

Prairielands eLine

Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District
www.prairielandsgcd.org

State Validates Groundwater District's Management Practices

Summer 2018

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In May, 2018, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) rejected a petition filed against the Post Oak Savannah Groundwater Conservation District (POSGCD) by a local resident who believed the District was not doing enough to protect the groundwater in Milam and Burleson counties. After consideration of all information, the TCEQ Commissioners voted unanimously to dismiss the petition. The Commissioners all agreed POSGCD was following the law and meeting the needs of the local landowners, while providing long term protection of the groundwater in the aquifers of the District. Both the TCEQ Executive Director and the TCEQ Office of Public Interests Council recommended in April to dismiss the petition, noting the petitioner had not produced evidence to support his claims.

This marks the second time in three years the commissioners of TCEQ have voted unanimously to dismiss a petition challenging the District's management of groundwater resources. Burleson County Judge, Mike

Sutherland said, "This validates the District's management of the aquifers, and should give the citizens in our two counties even more confidence in how the Board of Directors manages, regulates, and protects our precious resources." POSGCD General Manager Gary Westbrook added, "Our Board takes seriously the concerns of citizens in our District. Post Oaks' rules have always been designed to protect the aquifers below each landowner's property while preserving each landowner's right to produce their water." POSGCD Board President Sidney Youngblood stated, "Today's ruling is truly significant. It underscores that POSGCD's Board is committed to pursuing our Mission Statement taking on this responsibility at a very high level. This Board will continue on a non-compromising path of respectfully representing all landowners understanding that we must continue to build trust and confidence with Burleson and Milam County citizens to ensure that we are truly successful as a Board in protecting the valuable water resources that lie beneath both counties."

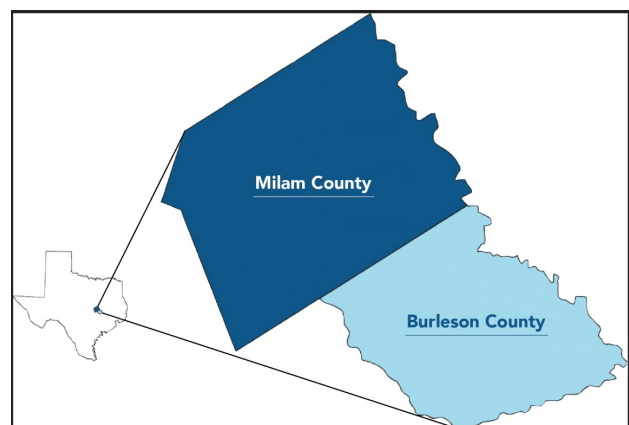
Cited at the TCEQ meeting was also the fact that POSGCD is going above and beyond the state minimum responsibilities by regulating production and building a robust water level monitoring network, currently at almost 170 wells, with wells strategically located in all aquifers of the District. This network is designed to provide the most up-to-date information on the health of the aquifers. The TCEQ Commissioners reminded the landowner that he could work within the District to participate in the direction and decisions made by the Directors.

However, a motion to rehear the complaint was

Inside this issue:

Weather (or not) to Water	2
Groundwater Law	3
Hill County Schools Get WET	3
Texas 4-H Ambassadors Program	4

filed by the landowner with the TCEQ on Monday, May 21, 2018.



Burleson and Milam counties are located in east central Texas.

Weather (or not) to Water!

Summer is coming, and with it comes our driest, hottest months in North Central Texas. Our biggest water output during this time is for outdoor watering, so much so that many cities implement watering restrictions for landscaping. Outside the city, water restrictions are only those that you put on yourself and your family. No matter where you live though, it is important to know how to tell when your landscape needs supplemental watering, not only to avoid the “sticker shock” of a high water bill, but to keep your yard at its healthiest.

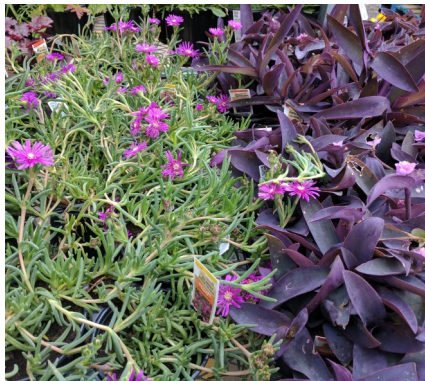
When do you need to water?

For two of our area’s most popular warm-season grasses, Bermuda and St. Augustine, one way to determine if it is time to water is by inspection of the blades of grass themselves. If your Bermuda grass lawn presents wilting leaves and a blue-gray color throughout, that is a good indication of drought stress; your yard could use supplemental watering. If your St. Augustine grass has a dull, bluish color, rolled or folded leaves, and footprints tend to retain their shape after you’ve walked across your lawn, it is showing signs of drought stress as well. Time for you to water.

How much/how long do you need to water?

Of course, each yard will be different, however, the following principles will apply to all turf grasses. Deep infrequent watering creates deep roots. Shallow frequent watering creates short roots. As water evaporates from the soil surface, short-rooted plants and lawns will need water more often. Deep-rooted plants and lawns will be able to absorb water from deeper soil, over a longer period of time. This approach also reduces disease, helps insure good air movement down to the root system, and conserves water. Water lawns slowly, allowing water to reach a depth of 6 inches.

As for how long this will take, again, each yard will be different. Try watching and measuring how long it takes for your sprinkler to fill a standard-sized tuna can (or cat food can) with one inch of water as it sweeps across the yard. If water starts running off your lawn before hitting the one-inch mark, pause the process to allow the water to soak into the underlying soil before continuing. Note the amount of time before you paused and the amount of time you needed to wait before continuing. You may need to pause more than once. But once you’ve successfully captured one inch of water in your catch can, you can determine your watering pattern for your individual yard. Just reproduce what you did to get one inch of water on your lawn, then stop.



What time do you need to water?

Since 50-60% of your irrigation can be lost to evaporation, it is best to water when that is less likely to happen. Whenever possible, water between mid-night and 8 a.m.

What about automatic sprinkler systems?

You need to understand how to operate, set, and re-program your automatic sprinkler system. Determine how much water your system discharges (as described previously) and set the timing of the various zones in your configuration to water what is needed for your type of grass, groundcovers, shrubs, and trees. As your landscape matures, the height of some of your plantings may even necessi-

tate changes in your head placements as the spray patterns become blocked or altered. Keep an eye on those heads and replace those that break.

What about planting native plants or those that are adapted to our climate?

Incorporating native or adapted plants to areas in your yard can help you build a more sustainable landscape. These plants typically use less water, have fewer issues with pests, and thrive in less-than-perfect soil conditions. Along with less water, they also require less pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizer.

An excellent online tool to help you refresh your yard using native and adapted plants is the Texas SmartScape website (www.txsmartscape.com). This website is free and has online landscape design functions and an easy-to-use, and frequently updated, plant database developed just for the North Central Texas area.

How much time will this take?

Considering the above changes to some of the ways you may be maintaining your yard, you’re going to be spending less time watering and doing yard work. You’ll have more time to just sit back and enjoy your beautiful yard while conserving water and saving money on your water bill.

For more information on these tips and others, visit the Prairielands GCD website at www.prairielandsgcd.org or call (817) 556-2299.



Evolution of Groundwater Law in Texas—Part 3

Texas Co. v. Burkett

In 1919, the plaintiff, Joe Burkett, sold his water rights to the Texas Company for a one-year period for \$5,000. In the contract was an option for the company to extend the contract for an additional one-year period at the same rate of compensation.

Three months prior to the end of the contract year, the Texas Company's representative, Mr. J. E. Rees, confirmed with Burkett that the

company would be exercising the option to extend the written contract for the additional year. Based on this confirmation, Burkett turned down a contract from the Magnolia Company for purchase of those water rights.

A month before the end of the original contract year, the Texas Company notified Burkett that it was not going to extend the contract leaving Burkett without a buyer.

Burkett sued the company for breach of contract, and as their defense, the company claimed that the contract was invalid because the water Burkett was trying to sell wasn't his but rather belonged to the State of Texas.

The court agreed with Burkett that the water in question was groundwater and was Burkett's property and his to sell or barter like any other property.

Next issue: *City of Corpus Christi v. City of Pleasanton (1955)*

Hill County Schools Get WET!



Karen Siddall explains groundwater and aquifers to students at Hillsboro Intermediate.

The Prairielands Water Education Trailer (the WET) with Trailer Wrangler David Miller and Public Relations & Education Administrator Karen Siddall headed to Hill County in April to participate in a series of Water Days for several Hill County school districts.

In conjunction with Texas AgriLife – Hill County, the Texas 4-H Water Ambassadors, Hill County Master Gardeners, Prairielands staff led tours of the WET with presentations on aquifers, wells, water conservation, and preventing pollution of our precious water resources.

Staff kicked off the week leading up to Earth Day (April 22) by visiting with fourth-grade students at Hillsboro Intermediate School in Hillsboro on April 16.

On Wednesday, April 18, a multi-school event was held at the Hill County Fairgrounds with teachers and fifth-grade students from Abbott, Bynum, Covington, Mount Calm, and Penelope ISDs attending.

Thursday, Whitney Intermediate hosted a Water Day event for their fifth-grade students and teachers.

The end of the week had the WET a little closer to home base with an Earth Day event at Venus Elementary School in Johnson County. Along with Kristin Davis, Texas AgriLife – Johnson County, students in the 2nd and 5th grades toured the trailer and learned about water conservation and water pollution prevention.



The education trailer is available for school presentations as well as civic events, club meetings, and public festivals. To schedule an event, contact PGCD at (817) 556-2299.



David Smith, Texas A&M 4-H2O Program Coordinator, explains how rivers change their course to students from Hillsboro Intermediate School in Hillsboro.



**PRAIRIELANDS GROUNDWATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

ELLIS HILL JOHNSON SOMERVILLE

Conserving, protecting, and enhancing
groundwater resources in Ellis, Hill,
Johnson, and Somervell counties

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prairielandsgcd.org.



In 2008 & 2009, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality designated large areas over the Trinity Aquifer from the Red River to Central Texas as Priority Groundwater Management Areas (PGMA) due to critical groundwater declines facing the area.

The Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District was created in 2009 by the 81st Texas Legislature with a directive to conserve, protect and enhance the groundwater resources of Ellis, Johnson, Hill and Somervell Counties in Texas.

Texas 4-H Water Ambassador Program

The 4-H Water Ambassador Program, now in its second year, provides a select group of high school age youth an opportunity to gain advanced knowledge and practice leadership skills related to the science, technology, engineering, and management of water in Texas.



Kolby Dague of Bell County demonstrates the Stream Trailer.

As 4-H Water Ambassadors, participants gain deep insight and appreciation for how water is secured, protected, conserved, and managed in Texas. They meet and interact with water industry professionals and gain access to a myriad of water education tools and resources. In addition, they can explore a wide range of career opportunities in the water industry and beyond.

As students gain knowledge and build on their experiences from the program, they will, in turn, play an important part in educating others in their communities and state on the importance of water in the State of Texas.

Participants in the first 4-H Water Ambassador cohort, Kyndal Sligh



Kyndal Sligh of McLennan County explains the Enviroscape to Whitney Intermediate School fifth-graders.

and Kolby Dague, took part in the recent Water Day events in Hill County.

For more information about this program, contact Program Coordinator, David Smith, at davidsmith@tamu.edu or (979) 862-1989.