

Prairielands eLine

Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District
www.prairielandsgcd.org

Interim Activity and Upcoming Legislative Session

While the Texas Legislature only gathers in session every other year, that year in between (or “the Interim” as it is known) is always busy for water professionals as they lay the groundwork for the next session. This Interim, the Texas Water Conservation Association and the Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts focused on a number of issues they want to take to our state’s leaders.

First on the agenda is an Advisory Committee Bill which would allow Groundwater Management Areas (GMAs) to add voting or non-voting members to the GMA. The bill would also require the appointment of a joint planning advisory committee composed of the chair of each regional water planning group located in the GMA and interest group representatives.

The Proposed Export Amendments bill would amend current export permit provisions by al-



tering and clarifying the factors to be considered by a groundwater conservation district (GCD) when issuing an export permit or adding an export condition to an operation permit and providing for automatic extension of an expired export permit or condition to conform to the term of the related operation permit.

Another area of concern deals with permit application administrative completeness. The proposed bill would limit the list of items a GCD can require for a permit application to what is already listed in statute as well as other information included in a district rule. The bill also states that a GCD may

not require additional information for a determination of a permit’s administrative completeness.

Other issues still being discussed include bills which would provide for consideration of registered exempt wells in permitting decisions, the Desired Future Conditions (DFCs) adoption process, permits proposing the use of groundwater as an alternate source, and the addition of a definition of “modeled sustainable groundwater pumping” to Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code.

The opening day of the 85th session of the Texas Legislature was January 10, 2017.

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Special points of interest:

- Legislative Interim topics listed
 - Composting courses set for February and March.
 - Education trailer available for home school students.
 - Next board meeting set for Jan 16.
 - Groundwater Awareness Week is March 5-11, 2017
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Master Composter Classes Upcoming

Prairielands GCD, Bluebonnet RC&D, and the City of Cleburne are, once again, collaborating to offer two gardening classes this February and March.

The Master Composter Training Courses are open to any resident 18 years of age or older, and are scheduled to be held February 23, 24, and 25 and March 16, 17, and 18 at the Winston Patrick McGregor Park House, located at 1628 W. Henderson St., in Cleburne (76033).

Each year, nearly four million tons of yard trimmings in the form of leaves,



Students will learn to assemble their own bins and what materials are needed to create the best compost.

grass, tree limbs, weeds and other organic debris are thrown away in Texas. That amounts to almost 20 percent of all trash in municipal landfills.

In addition, Texans spend more than \$300 million each year disposing of yard trimmings, and billions in total yard care costs, including water, fertilizer, and chemicals to combat harmful insects and plant diseases. Costly synthetic fertilizers and pesticides allow chemicals to wash into lakes, streams, and underground water.

Composting is a simple biological process that breaks down leaves, grass clippings, wood chips, brush, and food scraps into a dark, crumbly, nutrient-rich, organic product. It's nature's way of recycling organic matter and returning it to the earth so that it may be used again.

This 14-hour course is designed to give students an in-depth look at composting, including its benefits and challenges. Additionally, students will be introduced to vermi-composting (composting with worms), hands-on bin building, and an understanding of the biology of composting. Students are expected to provide 20

hours of volunteer time back to the community over a 12-month period to help further environmental education. The first 30 students completing their 20 hours of volunteer time will receive a free backyard composting bin.



The first 30 students completing their 20 volunteer hours after the class will receive a free composting bin similar to the one above.

The fee for the course is \$20 per student and prior registration is required.

Class hours are Thursday and Friday, 6 to 9 p.m. and Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. A light lunch will be provided on Saturday. For more information and to register, contact Paula Burgess with Bluebonnet RC&D, at 817-733-5066.

Education Trailer Visits with Somervell County Homeschoolers



Home school students from Somervell and Hood counties learned about groundwater and aquifers during a presentation at the Texas AgriLife Extension Office in Glen Rose by the Prairielands GCD water education trailer staff on Friday, November 4, 2016.



In addition, County Agent Zach Davis talked about surface water issues such as erosion control.



Students particularly enjoyed the trailer's working aquifer model.

District Board Meetings Scheduled

The Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District Board of Directors holds regular monthly board meetings which are open to the public.

Meetings are normally scheduled for the 3rd Monday of the month in the Board Room of the Liberty Hotel, 205 S. Caddo St., Cleburne, TX, 76031. (Board meetings that fall on a holiday are scheduled for an alternate date.)

The Board's Work Session is scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m., with the Board Meeting following immediately after.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

January 16, 8:30 a.m.
February 21*, 8:30 a.m.
March 20, 8:30 a.m.

Liberty Hotel Board Room
205 S. Caddo Street
Cleburne, TX 76031

***3rd Tuesday**

Both meetings are open to the public, however, certain restricted topics may be reserved for discussion by directors during closed Executive Session. Such a session would be announced during the Board Meeting and attendees would be invited to return after discussions are concluded. No voting by board members is allowed during an Executive Session.

Meeting notices and agendas are publicly posted prior to the date of the meeting at the PGCD office and on the district's website - www.prairielandsgcd.org.

U.S. EPA Report on Hydraulic Fracturing & Drinking Water Resources Issued

The latest EPA report concludes that hydraulic fracturing (fracking) activities can impact drinking water resources under some circumstances and identifies factors that influence these impacts.

The report, ordered by Congress in 2010, was released in mid-December 2016, and states the EPA's findings more strongly than the June 2015 draft which found no evidence of "widespread, systemic impacts" on drinking water.

As part of the report, the EPA identified certain conditions under which impacts from hydraulic fracturing activities can be more frequent or severe, including:

- Water withdrawals for hydraulic fracturing in times or areas of low water availability, particularly in areas with limited or declining groundwater resources;

- Spills during the management of hydraulic fracturing fluids and chemicals or produced water that result in large volumes or high concentrations of chemicals reaching groundwater resources;
- Injection of hydraulic fracturing fluids into wells with inadequate mechanical integrity, allowing gases or liquids to move to groundwater resources;
- Injection of hydraulic fracturing fluids directly into groundwater resources;
- Discharge of inadequately treated hydraulic fracturing wastewater to surface water resources; and
- Discharge or storage of hydraulic fracturing wastewater in unlined pits, resulting in contamination of groundwater resources.

According to the Texas Railroad Commission, the state body that regulates hydraulic fracturing, the current rules that are in place are adequate to protect against contamination of our drinking water resources. As long as companies follow Texas Railroad Commission regulations for operation, there shouldn't be any problems with fracking.

It was noted that data gaps and uncertainties limited the EPA's ability to fully assess the potential impacts on drinking water resources both locally and nationally. Generally, comprehensive information on the location of activities in the hydraulic fracturing water cycle is lacking, either because it is not collected, not publicly available, or prohibitively difficult to aggregate.

For a copy of the study, visit www.epa.gov/hfstudy.



**PRAIRIELANDS GROUNDWATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**
ELLIS HILL JOHNSON SOMERVELL

Conserving, protecting, and enhancing
groundwater resources in Ellis, Hill,
Johnson, and Somervell counties

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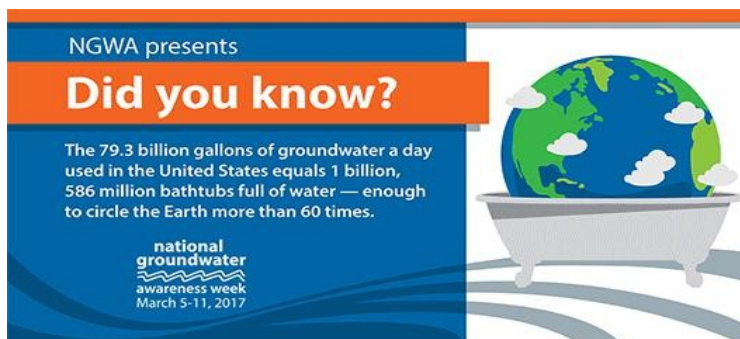
We're on the web at
prairielandsgcd.org.



In 2008 & 2009, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality designated large areas over the Trinity Aquifer from the Red River to Central Texas as Priority Groundwater Management Areas (PGMA) due to critical groundwater declines facing the area.

The Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District was created in 2009 by the 81st Texas Legislature with a directive to conserve, protect and enhance the groundwater resources of Ellis, Johnson, Hill and Somervell Counties in Texas.

National Groundwater Awareness Week is March 5–11, 2017



March 5 – 11, 2017 is National Groundwater Awareness Week. Groundwater is found in the spaces between particles and cracks in underground rock in formations known as aquifers. Even though it is out of sight, groundwater should not be far out of mind.

In Texas, groundwater provides 62% of all freshwater used, supplies 78%

of the water used by agriculture, and is a source of drinking water (from both public and private wells) for over 11.14 million Texans.

According to the 2017 State Water Plan developed by the Texas Water Development Board, groundwater supplied 62 percent of the 13.7 million acre-feet of water used in Texas in 2014. Farmers use about 78 per-

cent of this groundwater to irrigate crops. Approximately 18 percent of the water used for municipal needs was groundwater. Most of the western half of the State and a good part of the eastern half of the State rely primarily on groundwater resources.

Texans are fortunate to have the advantage of vast natural resources, among them clean and safe sources of drinking water. However, to ensure these continued resources we must all take a greater role in protecting our sources of drinking water.

Prairielands GCD may be able to help. Should you encounter incidents of water pollution occurring, please contact our office at (817) 556-2299.