



# Panhandle Water News

APRIL 2019

## PGCD's 2019 Scholarship Winners

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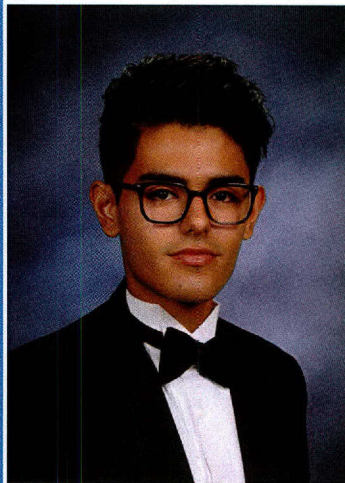
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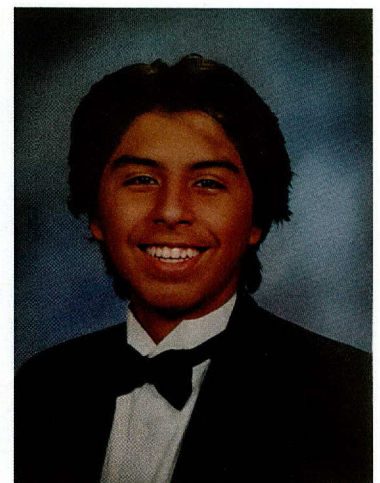
[Winning Scholarship Essay](#)



**Noel Lopez**  
1<sup>st</sup> Place Winner  
Miami High School



**Halle Barkley**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner  
Groom High School



**Erick Baylon**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place Winner  
Miami High School

In 2002, Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District (PGCD) established a scholarship program for graduating seniors throughout the District. The applicants are required to write a 500-1,000 word essay on a topic chosen by PGCD and to enroll as a full-time student at the college of their choice the fall semester immediately following selection. Also, they must maintain at least a 2.5 college GPA. A committee of three board members and a staff member select the winners. The student awarded first place receives a \$4,000 scholarship, second place receives \$3,000 and third place receives \$2,000. The scholarship total is paid out over four years.

PGCD's topic this year was:

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

PGCD had twenty-eight applicants this year and is proud to announce Noel Lopez, Halle Barkley and Erick Baylon as the top three winners of the scholarship.

Noel Lopez, son of Noel and Sonia Lopez of Miami, is our first place winner. Lopez is set to graduate from Miami High School with a 3.9 GPA. His future plans include attending Texas A&M University to study Mechanical Engineering. Read Lopez' winning essay on Page 3.

Halle Barkley, daughter of Keith and Kathleen from Groom, received second place. Barkley will graduate from Groom High School with a 4.0 GPA. She plans to attend Texas Tech University to study Animal Science.

Erick Baylon, son of Ramon and Dora of Miami, received third place. Baylon will graduate from Miami High School with a 3.9 GPA. He plans to attend the Texas A&M University to study Architecture.

PGCD wants to thank all of the applicants and congratulate the winners. We thoroughly enjoyed each essay and perspective on the topic. We wish you all the best of luck on your future endeavors.





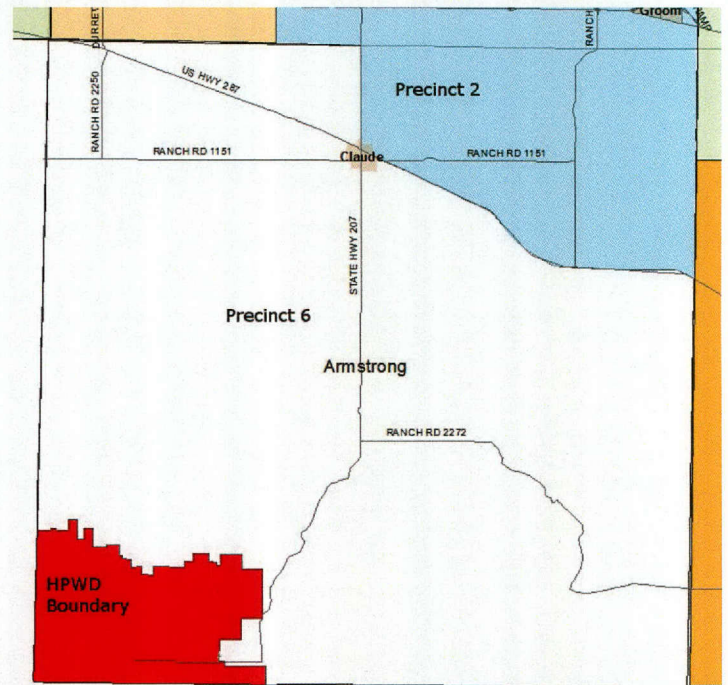
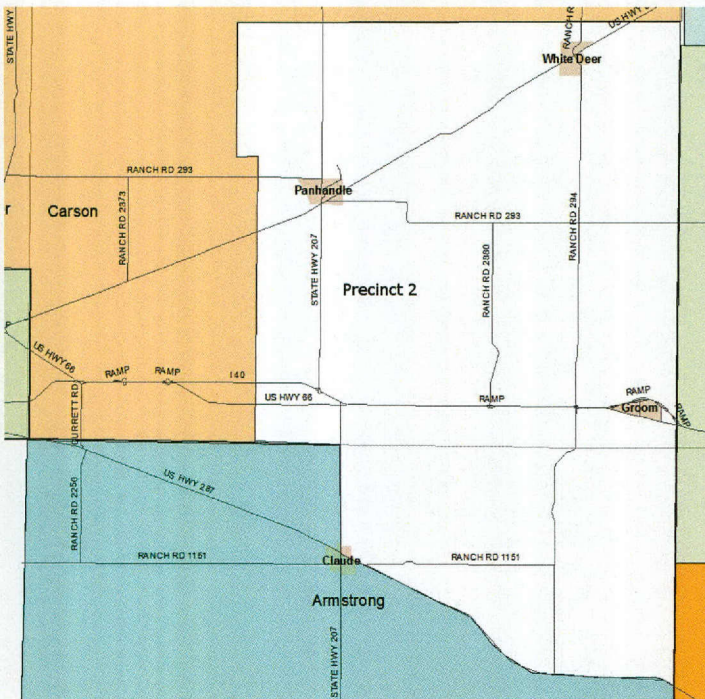
## PGCD Board of Director Elections

Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District Board of Directors elections are scheduled for Saturday, May 4, 2019. Two precincts are holding elections this year, Precinct 2 and Precinct 6. Running for a seat in Precinct 2 is Brett Britten of Groom, Johnny Crawford of Panhandle and Jamie Rocha also of Panhandle. In Precinct 6, longtime incumbent Jim Thompson is running against Brett Friemel, both of Claude.

Early voting begins Monday, April 22 through Tuesday, April 30. Constituents living anywhere within Precinct 2 or 6 may take part in early voting at the District office. The District office will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Monday, April 22 and 29 and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. the remaining days to accommodate early voters.

Election day polling locations are the Armstrong County Courthouse for Armstrong County constituents and the White Deer Community Center for Carson County constituents. Polling locations will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on election day.

For more information, please call the District at 806-883-2501 or visit [www.pgcd.us](http://www.pgcd.us).



## PGCD Rules - Operating Permit Process in Effect

New PGCD Rules effective December 20, 2018, and ratified at a special meeting on April 5, 2019 continue to be in effect. The District views 2019 as a “year of learning” and gives operators an opportunity to come into compliance with the new rules.

### Major Rule Changes:

- Operating Permits are required for all wells, new or existing, pumping more than 17.5 GPM and are 2-inches or greater in pipe diameter. Operating Permits must be applied for by December 31, 2019.
  - ◊ The District is currently taking Operating Permit appointments for the above specified well(s). Walk-ins are also welcome.
  - ◊ During the time of your appointment, you will be required to confirm your total contiguous acres.
- Operators are required to comply with District Meter Standards before an Operating Permit will be approved.
  - ◊ Meters are now required on all wells, new or existing, pumping more than 35 GPM.
  - ◊ Alternatively, meters may be installed a center pivot sprinkler, drip irrigation system or a central collection point, if all production is captured.

- ◊ PGCD Board of Directors will be discussing alternative metering methods at one of their next meetings. However, a full current copy of District Meter Standards can be found at [www.pgcd.us/metering](http://www.pgcd.us/metering).
- ◊ PGCD Board of Directors approved a 50/50 Meter Cost-Share Program to run through the end of September. The District will reimburse operators 50 percent of meter costs up to \$1,500.

- Production compliance will be calculated on a 3-year rolling average. In an effort to treat all operators the same, the District will begin calculating the average on January 1, 2020. Data will be collected in 2020, 2021 and 2022. On January 1, 2023, any operator pumping more than the allowable volume of 1-acre foot per contiguous acre will be subject to enforcement. From there forward, the 3-year rolling average will be in place.

2019 gives operators an opportunity to come into compliance with the new permit and meter requirements. To make an appointment, call the District office at 806-883-2501.





## Local Blue Legacy Award Winners

According to its website, the Water Conservation Advisory Council (WCAC) created the Blue Legacy Award to recognize responsible management of our water resources and to showcase examples of effective water stewardship.

David, Destan and Carter Hodges with Hodges Farms in White Deer received the Blue Legacy Award in the Agriculture - Producer category last month during Texas Water Day at the Capitol. Presented by the WCAC, along with the Texas Water Development Board, the award was given to Hodges Farms for their water conservation efforts with the installation of three large rainwater harvesting tanks.

The Hodges participated in Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District's Rainwater Harvesting Rebate/Loan Program installing two tanks in 2015 and adding another tank in 2016. Since 2016, the Hodges have collected over 700,000 gallons of water, allowing them to continue their spray operations and give water to their livestock without pumping any groundwater. In addition to using rainwater, Hodges Farms strives to conserve groundwater by rotating crops and staying up-to-date with developments in the agriculture industry.

PGCD is still accepting applications for its Rebate/Loan Program. The District is currently offering two types of payment options. Applicants may either receive 50 percent of the total cost of the system or put 10 percent down and pay the District back over a five year term at a low interest rate. For more information, visit [www.pgcd.us/rainwater-harvesting](http://www.pgcd.us/rainwater-harvesting).

Also winning from the District was the City of Amarillo, bringing home the award in the Municipal - serving 100,000 to 500,000 category. The city was recognized for its successful treated wastewater program. The water conservation program began in 1960, and is noted to be one of the first and largest programs of its kind at its inception. Treated wastewater from The River Road Reclamation Plant treats about 10 million gallons of water per day that is currently directed back to an Xcel facility and a local refinery. The program is touted with reusing approximately 250 billion gallons of water over the last 58 years.



*Pictured from left to right: Karen Guz, SAWS, Kathleen Jackson, TWDB and City of Amarillo Assistant City Manager, Floyd Hartman*

## Ag Loans Available

Panhandle Groundwater Conservation 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 with an eight year payback term. Approximate funds remaining are \$25,071,47. Once the remaining funds are loaned, the District has been approved for another \$1,000,000 in funds at an interest rate to be determined.

For more information about our ag loan program contact Katie Hodges or C.E. Williams at the District office at 806-883-2501.

## Scholarship Winning

**The Constitutional Amendment that Saved Texas by Noel Lopez, 1st Place Winner of PGCD's 2019 Scholarship Competition.**

About a century ago, Texas state legislators authored the Conservation amendment of 1917; by far, the most vital piece of legislation for groundwater conservation districts (GCDs). The individuals who created this piece of legislation understood that if Texans did not take adequate measures to protect their natural resources, then the treasures of their day would not be available to their descendants. The Conservation Amendment made it the obligation of the state legislature and ultimately of all Texans to conserve the natural resources of the state. Notably, the amendment allowed the creation of statutes that lead to the creation of groundwater conservation districts to govern over the state's water. In a word, GCDs are a direct result of the Conservation Amendment.

The legislation created an outline that would let the state pass laws necessary to preserve and conserve natural resources. Legislators decided that the best way to preserve and conserve the state's groundwater would be through local government entities now known as groundwater conservation districts.



*Pictured from left to right: Karen Guz, SAWS, Destan, Carter and David Hodges, and Kathleen Jackson, TWDB*

**Continued on Back Page**



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## Winning Essay Continued

Groundwater conservation districts are partial, single or multi-county districts that are typically created by the action of the Texas Legislature and confirmation from affected voters. Their end goal is to set rules in place to implement a water management plan.

As a result, landowners all across the state were affected, as they would now have to comply with the rules of their GCD. The Rule of Capture is the general rule in Texas regarding the rights landowners have over the water below their property; it states that property owners can pump as much water as they can beneficially make use of. Although this is the law, landowners cannot pump as much water as they want. General exceptions revolve around landowners purposefully wasting water. Additionally, districts can deny permits for new wells if they determine that that will not beneficially use the water; this is good because it prevents careless water usage and dangerous drilling.

One of the ways Texas has dramatically benefitted from the status provided by the Conservation Amendment is through the power it gives GCDs. The Conservation Amendment is vital to Texans because it allows for the control of local resources by citizens of affected areas. Furthermore, these districts have the power to establish rules that protect communities' private interests in groundwater. These districts can tax residents and take on debt because the Conservation Amendment allows it. Both of these are tools that can be used to manage regions better.

The ability for GCDs to accrue debt and levy taxes is a result of the Conservation Amendment. One way in which these tools aid in following water management plans is through programs such as the Agriculture Water Conservation Equipment Loan Program. In this program, GCDs provide ranchers and farmers low-interest loans that empower them to install high-efficiency irrigation systems. GCDs also focus on educational programs. Many will send out newsletters that inform subscribers about changes in water levels and updates to the district's management plan. Installing efficient irrigation systems and informing the public about where their water comes from are two ways GCDs accomplish the goal of the Conservation Amendment, and that is to conserve, preserve and develop water and other natural resources.

Ultimately, the Conservation Amendment of 1917 was the foundation for a multitude of statutes on groundwater legislation, of which many provided a framework for the establishment of the Groundwater Conservation District system in Texas. The amendment is vital part of everyday life because without it there would be no legal incentive to conserve, preserve and develop our water. Water is the life source of all humans, and without it, humans will quickly perish. That is why the Conservation Amendment is an exceptionally crucial part of the Texas Constitution; it preserves human life through groundwater conservation districts.