


TWDB APPROVES DISTRICT MANAGEMENT PLAN

The District recently received a Certificate of Administrative Completeness for the recently adopted District Management Plan. The Certificate was issued by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), following a thorough review of the document.

The District Board adopted the current plan, following notice and a public hearing, on September 9, 2008. Texas Water Code requires that Districts review and readopt the plan at least once every five years. The TWDB is then required to review and approve plans for administrative completeness. This review is rather exhaustive, and is a means of ensuring all of the information required by law is included in the plan.

Facts and figures concerning groundwater supply and demand are included in the plan. Also, the goals of the District are listed, as well as the accountability criteria which ensures the goals are met.

The current management plan is available at the District office, as well as the District web site www.spuwcd.org. 

Calendar of Events

February 16	Presidents' Day Office Closed
March 3	Board Meeting 8:30 am District Office
April 7	Board Meeting 8:30 am District Office
April 10	Good Friday Office Closed
April 18	Water Wise Landscape Workshop
May 5	Board Meeting 8:30 am District Office
May 25	Memorial Day Office Closed

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GROUNDWATER NEWS

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Member



In this issue

- Work Ongoing for GMA #2
- Water Wise Landscape Workshop
- District Addresses Administrative Rules
- Legislators Address Groundwater Districts
- TWDB Approves District Management Plan

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STATE LEGISLATORS ADDRESS GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

The Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts (TAGD) recently held a quarterly meeting in Austin. The organization has about 80 district members, as well as 20 associate members. During the two day meeting, invited legislators addressed water topics of concern for the 2009 81st Legislative session. These topics included the funding mechanism for the State Water Plan, joint planning for desired future conditions (DFCs) of aquifers, and an emphasis on conservation.

The 2007 State Water Plan is a collection of information from 16 Regional Water Plans covering the entire State of Texas. Within the Plan, there are facts and figures illustrating the water supplies necessary for meeting the needs of this State during the next 50 years. Where shortages are projected, there are strategies listed for addressing the needs, as well as the cost of implementing these practices. Countless hours of research and work were devoted during the formulation of the Regional Water Plans, as well as the State Water Plan. Now that the various strategies have been identified, the work of implementation is just beginning. A major issue, though, concerns the estimated \$30 billion cost of designing, constructing or implementing the Plan's 4500 water management strategies and projects. During the discussion, policy makers stressed the need for fully funding the water plan, and all of the associated infrastructure needs. Options for funding the Plan may include a bottled water tax, additional sales tax, general revenue, additional charges on water bills, and several others. There is no certainty that any one of the aforementioned may be adopted, though, as legislators consider these and other options during the session. However, each person reiterated the importance of addressing the funding source now that the Plan has identified the projects necessary for meeting future needs.

Secondly, an issue of great interest to groundwater conservation districts (gcds) was addressed at length. This concerns the provisions for joint planning and addressing the DFCs for relevant aquifers by September 1, 2010. The legislation that created this process was enacted following the 2005 79th legislature, and has been mentioned repeatedly in this newsletter since that time. The comments offered during this discussion were supportive of the current structure and guidelines which govern the process. Legislators told the group that they are looking for positive results from this process, and are hopeful that other legislators are also content letting the process mature and work.

Legislators are looking for positive results, and proof that gcds and people sharing an aquifer can work together and solve problems collaboratively. Furthermore, it was emphasized that the best system for managing aquifers (gcds), is already in place, but there is always room for improvement. The speakers also commented that, as elected officials, they are quite familiar with the different perspectives that must be balanced while "charting new territory". There was praise given to those Groundwater Management Areas (GMAs) that have, or will soon have, adopted DFCs for relevant aquifers. It is important, as one stated, to have some success stories from this process during the coming months. These successes create confidence for the process as it is currently structured.

Lastly, the conservation topic was addressed. The emphasis here concerned the very important message that must always be top priority. After all, as one speaker reminded, "Remember, you are all Groundwater **Conservation** Districts". The audience was encouraged to develop and implement programs that address conservation goals.


(Legislators...continued on page 2)

District Addresses Administrative Rules

Recent changes to Chapter 36, Texas Water Code, require that groundwater conservation districts (gcds) adopt rules consistent with the statute. Specifically, these changes concern administrative processes regarding issuance of permits and notice and procedures for hearings. The legislation affecting this portion of the water code was

sponsored by Sen. Robert Duncan of Lubbock during the 79th Legislature. It applies to uniform procedures for notice and hearing requirements.

During the past months, the District has developed preliminary draft language that conforms to the statute. It is expected that the Board of Directors will discuss these draft changes during regular business

meetings for the next several months. Afterward, as required by law, the District will provide notice of a hearing to receive comment on the draft rules. Interested parties may attend any of the open meetings for more information regarding the scope of proposed changes. Additional information is also available at the District office. 

(Legislators...continued from page 1)


This encouragement is consistent with other presentations delivered to gcds in the past. It is important that water users within gcds seek better ways of using and conserving water. One legislator mentioned that gcds should know how much water is used, saved and/or wasted within their respective districts. Overall, the message confirmed the responsibilities of each gcd in Texas. Since the State has entrusted the management of underground water to local districts, there is a burden of responsibility within each district that requires careful planning for meeting future needs.

The question, then, it seems is whether this District (the South Plains UWCD) is providing programs that target conservation goals? Perhaps a review of current and upcoming programs helps answer this question. While not exhaustive, the following are examples of several District programs.

First, the District is sponsoring a water wise landscape workshop during the month of April. During this seminar, landscape professionals will address practices which help conserve outdoor water use. Landscape irrigation use comprises a majority of the municipal water demand during many months of the year. In fact, during recent years, the District has provided over 1,000 lawn sprinkler gages and conservation pamphlets at City offices within the District. These help outdoor water users apply only the needed amount of irrigation water. Consequently, reducing outdoor water use may significantly prolong existing water supplies. Additional details of this workshop are included on Page 3 of this newsletter.

Secondly, the District has a commitment for education programs that target conservation. Since 2007, the District has shared the cost of an education coordinator with three neighboring gcds. This project has strengthened the Districts' education programs, and fostered the expansion of new programs. Additionally, having a dedicated education employee allows more time for school presentations, civic group visits, and educator training. In fact, plans are developing for a teacher workshop in September concerning the use of "Major Rivers" curriculum, which the District has sponsored since 1994. One other interesting note is the publication of a water wise plant handbook for the District. The education coordinator is nearing completion of this useful handbook for gardeners, which contains an extensive list of drought tolerant plants that are well suited for the area.

Third, the District is completing the analysis of on-farm irrigation water use for the 2008 crop. This is the seventh year of this study, which is quite useful for irrigated producers. Using a network of cooperators, the District collects, analyzes, and reports the monthly irrigation applications for various crops. At year end, the corresponding yields are also analyzed, which provides an overview of those fields where water use efficiencies and dollar return per unit of applied water are highest. With this data, producers may adjust irrigation amounts so that optimum rates of return are targeted. The summary of this study is often included during the South Plains Ag Conference each February. There are usually 100-150 local producers who attend this day-long event.


Concluding, it appears that the current District programs are consistent with the goals and conservation themes which were communicated recently by a panel of legislators. The work of joint planning for a DFC is proceeding in timely fashion, and the District is cooperating with other gcds, working toward similar goals. The District remains committed to the management and conservation of underground water which has been entrusted by the legislature, and those served by the District. 

WORK ONGOING FOR GMA #2

Since 2005, State Law has included requirements that groundwater conservation districts (gcds) jointly plan for desired future conditions (DFCs) of relevant aquifers. This concept involves coordination and planning among gcds within the boundaries of groundwater management areas (GMAs). The boundaries of 16 GMAs have been delineated by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), and cover large segments of major aquifers in Texas. The concept of aquifer-wide management is addressed using this process, yet recognizes that certain subdivisions of aquifers may require unique management and separate DFCs.

During the past three and a half years, the gcds within GMA #2 (including the South Plains UWCD) have met and considered a wealth of data while addressing possible DFCs for the Ogallala. A number of different scenarios have also been submitted to the groundwater modeling staff at TWDB. The statute requires that groundwater availability models be used during the planning process.

The most recent scenarios for DFCs have just been modeled, and draft results of these requests are now being analyzed. During the month of February, each of the seven gcds in GMA #2 should have opportunity for considering the various results supplied by TWDB. Afterward, it is likely that a meeting of GMA #2 will occur during the month of March. At that time, there may be consideration of the most desirable scenario for the DFC. However, before adoption of a DFC, the members will schedule some hearings within the GMA for additional public comment regarding the issue. Following the conclusion of the hearing process, the members may schedule another meeting to consider adoption of a DFC, providing there is agreement that the matter has been thoroughly analyzed. This may occur as early as the month of April.

As always, interested persons may follow the news of this process using the informational resource at www.gma2.org. 

WATER WISE LANDSCAPE WORKSHOP

The South Plains Underground Water Conservation District is hosting a Water Wise Landscape Workshop on Saturday, April 18 from 8 am to 12 pm at the First Christian Church in Brownfield, Texas.

Topics are designed for District residents interested in maintaining and beautifying their landscape, while conserving water. The workshop features expert presenters, free water-saving tools, literature, and door prizes. All attendees will receive a complimentary copy of the South Plains UWCD Water Wise Plant Book.

Featured speaker, Billy Kniffen, AgriLife Extension water resource specialist at Menard, said the workshop should be of interest to Master Gardeners, designers and installers of rainwater-collection systems, homeowners with systems or those planning or interested in installing a system.

"We'll cover basic installation for outside landscape use, inside potable and non-potable use, sanitation of systems and general system maintenance," Kniffen said.

The second half of the workshop will be presented by Kay Thompson, Master Gardener program coordinator for Tom Green County.

Thompson said her presentation highlights the basic principles of xeriscaping, including water-conserving design, low water use plants, water harvesting techniques, appropriate irrigation methods, and use of mulches.

"I will teach homeowners how to have the lush landscape they've always dreamed of - one that will not only look good, but perform the way they want it to," Thompson said.

Concluding will be a brief presentation given by the South Plains UWCD Education Coordinator, Crystal Hogue.

There is no charge for the workshop, but organizers ask that participants call the South Plains office at 806-637-7467 by March 27th. 