



Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District Celebrates 10 Years of Protecting Groundwater Resources

September 4, 2019 - For Immediate Release

Cleburne, TX – September 1, 2019 marked ten years since the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District’s enabling legislation was created in 2009 by the 81st Texas Legislature in response to a finding by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality that groundwater shortages were expected in Ellis, Hill, Johnson, and Somervell counties over the next 25 years.

Located in the northern prairies of Texas and headquartered in Cleburne, the District encompasses 2,870 square miles across its four-county area. The District’s mission is to protect existing water wells, promote conservation, ensure availability and quality of groundwater for future generations, and allow residents to maintain local control over their groundwater.

The District is led by a Board of Directors, two from each of the four counties, who are appointed by the County Commissioners in their respective counties. Board President, Charles Beseda, has served the District since it was created, and said he started his years of continued service in hopes of finding an opportunity to make a difference in his home and community.

“I wanted to make this place better than I found it and have a place for my kids to grow up and enjoy and I felt like getting involved in water conservation was a way I could help make a difference,” Beseda said. “Water is a main concern in this area when we think about our future, and we have to be more aware of our resources and how we can conserve.”

Serving as a director for ten years has allowed Beseda to be involved in many of the important milestones and accomplishments of the District, along with the rest of the directors and an office staff that serves in different aspects of running the operations of the District.

“The best way to build an organization is from the ground up, and I feel like we’ve really done a good job at that,” Beseda said. “We’ve got a great organization that continues to get better through its leadership, staff, technical studies, and programs.”

Some of the significant achievements in the last ten years of the District’s existence began in 2012 with the development of the ongoing aquifer water level monitoring program. This program allows the District to implement its regulatory and permitting program and monitor water level trends. In 2014, Jim Conkwright joined the District as the new General Manager after previously working in groundwater management in the Lubbock, TX area.

“While my previous experience had been with different aquifers than those within the bounds of Prairielands GCD, declines due to years of over-pumping in the North Texas Trinity and Woodbine aquifers presented issues that were all too familiar,” Conkwright said. “The residents of the four counties were aware of this when the district came into being in 2009, and when I

arrived, there was already progress on the development of the new North Texas Trinity and Woodbine Groundwater Availability Model, in cooperation with other groundwater conservation districts in the same management area.”

From 2012 to 2014, the District conducted technical studies of the local aquifers and groundwater use to help develop the groundwater availability model utilized in the Groundwater Management Area 8 joint planning process to determine Desired Future Conditions for aquifers. Upon its completion, the model was adopted by the Texas Water Development Board as the official Groundwater Availability Model for this area. By 2017, the District developed and adopted these Desired Future Conditions.

Starting in 2017, additional research was conducted to look at water well interference which helped develop the 2-acre minimum tract size requirements for new wells. The number of registered wells in the District has grown from 938 in 2013 to 1,517 in 2018.

Most recently, following multiple public hearings, the District adopted permanent rules on December 17, 2018, as a requirement of Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code to provide protection to existing wells, prevent waste, promote conservation, provide a framework that will allow availability and accessibility of groundwater for future generations, protect the quality of the groundwater, and to ensure local control over our groundwater resources. The District also received state approval of its management plan adopted on January 21, 2019. The District rules and management plan are designed to prevent waste, collect data, plan for future resources, and educate the public about water conservation and aquifer protection.

Conkwright also listed the other noteworthy accomplishments during his tenure with the District were the development of a talented district staff, establishing leadership recognized across the state in the areas of groundwater management and conservation, and the naming of a well-respected and highly qualified General Manager, Kathy Turner Jones, upon his retirement in late April of this year. Jones joined to the District after a successful tenure with the Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District in Conroe, TX, where she served as General Manager for 16 years.

“I am fortunate to transition into management of such a successful District,” Jones said. “The previous general managers worked very hard to establish this District and create a collaborative presence amongst the communities, joint planning groups, and local government within the District, and I look forward to continuing that legacy.”

Moving forward into its tenth year of groundwater management, the District is establishing the water well permitting system to achieve the Desired Future Conditions as mandated by the Texas legislature. To find out more information about the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District, please visit our website at www.prairielandsgcd.org.

###

Contact: Sinclair Newby
Public Relations and Education Director
817-556-2299
sinclair@prairielandsgcd.org