRA will retain ownership of the plant and water, as well as oversight of water pricing and distribution.

The partnership is designed to provide long-term cost predictability, with IDE's water treatment fees established through contractual terms while water pricing remains under public control.

The project is also expected to support hundreds of construction jobs through American contractors and create opportunities for a locally trained workforce to operate the facility.

The project has reached several major milestones, including securing water reservations for its planned capacity, establishing a long-term lease on Harbor Island and receiving a $7 million grant from the Texas Water Development Board.

As development continues, NRA will work with regional stakeholders, government partners and communities to advance STOW as a long-term water supply solution for South Texas.

STOW | South Texas Offshore Water
An offshore solution for Texas' water security.

About STOW | South Texas Offshore Water

STOW, formerly known as the Harbor Island Seawater Desalination Project, is being developed by the Nueces River Authority to provide a new, reliable water supply for South Texas. Located on Harbor Island, the proposed facility is designed to produce up to 100 million gallons of freshwater per day through seawater desalination, utilizing offshore intake and discharge infrastructure in the Gulf and a regional water conveyance system.

About Nueces River Authority

The Nueces River Authority was created by the Texas Legislature in 1935 to preserve, protect and develop the water resources of the Nueces River Basin. NRA works with communities, customers and government partners across South Texas to support water supply, water quality, flood mitigation and the long-term stewardship of the region's water resources.

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