

# Panhandle Water News

HAPPY NEW YEAR

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January 2002

## FRANK SIMMS RETIRES FROM BOARD

Frank Simms declined to run for re-election in the February 2002 election. Mr. Simms was elected to the District's Board of Directors in January 1985 and has served continuously since that time. He was elected vice-president of the Board in February 1990, and moved up to the office of president in January 2000. Frank served as Director for Precinct 2, which covers a large portion of Carson County and the northeast portion of Armstrong County.

Mr. Simms was a dedicated and conscientious leader of the District for seventeen years and his leadership, knowledge, and experience will be sadly missed by the Board of Directors and staff.

## UNOPPOSED CANDIDATES ELECTED TO BOARD

As of the December 19, 2001 deadline, only one person had applied for a place on the ballot in Precincts 2, 4, 6, and 8. In accordance with the Texas Election Code, the Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District Board of Directors has declared that all unopposed candidates in the February 2, 2002 elections are duly elected to their respective offices and the scheduled election will not be held.

The Texas Election Code allows political subdivisions of the State to declare the results of an election without conducting it, if there are no contested positions. This provision saves a considerable amount of taxpayer money.

**Billy Van Crawford**, who lives in Panhandle, will begin his first term as Director of Precinct 2. He will replace Frank Simms, in that precinct. **Charles Bowers**, who lives at Grandview-Hopkins, was re-elected to Precinct 4. **Jim Thompson**, who lives at Washburn, was re-elected to Precinct 6, and **Danny Hardcastle**, who lives near Wheeler, was re-elected Director of Precinct 8.

PGCD has a total of nine elected directors. The four newly elected directors will take office in February.

## WINTER LEVEL MEASUREMENTS IN PROGRESS

District personnel are currently taking depth to water measurements in approximately 700 wells located throughout the District. Different kinds of wells are used for these measurements such as irrigation wells, windmills, domestic wells, abandoned wells, etc. This gives accurate information for our records. Some wells used have more than 40 years of data.

Saturated thickness maps are prepared from the information gathered. Saturated thickness maps are useful to landowners, as they try to locate the best places to drill windmills or irrigation wells.

Depletion maps are also prepared from the data gathered. These maps tell us how many feet the water table has risen or fallen in the last year, and determine the amount of depletion allowance for I.R.S. purposes.

## 2001 DECLINE MAPS AND COST IN WATER APPROVED BY I.R.S.

Ms. Lorinda Busby, of the I.R.S. Engineering Group, met with the District's hydrologist, Ray Brady, on December 14, to examine the annual decline maps for I.R.S. purposes. She also met with district manager, C. E. Williams, on January 22 to consider the annual cost of water. Both the decline maps and cost in water amounts were approved.

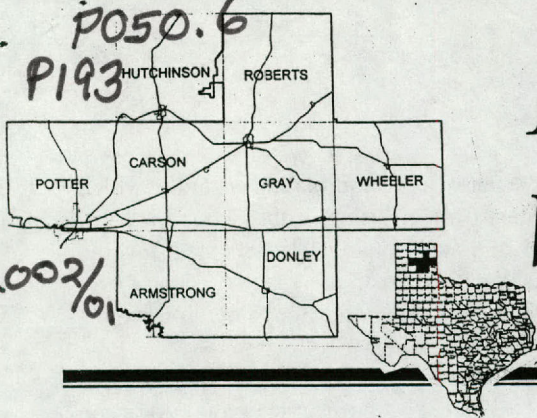
The annual letters for landowners who qualify, and have requested decline information, have been mailed.

## ANNUAL FINANCIAL AUDIT APPROVED

Chapter 36.153, of the Texas Water Code, requires groundwater conservation districts to have an annual audit made of the financial condition of the district.

The report for Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District, as prepared by Grantham, Cory and Heare, P.C., was presented to the Board on December 19, 2001. It was considered and approved by the Board.

Copies of the audit have been mailed to the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission and the Texas Water Development Board.



## **PERFORMANCE REPORT PRESENTED TO BOARD**

The District Management Plan requires the manager and staff to present an annual report to the Board of Directors, during the last monthly Board of Directors meeting each calendar year. The report covers District performance, in regards to achieving management goals and objectives. It includes the number of instances each activity was engaged in during the year, referenced to the expenditure of staff time and budget, so that the effectiveness and efficiency of each activity may be evaluated.

The staff presented the 2001 Annual Report to the Board at their regular meeting on January 23, 2002. It was reviewed and accepted by the Board.

Persons desiring a copy of the report may drop by the District office, or call and a copy can be mailed.

## **29<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL G.M.D.A. CONFERENCE HELD IN SAN ANTONIO**

General Manager C. E. Williams, along with Board members Jim Thompson and Robert A. Clark, attended the Groundwater Management Districts Association meeting in San Antonio, Texas, January 13-15.

Among the topics covered were the "ESA's Impact on Groundwater Use & Management" and "New or Unique Projects/Programs", which included sessions on desalination, GIS uses, and the State Caucuses.

Another highlight of the meeting was the Edwards Aquifer Tour. The Edwards Aquifer and its catchment area covers approximately 8,000 square miles and includes all or parts of 15 counties in south-central Texas. The aquifer is the primary source of water for over 1.7 million people and also supports agricultural, industrial, and recreational uses and endangered species habitat. The artesian zone includes some of the largest producing wells in the U.S.

## **PUBLIC HEARING SET ON SCOPE OF WORK FOR THE UPDATE OF THE REGIONAL WATER PLAN**

A public hearing is scheduled February 5, concerning the next regional water plan scope of work.

As the Texas Water Development Board incorporates regional water plans into a state water plan, the 16 regions across the Lone Star state began working on the next round of regional water plans.

The Panhandle Water Planning Group will meet at 7:00 p.m., February 5, in the board room of the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission, 415 W. 8<sup>th</sup>, Amarillo.

Jarrett Atkinson of the P.R.P.C. said, "The specific purpose of this public hearing is to receive comments from

the public regarding any items, information or studies which should be considered for inclusion in the Scope of Work development for the next regional water plan for the Panhandle Water Planning Area."

Only items included in the Scope of Work report can be funded for further study.

Oral comments given during the Feb. 5 meeting will be recorded and considered by the planning group, Atkinson said.

Written comments can be submitted at the meeting, or mailed to Jarrett Atkinson, Panhandle Regional Planning Commission, P.O. Box 9257, Amarillo, TX 79105.

The deadline for written submissions is Feb. 20.

## **HOG FACILITY STUDY GROUP**

A committee to make recommendations regarding swine facilities to the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission was appointed by Gray County Commissioners Court recently.

The committee consists of fifteen members including PGCD general manager C. E. Williams, and directors Charles Bowers and John R. Spearman, Jr.

The purpose of the committee is to determine if more stringent rules should be implemented regarding the swine industry guidelines in Texas.

Chairman of the committee is Gray County Commissioner Jim Greene.

## **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

*Bart Wyatt, Ed. Dir.*

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District was faced with a huge educational task. On August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2000, all of Potter County, excluding a small portion in the southwest corner, was annexed into the District. This was a very exciting time for us. But as the smoke cleared, an enormous task awaited the District. Not only did every fifth grader in the previous counties in the District need to be educated in their conservation methods, but now another 26 public, elementary schools were added to the District's educational program. The District was ready to meet the challenge head on, knowing great accomplishments were waiting around the next corner.

Some 3,382 miles later, all but five schools in the District had received an educational presentation. Many phone calls, letters, and meetings were made or held throughout the new schools in the District. With all this legwork came the rewards. A total number of 1,888 students in 42 different schools were given presentations, maps, and water-wheels. This was a 300% increase from last year's total number of students. The District was overwhelmed and truly thankful for the participation of all the schools.

With the accomplishment of a new network of

schools comes new goals the District wants to obtain. We still want to "Welcome Aboard" the five other schools that did not make it into the District's program last year. We are also working towards establishing networks with both private and parochial schools. Another goal of the District is to begin providing educational programs for civic, social, and youth clubs.

Water is in the news more and more everyday. People are realizing its importance and what is at stake for the people of the Panhandle. Working together, everyone in the District can become better educated on water and its conservation methods. The sky is the limit—look for great things to happen!

## SETTLEMENT TALKS UNDERWAY

The process toward a possible settlement between Boone Pickens and other Roberts County landowners (Mesa) and the Canadian River Municipal Water Authority (CRMWA) was instigated when PGCD general manager C. E. Williams called the parties together in December, in an effort to avoid costly litigation. Both sides agreed to have a Mesa hydrologist work up plans for Mesa's well field and submit it to CRMWA authorities.

Another meeting was held January 17, in Austin. The meeting revolved primarily around well placement on the Mesa properties, so that the wells do not directly affect water levels in the neighboring CRMWA well field.

CRMWA filed a protest with PGCD in June, to stop the Mesa group from obtaining a permit to pump water and ship it downstate. In the protest, CRMWA claimed that Mesa had not provided enough information in its permit application about its planned well field, and that the proposed operation could infringe on the water authority's ability to serve its 11 member cities in the Panhandle and South Plains.

Mesa countered last fall by filing a lawsuit against CRMWA. The lawsuit is now essentially on hold and the administrative hearing on the application protest, which was originally scheduled for January 28, has been rescheduled for April 8.

## DISTRICT AWARDED CLOUD- SEEDING GRANT

Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District will receive a grant for \$183,412 from the Texas Department of Agriculture for its precipitation enhancement program.

"It's a 50-50 grant that we get from the state to do our weather modification program," general manager C. E. Williams said. "Without it, it probably wouldn't be possible. It would be much more difficult for sure."

The grant was announced in December, and is one

of ten awarded to weather modification programs around the state. The PGCD program, like most others across Texas is seasonal. It will start about April 15 in the eastern part of the Panhandle. "This is the third year for our program," Williams said, "and the second year we've done it in house." The first year it was contracted out to Weather Modification, Inc., out of Fargo, N.D.

According to Texas Agriculture Commissioner Susan Combs, the precipitation enhancement program is an integral part of the state's long-term water management plan. Increased rainfall has meant higher crop yields, improved grazing, reduced irrigation costs, and improved water quality. "The practice also helps increase rainfall runoff into reservoirs and aquifers," Combs said.

The precipitation enhancement programs stimulate clouds to generate more rainfall than would normally be produced, TDA officials say. It is an effort to maximize rain through the introduction of seeding agents, such as silver iodide. The seeding agents are flown into the clouds with aircraft.

## AGRICULTURAL WATER CONSERVATION EQUIPMENT LOANS AVAILABLE

The Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District has been approved for a \$500,000 loan from the state to assure the conservation of water used for agricultural purposes.

The money will be used to make low-interest loans to farmers who live in the District, for the purchase and installation of more efficient, low-pressure irrigation equipment.

Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District has participated in the Agricultural Water Conservation Equipment Loan Program, through the Texas Water Development Board, since 1992. During that time, sixty-three loans have been approved to assist farmers.

The District covers all of Roberts, Carson, Gray, Wheeler, and Donley counties and portions of Armstrong, Potter, Hutchinson, and Hemphill counties.

The interest rate will be 2.9%, and the limit per loan is \$75,000. Persons interested in applying for a loan should contact the District office at 201 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., White Deer, 883-2501.

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Yvonne Thomas, *Admn. Assistant*  
Bart Wyatt, *Education/Field/Lab*  
Kari K. Wilson, *Secretary*  
Alvin Stamps, *Field Technician*

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Frank Simms, *President*  
Charles Bowers, *Vice-President*  
Jason C. Green, *Secretary*  
Phillip Smith, *Director*  
Jim Thompson, *Director*  
Robert A. Clark, *Director*  
Danny Hardcastle, *Director*  
John R. Spearman, Jr., *Director*  
John McKissack, *Director*

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## TEXAS WATER ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Austin** - The first meeting of the Texas Water Advisory Council, which was established during the 2001 legislative session, with the passage of Senate Bill 2, was held January 23.

Chairman J. E. "Buster" Brown began the meeting by specifying that the advisory council had been created to "serve as an ongoing policy discussion and platform for State water authorities". Chairman Brown also reminded the council that groundwater became a central issue during the 1997 legislative session, but that the issue of water had become much broader, which led to the development of the first State water plan, under Senate Bill 1.

A number of persons testified before the council including, Sarah Woelk, Texas Ethics Commission; Frank Knapp, Office of the Attorney General; Commissioner Susan Combs, Department of Agriculture; Kathleen White, Commissioner of the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission (TNRCC); Rep. Ron Lewis; Rep. Gary Walker; Jack Hunt, Texas Water Development Board (TWDB); and Commissioner Joseph Fitzsimmons, of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Others testifying were James Box, a public member specializing in groundwater; Ruth Schiermeyer, a public member specializing in surface water; Larry McKinney, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; Craig Pedersen, Executive Director of TWDB; and Jeff Satise, Executive Director of TNRCC.

Each member of the advisory council was introduced by Chairman Brown and each gave a brief description of the issues they believed the council should address.

Issues suggested include enhanced water supply, water rights administration, water rights compliance and enforcement, water conservation and drought management, bi-partisanship in relation to water issues, quality and quantity of water, implementation of the State and regional water plans, a greater emphasis on water conservation, better water data and the sharing of that data, the economic impact, and the different characteristics of the aquifers across the state, including their ability to re-charge, or the lack of that ability.

Commissioner Susan Combs expressed an interest in aquatic vegetation issues and in enhanced water supply. She suggested that the council allocate costs and resources to those who would benefit most from enhanced technologies.

Mr. Pedersen told the council that his department's responsibilities included: data collection and supply studies, producing groundwater models, maintaining a centralized bank of information and sharing of data. He also included: developing a strategic mapping initiative, implementing regional and state water plans, project constructing and financing, and providing technical assistance for the groundwater planning process. Mr. Pedersen said the critical issue for the future would be financing and that "money is the principal road block."

Rep. Ron Lewis reminded the council that it has no power to make laws, but rather should assist in managing the issues in a diversified state. "Our biggest challenge," said Lewis, "is to bury the fear that people will have their water taken from them"

The Texas Water Advisory Council's next meeting was set for May 7<sup>th</sup>.