



Panhandle Water News

OCTOBER 2018

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Hearing Set for PGCD Proposed Rule Changes

Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District (PGCD) and its Board have been working over the past several months to simplify its permitting, compliance and depletion monitoring processes. A Hearing is set for December 20, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. at the District office to approve and adopt the proposed rules. Over the next couple of months, PGCD staff members will be traveling throughout the District, meeting in at least every county, to discuss the proposed changes. If you or an organization you know have upcoming meetings, where you would like us to present, please call the office at 806-883-2501.

Major Proposed Changes:

- Operating Permits will be required on all wells 2 inches or larger, for new or existing wells. An Operating Permit must be granted before any production takes place. All Operating Permits must be applied for and granted by January 1, 2020.
- As part of the Operating Permit process, producers will be required to submit their Contiguous Acreage Tract (CAT) information. District staff will confirm and verify CAT(s) and Maximum Allowable Volume will be calculated based off the number of acreage within each CAT.
 - ◊ **Maximum Allowable Volume** must not exceed one acre-foot per acre per year (which has been the rule since 2004).
- To drill a permitted well (2 inches or larger), operators have to obtain an Operating Permit first, and then apply for a Drilling Permit.
 - ◊ **Maximum Rate of Production** will remain the same at 2,880 GPM/section or 4.5 GPM/acre.
- In order to ensure compliance, flow meters will be required on all wells 2 inches or larger.
- PGCD Board of Directors set aside \$350,000 this fiscal year (October 1, 2018-September 20, 2019) for a meter cost share program. The 50/50 cost share program is for wells that have not been required to install a meter previously.
- Operators will be required to comply with District Meter Standards, meaning they are responsible to ensure meters are operating to manufacturer's specifications, they must notify the District within three working days if their meter needs repairs and must submit initial meter readings at the beginning of each pumping season.
 - ◊ The initial meter reading is for PGCD staff to notate the meter as operational. Operators will be able to upload the initial reading to PGCD's website, using a password protected portal.
- Registrations will still be required for all 1-inch wells and exempt wells. Spacing rules in Rule 8.1 will still apply.
- Rules are set to go into effect on January 1, 2020, giving operators throughout the District one year to obtain Operating Permit(s) and make necessary adjustments for compliance.

It is important to keep in mind, the Maximum Allowable Volume and the Maximum Rate of Production will remain the same as before. The proposed changes are brought forth in order to ensure each owner/operator within our District will be treated equally. The changes are also steps to help PGCD achieve their ultimate Desired Future Condition (DFC), the 50/50 Management Standard, which states 50 percent of the total volume of water will remain 50 years from today.



2018-2019 PGCD Scholarship Question

The Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District established its scholarship program in 2002 and has since given away \$144,000 to graduating District students. First place is awarded a \$4,000 scholarship, second place receives \$3,000 and third place \$2,000. Each scholarship amount is split into a four year payout.

Graduating seniors living within the District (Armstrong, Carson, Donley, Gray, Potter, Roberts and Wheeler counties) are eligible to apply for the scholarship. Applicants must write a 500-1,000 word essay on the topic chosen by the District. Recipients are required to enroll as a full-time student, attend college the fall semester immediately following selection and maintain at least a 2.5 GPA at the college of their selection.

The 2018/2019 essay topic is:

Why is the Texas Constitutional Amendment of 1917, known as the "Conservation Amendment", important to groundwater conservation districts in Texas?

Applications and additional information can be found online on the District's website at www.pgcd.us/pgcd-scholarship

2018-2019 Tax Rate

During the August 16 Board Meeting, Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District's Board of Directors approved the 2018-2019 tax rate. The tax rate will be 0.009055/\$100 valuation. Though a slight increase, the effective tax rate is the total tax rate needed to raise the same amount of property tax revenue for PGCD from the same properties in both the 2017 and 2018 tax year.

Ag Loans Available

Panhandle Groundwater District is accepting loan applications from District producers for center pivot sprinklers, drip irrigation systems, soil moisture probes, and other water saving equipment.

The loan is available to producers at an interest rate of 1.86 percent and an eight year payback term. Approximate funds remaining are \$140,932.47

For more information about our ag loan program contact Julie Bennett or C.E. Williams at the District office at (806) 883-2501.

REMINDER:

Stop by PGCD's booth at the Amarillo Farm & Ranch Show November 27-29 at the Amarillo Civic Center.

El Niño Likely During Fall and Winter 2018-19

Fall to early winter of 2017 consisted of a long dry streak starting in mid-October which brought extreme to exceptional drought conditions to the entire Panhandle by spring 2018. The Climate Prediction Center issued a La Niña Watch in their October 2017 report stating there was an increasing chance of La Niña during the Northern Hemisphere through fall and winter 2017-18. (October 2017 SSTs anomalies are shown in Figure 1.) The first La Niña Advisory was issued November

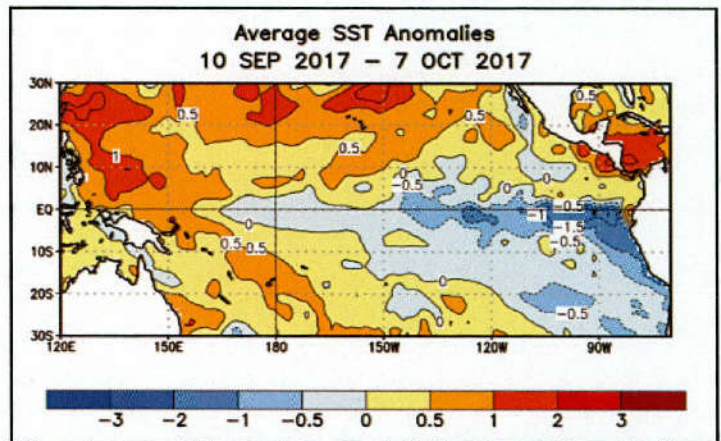


Figure 1: Average SST anomalies across the Pacific Ocean for September 10-October 7, 2017. Source: Climate Prediction Center

2017 and the final advisory was issued in May 2018.

While ENSO-neutral conditions persisted through the summer with average sea surface temperatures (SSTs) across the central and eastern Pacific Ocean, models were already indicating that an El Niño event might be possible in fall and winter 2018-19. The first El Niño watch was issued in June 2018. As of the October 2018 report an El Niño Watch is still in effect, and El Niño is favored to form in the next couple of months and continue through the Northern Hemisphere winter 2018-19 (70-75% chance). Current SSTs anomalies are shown in Figure 2, and if you compare this to Figure 1 you can see how

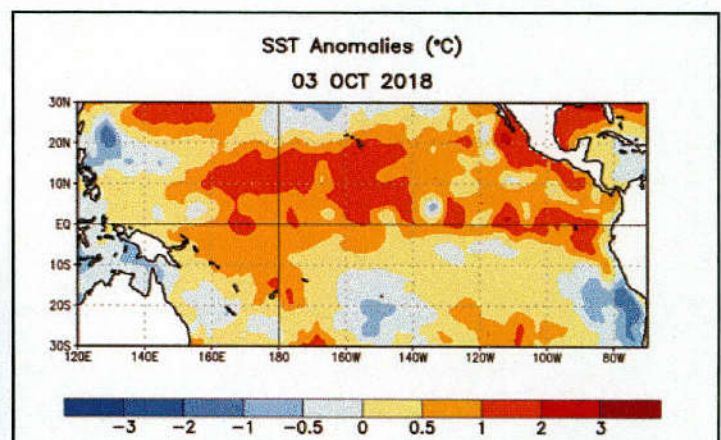


Figure 2: Average SST anomalies across the Pacific Ocean for October 3, 2018. Source: Climate Prediction Center



Education Program Starting 19th Year

much warmer the temperatures currently are across the central and eastern Pacific Ocean than last year.

This change in pattern with an El Niño developing will likely mean above-average rainfall for Texas from October to May. An El Niño also tends to bring cooler than normal temperatures, and if the first freeze is any indicator that might also ring true for the Panhandle. Amarillo's first freeze was on October 14 at 30° and their average freeze range is October 16-20. Further east Pampa's first freeze was also on October 14 at 32° and their average freeze range is October 21-25.

This year the Panhandle started the summer with all counties in an extreme to exceptional drought; however, some rainfall through the summer did help relieve some of those areas. The current drought monitor issued October 9 (Figure 3.)

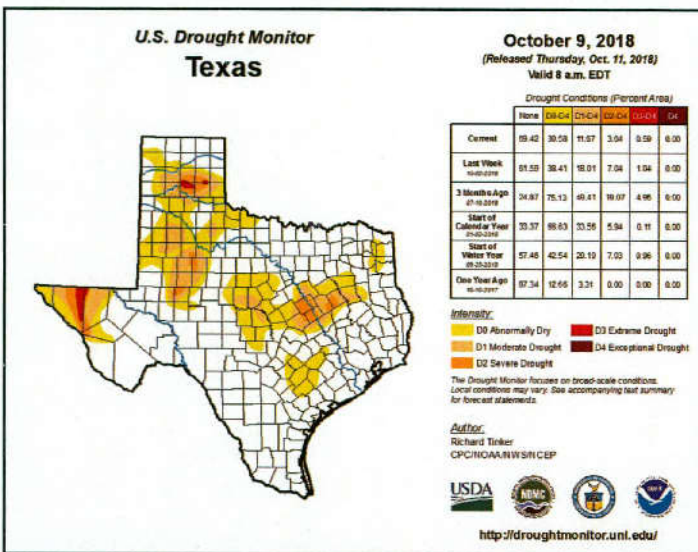


Figure 3: U.S. drought monitor map for Texas issued on October 9, 2018.

shows many portions of the Panhandle drought free with the south-central portions still seeing some abnormally dry to some small portions of extreme drought. According to PGCD's rain gauge totals (Figure 4) through September shows all the counties still below the yearly rainfall totals, and some counties including Armstrong, Carson and Potter still need to receive at least half of their yearly rainfall between now and January.

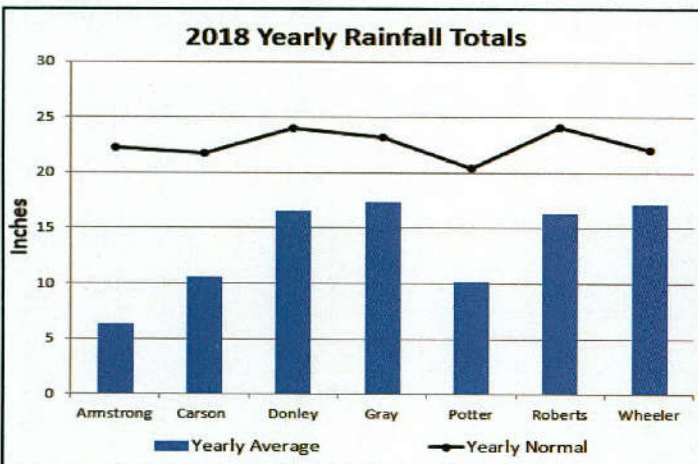


Figure 4: PGCD's rainfall totals through September compared to their total normal yearly rainfall.

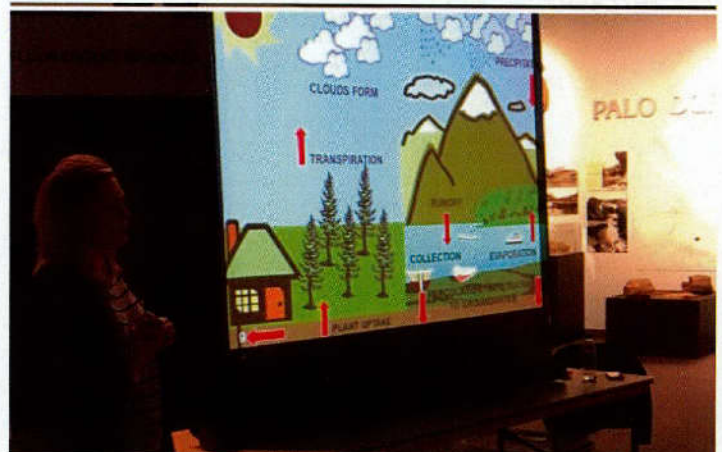
PGCD is starting up the nineteenth year of its education program. The program was created in 1999 and has since reached out to thousands of students across the District. It is stated in PGCD's management plan for the District to reach out to at least 80 percent of the schools within the district boundaries to teach them about water conservation. However, our goal is to reach 100 percent to ensure we are making an impact on the importance of water conservation to our future generations.

New this year, PGCD is focusing on all elementary grades, and discussing the importance of water conservation at each level. Presentations include information about the water cycle, the Ogallala Aquifer, where our water comes from, and playa lakes. Many of the topics discussed teach them objectives they are tested on in the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness test, making it a great educational aid for teachers.

We also have an underground flow model that is a great visual aid of how wells operate, what the aquifer looks like, and how water flows beneath the earth. At the end of the presentation we give the students a water saving kit that allows them to take conservation practices into their own hands.

It is a great tool for educating our youth about water conservation and we are excited to be able to start another year in the classrooms. If you would like to schedule an education presentation or would like any other type of presentation given please contact Britney Britten at the PGCD office at (806) 883-2501 or by email at pgcd_education@yahoo.com.

In addition to the elementary education presentations, Britney also presents to local civic groups and other organizations. Topics include, General District Information, Xeriscape Gardens, Rainwater Harvesting Information and Ways to Conserve Water at Home. Our presentations are great for any Club, including: Lion's Club, Boy or Girl Scout Troops or evening gardening clubs. Contact the office today to schedule your next presentation.



PGCD's PR/Education Coordinator reviewing the Water Cycle with local students.

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PGCD Co-Hosts Local Playa Lake Festival

PGCD along with Ogallala Commons hosted a Playa Lake Festival for 5th graders in Carson County earlier this month. Schools in attendance were Groom, Panhandle and White Deer, totaling at about 90 students.

Throughout the day, students learned about water conservation from PGCD's Meteorologist, Jennifer Puryear. They also had the opportunity to come in close contact with reptiles and amphibians, thanks to Robert Martin with Ogallala Commons. Jim Steiert from Hereford taught the students about wetland buffers and the importance of waterfowl. His demonstration was complete with bird calls of all kinds. Justin Trammel from Canyon gave an interesting presentation on invertebrates and why playa lakes are so important to our area.

In the afternoon, the students visited a local playa. The kids were fortunate to be able to visit a playa filled with water - the parents were not as fortunate judging by the looks of their muddy shoes. Students had the opportunity to use nets and see what they could dig up inside the playa lake.

PGCD stresses the importance of engaging with students and informing them about water conservation and why it is so important. If you have any upcoming events or meetings, where a presentation on water conservation would be relevant, please call the office at 806-883-2501 or email Britney Britten at Britney@pgcd.us.



PGCD's Meteorologist, Jennifer Puryear talking about water conservation.



Carson County 5th Graders visiting a local playa lake.