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Texas nears permits to reuse produced water, Sen. Perry says

By **Mella McEwen**, Staff Writer

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State Sen. Charles Perry served as the luncheon speaker at the Produced Water Society's Houston conference.

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State Sen. Charles Perry has led the charge towards turning produced water into a new source of water for industry and municipalities alike.

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He reflected on that effort and the progress made during a luncheon speech at the recent Produced Water Society conference in Houston.

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“There were no surprises,” he told the Reporter-Telegram. “I knew on the front end we could clean the water. I had no doubt — we just hadn’t done it before. We’ve funded the science and checked all the boxes.”

He sponsored legislation creating the Texas Produced Water Consortium, hosted by Texas Tech University.

Oil and gas producers are a significant part of the effort because the 26 million barrels of water produced daily alongside oil and natural gas has created significant challenges, he noted.

“We’re still injecting water, but we’re running out of pore space. If we can’t move the water, we can’t drill wells,” he explained.

Operators say the Permian Basin has as much as 100 years of oil and gas to produce and that managing water is a critical piece of perpetuating that output, he said. The objection has been that it costs too much to clean the water compared to disposal. “My point is, when we run out of pore space, how much is too much?”

Today, technological advances have placed cleaning costs closer to disposal costs, he added.

“We’ve now come to the point we’re getting close to getting permits at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to allow beneficial reuse,” Perry said. “Science

has shown produced water is cleanable, it's usable" and there will soon be large-scale treatment facilities.

He said he has pictures of sorghum and cotton grown over the last three or four years that were watered by hand or with well water, rainwater or treated produced water. The crops watered with produced water are about two feet taller, he said.

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"I remind everyone this is not new, that this has been done elsewhere. It's just not been done on the scale of 26 million barrels of water a day," Perry said.

Beyond beneficial reuse, produced water could serve as an organic source of essential minerals like lithium and ammonium nitrates.

He predicted TCEQ permits for land applications is about a year away and could benefit farmers. Beneficial reuse could be a way to organically feed crops while reducing costs for farmers.

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His original timeline was 10 years and efforts are now in their sixth year, he noted.

“It will be interesting to see how this develops. It’s happening quicker than I thought,” he said.

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