



Panhandle Water News

OCTOBER 2012

Texas Groundwater Summit: A Look Into the Future

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The Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts held the Texas Groundwater Summit in Austin, Texas at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on August 28-30. The summit included a very detailed and informative agenda and provided outstanding keynote speakers.

“TAGD was established in 1988 to provide technical, administrative and policy-based support to groundwater conservation districts in the state. TAGD has since grown into a collaborative group of more than 80 Texas GCDs and 24 other groundwater-related organizations, all working to promote and support sound management of groundwater based on local conditions and sound science”, according to executive director, Stacey A. Steinbach.

On Thursday during the conference C.E. Williams, general manager of Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District, served as moderator of the summit. During the session Lyle Larson of the Texas State House of Representatives delivered a keynote on The Future of Texas Water. Larson is a Texas native who grew up on a family farm near



TAGD Groundwater Regulation Panel: Ellis, Howe and Johnson

San Antonio. Currently he serves on the Texas House Natural Resources Committee. Larson presented his perspective on what is likely to happen to Texas water in the near future. Larson said, “the most pressing water issue currently in Texas is how to fund the identified needs in the current state’s water plan. Future generations are depending on us to leave them with good, clean and affordable water like was given to the current

generation. The drought of 2011 showed how vulnerable many areas of the state are when extreme dry periods occur”.

Another key speaker was Brian Sledge, Principle, Lloyd Gosselink Rochelle & Townsend, PC. Sledge is an attorney and lobbyist for groundwater districts and during his presentation he touched on what may be included in the 83rd session.

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It’s Time to Protect your Xeriscaping

Don’t let your handy work go to waste! It’s time to start planning to take care of your xeriscaping during the winter months. Winterizing your plants and taking care of your garden accessories and utilities can keep you from having so many headaches during the winter and heartaches when spring rolls around. Winterize means to prepare something to withstand the cold winter conditions. Here are a few things to add to your own

checklist to ensure your garden reaches your expectations next year!

- Many xeriscaping plants generally reach maturity in three years, during the fall, plants can be divided to fill the open spaces in your garden as the plants grow. This also prevents overcrowding when the plant begins to grow next year.
- Fall is the time of year to plant

spring bulbs; they are great xeriscaping plants pulling moisture from the snow as the root systems develop.

- Some plants do better in the spring if they are cut back before the winter cold hits and the plants begin to harden to protect themselves. Be sure to check on your specific plant’s needs, as they are all different.
- Filters need to be checked at

Xeriscaping continues on page 3



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TAGD also presented a panel for groundwater regulation after Texas Senate Bill 332 and the Edwards Aquifer Authority vs. Day & McDaniel. The panelists included Gregory M. Ellis League City/ Attorney at Law, Bill Howe, State Legislative Director/Texas Farm Bureau, Russ Johnson, Partner, McGinnis, Lochridge and Kilgore, LLP. Panelists discussed the state of groundwater law and management after the enactment of Texas Senate Bill 332 and the Texas Supreme Court's decision.

These two cases are relating to the ownership of groundwater below the surface of the land, the right to produce that groundwater and the management of groundwater in Texas. SB 332 passed to recognize that a landowner owns the groundwater below the surface of that landowner's land as real property. The bill goes on to say the landowner is entitled to drill for and produce the groundwater but without causing waste or malicious drainage of other property, but does not entitle the landowner to capture a specific amount of groundwater. The bill went on to say districts' have the right or duty to write reasonable rules for limiting or regulating the drilling of a well by a landowner, comply with minimum well spacing and the regulation of production, conserve, protect and recharge the groundwater reservoir. This act went into effect in September 2011.

New Ag Loans

Texas Water Development Board approved the Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District's loan request on September 20, 2012 for the amount of two million dollars. This program loans funds to farmers for more efficient irrigation equipment. The interest rate will be to them will be 1.2%.

Buff-A-Rama

September 22, 2012 Julie Bennett represented the Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District by attending the Buff-A-Rama Health and Safety Fair held at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas. The fair was presented to canyon area kids and had a turnout of almost 100 youth.

PGCD represented with a booth that was visited by at least 65 kids. These kids were greeted by Julie and introduced to water conservation and the water warrior through coloring books and tattoos which were a huge hit. PGCD gave each visitor to the booth the chance to share a water conservation tip to test their water smarts and an opportunity to play Water Plinko to win a PGCD water bottle.

Buff-A-Rama reached tons of local kids and included lots of activities including live musical entertainment. Other booths represented at the event included water safety, bicycle safety, the family support group who held a hula- hoop contest, Amarillo police bomb squad, the Marines, Amarillo Fire Department and the Canyon Police Department.



Study Area Hearing

A board hearing was held August 8, 2012 as a part of the 50/50 program at the District Office in White Deer. The 50/50 management standard ensures that the saturated thickness goal which was created to move towards sustainability of the Ogallala Aquifer progression. Depletion implementation began in 2005 and hard science drives the system.

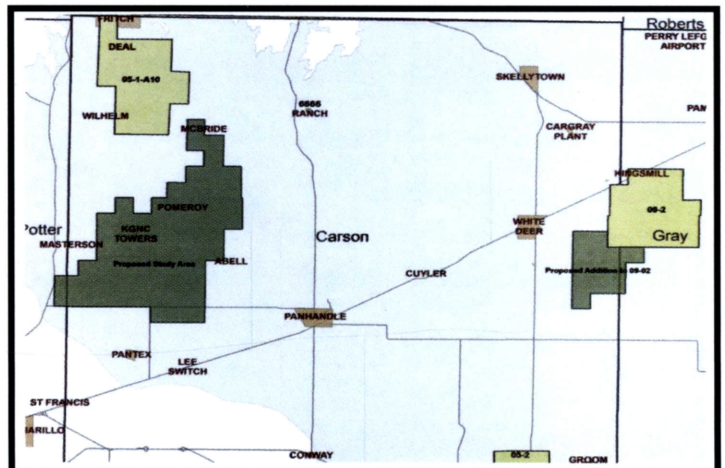
Items to consider on the Board's agenda were the creation of new Study Areas, review and amend existing Study Areas and continue the Roberts County Conservation Area. In proclaiming a new study area the district's board and staff will look more closely at aquifer declines and production of because it has been shown to be exceeding the acceptable annual decline rate.

Based on current well measurements and records of those measurements the District calculates the percent of the decline based on the current aquifer measurements and a five year rolling average of those measurements. If it is found that an area of nine square miles or larger area is producing greater than or equal to a 1.25 percent allowable annual decline in saturated thickness, the area is presented to the PGCD board for consideration to be designated as a Study Area and upon approval a hearing is required to inform the general public.

During this hearing the board reviewed the background and new information of the study areas in the District and the proposed additions to the study areas. The motions to add study area 09-2-A12 in east Carson County and west Gray County and area 12-1 in west Carson County and eastern Potter County to the current study areas passed unanimously.

Conservation areas have also been mapped out within the district in addition to study areas. These areas are looked at more intensely and actions on these properties may be more extensive than a study area and may result in lower the annual allowable usage of the aquifer in that area.

Motion was also made for Conservation area 11-1 in central Roberts County to remain a conservation area and that too passed unanimously.



Map of Study Area Hearing Areas



More Crop for the Drop



On September 26, 2012 the Carson County Gin and NexGen hosted a group for lunch and an opportunity to learn more about two things that can greatly affect their cotton yield – water and seed. The PGCD’s GM, C.E. Williams, introduced the start of the session with a few quick comments about Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District’s More Crop for the Drop program initiated in 2011.

“It’s a good time to start educating farmers about the opportunities and programs we provide, I’m afraid the dry summer is going to affect them much more than they thought since they are all comparing it to the summer from hell we had in 2011. It’s been just about as dry but with less wind in 2012. But dry is dry any way you look at it.” said Williams.

Leon New, irrigation specialist and consultant for PGCD, presented the numbers gathered by the MC4TD Program this year. This program began in order to conduct and establish field scale crop production demonstrations with cooperating growers using advanced soil monitoring, irrigation system tracking technologies and on site field data to reduce corn and cotton irrigation.

The data reviewed was gathered from four participating local farmers in the district. The program is designed to help farmers get the most out of their irrigation plans. The data gathered show at what stages of development the crop is most likely to stress from lack of moisture. It also tracks at what part of the season the crop requires more moisture, gathers the soil moisture levels down to 60 inches, and how deep the crop is actually pulling the moisture from throughout every stage of the crop, planting to maturity.

Wade Ritter, a participating farmer, was in attendance and was able to answer questions as they arose about his experiences with the program. He has been a cooperator with his cotton field in 2012. As a cooperator, PGCD employees visit his field once a week to gather soil moisture and rainfall data.

The MC4TD project demonstrates how current water conservation technologies, irrigation management and system adjustments can reduce groundwater use and allow irrigated agricultural producers to remain profitable and financially viable with diminishing groundwater resources.

“The major goal of this is to maintain more crop (corn or cotton) with less water.” Said New.

Xeriscaping Continued from Page 1

least once a month year round, however in the winter months this is extremely important.

Depending on your usage it may be ok to remove the filter completely.

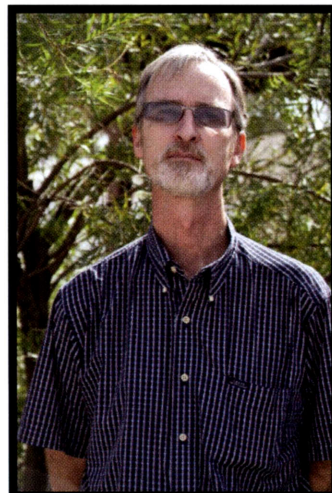
- Although plastic pipes are typically preferred because they will not rust, when frozen, they are prone to breaking. Be sure to drain any water from pipes to ensure they do not freeze and burst where the water settles in the pipe.
- Be sure to remove or regularly maintenance any pumps or motors you may be using to move water. These too can break due to freezing and cause a major problem.

Check out these tips and more on our Facebook or Twitter page #WaterSmarts!

Introducing PGCD’s New Employees

Julie Bennett joined the District on April 30, 2012. Bennett’s principle duties are business administration, but she will also be assisting in several other areas. Most recently Bennett was employed with the City of White Deer as City Secretary. She moved to White Deer in 1987 from Irving, Texas and is married to Darin Bennett. Their son, Brice Bennett, is 21 and currently attending Frank Phillips College in Borger, Texas. Bennett says she enjoys time with family more than anything.

Steve Shumate joined the district on June 18, 2012. Shumate grew up in Panhandle, Texas and graduated Magna Cum Laude from West Texas State University with a B.S. in geology. He worked as a hydrologist for 19 years at the Colorado Basin River Forecast Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. Shumate said he is enjoying the variety of work his position provides. He is currently making a home in Pampa.



Steve Shumate



Julie Bennett

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C.E. Williams and Leon New at Cotton Field Day

2012-2013 Tax Rate

C. E. Williams reported that at the Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District Board of Directors meeting on August 10, 2012, the 2012-2013 Tax Rate was set at .008870/\$100 valuation, down from .00915 in 2011-2012

Scholarships Available

The PGCD established a scholarship in 2002 and has since given away \$90,000 to District students. First place is awarded a 4 year scholarship of \$4,000, second place receives \$3,000 and \$2,000 goes to third place. Graduating seniors from the District (Armstrong, Donley, Gray, Potter, Roberts and Wheeler counties) are eligible. 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 and attend college the fall semester immediately following selection. The 2012/2013 essay topic is:

“Water is an important part of our daily lives in many ways, and it is becoming a limited resource in many places including the Texas Panhandle. What water conservation strategies should county governments, municipalities and water districts initiate that would inspire you and your community to conserve water?”

Applications and additional information can be found on the Amarillo Area Foundation’s website at <http://www.amarilloareafoundation.org>