

# Prairielands eLine

The Newsletter of the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District

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## Ellis County Rural Heritage Farm Promotes and Protects Natural Resources

The Ellis County Rural Heritage Farm announced on December 10, 2021 that it has received a \$500 grant from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin to purchase wildflower and native grass seed from the Native American Seed Company to be planted in a demonstration area on the property. The project is intended to help students and youth learn more about growing native seeds and native plants and pollination.

The 145-acre Heritage Farm is located at 130 Cunningham Meadows Road, just south of FM 66 and west of Waxahachie and is the remnant of the Marvin W. and Mattie F. Aday Family Farm. A fully-restored 1913 farmhouse is the centerpiece of the property. The mission of the farm is to preserve and to promote public awareness and appreciation of the natural and farming heritage of rural Ellis County. The farm is a 501c3 non-profit organization in collaboration with the Ellis County Museum.

The farm has partnered with the Indian Trail Chapter of the Master Naturalists and area Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts for projects at the farm, including a Prairie Wildlife and Wildflower Adventure the last Sunday in April and Farm Heritage Day the last Sunday in September. The Prairielands GCD Water Education Trailer has been hosted at these events in previous years.

In addition to the wildflower grant, the Texas Land Conservancy recently completed a conservation easement for the farm. The property is located in the Northern Blackland Prairie, an endangered grassland ecoregion that runs from the Red River to San Antonio. The farm's property also features deciduous bottomland woodlands and creek that run through the property and feed into Lake Waxahachie. With the official protection it will preserve the agricultural heritage, critical wildlife habitat and water resources. The prairie will be restored with help from the Native Prairies Association of Texas.



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## Expanding the Toolbox: Free Water Loss Resources for Public Water Systems and Operators

Did you know the Texas Water Development Board provides resources for public retail water systems to help make the most of their water loss audit, reduce and repair leaks, and conserve water? As more winter weather blows our way, we at Prairielands GCD know the public retail water systems have been working diligently since the “snowpocalypse” of 2021 to continue providing safe and reliable water to their customers. The good news is there are resources available for these kinds of situations, and we wanted to ensure you were aware of these opportunities provided by TWDB to help mitigate water loss and sustain revenues.

### Free Leak Detection Equipment

Knowing there is a leak is one thing, but locating it can sometimes be tricky, especially with large systems. As a conservation initiative, TWDB loans acoustical leak detection and ultrasonic flow meter testing equipment to help assist utilities identify leaks and determine flow rates. This program is designed to aid utilities in reducing water loss by locating leaks within the distribution system and verifying flow rates from production meters. The equipment ranks among the industry’s best current technology and can filter out unwanted sound frequencies that would otherwise prevent you from pinpointing the leaks. This equipment can be borrowed for 30-days and as many times as necessary throughout the year. The equipment is free to borrow, the utilities only cost is to prepay for return shipping. For more information on the resources listed above, please visit [www.twdb.texas.gov/conservation/resources/waterloss-resources.asp](http://www.twdb.texas.gov/conservation/resources/waterloss-resources.asp).



### Water Loss, Use, and Conservation (WLUC) Workshops

TWDB also conducts trainings based on the water use survey, water loss audit, and water conservation reports. Information on TWDB’s available financial assistance and other financial and technical assistance programs will also be included in the trainings.

The WLUC workshops, part of TWDB’s Technical Assistance for Water Loss Control program (TAWLC), looks at water loss from a water stewardship perspective. Public utility revenue loss, collecting and reporting accurate data, assessing, auditing, and data validation will be reviewed. Data validation is accomplished using TWDB’s assessment scales which help utilities identify action items for water loss control. The WLUC workshops are provided at no cost to participants and approved for 4 hours of continuing education for licensed water operators through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. To register, please visit [www.twdb.texas.gov/conservation/municipal/waterloss/auditor\\_training.asp](http://www.twdb.texas.gov/conservation/municipal/waterloss/auditor_training.asp)

TWDB Conservation staff will be conducting virtual workshops via webinar on the following dates:

- **Thursday, February 10th**
- **Wednesday, March 9th**
- **Tuesday, April 12th**

# Prevent and Manage Water Leaks at Home During Fix-A-Leak Week 2022

Are you ready to chase down leaks? Household leaks can waste nearly 1 trillion gallons of water annually nationwide, so each year we hunt down the drips during Fix a Leak Week. Mark your calendars for EPA's annual Fix a Leak Week, March 14 through 20, 2022—but remember that you can find and fix leaks inside and outside your home to save valuable water and money all year long.

**The average household's leaks can account for nearly 10,000 gallons of water wasted every year and ten percent of homes have leaks that waste 90 gallons or more per day.** Common types of leaks found in the home are worn toilet flappers, dripping faucets, and other leaking valves. These types of leaks are often easy to fix, requiring only a few tools and hardware that can pay for themselves in water savings.



To check for leaks in your home, you first need to determine whether you're wasting water and then identify the source of the leak. Check your water meter before and after a one-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter changes at all, you probably have a leak.

## Toilet Leaks

Old or worn-out toilet flappers (e.g., valve seal) can cause leaks. Flappers are inexpensive rubber parts that can build up minerals or decay over time. Replacing them can be a quick and easy fix for your water woes. To fix this leak, consult your local hardware store, home improvement retailer, or licensed plumber.

## Faucet Leaks

Old and worn faucet washers and gaskets frequently cause leaks in faucets. A leaky faucet that drips at the rate of one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons per year. That's the amount of water needed to take more than 180 showers! Many tutorials are available online for how to fix a wide variety of faucets.

## Showerhead Leaks

A showerhead leaking at 10 drips per minute wastes more than 500 gallons per year. That's the amount of water it takes to wash 60 loads of dishes in your dishwasher. Some leaky showerheads can be fixed by making sure there is a tight connection between the showerhead and the pipe stem and by using pipe tape to secure it. For more complicated valve leaks in showers that drip when not in use, contact an experienced handyperson or licensed plumber.

## Outdoor Leaks

If you have an in-ground irrigation system, check it each spring before use to make sure it wasn't damaged by frost or freezing. An irrigation system that has a leak 1/32nd of an inch in diameter (about the thickness of a dime) can waste about 6,300 gallons of water per month. If you need help, hire a licensed irrigation professional to repair leaks and maximize the system's efficiency.





## PGCD Board of Directors Adopt Amendments to District Rules

The Board of Directors for Prairielands GCD held a public hearing on December 20, 2021, to adopt amendments to the District Rules regulating water wells within the boundaries of the District, including Ellis, Hill, Johnson and Somervell counties. The adopted amendments to the District Rules went into effect January 1, 2022.

The adopted amendments to the District Rules included requiring any well equipped with a variable frequency drive capable of being set in a manner that would allow the well to operate at a production capacity higher than authorized by the District to be equipped with a flow restrictor that mechanically restricts the production capacity of the well at the wellhead to the authorized amount. The deadline to drill, equip, complete, or substantially alter a well increased from one hundred twenty (120) days to one hundred eighty (180) days from the date of approval of the well registration or permit. The amendments also allow semiannual meter reading and water production reporting for small well owners that are not public water systems and that produce no more than 10,000,000 gallons annually, as well as eliminated the use of a geographic weighted centroid to calculate the minimum spacing distances from property lines and from existing wells and allows the general manager to approve exceptions to the minimum well spacing requirements in certain instances. Additionally, the amendments establish minimum spacing requirements between new small-capacity wells and existing wells and clarify spacing requirements for new large-capacity wells from existing wells on the same property and increase the required minimum tract size for a single domestic well serving two or more households.

Other amendments included establishing certain requirements for pump installers and well owners relating to equipping a well and clarifying requirements regarding well screening and completion based on the information provided in the approved application for a registration or permit. The amendments also clarify the calculation of contiguous controlled acreage for Operating Permits for retail public utilities based on the type of certificate of convenience and necessity (CCN) held by the retail public utility and amends the provisions in the District Rules relating to compliance orders. The amendments also establish a minimum threshold and other limitations for eligibility for the monthly water use fee payment option, amended the general manager's authority to enter into settlements for rules violations, establishes permitting requirements and increased fees for average system water loss by public water systems above certain percentages to prevent waste and promote water conservation, any temporary transitional rules provisions that have expired were eliminated, and other non-substantive clarifying and conforming changes.

The adopted amendments to the District Rules are necessary to support the District's efforts in managing the ground-water resources within the boundaries of the District. Information about the public hearing and copies of the amended District Rules are available on the District's website at [www.prairielandsgcd.org](http://www.prairielandsgcd.org), and physical copies can be obtained by visiting the District office at 208 Kimberly Drive in Cleburne.





## Rainwater Harvesting 101 Workshop Planned for March 19

Prairielands GCD will be hosting another Rainwater Harvesting 101 workshop on March 19, 2022 for local residents to learn more about the basics and benefits of rainwater harvesting. Participants will join 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 include 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 will install ball-valve spigots towards the bottom of the barrel for outflow of the collected rainwater, and also fasten on screens to the openings of the rain barrel to keep out mosquitoes, debris, and leaves. Attendees of the workshop will be able to take these barrels home and implement them right away just in time for the spring and early summer rainshowers. To learn more about rainwater harvesting and to register for the workshop, please visit [www.prairielandsgcd.org/education/rainwater-harvesting/](http://www.prairielandsgcd.org/education/rainwater-harvesting/)

## Now Scheduling the Water Education Trailer for Spring 2022

The WET, or Water Education Trailer, 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 over 120 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 email [sinclair@prairielandsgcd.org](mailto:sinclair@prairielandsgcd.org) to schedule a visit!



## 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

**February 21** Presidents Day  
PGCD Office Closed

**March 21** PGCD Board Meeting  
9:00 a.m.  
208 Kimberly Dr  
Cleburne, TX 76031

**April 18** PGCD Board Meeting  
9:00 a.m.  
208 Kimberly Dr  
Cleburne, TX 76031

**February 22** PGCD Board Meeting  
9:00 a.m.  
208 Kimberly Dr  
Cleburne, TX 76031

**April 15** Good Friday  
PGCD Office Closed

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

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