



Wastewater Systems Regionalization – What You Need to Know

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Introduction

- Owners and operators of wastewater systems face an ever-increasing demand on their resources to stay in compliance with federal and state regulations.
- Regionalization promotes an affordable, long-term solution to wastewater management by consolidating wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal into larger service providers for areas or regions.
- Regionalization involves consolidation of wastewater systems when a public or private entity provides wastewater service by means of physically connecting new systems to existing ones.
- The TCEQ strongly encourages owners or operators of proposed new domestic wastewater systems to be proactive by giving serious consideration to joining or connecting to a sound neighboring system.

Statutory and Regulatory Authority for Regionalization

- Texas Water Code (TWC) Section 15.001(13) defines Regionalization as the “development of a water supply or wastewater collection and treatment system that incorporates multiple service areas into an areawide service facility or any such system that serves an area that includes more than a single county, city, special district, or other political subdivision of the state.”
- TWC Sections 26.081 through 26.087 provides Texas’ regionalization policy for wastewater treatment. It states that TCEQ is to implement a policy to “encourage and promote the development and use of regional and area-wide waste collection, treatment, and disposal systems to serve the waste disposal needs of the citizens of the state and to prevent pollution and maintain and enhance the quality of the water in the state.”

Statutory and Regulatory Authority for Regionalization (cont.)

- TWC Section 26.0282 authorizes TCEQ, when considering issuing a permit to discharge waste, to deny or alter the terms and conditions of a proposed permit based on need and the availability of existing or proposed area-wide or regional waste collection, treatment, and disposal systems.

How does Regionalization apply to me?

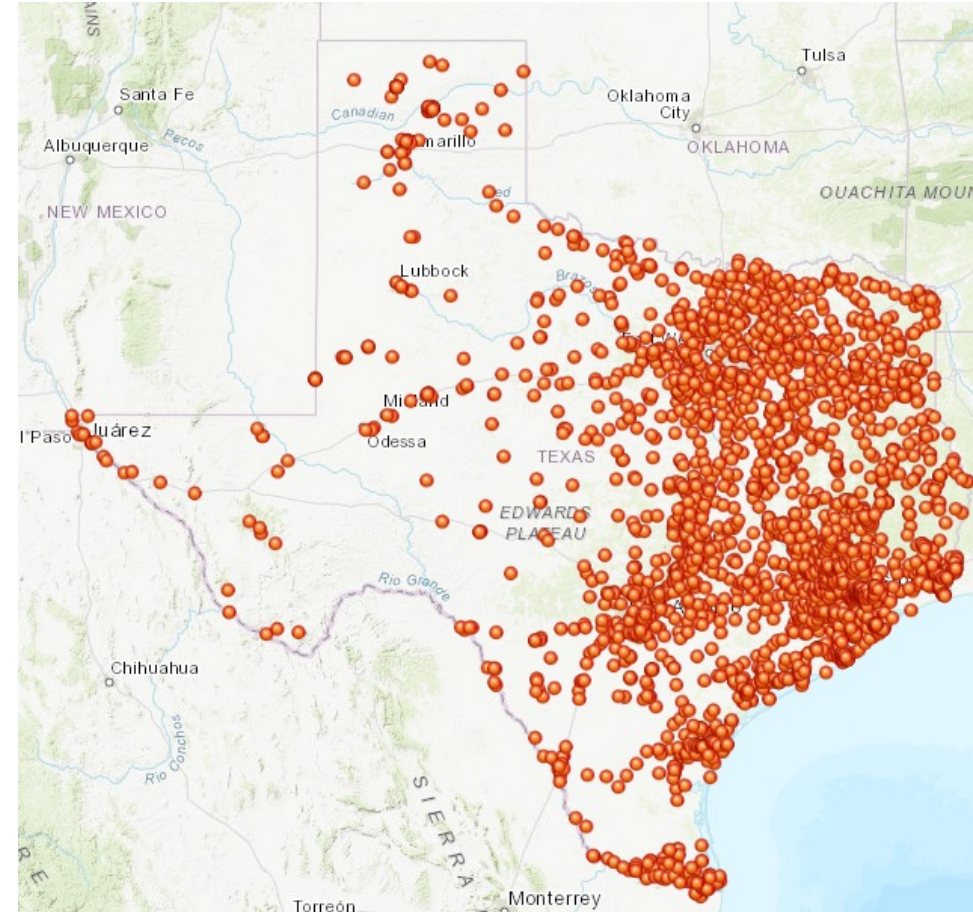
- If you are considering building a new wastewater treatment plant and are applying for a new TPDES permit, Regionalization applies to you.
- Entities regulated by the TCEQ, including owners/operators of proposed new wastewater systems, should consider connecting to an existing permitted domestic wastewater system or demonstrate that doing so is not feasible.
- You must determine if regionalization is possible before submitting a new permit application to TCEQ.

Roles in Evaluating Regionalization

- Role of the New Wastewater Systems
 - If you plan to build a new WWTP system, an important part of the planning process includes evaluating the possibility of regionalization (i.e., connecting the new or proposed system to an existing system) versus building a stand-alone system.
- Role of the Existing Wastewater Systems
 - Existing WWTPs should have accessible information on how they can be contacted for purposes of seeking connection to their system and must provide prompt responses to requests for service. They should also encourage regionalization by treating all applicants fairly, charging reasonable application fees, and charging cost-based fees for providing wastewater service to those requesting service.
- Role of TCEQ

Where do I Start?

- Perform a search and identify all existing permitted domestic wastewater treatment facilities or sanitary sewer collection systems within a three-mile radius of your proposed facility.
- You must also identify if any portion of the service area is within another utility's sewer CCN area.



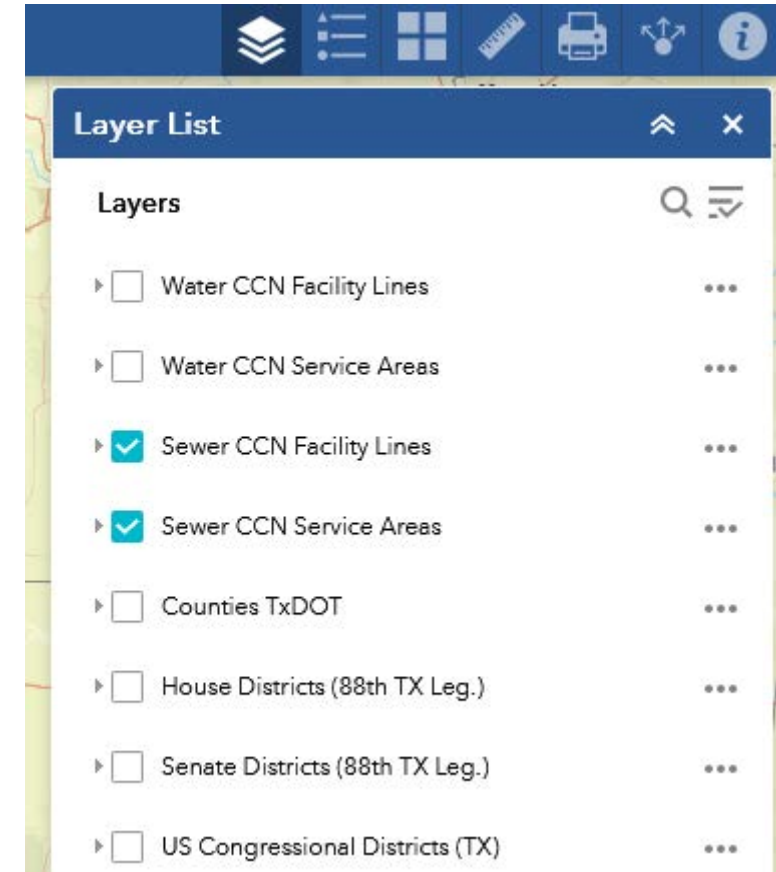
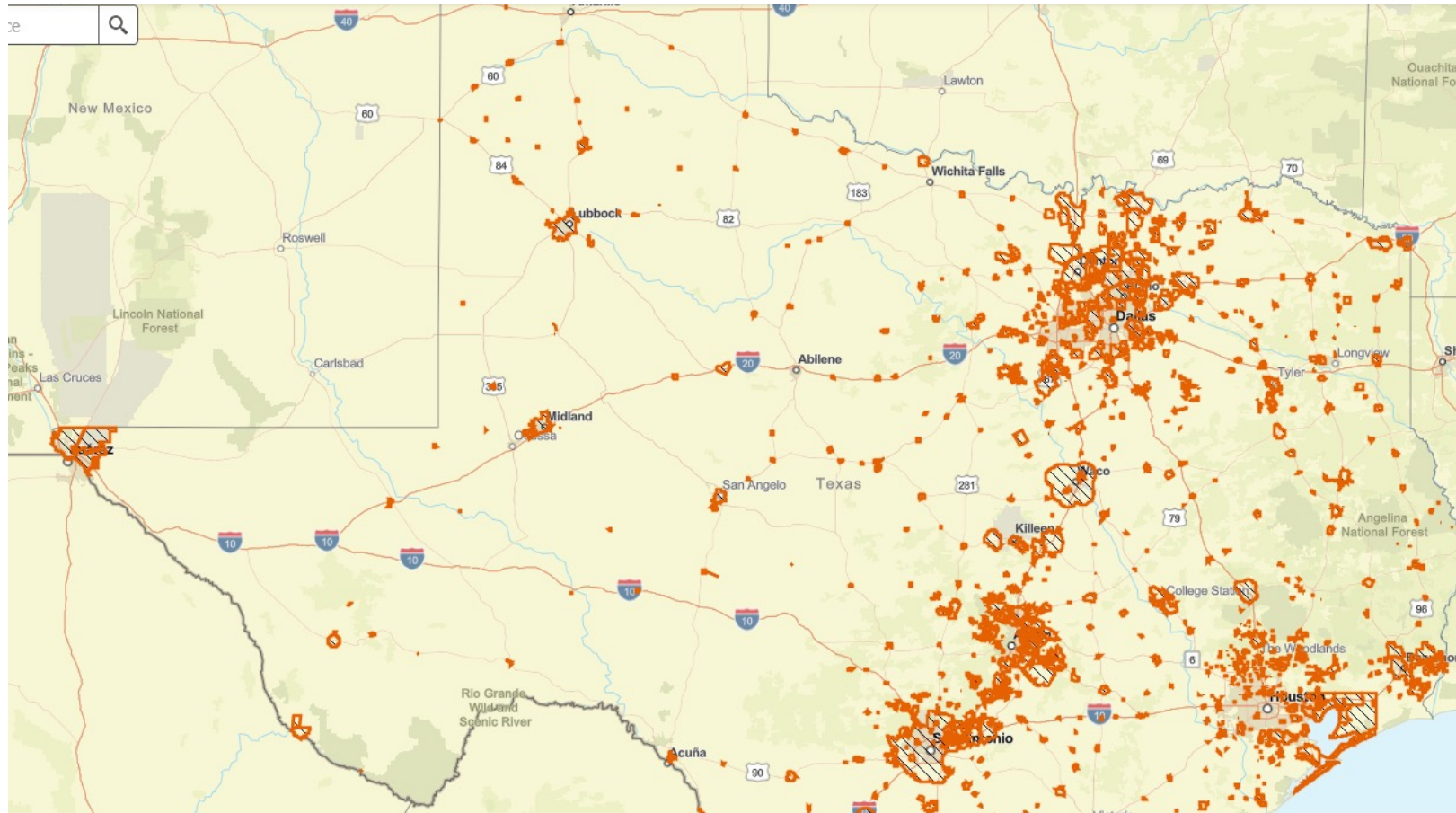
Where do I Start? (cont.)

- Tips to make your research more productive:
 - Go online for the most recent information, starting with the resources in Table 1 (next slide).
 - You might have to do local research—perhaps even fieldwork—to complete this task.
 - Drive through the area. wastewater systems must have identification at all plant sites. Locate the systems you found using the online resources.
 - Talk to the operators of any wastewater systems in the area and find out who they serve or who operates other nearby systems.
 - Review online information for service areas. Contact each wastewater system's owner or operator to find the limit of its service area. Don't assume that the physical system limit is the same as the service area limit.
 - Contact county offices to find out about subdivision plats on file. Each city should also have this information for areas inside that city's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). Start by searching the city or county websites. Most have this information available online.

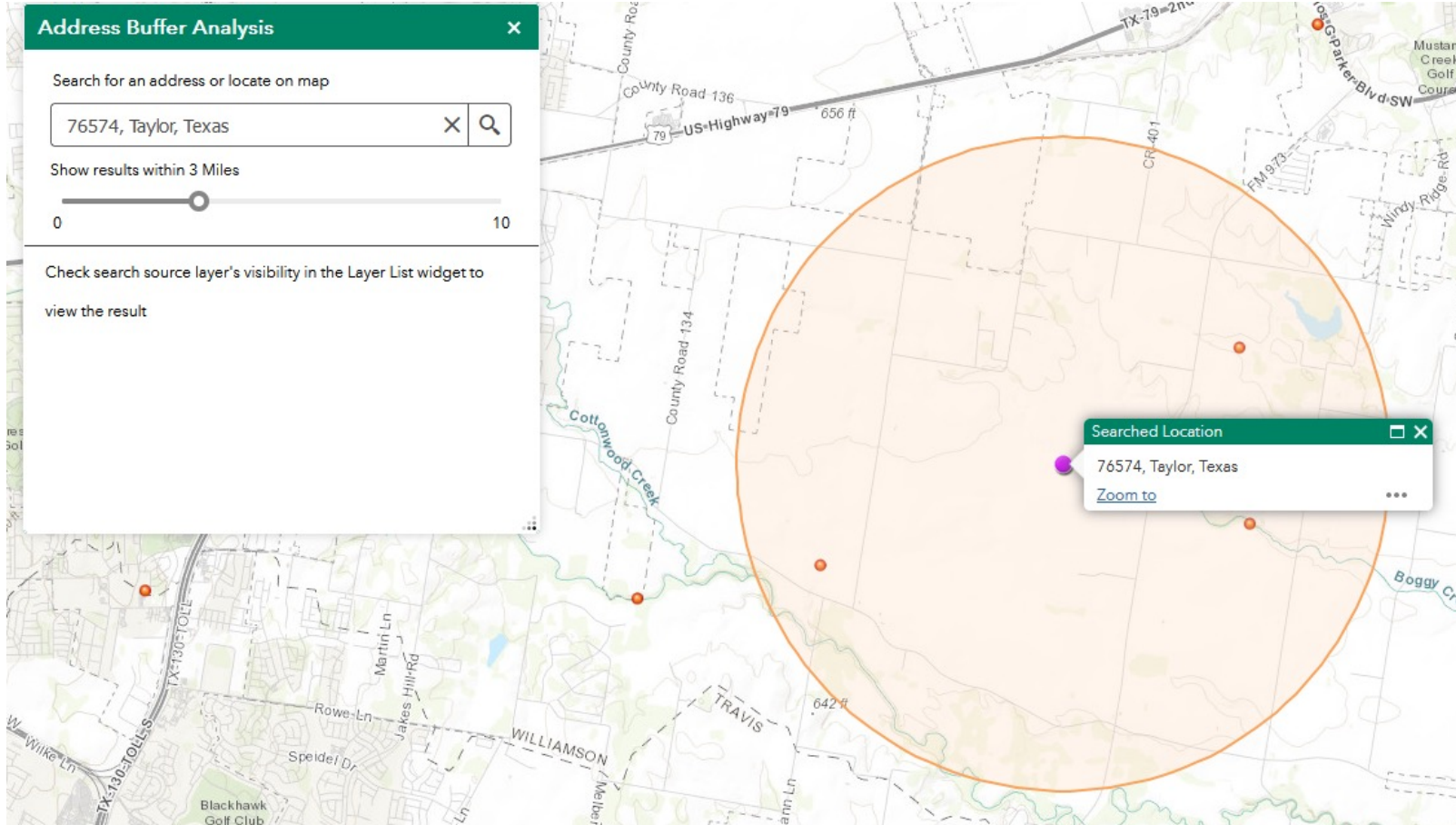
Table 1. Online resources for identifying and locating nearby wastewater systems.

Provided by	Online Resource	Available Information
PUC	CCN Map Viewer	Find the wastewater service provider for a specific address or property.
TCEQ	Wastewater Outfall Map Viewer	Find the outfall locations of nearby wastewater treatment plants. Clicking on an outfall reveals the name of the permittee as well as an abbreviated version of the permit number.
Counties and Cities	Subdivision plats / property information	Access subdivision plat maps. Information available varies by city/county.

CCN Map Viewer



Wastewater Outfall Map Viewer



Requests for Service

- If your proposed facility is within a three-mile radius of any existing permitted domestic wastewater system or a portion of your service area is within another utility's sewer CCN area, you must request service from the existing permitted system owner or operator.
- Your request for service must include your proposed facility's capacity, an inquiry for the total cost assessment of connecting to their sewer system and providing sewer services, as well as any additional conditions for receiving service.
- These requests should be mailed via certified mail for effective response documentation.

Requests for Service (cont.)

- If a request for service was approved, you are encouraged to evaluate the financial, technical, and managerial aspects of regionalization.
- Financial:
 - Evaluation of the cost-benefit analysis of regionalization compared to the construction, maintenance, and operation of your stand-alone system.
 - Affordability of rates proposed by a regional or area-wide system compared to the projected rates of your stand-alone system.
 - Other financial factors specific to your case (i.e., projected development schedule, costs of obtaining easements, etc.)

Requests for Service (cont.)

- Technical:
 - Feasibility of connecting with another collection system.
 - Feasibility of obtaining easements (e.g., collection system is across a waterbody, another utility's CCN area must be crossed, etc.)
 - The existing facility's capacity to accommodate the projected increase in flow from your development.
- Managerial:
 - The existing facility's compliance history is in good standing.
 - The operation and maintenance of the existing facility is dependable.

Questions?

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