

Prairielands eLine

The Newsletter of the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District

Summer 2022 | Vol. 8, Iss. 3

Public Hearing on Proposed Amendments to District Rules Scheduled for July 18, 2022

The Board of Directors (“Board”) of the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District (“District”) will hold a public hearing, accept public comment, and may act to adopt amendments to the District Rules regulating water wells within the boundaries of the District, including Ellis, Hill, Johnson, and Somervell Counties, Texas. Prior to its adoption of these amendments, the Board adopted permanent District Rules on December 17, 2018, and has subsequently amended them. The proposed amendments to the District Rules include: (1) giving the Board permissive authority to increase groundwater production by Board resolution during periods of extreme drought by authorizing permittees to overproduce their permits by a certain percentage designated by the Board in any calendar year in a collective total amount that will still promote achievement of the desired future conditions for the aquifers; (2) requiring permittees that are required by law to have drought contingency plans to implement those plans in order to be eligible for the increased groundwater production; (3) granting the Board similar permissive authority to increase production for a calendar year by resolution for a specific public water system or other permittee that is experiencing an emergency or other unforeseen event that could cause imminent public health or safety risks; and (4) other minor clarifying or non-substantive changes.

This hearing will be held on Monday, July 18, 2022, beginning at 9:00 a.m., at the District office located at 208 Kimberly Drive, Cleburne, TX 76031. Any person who desires to appear at the hearing and present comment or other information on the proposed adoption of amendments to the District Rules may do so in person, by legal representative, or both. Comments may be presented verbally or in written form. Limits may be placed on the amount of time that each person is allowed to present verbal comments. Persons interested in submitting written comments on the proposed amendments may do so by sending any such comments to the District office at 208 Kimberly Drive, Cleburne, TX 76031. The Board may act to adopt the amendments to the rules as proposed or with additional changes based upon comments and discussion at the hearing. The hearing posted in this notice may be recessed from day to day or continued where appropriate. At any time during the hearing, the Board may recess into a closed session under Section 551.071, Government Code, to receive legal advice regarding the rules amendments.

The public hearing is available to all persons regardless of disability. If you require special assistance to attend the hearing, please contact the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District at (817) 556-2299 at least 24 hours in advance of the hearing.

A copy of the proposed amendments to the District Rules may be requested by email at kjones@prairielandsgcd.org, is available for reviewing or downloading at www.prairielandsgcd.org, and may be reviewed, inspected, or obtained in person at the District office located at 208 Kimberly Drive, Cleburne, TX 76031. For more information, contact the District’s General Manager, Kathy Turner Jones, at (817) 556-2299.

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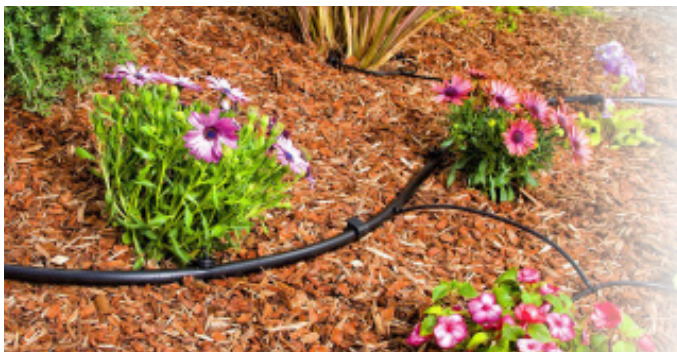
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Make the Most of Every Drop During Drought

With rising temperatures and record-breaking winds, paired with the lack of precipitation historically seen during this time of year, it is very evident that drought conditions have gripped a large portion of the state, including Ellis, Hill, Johnson and Somervell counties. It is important now more than ever to be efficient with the watering residents do during this time. According to the Texas Water Development Board, outdoor water use can account for 50 to 80 percent of home water use during the summertime.



One way you can help conserve water outdoors is to know the most efficient approaches to applying water to your lawn, flowerbeds, trees, and shrubs. Sprinkler systems are popular because they are convenient and supply large areas of a landscape with plenty of water. With careful timing of zone watering and proper selection of spray nozzles, these systems can be adjusted to water in a reasonably efficient manner. Monitor zone settings and adjust throughout the year to meet changing weather conditions and landscape needs. Be sure that water is not applied to non-pervious areas such as sidewalks and driveways, and areas with different watering needs are on separate zones.



Drip irrigation systems are very efficient (use up to 60% less water) at supplying water to smaller areas of a landscape. Drip irrigation places a small, steady amount of water close to the roots. Almost 95% of drip irrigation water can reach a plant, while traditional automatic sprinklers are much less efficient. Drip irrigation can nearly eliminate water loss caused by evaporation and drift, as well as reduce erosion and runoff. Although drip irrigation does use less water, the watering schedule still needs to be appropriate for weather conditions and landscape needs.



Hand watering means using a combination of hose-end yard sprinklers that have to be moved and the use of a handheld hose, or even using a watering can. For most applications, the first thing to consider is using a sprinkler or spray nozzle that does not produce a fine mist. Fine mist evaporates more quickly and is easily blown out of the area you want to water. When using a sprinkler on your lawn, be sure that you deliver the amount of water needed. Make sure and set a timer or set up a reminder so you don't forget to move the sprinkler and over water.

While there has not been a steady amount of precipitation seen in recent months, there are methods that can be used to maximize the precious rainfall that we do receive. Rainwater harvesting is an innovative alternative water supply approach that captures, diverts, and stores rainwater for later use. Implementing rainwater harvesting is beneficial because it reduces demand on existing water supply, and reduces run-off, erosion, and contamination of surface water. Rainwater is superior for landscape use and plants thrive on rainwater. Rainwater harvesting also reduces flow to storm sewers and lowers the threat of flooding. Additionally, rainwater harvesting helps

create conservation-minded behaviors which can allow utilities to reduce peak demands during summer months. However, it is important to check any city or county ordinances regarding the use of harvested rainwater.

Lastly, opting to plant native and adapted plants is the ideal choice for water efficient landscapes in Texas. Some of the characteristics that lead Texans to incorporate native or adapted plants include their tolerance for drought and heat, water efficiency, and low pesticide and fertilizer requirements. Vitex, lantana, and red yucca are just a few of the native plants that have low water demands and provide a gorgeous pop of color to your landscaping while only requiring the fraction of the water that non-native plants require. A bonus is that native plants can attract pollinators and hummingbirds.

Applying water efficiently, utilizing harvested rainwater, and opting to landscape with native and adapted plants will allow you to make the most of the water use outdoors during this critical time. Your participation in these conservation approaches will help protect and sustain our local water resources. To learn about more ways to conserve water, please visit www.prairielandsgcd.org.

Conservation in Action at the Prairielands GCD Office

The Prairielands GCD office facilities utilize all of the conservation practices mentioned above. The rainwater harvesting systems at the District office are utilized to irrigate certain landscaped areas at the building via a drip irrigation system. The demonstration garden serves as a supplemental education piece for the public to see real life landscape examples which utilize native plants, a rain garden, drip irrigation, and xeriscape beds. The demonstration gardens promote the additional use of water-conserving practices by using plants with low water requirements and utilizing rainwater as an irrigation source. All areas that are irrigated by harvested rainwater are designated by garden signs.



Summary of Spring 2022 Educational Outreach

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. The District also hosted several conservation workshops focused on rainwater harvesting and native landscaping. Here are some photos and information about spring 2022 educational presentations. Staff presented to 1,545 students in grades K-7 from 11 different school districts inside Johnson, Ellis, Hill and Somervell Counties. There were also 50 people who attended the conservation workshops.

Participants in the District's native landscaping workshop work together on a landscape plan utilizing native plants



5th grade students from Abbott ISD asked great questions about indoor water conservation during a demonstration in the WET.



Local residents pose with their new DIY rain barrels after a rainwater harvesting workshop



4-H Water Ambassadors Complete Leadership Academy

The 2022-2023 cohort of Texas 4-H Water Ambassadors embarked on a week-long tour across the state to learn more about protecting and managing water resources in Texas.

During their travels, ambassadors completed the wetland ecology course at John Bunker Sands Wetland Center, heard from North Plains Groundwater Conservation District in Dumas and Gateway Groundwater Conservation District in Quanah on efficient irrigation practices with center pivots and subsurface drip, the importance of selecting crop varieties suited to climate, soil and economic constraints, as well as effective water education activities for youth, and toured the City of Brownfield's water storage, treatment, and distribution facility.



Prairielands GCD has been a sponsor of the program since 2017, and currently there are three ambassadors representing counties within the District. Zane Ball of Johnson County, Hannah Lewis of Hill County, and Emma Pool of Johnson County. 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. For more information on the program, please visit www.prairielandsgcd.org/education/texas-4-h-water-ambassadors/



Staff Spotlight: Jose Sarmiento

Field Technician – Joined PGCD in March 2022

Tell us a little about yourself.

"I was born and raised in Cleburne, and I am the oldest of four siblings. Before I started working at the District, I worked for eight years at the Johnson County corrections facility here in Cleburne."

Do you have any hobbies outside of work?

"Video games have always been my main hobby, pretty much ever since I can remember. Really anything that involving technology is really intriguing to me. Boxing and Mixed Martial Arts or really any combat sport would be one of the things that really consumes my free time as well.

Here recently I've been enjoying learning construction and remodeling from my cousin who is a full-time builder. I just purchased my own home in 2021 and really enjoy doing projects around the house to make it better. I am big on family though, and everything I do is for my family. I just hope to do the best to set a good example for them and make them proud."

What do you enjoy about working at PGCD?

"It's such a breath of fresh air. Coming from working at a place with over 400 employees to working at an office with ten employees, my biggest enjoyment would be the teamwork around the office. Everyone here is willing to stop to help you or teach you. I really enjoy that and how well everyone works together."

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 4 **Independence Day**
PGCD Office Closed

Aug 15 **PGCD Board Meeting**
9:00 a.m.
208 Kimberly Dr
Cleburne, TX 76031

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

July 18 **PGCD Public Hearing and Board Meeting**
9:00 a.m.
208 Kimberly Dr
Cleburne, TX 76031

Sept 5 **Labor Day**
PGCD Office Closed

Oct 17 **PGCD Board Meeting**
9:00 a.m.
208 Kimberly Dr
Cleburne, TX 76031

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