

Prairielands eLine

The Newsletter of the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District

Winter 2021 | Vol. 7, Iss. 1

Reminder: Water Use Fee Payment Schedule Changes Beginning January 1, 2021

The District would like to provide a reminder that beginning January 1, 2021, the fee payment structure for water use fees for non-exempt wells allows an option to prepay annually or submit quarterly or monthly payment of fees for groundwater production based on the annual groundwater production authorization in the permit. January 1, 2021 will also mark the beginning of the requirement for monthly submission of water production reports, meter readings, and meter logs for non-exempt wells.

Although it is almost a year away, we also want to remind non-exempt well owners and operators that beginning January 1, 2022, in order to encourage groundwater conservation, eligible permittees have the opportunity to receive a refund for payment of unused water use fees from the previous calendar year of up to twenty (20) percent of the amount of groundwater authorized by permit to be produced. Permittees are eligible for the refund if the actual amount of a well owner's annual groundwater production during the previous calendar year was up to 20 percent or less than the amount authorized in the permit. The amount of any refund due to a permittee will be determined by the District each calendar year after receipt of the Water Production Report due by January 15th.

If you have any questions or would like some additional assistance, please contact the District office at 817-556-2299.

Prairielands GCD relocated to a new office facility in September 2020. If you haven't done so already, we ask you to please update your records to reflect our new mailing and physical address:

**208 Kimberly Dr
Cleburne, TX 76031**

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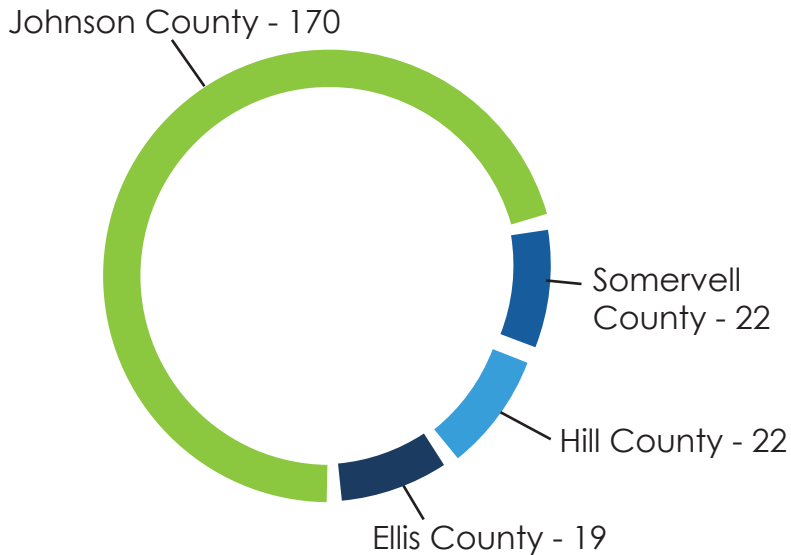
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2020 Well Registration and Groundwater Usage

2020 has come and gone, and now is the time when the District staff start to compile data and information for the annual report. The following statistics on well registration and groundwater usage are provided as a brief summary of 2020 numbers, and more comprehensive and detailed information will be available in the District's annual report in the coming months.

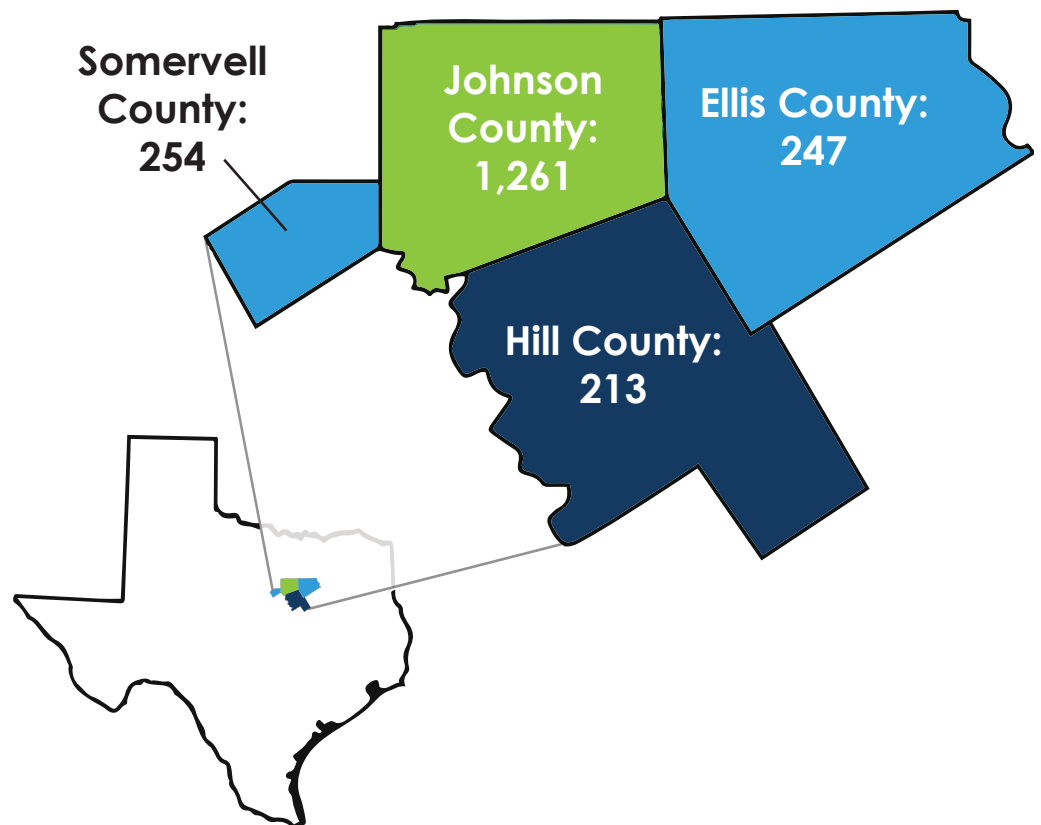


2020 Well Registrations by County

The chart to the left depicts a total of 233 wells which were registered with the District in 2020, bringing the total number of registered wells to 1,975. Of the new registrations, there were 219 new wells, 13 existing wells, and one plugged well. These 2020 well registrations were comprised of 226 exempt wells and 7 non-exempt wells.

Total District Well Registration Amount

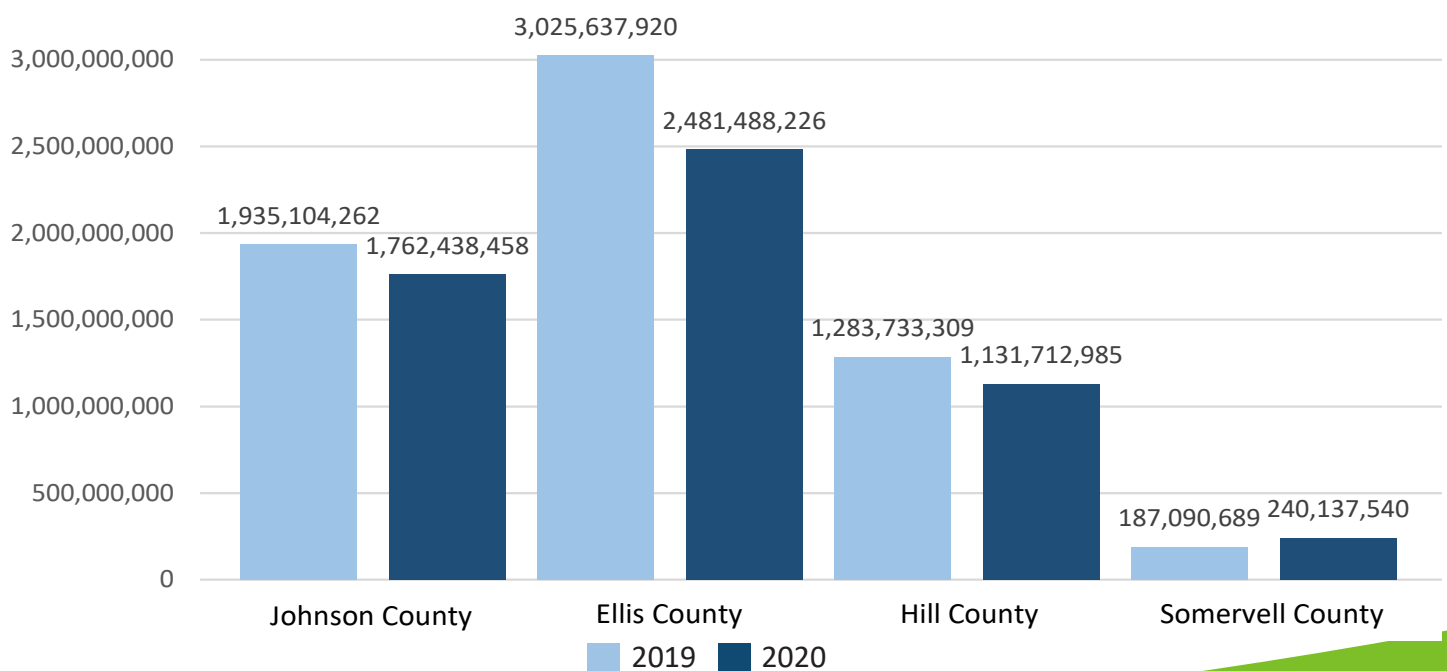
The map to the right represents total amounts of wells registered in each county by the end of 2020.



Water User Group Water Usage		
User Group	2020 Usage	2019 Usage
Municipal/Public Water Supply	5,199,075,656	5,373,025,036
Industrial/Manufacturing	828,487,837	877,097,106
Filling a Pond or Other Surface Impoundment	39,386,910	81,855,498
Commercial/Small Business	48,484,378	45,014,230
Oil & Gas Production	2,675,553	38,768,761
Golf Course Irrigation	32,517,500	11,256,400
Other*	2,557,500	4,549,150
Annual Total	6,073,185,334	6,431,566,181

The chart above shows a comparison of water usage by water user group between 2020 and 2019. While user groups such as Municipal/PWS, Industrial/Manufacturing, and water for oil and gas production saw decreased amounts of production, golf course irrigation and commercial/small business saw increased amount of groundwater produced.

The chart below represents a comparison of each county's groundwater usage in gallons between 2019 and 2020. Although these are preliminary numbers, groundwater usage is lower in Johnson, Ellis, and Hill Counties, while production in Somervell County saw an increase in 2020.



Winter Weather Watering Tips

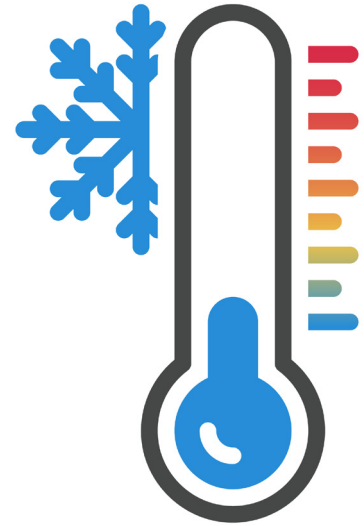
How has your yard handled the recent cold snap? Proper watering, as well other simple methods for plant choice and protection can help your winter landscaping survive when the temperatures tumble.

Water at the right time

Even though it's winter and your plants might look dead, you don't want your plant to dry out. The roots are still alive under the soil and need water for hydration but also for insulation. You'll want to: Water only when temps rise above 45 degrees or above before a freeze. Be sure your irrigation control or timer is turned off when a freeze is expected. Irrigate earlier in the day when plants are more likely to absorb water.

Water the right amount

Don't over-water! Once or twice a month during winter is usually sufficient for most plants. When you do go out to water, remember the following: Add only enough water to make the soil moist, especially when temperatures are expected to dip below freezing. Use a moisture meter to help you decide if you need to water at all. Pay special attention to newly planted or frost sensitive plants. Remember to water only when there hasn't been a recent rain, snow or sleet. If your lawn is receiving at least one inch of water per week, then you do not have to water it. Diseases can set in if your lawn is receiving too much moisture. Remember that the days are shorter, and the sun doesn't hold its intensity for nearly as long as the summer months



Plant Native Trees and Shrubs

This is also the ideal time to plant trees and shrubs that are native (or well adapted) to our area. Native plants have a better chance of thriving in our central Texas climate, so they won't need extensive watering in the summer or to be replaced after a bout of cold weather. Opting to plant these natural beauties saves you time, water, and money.

Some of the best trees for our area include Chinquapin Oak, Texas or Shumard Red Oak, Cedar Elm (but only if mistletoe is not a neighborhood problem), Burr Oak, and Live Oak. These are great large native shade trees. Lacey Oak is a small native evergreen oak and Caddo or Shantung Maples are smaller shade trees but are not native to our area. For smaller ornamental native trees, consider Vitex, Possumhaw Holly, Yaupon Holly and Carolina Buckthorn. A couple of noteworthy non-native ornamental trees are Desert Willow, Chitalpa, and Crape Myrtle. When considering shrubs, some native shrubs that are suitable for landscapes are Texas Sage, various yucca and agave. Non-native considerations could include many varieties of nandina, yew, holly and abelia.

During the winter months, the root systems of the fall-planted specimens develop and become established. When spring arrives, this expanded root system can support and take advantage of the full surge of spring growth. Plant roots grow anytime the soil temperature is 40 degrees or higher, which may occur all winter in Texas.

Annette Kinney Promoted to Permitting Coordinator

Effective January 1, 2021, Annette Kinney has been promoted to Permitting Coordinator for Prairielands GCD. Annette started at the District in February 2019 as the Office Assistant, where she quickly became an important asset to the District as she helped with well registrations, permitting assistance, and other important duties needed to help the District operate.



When she found out about her promotion, Annette said she felt gratitude for her hard work being recognized and how she was excited to continue learning and growing professionally in her new role.

“Starting as Office Assistant for the District and working my way across departments has allowed me to learn about many different areas of groundwater conservation and management,” she said. “I have worked hard to learn the ins and outs of water well registration, permitting, and the District Rules, and I appreciate knowing my hard work does not go unnoticed.”

When asked what her favorite part of her job is, she said it was learning about the planning and development of Desired Future Conditions (DFCs) and the importance of water well registration and permitting to help conserve and protect groundwater resources.

Annette is from Cleburne, and now she and her husband, Daniel, and daughter, Zoe, live just outside of Keene. She enjoys spending time with her family, (which she is glad this job allows), as well as raising chickens, rabbits, gardening and canning. Next time you call or come by the District office, be sure to tell Annette congratulations!

Prairilands GCD Recognized as Signature Sponsor of Texas 4-H Water Ambassadors

Prairilands GCD was recognized on Tuesday, December 22 by local 4-H Water Ambassadors for being a sponsor of the Texas 4-H Water Ambassadors Program in 2020. The District is proud to support this youth leadership organization and provide an opportunity for young people to nurture their passion and knowledge for management of natural resources in Texas.

Founded in 2017, The Texas 4-H Water Ambassadors Program provides high school youth an opportunity to gain advanced knowledge and develop leadership skills related to the science, technology, engineering, and management of water across the state.

Through the program, ambassadors gain insight into water law, policy, planning, and management as they interact with representatives from state water agencies, educators, policy-makers, and water resource managers. Ambassadors also gain an appreciation for the complexity of managing Texas surface and groundwater resources, its importance to local, regional, and state economies, and the importance of protecting this valuable resource for future generations.

Water Ambassadors commit a minimum 40 hours of service over a 12-month period following a Leadership Academy. Service hours include delivering water education at local 4-H clubs, schools, and community events. Many ambassadors have been accomplishing this goal through virtual presentations and meetings. Applications for this program are typically accepted from March through May every year and are open to students entering their 9th through 12th grade school year.



From left to right: Public Relations and Education Director, Sinclair Newby, Brayden DeBorde, Copeland Welch, and General Manager, Kathy Turner Jones.



Prairilands GCD has five 4-H Water Ambassadors within the District:

- Brayden DeBorde - Ellis County
- Copeland Welch - Hill County
- Leigha Adair - Hill County
- Jillian Ellis - Johnson County
- Grayson Tomas - Johnson County

Water Loss Audit Allows Utility Providers to Conserve Water and Increase Revenues

In 2003, the 78th Texas Legislature enacted House Bill 3338 to help conserve the state's water resources by reducing water loss occurring in the systems of drinking water utilities. This statute requires that retail public utilities providing water within Texas file a standardized water audit once every five years with the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). Water auditing and loss control are emerging as significant conservation measures because as utilities minimize water loss, they increase their efficiency and reduce the need to search for additional water sources. For utilities to effectively identify losses in their systems, they must first employ water auditing as a routine business practice, using a method that has clearly defined terms and meaningful performance indicators.

Why Complete a Water Loss Audit?

Water loss control can help conserve water and can also save a utility and its customers money. Reducing water loss offers utilities the ability to increase their water use efficiency, improve their financial status, minimize their need for additional water resources and assist with long-term water sustainability. Completing the Water Loss Audit will help a utility understand where and how much water is being lost from the distribution system and will provide a baseline to track and improve water loss control.



Who Needs to Submit?

All retail public water suppliers are required to submit a water loss audit once every five years. The first year for this requirement was 2005, then 2010, and the next predetermined scheduled audit for this requirement is for the year 2020 and is due by May 1, 2021. Even if a retail supplier submitted a water loss audit in a non-required year, they are still required to submit one for 2020, per Texas Water Code Section 16.0121.

Additionally, any retail water supplier that has an active financial obligation with the Texas Water Development Board, or has more than 3,300 connections, are now required to submit an audit annually. The annual water loss audits are due on May 1st. The Texas Water Development Board also encourages all retail public water suppliers to complete an audit annually to assist them in tracking water loss to help better track their water loss and identify issues that may need addressing.



Utilities should use recommended practices to monitor and control water and revenue losses. These include active leakage control, as well as metering production flows and customer consumption. Consumption data serve as the basis for billing and revenue collection for most water utilities, but the data are also critical to water demand management. Today's water utilities can also use other advanced technologies, such as automatic meter reading technologies, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), hydraulic modeling, and sophisticated leak detection technologies, such as leak correlators and leak noise loggers. By using the above technologies, water utilities can address a variety of losses; however, the foundation of the water loss control program is the compilation of the water audit on a routine basis as a standard business practice.

Groundwater Management Area 8 Update

October 27, 2020

On October 27, 2020, representatives of the GMA 8 Districts convened for a public meeting to take up and consider proposing for adoption the DFCs for all relevant aquifers within GMA 8, which was held through a virtual meeting method authorized by the Governor's March 16, 2020 order on conducting open meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. With voting representatives in attendance from at least two-thirds (2/3) of the GMA 8 Districts, the GMA 8 Districts have adopted administrative procedures for the consideration, proposal, and adoption of DFCs, and the GMA 8 Districts find that the DFCs proposed by this resolution were considered and proposed in compliance with the requirements of those administrative procedures in all respects. The DFCs proposed by this resolution will be distributed by mail to the GMA 8 Districts, initiating a 90-day public comment period by which each district in GMA 8 must hold a public hearing on the DFCs proposed that are relevant to that district pursuant to Section 36.108(d-2) of the Texas Water Code. Then, each district within GMA 8 will compile a written summary of relevant comments received at the public hearing held by the District, any suggested revisions to the proposed DFCs, and the basis for any such revisions, and will submit its summary report electronically to the GMA 8 Districts, and the GMA 8 district representatives shall reconvene to review the reports, consider any suggested revisions to the proposed DFCs, and finally adopt the DFCs for GMA 8. The GMA 8 Districts find that the proposed DFCs for adoption in GMA 8 are in each instance merited and necessary to support the management of groundwater resources within the boundaries of the GMA 8 Districts in a manner consistent with the requirements of Chapter 36, Texas Water Code.

Board Approves Board Meeting Dates for 2021

In a public meeting on December 21, 2020 the Board of Directors unanimously approved the following dates to hold public Board Meetings. Please visit our website to download the links to add to your calendar.

January 19, 2021

February 16, 2021

March 15, 2021

April 19, 2021

May 17, 2021

June 21, 2021

July 19, 2021

August 16, 2021

September 20, 2021

October 18, 2021

November 15, 2021

December 20, 2021

Upcoming Events and Meetings

**January
19**

PGCD Board Meeting
9:00 a.m.
208 Kimberly Dr
Cleburne, TX 76031

**February
2**

Deadline to Submit Operating Permit Applications to be Heard at February Board Meeting

**January
21-22**

TWCA/TRWA 2021 Water Law Seminar

**February
15**

President's Day
PGCD Office Closed

**January
26-27**

Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts' Regular Business Meeting

**February
16**

PGCD Board Meeting
9:00 a.m.
208 Kimberly Dr
Cleburne, TX 76031

Be sure to visit the homepage of our website to sign-up to receive our e-blast notifications so you never miss out on the latest news, events or updates about Prairielands GCD!

Stay in the Know: State and Local Water News at a Glance

- **New Spring Monitoring Program Assesses the Health of the State's Aquifers** - The Texas Water Development Board began a new initiative this year to monitor a network of springs across the state on an annual basis. In this program, staff will collect water quality samples and flow rate measurements from every spring to determine the amount of water flowing from the aquifer and to verify the source of the water. [Read more.](#)
- **New Desalination Approach Could Help Texas Conserve Scarce Water Resources** - A new breakthrough from researchers at the University of Texas at Austin, along with DuPont, could help speed up and lower the costs of purifying water by reverse osmosis. In turn, that could ease some of the state's water woes, as migration and climate change put strain on scarce resources. [Read more.](#)
- **Water Well Users Asked to Conserve Due to Drought Conditions** - The Central Texas Groundwater Conservation District is asking Burnet County residents who have wells to voluntarily reduce their water usage by 20 percent due to drought conditions. [Read more.](#)
- **Houston Approves New Incentives for Green and Stormwater-Sensitive Development**- Developers in Houston are now eligible for tax incentives for certain environmentally-friendly building designs. Developers who incorporate "green stormwater infrastructure," such as green roofs, rain gardens, permeable pavement and rainwater harvesting, are now eligible for a new city tax abatement approved by Houston City Council on Dec. 16. [Read more.](#)

About Prairielands GCD

The Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District was created 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. The TCEQ finding required local residents to create a groundwater conservation district, or else TCEQ would mandate one. Enabling legislation for the Prairielands GCD was passed in 2009.

The Mission of the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District is to develop rules 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 in the recharge zone of the aquifer, insure that the residents of Ellis, Hill, Johnson, and Somervell Counties maintain local control over their groundwater, and operate the District in a fair and equitable manner for all residents of the District.

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