

# Panhandle Water News



April 2003

## DISTRICT RULES AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

The final hearing on the District's proposed Rules and Management Plan has been postponed until after the 78<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature adjourns in June. A public hearing was held on January 21, 2003, and several concerns were identified. The Board has continued to work on problem areas in the proposed rules and feel they should postpone any action until after the Legislature adjourns, in the event there are changes that might affect the Rules. During this time, all comments will be considered and a formal response to each item will be delivered.

### NWRA INTERN PROGRAM

The Groundwater Management Districts Association (GMDA) is supporting the National Water Resources Association (NWRA) Intern Program for college sophomores, juniors, seniors or graduates who would like to work for 3-4 months in Washington, DC as a NWRA intern. This unique opportunity turns out to be very valuable experience for both the intern and our associations - especially when the intern is from GMDA.

Each intern is paid a stipend of \$1,000 per month by NWRA. While this stipend will not cover all expenses for an intern, it will cover at least half. NWRA will train the intern and provide assistance with finding housing. Most importantly, NWRA will assist in finding permanent placement in a water-related position, if desired by the intern. Placing association people in government positions in Washington is an important result of the program, but certainly not a requirement. Several past interns currently work for various agencies and congressional committees in Washington, DC.

If you know of anyone who would be interested in becoming a NWRA intern, or need more information about the program, call our office or contact Ron Bishop, 215 N. Kaufman, Grand Island, NE 68803. Telephone: (308)385-6282.

### 78<sup>th</sup> TEXAS LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

The House Natural Resources Committee for the 78<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative session consists of Rep. Robert Puente of San Antonio, chairman; Rep. William ("Bill") Callegari of Katy, vice-chairman; and Representatives Scott Campbell of San Angelo; Robby Cook of Eagle Lake; Charlie Geren of Ft. Worth; Richard (Rick) Hardcastle of Vernon; Mike (Tuffy) Hamilton of Mauriceville; Ruben Hope of Conroe; and Steven Wolens of Dallas.

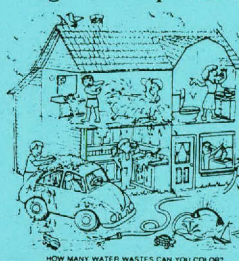
The Senate Natural Resources Committee consists of Senator Kenneth Armbrister of Victoria, chairman; Senator Mike Jackson of LaPorte, vice-chairman; and Senators Gonzalo Barrientos of Austin; Robert Duncan of Lubbock; Craig Estes of Wichita Falls; Troy Fraser of Horseshoe Bay; Juan Hinojosa of McAllen; Jon Lindsay of Houston; Eddie Lucio Jr. of Brownsville; Florence Shapiro of Plano; and Todd Staples of Palestine.

The House Agriculture and Livestock Committee consists of Representative Rick Hardcastle of Vernon, chairman; and Representatives Delwin Jones of Lubbock; Pete Laney of Hale Center; and David Swinford of Dumas. Sen. Robert Duncan is chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Agriculture.

### BOOK COVERS PROVIDED FOR DISTRICT STUDENTS

Since 1991, PGCD has provided each elementary student in the District with book covers for the current school year. In addition to protecting school books, the covers are designed to make students aware of common water wasting practices and to promote conservation and protection of our Ogallala groundwater. This year, 15,000 book covers were distributed to schools in Allison, Amarillo, Clarendon, Claude, Ft. Elliot, Grandview-Hopkins, Groom, Hedley, Kelton, Lefors, McLean, Miami, Pampa, Panhandle, Shamrock, Wheeler, and White Deer.

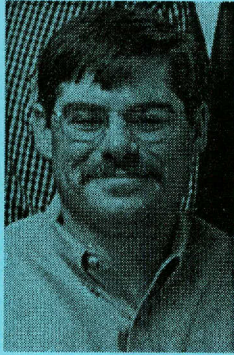
Conserve the  
Ogallala Aquifer...



LEARN TO  
BE WATER TIGHT



## MEET YOUR DIRECTOR



**Jason C. Green** serves as District Director of Precinct 5, and is secretary of the Board. Mr. Green was appointed to the Board of Directors in April, 1999, to fill a vacancy in that precinct. He was elected to the position in January 2000.

Jason farms in Donley County and he and his family reside 8 miles west of Clarendon. He attended Clarendon College and Panhandle State University. Jody is a floral designer at Country Bloomers does volunteer work in the community, and attends lots of ball games. Daughter Kaysea is a busy 6<sup>th</sup> grade student. She plays basketball, shows animals in FFA, is a member of the horse club, and participates in U.I.L.

Precinct 5 includes the majority of Donley County. If you reside within this area, Mr. Green is your director on the Board.

## COLIFORM BACTERIA IN DRINKING WATER

Although bacterial contamination can result from a number of sources, human and animal wastes are a primary source of bacteria in water. These sources of bacterial contamination include runoff from feedlots, pastures, dog runs, and other land areas where animal wastes are deposited. Additional sources include seepage or discharge from septic tanks and sewage treatment facilities. Bacteria from these sources can enter wells that are either open at the land surface, or do not have watertight casings or caps.

Insects, rodents or animals entering the well are other sources of contamination. In some areas older wells were dug by hand and lined (cased) with rocks or bricks. These wells usually have large openings and casings that often are not well sealed. This makes it easy for insects, rodents, or animals to enter the well.

If laboratory tests confirm the presence of Coliform bacteria in your water supply, use an alternative water supply or disinfect your water supply until the problem can be corrected. The next step is to attempt to identify and eliminate the source of contamination. As you attempt to find the source of contamination, evaluate both well location and well construction. Check the entire water distribution system for potential problem areas.

To evaluate well location, ask the following questions. You should be able to answer "yes" to all of the following:

- Is the well located at least 50 feet from a septic tank or any non-watertight sewer line?
- Is the well located at least 100 feet from any seepage pit, cesspool, tile field, privy or other subsurface disposal system?
- Is the well located at least 100 feet away from any feedlot, manure pit, manure or sewage lagoon or livestock lot?

To evaluate well construction, ask the following questions. You should be able to answer "yes" to all of the following:

- Does the well have a watertight casing, preferably of heavy-gauge metal or National Sanitation Foundation approved plastic?
- Are all joints in the well casing screwed, welded or otherwise properly sealed?
- Does the well casing extend at least 12 inches above the grade of the land surface?
- Is a sanitary well cap used on the casing?
- Is pitless installation used; or, if pit installation of pumping and storage equipment is used, is the pit at least 10 feet away from the well?

Bacterial contamination of drinking water can be a problem. A water test is the only way to evaluate whether bacteria are present in a water supply. Proper well location and construction are keys to avoiding bacterial contamination of drinking water. If contamination is present, attempt to identify and eliminate the source of contamination. A contaminated water supply **can** be disinfected. If you suspect problems with your drinking water, please call the District office.

*(source: Upper Republican Tailwater, 7/99)*

## AG LOAN FUNDS AVAILABLE

Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District has been approved for additional funds from the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). These will be loaned to farmers for the purchase of water conservation irrigation equipment.

The District has requested \$250,000. Equipment purchased with this money can be new or used; however, equipment purchased prior to January 1, 2003, is not eligible. Loans require 20% down with up to 8 years payout. The interest rate on the new loan will be 4.67% to the producer.

Since the inception of the Agricultural Water Conservation Equipment Loan Program, the District has approved 75 loans, totaling over \$3,262,000, to area producers. Water savings from these new efficient systems are just a part of the overall efforts the Directors of the Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District are involved in, to accomplish their long term goals of water conservation within the District. Loan Packets and Guidelines are available at the District office. If you are interested or have questions concerning the loan program, call or come by the District office.



## WATER: IMPORTANT TOPIC FOR 78<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATURE



The 78<sup>th</sup> Legislature is in full swing, and all bills have been filed. A large number of the bills filed relate to groundwater and/or groundwater districts. District Manager C. E. Williams is in Austin frequently, monitoring and testifying on important bills. Following is a list of the bills the District is currently tracking.

HB 423 author: Christian - Relating to restrictions on the transfer of groundwater from a rural county to another county.

HB 645 author Puente - and SB 779 author Armbrister - Relating to prohibiting the creation or enforcement of certain restrictive covenants that undermine water conservation.

HB 803 author Geren - Relating to the assessment of damages in a condemnation proceeding based on the market value of groundwater rights as property apart from the land.

HB 975 author Puente - Relating to the plugging of abandoned or deteriorated water wells.

HB 1065 author Robby Cook - and SB 776 author Averett - Relating to the eligibility requirements to serve as a director of a groundwater conservation district.

HB 1203 author Robby Cook - and SB 1550 author Duncan - Relating to the use of site-specific information by a groundwater conservation district to develop its management plan.

HB 1379 author Robby Cook - and SB 738 author Duncan - Relating to the notice and hearing process for groundwater conservation districts.

HB 1534 author Robby Cook - Relating to the removal of certain powers of groundwater conservation districts.

HB 1535 author Robby Cook - Relating to the use of certain fees by groundwater conservation districts.

HB 1541 author Callegari - Relating to the general powers and authority of water districts.

HB 2417 author Gattis - Relating to the regulation of the transfer of groundwater out of a groundwater conservation district.

HB 2660 author Puente - Relating to the establishment of minimum levels of water conservation in water conservation plans.

HB 2890 author Robby Cook - Relating to allowing groundwater conservation districts to define waste by local rule.

HB 2950 author Hope - Relating to the powers of a groundwater conservation district protecting the historic use of groundwater.

HB 2951 author Hope - Relating to regulation of spacing and production of groundwater from aquifers by a groundwater conservation district.

HB 3030 author Van Arsdale - Relating to public notice of groundwater contamination.

HB 3035 author Robby Cook - Relating to the powers and duties of groundwater conservation districts.

HB 3036 author Robby Cook - Relating to the privacy of site-specific groundwater information gathered on private property.

SB 623 author Lindsay - Relating to the general powers and authority of water districts.

SB 899 author Averitt - Relating to the fees of office and reimbursement of directors of groundwater conservation districts.

SB 1094 author Duncan - Relating to the creation of a task force to evaluate matters regarding water conservation.

SB 1698 author Wentworth - Relating to goals for and certification of groundwater management plans.

SB 1700 author Wentworth - Relating to the administration of the weather modification and control grant program.

## BART WYATT SPEAKS AT PANHANDLE ALLIANCE ANNUAL MEETING

Bart Wyatt, Director of Education/Information, was invited to speak at the Panhandle Alliance, Inc. annual meeting, held in Sunray, Texas on February 20, 2003. Approximately one hundred persons were in attendance as he explained the importance of conserving groundwater for future generations and the vital role the Panhandle Groundwater District is playing in obtaining this goal. Using visuals, Wyatt explained how little fresh water was actually left in the world for everyone to drink. "This is the reason it is so important to begin educating the younger generations," Wyatt said. "This is their future, and they need to start conserving at an early age, so their families will have good conservation practices and water to drink."

The audience was very attentive as he demonstrated his underground flow model. This model showed how water moves, or flows, under ground. "The "ant farm", as the fifth graders like to call it," chuckled Wyatt, "is a 3-D image of how the underground looks and operates." While Wyatt used a hand-pump to simulate a working submersible pump, audience members watched as red and yellow dyes flowed through the sand. Wyatt explained what the dyes represented and why they flowed along a certain path. With the help of the flow model, he also pointed out the effects producing water wells may have on the water table and the importance of recharge.

After completing the presentation, Wyatt opened the floor for questions. Both illustrations spurred many questions on both quality and quantity of water.

## HOW MUCH WATER IS AN INCH OF RAIN?

One inch of rain falling on a 160 acre field delivers 4,344,680 gallons of water, or 13.3 acre feet. It would take just over 4 miles of 8,000 gallon capacity railroad tank cars to transport this amount of water, which by the way, would weigh over 18,000 tons.



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*Panhandle Water News* is published quarterly by the Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District. Subscriptions are free upon request.

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"CONSERVING WATER FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS"



## PRECIPITATION ENHANCEMENT NOTES

There has been a flurry of activity recently, as the 2003 Precipitation Enhancement Program prepares to get underway on April 15, 2003. Annual inspections on the Cessna 340 and Piper Comanche have been completed, flares have been purchased, the radar is up and running, and excitement is in the air. All we need now are clouds!

In preparation for the upcoming season, meteorologist Orlando Nunez and pilots Herb Speckman and Chad Gerard attended training sessions in San Angelo, during the week of February 23-28. Meteorologists and pilots from projects all over the State of Texas attended the meeting, which gave everyone a chance to exchange information and expertise. In the last two years, a plethora of information has been released about the performance of the different local projects in the State.

Since October, District personnel have held informational meetings in each county in the District, to present the results and assessments of the 2002 season. Attendance has been very good at these meetings and everyone has received valuable information and been given a chance to express their opinion of the Program.

## TAX DEDUCTION OFFERED TO LANDOWNERS

Any landowner who purchased, inherited or otherwise attained interest in land within the District after 1948 and whose Ogallala Aquifer groundwater is being depleted in the business of irrigation farming is eligible to take a tax deduction. The tax deduction is based on the landowner's cost in water resources at the time of acquisition. Basically, the water value is the difference in the sales prices between irrigated and dryland in any given year.

The quantity of groundwater in storage beneath the tract of land at the time of acquisition and the documented yearly decline in feet are required by the I.R.S. to claim the deduction. Cost guidelines are updated each year by the District, based on actual real estate appraisals of recorded land sales. Interested landowners or their accountants can obtain the data necessary to claim the tax deduction by contacting the District office, 883-2501.

Requests must include a complete legal description of the land involved and the original date of land acquisition.

## REMINDER . . . . .

**Cap or plug all abandoned wells. If you have questions, or need help, call the District office, 806/883-2501.**