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Since some of the panic has died down, we are now deeply affected by the reality of a drought-of-record, heat stricken irrigated crops, and a lot of new water wells that are still inadequate for irrigating a crop this much. The discussion of water policy and managing a dwindling supply in this drought now becomes even more critical than previously imagined.

As the drought continues, we receive more questions each day concerning water. Some of the most common questions are listed below:

Q. Can I still drill a new well?

A. Yes, subject to the District's well spacing/production rules, which are the same as they have been since last amended in September 2009.

Q. Are we required to have 50% of our water left in 50 years?

A. No, although that is one of several goals that various gcds have adopted, it is not the adopted DFC for this District.

Q. Can my well run dry?

A. Severe levels of depletion can cause well production to decrease dramatically. We encourage all well owners to know their saturated thickness and conserve water as much as possible. There are parts of the District where wells only produce 1-2 gpm today due to depleted water levels.




Q. Am I required, or will I soon be required, to place a meter on my well?

A. (This is probably one of the most frequent questions, but also more difficult to answer, due to uncertainties). At this time, our District has no rule requirement for meter installation. Other gcds are implementing rules that require water use reporting (using meters) in order to comply with their adopted DFCs. Those local gcd Boards of Directors have determined that such provisions are needed to manage the resource effectively.

Q. (Reworded, but often asked after the above question). When will I be required to place a meter on my well or irrigation system?

A. Water use reporting will be required when the Board determines it is necessary to comply with State laws, to achieve a desired future condition, or both. When we examine the current water policy direction of this region and the State, it is a best guess that reporting water use via meters may be required within the next 5 years. 💧

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-  4. Adopt applicable DFCs adopted by the management area
-  5. Update the district management plan within 2 years of adopting DFCs
-  6. Update rules to implement the DFCs within a year of updating the management plan
- 7. Adopt rules designed to achieve DFCs
- 8. Adopt rules that adequately protect groundwater
- 9. Enforce rules for the adequate protection of groundwater

As you can see, a good bit of change was suggested for the joint planning process and establishment of DFCs, even though we just completed the first-ever establishment of DFCs. That should be a reminder to us all of how quickly policy changes may be implemented. The Legislature has placed a lot of trust in gcds with the DFC process, and will likely keep adjusting the specific provisions to ensure the job is done fairly and openly. The accountability provisions in the law require that gcds follow through with plans to achieve goals that are established.

Again, this requires that our District's management plan and rules are sufficient for achieving the adopted DFC of drawdown not exceeding the 10-year average of -1.15 ft/yr. The Board is currently discussing these topics and will keep you updated as progress occurs. 💧

Water Quality Sampling Complete

The District recently finished obtaining water samples for its annual water quality study. Each year, the District conducts a water quality program, and this year it concerns the quality of water from private domestic wells.

During this year's study, we visited 32 well sites. Most of these were also sampled in 2009, although 2 wells this year have not been sampled previously. The analysis is being conducted by the Lower Colorado River Authority's Environmental Laboratory Services in Austin. This lab has also performed work for us during our water quality programs in 2007 and 2009. The results of this work help us understand the contaminants that may affect drinking water quality in private wells.

Most of the well owners interviewed during our sampling reported that they use a water treatment system inside their homes. The most common treatment consists of reverse osmosis (RO), which is a very effective means of treating most contaminants that we find here. The lab is screening these samples for the following contaminants this year: arsenic, chloride, fluoride, sulfate, nitrate (and nitrite), as well as total organic carbon.

The results of this study should be available next month. Look for results of our past work by visiting the "Hydrologic Map" link on the web site: www.spuwcd.org. 💧

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NEWS**

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GROUNDWATER SOUTH PLAINS NEWS

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Last August, the 7 groundwater conservation districts (gcds) of Groundwater Management Area #2 (GMA #2) adopted desired future conditions (DFCs) for relevant aquifers. Since that time, our management area (and the whole region) has experienced exceptional drought, and a lot of folks have continually questioned us about any impending rules changes. Before listing some of those frequently asked questions, we will provide a short factual summary of events during the past year.

As required by law, the GMA #2 DFCs were adopted last August and sent to the Texas Water Development Board in Austin (see article from August 2010 *Groundwater News*). The TWDB then used those DFCs in a groundwater availability model, which provided estimates of the amount of groundwater that can be used each year to meet those future conditions. The availability numbers are important, and form a basis for managing the aquifer so that the DFC is achieved.

As the fall and winter months approached, the big story for much of our area concerned the rising prices for agricultural commodities. As this price shift occurred, many producers found it feasible to consider adding more wells to their farms and increasing irrigation capacity. Rumors and falsehoods soon spread across this District, creating fears that new wells would soon be prohibited, prompting many people to apply for new well permits. Much of this misinformation and panic spread from the first draft of rules changes developed by the High Plains UWCD. Because High Plains UWCD is the largest gcd in our management area, many people incorrectly assumed, or were told, that **all** of GMA #2 had a DFC of 50/50 (50% of 2010 water left in 50 years) and would be affected by new rules designed to achieve such. That is simply incorrect, as the other six gcds of GMA #2 adopted a different goal, which is based on average yearly drawdown, **not** the 50/50 method.

It should be no surprise that gcds are discussing management plans and rules at this point in time. As we stated last fall (in this newsletter) current law requires that districts' management plans and rules must achieve the adopted DFCs. Obviously, that means that each gcd Board of Directors must review their current management plan and rules, then determine if any changes are necessary to affect the desired goal. In fact, during the most recent legislative session, even more accountability provisions were added to Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code that address implementation of management policies to meet the DFCs.

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LACK OF RAINFALL— STILL BIG NEWS

According to official records of the National Weather Service, Brownfield's total 2011 precipitation through July of this year is 0.81 inches. That is the lowest total ever recorded for the first seven months of the year. This drought is severe, and is classified as "Exceptional" in the current U.S. Drought Monitor.

The chart shown below illustrates the yearly precipitation for Brownfield, Texas based on National Weather Service records. As you see, it dates to 1916, and has one missing year of data, 1922. There are nine years where the yearly total is below 10.00 inches, the last time being 1964. A big question, now, concerns the length of this drought. Some weather forecasters are suggesting that it may extend into 2012. The historical data shown below indicates the driest years are followed by a year where precipitation rebounded above 10 inches. Whether or not that will be the case for next year is uncertain.

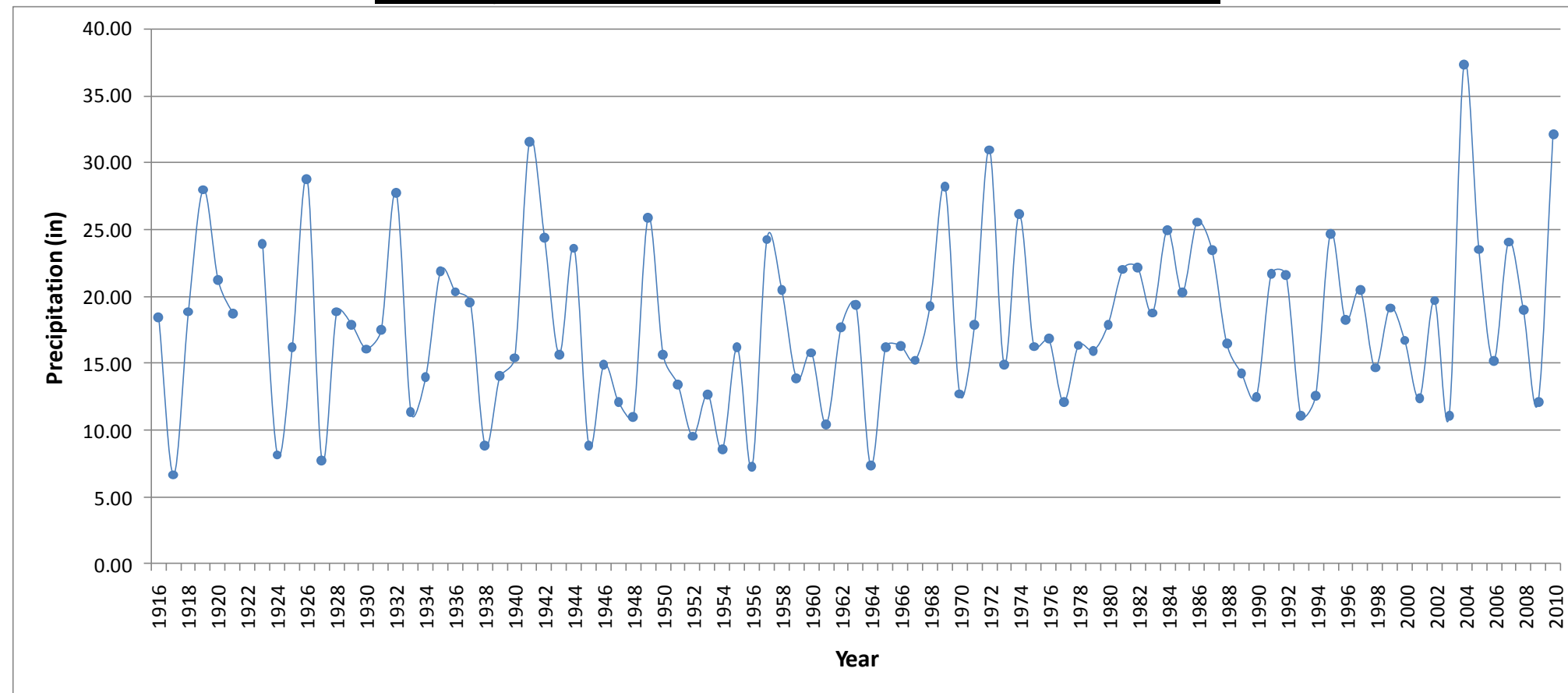
A few notable facts from the historical rainfall data include:

- High—37.35" (2004)
- Low—6.65" (1917)
- Average—17.89"

All of this data is available on our web site (www.spuwcd.org) on the "Conservation" page "Rainfall Monitoring" link. ♠

Yearly Precipitation for Brownfield, TX

Source: NWS



PLEASE CONSIDER THESE CONSERVATION TIPS

1. Repair leaky faucets.
2. Don't use the toilet as a wastebasket.
3. Repair toilet leaks.
4. Use melted ice in drinking glasses to water indoor plants.
5. Install water-saving shower heads and low-flow faucet aerators.
6. Collect rainwater runoff from your roof in buckets or barrels.
7. Take a short shower instead of a bath.
8. When brushing your teeth, turn the water off until it is time to rinse.
9. Run the dishwasher and clothes washer only for full loads.
10. Minimize the use of the kitchen sink garbage disposal.
11. Do not let the sink faucet run while shaving.
12. Do not run water down the drain while waiting for hot water. Collect that water and use it for pets and plants.
13. Keep a bottle of drinking water in the fridge where it stays cold.
14. Plant drought-resistant lawns, shrubs and plants.
15. Add mulch around trees and plants.
16. Water your lawn deeply, and only when needed.
17. Do not water in the heat of the day, or while it is windy.
18. Use a broom, not the water hose, to clean driveways and sidewalks.
19. If washing dishes by hand, do not leave the water running for rinsing.
20. Collect the water used for rinsing dishes and use it for watering plants. ♠

2012 Calendar Art Winners Receive Awards

Local fourth and fifth graders recently competed in the South Plains Underground Water Conservation District's fifth annual calendar artwork contest. The students were given a presentation by the Education Coordinator regarding water conservation. The students were then asked to take that information and create a detailed picture illustrating what they believed to be an important water conservation message for the public. This year, over 300 entries were submitted and local judges enjoyed looking at the colorful and creative messages that the 4th and 5th graders from three Terry County Elementary Schools created.

The grand prize winner in this year's contest is Aliyah Castillo, of Meadow's Burleson Elementary, who received a \$50 cash prize and a certificate for her accomplishment. Her entry is featured on the cover of the 2012 South Plains UWCD calendar.

Other winners received a \$25 cash prize and their artwork will be published on monthly pages of the calendar. They include Oak Grove Elementary students Angelina Garcia, Cassidy Cooper and Touryn Longoria. Wellman-Union winners include Andrea Jaramillo, Elisabeth Peters, Jacy Rowden and Nicole Sifuentez. Meadow's Burleson Elementary winners include Austin Simmons, Genesis Rodriguez, Riley McBee, Christian DeLuna and Helen Giesbrecht.

The District thanks all the students who participated in this year's contest. The 2012 South Plains UWCD calendars will be available November 30th. You can also view this year's winning artwork on the SPUWCD Educational Web-site at www.Savingh2o.org. ♠

Legislative Update

Despite the large issues of budget cuts and redistricting, there were also a number of new water laws that passed the Legislature during the 82nd Regular Session. A short summary of the most important new laws is included below. This is by no means exhaustive, but meant as a guide for understanding general policy.

- SB 332—Language in this bill addresses groundwater ownership and "recognizes that a landowner owns the groundwater below the surface of the landowner's land as real property". This ownership right entitles a landowner to drill for and produce groundwater, but does not grant the right to capture a specific amount.
- SB 660—A lot of ground is covered in this bill, including the reauthorization of the Texas Water Development Board until 2023. The TWDB was one of several agencies subject to sunset review this year. Other provisions of this bill concern the process of establishing DFCs. Specifically, the bill adds nine new factors that geds must consider when adopting DFCs. Also, geds must now provide notice of a management area meeting 10 days in advance, when previously it was 3 days. Once DFCs are adopted, the districts must prepare a detailed report, also known as a "DFC Explanatory Report". Finally, there is also new language here that concerns accountability after the DFC adoption. An "affected person" in the management area can file a petition for inquiry at the TCEQ if a district fails to:

1. Submit a management plan to TWDB
2. Participate in joint planning
3. Adopt rules