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Ward Exiting Texas Water Agency To Run Trinity River Authority

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By [Richard Williamson](#)

DALLAS — J. Kevin Ward, executive administrator of the Texas Water Development Board, is leaving the agency after 22 years to become general manager of the Trinity River Authority.

Ward, 52, will replace general manager Danny Vance, who is retiring after 31 years at the agency. His last day is Feb. 28.

Melanie Callahan, a certified public accountant with more than 28 years of experience in public-sector financial management, will become the Water Development Board's interim director.

Ward has supervised the lion's share of the TWDB's bond issues, beginning as financial analyst in 1987. He later became finance section chief and development fund manager before his appointment as executive director in May 2002.

Ward played a key role on the Environmental Protection Agency state revolving fund workgroup several years ago for implementing the state's clean and drinking water revolving fund programs.

"I've gotten a chance to do so many wonderful things at the agency," Ward said. "When I started, we had just \$500 million in assets. Now, we have \$6.4 billion."

Board chairman Edward Vaughan said that Ward "worked hard to lay a solid foundation for this agency. I'm confident that Melanie will continue to build on his work to successfully lead us through the legislative session."

The TWDB was created in 1957 after the worst drought in modern Texas history. It helped finance new reservoirs throughout the state and helped local water utilities pay for improvement to infrastructure to conserve water.

The agency also issues bonds to build water infrastructure in impoverished areas along the Texas-Mexico border.

Ward's departure comes as the Texas Legislature is in session to consider future bonding authority for the board.

Ward said the agency is seeking a bond capacity of \$6 billion, which would include its outstanding \$3.5 billion of bonds. The triple-A-rated TWDB is one of the state's largest issuers of general obligation debt, but it also has a program for revenue bonds.

Callahan began working for the board as the director of the Fiscal Services Division and the chief accounting officer, and was named chief financial officer in August 2007.

In her role as the CFO, Callahan monitored a \$3.5 billion debt portfolio, a \$5.1 billion loan portfolio, a \$1.2 billion investment portfolio, and formulated and managed a \$70 million annual operating budget.

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