

Prairielands eLine

The Newsletter of the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District

Summer 2021 | Vol. 7, Iss. 3

McClure Appointed to Prairielands GCD Board of Directors

In a public meeting on May 17, 2021, Barney McClure of Cleburne took his oath of office as a director on the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District Board of Directors. McClure was appointed by the Johnson County Commissioners Court in a meeting on May 10, 2021.

A Cleburne native, McClure built a distinguished career serving the youth of Texas as a vocational agriculture teacher for 37 years. Following his retirement from education, McClure led a successful tenure from 2011 to 2019 as the executive director of the Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas, which was established in 1940 to promote and advance agriculture education and provide legislative representation to safeguard agriculture education programs in Texas. McClure was appointed to serve out an unexpired term representing Johnson County on the Prairielands GCD Board of Directors through August 31, 2023.

The Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District's Board of Directors consist of eight members, two from each county, who are appointed by the county commissioners' courts to serve unpaid, four-year terms. The District is committed to manage and protect the groundwater resources within Ellis, Hill, Johnson and Somervell Counties and to work with others to ensure a sustainable, adequate, high quality, and cost-effective supply of water, now and in the future. Find out more about the District and ways to conserve water by visiting www.prairielandsgcd.org.



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Local Residents Gain Hands-On Knowledge at Rainwater Harvesting 101 Workshop

Prairielands GCD hosted a Rainwater Harvesting 101 workshop on June 5, 2021 for local residents to learn more about the basics and benefits of rainwater harvesting. Participants from Johnson, Ellis, Hill, and Somervell Counties, as well as a few residents of Hood, Tarrant and Dallas Counties, joined District staff for an educational presentation on rainwater harvesting, followed by assembling their own 55 gallon rain barrel to take home with them.

Presentation topics included the basic components of a rainwater harvesting system, benefits and uses of rainwater harvesting, where to put your rain barrel to capture the most water, and how to make the most of a rainwater harvesting system by implementing rain gardens and efficient irrigation systems. To assemble their rain barrels, participants installed ball-valve spigots towards the bottom of the barrel for outflow of the collected rainwater, and also fastened on screens to the openings of the rain barrel to keep out mosquitoes, debris, and leaves. With the recent rainfall events we have been experiencing, attendees of the workshop were able to take these barrels home and implement them right away. Here are a few photos from our workshop event and some submissions from participants after they implemented their new rain barrels at their homes. To learn more about rainwater harvesting, please visit www.prairielandsgcd.org/education/rainwater-harvesting/



Attendees worked together using the information and instructions given by District staff during the educational presentation to assemble their own 55 gallon rain barrel.



This participant not only took home a blue barrel, but also installed an additional brown barrel and a rain chain at the front of their home!



A married couple who attended the workshop together went home and installed their barrels on the back porch and are using the harvested rainwater to water a garden and flowerbeds.



Staff Spotlight: Brian Watts

Comptroller - Joined PGCD in May 2021

"I wasn't fortunate enough to be born in Texas...but I got here as fast as I could. I have called Somervell County home since 1988 and my wife and I have raised our 2 children there and now we get to enjoy seeing our daughter and her husband raise our 2 grandchildren in the house they bought across the street from our home. Being able to see them so often and being a part of their activities is a great blessing. I joined Prairielands after serving as the Somervell County Auditor for 8 years and working for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) prior to that. I am a licensed Texas CPA and have really enjoyed every aspect of working with the staff and my interactions with the folks we serve. #smalltownliferocks"

Summary of Spring 2021 School Educational Outreach Presentations

Education about conserving and protecting groundwater resources is one of the main goals of the District. Each year, District staff present at schools within Johnson, Ellis, Hill and Somervell Counties. The majority of these presentations utilize the WET, or Water Education Trailer, which is a FREE mobile classroom that features exhibits that provide demonstrations about rainwater harvesting, indoor water conservation tips, pollution prevention, how a water well works, and features a working aquifer model. The presentations included in the WET meet TEKS standards and provide STEM-based learning activities.

Since its development in 2015, over 12,000 adults and children have toured the WET at events. The WET is available for elementary, middle, and high school classes, teacher development, community events, meetings, and workshops. We are happy to tailor the presentations and curriculum to your specific needs. Please contact us to schedule a visit! Here are some photos and information about spring 2021 educational presentations. Staff presented to 1,323 students in grades K-12 from 13 different school districts inside Johnson, Ellis, Hill and Somervell Counties.



*4-H Water Ambassador
Brayden DeBorde from
Ellis County assisted in
demonstrations for these
students from Abbott.*



*4-H Water Ambassador
Copeland Welch from Hill
County discussed the District's
rainwater harvesting model
with students from Hill County.*





5th grade students at Venus Elementary School learning about local aquifers from the WET's aquifer model.



8th graders at Cleburne Christian Academy discussing rainwater harvesting and outdoor water conservation.



Hillsboro Intermediate School students asked great questions about pollution prevention during a demonstration in the WET.



Texas Water Development Board Adopts 2022 State Water Plan

During a public board meeting on July 7, 2021, the Texas Water Development Board adopted the 2022 State Water Plan. Every five years, the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) is required by Texas Water Code §16.051(a) to adopt a comprehensive state water plan that incorporates the approved regional water plans. The state water plan is to provide for the orderly development, management, and conservation of water resources, prepare for and respond to drought conditions, and make sufficient water available at a reasonable cost to ensure public health, safety, and welfare and further economic development while protecting the agricultural and natural resources of the entire state.

The 2022 State Water Plan will be the fifth state water plan developed through the regional water planning process as mandated by Senate Bill 1 in 1997 and Texas' eleventh state water plan developed since 1957. At the end of each five-year regional water planning cycle, the TWDB Executive Administrator compiles information from the Board-approved regional water plans and other sources to develop the state water plan, which is published for public comment and, after consideration of public comments, adopted by the Board. Once adopted, the state water plan is submitted to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, and the appropriate legislative committees.

Save Money and Water During Smart Irrigation Month

Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District is celebrating Smart Irrigation Month by helping local residents identify ways they can conserve water, save money and see better irrigation results during the peak of summer.

Smart Irrigation Month is a public awareness campaign led by the Irrigation Association, a nonprofit industry organization dedicated to promoting efficient irrigation. Focused on July, traditionally the month of peak demand for outdoor water use, the campaign highlights simple practices and innovative technologies to make maintaining green spaces easy and convenient and minimizing overwatering while keeping lawns, gardens and landscapes beautiful and healthy. These approaches will also allow you to save money on utility bills and help protect community water supplies for today and the future.



To conserve water and utilize more efficient watering practices, PGCD recommends residents plant and maintain landscapes using native and adapted plants that will thrive in the Texas climate and require less water. It is also recommended to water early in the morning or later in the evening when the likelihood of losing water to evaporation is lower. Take the time to inspect your sprinkler systems and hoses for any repairs that may need to be made to fix and prevent leaks. You can also install new irrigation systems that use real-time weather data and soil moisture sensors to automatically adjust watering to meet plant needs, as well as retrofitting existing systems with rain sensors that prevent watering in rainy weather. PGCD also encourages the use of rainwater harvesting systems to capture and store rainwater for outdoor use on lawns, landscaping, and gardens.

Texas Groundwater Protection Committee Releases Updated Landowner's Guide to Abandoned Water Wells

Over the years, thousands of wells across Texas around homes, farms, industrial sites, and urban areas have been abandoned without being properly plugged. Not only can these abandoned wells become potential conduits for groundwater contamination, but they can also be a safety hazard for humans and animals. Plugging an abandoned well takes time and money, but these wells are a threat that cannot be ignored. Texas law makes the landowner responsible for plugging abandoned wells. The landowner is also held responsible for injury or pollution related to the abandoned well. This publication is provided to help landowners understand how to plug a well properly. The Texas Groundwater Protection Committee has released a new version of the Landowner's Guide to Abandoned Water Wells, available online by visiting www.tgpc.texas.gov/, and we have included some highlights below on how to report and manage an abandoned well.

How can I report an abandoned well?

The TDLR Well Driller/Pump Installer/Abandoned Well Referral Program provides a wealth of useful information, including:

- Reporting an abandoned well online.
- Reviewing the status of an abandoned well complaint.
- A checklist that can be used to determine whether a well is abandoned.
- The definition of an abandoned or deteriorated well.

What are my options if I have an abandoned well?

There are three different courses of action that can be taken to eliminate the hazards of an abandoned well:

- Return the well to an operable state by making sure the casing, pump, and pump column are in good condition and the well is sealed at the surface to prevent surface water or contaminants from entering the well.
- Cap the well to prevent surface water or contaminants from entering it. The cap must be able to support 400 pounds and prevent easy removal by hand.
- Plug the well from the bottom to the top with bentonite chips, bentonite grout, or cement. Large-diameter wells can also be filled with clay-based soils, compacted clay, or caliche. Details on what you should do prior to plugging your well, as well as on the well plugging operation itself, are provided on page five of the Landowner's Guide to Abandoned Water Wells under "How Do I Plug My Own Well?"

Staff Spotlight: Robert Spencer

GIS Specialist - Joined PGCD in April 2021

"I am from Lubbock, TX and I graduated from Texas Tech University in 1998 with a bachelor's degree in wildlife management. Over my career, I've done toxicology work for Texas Tech University, worked for Texas Parks and Wildlife for 20 years and have gathered various mapping skills throughout the years. I'm now the GIS Specialist here at Prairielands GCD and hope to become an integral member of the team."



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.

Upcoming Events and Meetings

July 19 **PGCD Board Meeting**
9:00 a.m.
208 Kimberly Dr
Cleburne, TX 76031

July 20 **GMA 8 Meeting**
10:00 a.m.
208 Kimberly Dr
Cleburne, TX 76031

Aug 16 **PGCD Board Meeting**
9:00 a.m.
208 Kimberly Dr
Cleburne, TX 76031

Aug 31 - Sept 2 **Texas Groundwater Summit**
San Antonio, TX

Sept 6 **Labor Day**
PGCD Office Closed

Sept 20 **PGCD Board Meeting**
9:00 a.m.
208 Kimberly Dr
Cleburne, TX 76031

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