

# Prairielands eLine

The Newsletter of the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District

Fall 2023 | Vol. 9, Iss. 3  
October 24, 2023

## Board Adopts Resolution Authorizing Increase of Groundwater Production During 2023's Extreme Drought

Following consecutive summer days of triple digit temperatures and no rainfall, most of the District has regressed into "extreme" drought with 22.55% of the District in "exceptional" drought based on the September 14, 2023 data provided by the U.S. Drought Monitor. In consideration of these extreme drought conditions, the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District's Board of Directors, during their September 18th board meeting, adopted a resolution under District Rule 5.10 to provide some relief from this year's extreme drought to water well permit holders. The resolution allows each water well permittee of the District to produce an additional 10% of groundwater over and above their total annual permitted amount in calendar year 2023 if they comply with the terms of the resolution, which requires:

- timely payment of water use fees for the excess water produced; and
- for permittees that are public water systems, implementation of their drought contingency plans during calendar year 2023, including mandatory water use restrictions.

Overpumping produced in compliance with the drought resolution will not be subject to enforcement action by the District.

During discussions regarding the ongoing drought with the District's hydrogeologist, it has been determined that allowing this amount of additional groundwater pumping for calendar year 2023 will not hinder the District's ability to achieve the management goals it has set for each of the aquifers in the District. However, if the drought continues

for multiple years, there is no guarantee that additional water will be available for permittees in future calendar years. The Board of Directors will reassess water availability in future years based on drought conditions and how much groundwater pumping has occurred at that time.

District staff have been and will continue to monitor monthly groundwater production reports from all permittees to attempt to identify those permit holders that can benefit from the additional groundwater production authorized by the drought resolution. All permittees are encouraged to monitor their own actual pumping as compared to their permitted amount and contact the District staff at (817) 556-2299 if they foresee they will exceed their permit limit by the end of this year.

In addition to timely payment of water use fees, permittees that are public water systems are required to submit proof to the District that they have implemented their drought contingency plans, including mandatory water use restrictions, in order to qualify for the 10% additional production authorization. The District is committed to working with those permittees who are doing their own part to manage the extreme drought conditions by implementing their drought contingency plans.

The District will invoice permittees monthly for groundwater amounts produced in excess of the total annual permitted amount under the drought resolution, and the final deadline to pay all water use fees for all overproduced water in calendar year 2023 will be February 15, 2024.

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# Recent Board of Directors' News: Shaping the Future

## Board of Directors Appointments

During September's Board of Directors meeting, four dedicated directors were sworn in after their reappointment by the Commissioner's Court in their respective counties. Standing from left to right, the reappointed directors are Barney McClure representing Johnson County, John Curtis from Somervell County, Charles Beseda serving Hill County, and Maurice Osborn out of Ellis County. These directors will play a pivotal role in making informed decisions that will have a lasting impact on the District's water conservation and sustainability efforts. We look forward to their continued service and leadership in the years to come.



## Increase to 2024 Water Use Fees

In a public meeting on August 21, 2023, the Prairielands GCD ("District") Board of Directors voted to increase the 2024 water use fees \$0.02 per each one thousand gallons for all non-agricultural groundwater permitted. Since its creation in 2009, the District has continually held its water use fees at 20 cents per 1,000 gallons. However, the current economic direction of continued escalating costs and inflation has been felt by all, including the District. Following review of projected revenues, projects, and growing inflation the Board of Directors determined it necessary and appropriate to set the water use fees at \$0.22 per 1,000 gallons.

The production fee of \$1.00 per acre-foot of groundwater used annually for agricultural purposes will remain unchanged. In addition, the existing 50% export surcharge will continue to be applied to groundwater produced within the District that is transported for use outside of the District set forth in District Rule 7.2.

## Board Adopts Amendments to Rules

In a public meeting on January 17, 2023, the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District ("District") amended its rules regulating water wells within the boundaries of the District, which include Ellis, Hill, Johnson, and Somervell Counties. The amendments provide clarity for well owners and operators on several provisions of the rules and are immediately effective.

The proposed amendments to the District Rules encompassed a variety of changes, including exemptions for temporary water well drilling, a petition process for rule amendments, updates for permit procedures, adjustments to water audit requirements, modifications to test well criteria, changes to well drilling deadlines, and revisions to meter accuracy standards. They also address shared well regulations, well spacing requirements, and introduce other minor clarifications and nonsubstantive adjustments.

The adopted amendments to the District Rules are necessary to support the District's efforts in managing the groundwater 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.

## District Completes Drilling of a New Monitor Well



Groundwater, often referred to as the hidden treasure beneath our feet, plays an indispensable role in supplying water for agriculture, industry, and our homes. Groundwater Districts are vital guardians of this precious resource, tasked with managing and conserving it for the benefit of current and future generations. One essential tool in their arsenal is the establishment of comprehensive monitoring well programs, which are the backbone of effective groundwater management.

Monitoring well programs provide invaluable data on the quantity of groundwater in a given area. This data is the foundation for informed decision-making, as it allows the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District (“District”) to assess trends, changes, and the potential impacts of various water uses. With this knowledge, we can create effective strategies to protect and sustainably manage groundwater resources. The monitoring well program provides the essential data required to ensure that these rules align with the current needs for sustaining groundwater resources. This not only safeguards the resource itself but also ensures a level playing field for all stakeholders. Groundwater management is not static; it requires constant adjustment based on the latest information and changing conditions. The use of our Monitoring Well Program offers real-time insights, allowing for adaptive management strategies that can be adjusted to evolving circumstances.

Over the past year and a half, the District has been diligently expanding its Monitoring Well Program. At the close of the previous year, the District embarked on a noteworthy milestone in the program's growth by drilling a new monitor well. The journey from site selection to completion has encompassed meticulous planning.

When determining both the drilling location and depth, numerous factors were taken into account. This included assessing high-production zones, unexplored areas where wells had not been previously drilled, and locations with the most advantageous water levels. In August, the District initiated the drilling of a new monitor well. While staff members had been consistently adding drilled wells to the program, this marked the first instance where the District meticulously chose the well's location and depth. The drilling process spanned approximately 1.5 months, reflecting the commitment to the responsible management of this invaluable resource. Situated at the perimeter of a high-production zone, this monitoring well will provide insights into the directional flow of groundwater, moving from west to east. As the District proceeds with the expansion of its monitoring well program, anticipate the District's initiatives to include the planning and drilling of new monitoring wells in areas currently lacking them.



# A Review of Public Relations Events and Impactful Connections

Over the past few months, our Public Relations and Education staff have been dedicated to community outreach, actively participating in a series of impactful events. These initiatives have not only allowed for the sharing of knowledge but have also played a pivotal role in promoting responsible water use. The engagement with residents and businesses fosters a sense of shared responsibility for the management of our precious groundwater resources.



One notable asset in our education outreach is the Water Education Trailer, also known as the “WET.” The WET recently made appearances at two events: the Ellis County Rural Heritage Farm’s annual Farm Heritage Day and the Cleburne Chamber of Commerce’s Food Truck Festival and Business Expo. Inside the WET, District staff conduct enlightening demonstrations on water conservation, sustainability, and aquifer science. Depending on the event, an informative booth is also set up alongside the WET, providing valuable insights into topics such as rainwater harvesting and irrigation.

In addition to these events, the District actively engages with developers, builders, and real estate professionals. The open dialogue with real estate experts allows us to address groundwater-related considerations when residents purchase homes in areas impacted by groundwater conditions. This continuous engagement reflects our commitment to educating and collaborating with the community, reinforcing responsible water usage, resource protection, and the long-term sustainability of groundwater resource. The District continually welcomes the chance to engage in conversations about groundwater conservation.



# Groundwater Management 8 Update



Kicking off 2023, Groundwater Management 8 (“GMA 8”) has agreed to undertake an important endeavor by updating the Northern Trinity Groundwater Availability Model (NT-

GAM). Notably, this update is yielding improved run times and enhancing efficiency. INTERA, the technical consulting firm, is diligently collaborating with GMA 8 comprising of eleven Groundwater Districts to compile the necessary data. The dedicated consultant team is making headway, focusing on structural enhancements and calibration scripts, while integrating recharge information.

The NTGAM serves as a critical tool for resource management in the Northern Trinity region. It provides a holistic view of available groundwater resources, facilitating effective and sustainable resource management. This is particularly essential in areas with diverse stakeholders, such as agriculture, industry, and residential users, who depend on groundwater. The model also supports informed planning and allocation of groundwater resources, enabling equitable distribution. It plays a pivotal role in the development of policies and regulations for responsible groundwater management, preventing overuse and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Currently technical consultants continue to work on updating the model and are on track to meet their proposed completion timeline for review by TWDB in the summer of 2024.



## PGCD Office Certified Wildlife Habitat

Our District office has achieved an exciting milestone by becoming a certified wildlife habitat. This recognition was earned by meeting specific requirements that focus on creating a welcoming environment for birds, butterflies, and various neighborhood wildlife. To receive this certification, our office developed a wildlife habitat garden that provides essential elements for local wildlife. This includes native plants for food, accessible water sources, shelter from inclement weather, and safe spaces for wildlife to raise their young. By maintaining sustainable practices in our yard and garden, we ensure that our environment remains a healthy and clean haven for the wildlife that graces our office surroundings.





# 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

### November

- 10 In Observance of Veteran's Day**  
PGCD Office Closed
- 13 PGCD Board Meeting**  
9:00 a.m.  
208 Kimberly Dr  
Cleburne, TX 76031
- 16 WET - Rio Vista Middle School**  
Rio Vista, TX

### December

- 12 WET - Pleasant View Elementary**  
Godley, TX
- 18 PGCD Board Meeting**  
9:00 a.m.  
208 Kimberly Dr  
Cleburne, TX 76031
- 22-29 Christmas Holiday**  
PGCD Office Closed

General Manager  
Kathy Turner Jones

**Board:**

President  
Charles Beseda  
Hill County

Vice President  
Paul Tischler  
Johnson County

Secretary/Treasurer  
Maurice Osborn  
Ellis County

Director  
Marty McPherson  
Somervell County

Director  
Kathy Tucker  
Ellis County

Director  
John Curtis  
Somervell County

Director  
Brad Daniels  
Hill County

Director  
Barney McClure  
Johnson County

### Be Sure to Connect with Us on Social Media!



www.prairielandsgcd.org  
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