

Prairielands eLine

The Newsletter of the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District

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Prairielands GCD Continues Commitment to Financial Responsibility

As inflation and rising costs continue to affect organizations across Texas, the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District (PGCD) remains committed to responsible financial management while minimizing the impact on permit holders.

This was clear during the PGCD Board of Directors' ('Board') meeting in July, when the Board approved the District's 2027 Water Use Fee Schedule. Effective January 1, 2027, the non-exempt, non-agricultural groundwater use fee will increase by **one cent per 1,000 gallons**. Agricultural groundwater producers will continue to pay **\$1.00 per acre-foot**, and exempt well owners will continue to be exempt from groundwater production fees.

The modest adjustment reflects the District's efforts to address increased operating costs while maintaining the programs and services that support groundwater conservation, permitting, scientific studies, and regulatory responsibilities throughout Hill,

Johnson, Ellis, and Somervell Counties.

"As with every organization, the District has experienced increased operating costs due to inflation and rising prices for goods and services," said PGCD Comptroller Brian Watts. "Our goal is to make only those adjustments necessary to continue providing quality service while remaining financially responsible."

The District also continues to emphasize long-term financial planning by maintaining adequate operating reserves, investing in durable equipment, and planning for future infrastructure and scientific needs.

"Conservative financial management isn't about spending less—it's about spending wisely. Our objective is to ensure the District remains financially prepared to meet its mission while minimizing the need for future fee increases," said General Manager Kathy Turner Jones.

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By taking a measured approach to budgeting and financial planning, the District strives to protect both its long-term financial stability and the groundwater resources entrusted to its care.



PGCD Board of Directors Adopts New High-Volume Groundwater Permit Requirements

As Texas continues to experience population growth and increased demand for water, communities across the state are asking how large-scale development—including industrial facilities, manufacturing, and data centers—may affect local groundwater resources.

The District has spent months at the center of these discussions. Whether you're chatting with our field technicians at your well, raising questions at an educational workshop, or just listening to our annual report at a county commissioners' meeting, you have constant access to our insight and expertise.

As District staff works to track trends and keep you informed, the District Board has been engaged in evaluating its rules to ensure the District has the tools needed to responsibly evaluate proposals for large-volume groundwater production while continuing to protect private property rights and

groundwater resources throughout Hill, Ellis, Johnson, and Somervell Counties.

Following a public hearing on **August 17**, the PGCD Board of Directors approved several amendments to the District's Rules designed to strengthen its review of **high-volume groundwater production applications**.

One of the most significant changes establishes a new **High-Volume Application** category. Under the new rules, any application requesting an increase in groundwater production authorization of **50 million gallons per year or more** will be subject to additional scientific review before being considered by the Board.

Applicants meeting this threshold will be required to conduct **site-specific aquifer testing**, prepare a **hydrogeologic report**, evaluate potential impacts to the aquifer and nearby wells, and provide additional public notice before the

application is presented to the Board for consideration.

The Board also adopted revisions to the District's definition of a **well system**. Under the amended rules, if multiple wells or permit applications are determined to function together to serve the same project or common purpose, the District may evaluate the groundwater production of the system as a whole when applying its Rules.

Additional amendments adopted by the Board update the District's enforcement provisions and civil penalty schedule to reflect recent changes in state law.

General Manager Kathy Turner Jones noted that the amendments are intended to ensure the District has the scientific information necessary to evaluate potential impacts from large-volume groundwater production while maintaining a fair and transparent permitting process.

"We appreciate everyone who participated in the rulemaking process," Jones said. "Public input is an important part of developing effective groundwater management policies, and we appreciate the thoughtful comments and engagement throughout the process."



Prairilands GCD is pleased to introduce our new Public Relations & Education Director.

Macy Kendrick has spent her career keeping her community informed. Macy earned her B.A. in Media Arts at the University of North Texas. She comes to us now from the Waco area, where she has spent the last several years working as a broadcast journalist. Moving forward, her communication acumen will allow the District to build on its strong foundation of transparency and collaboration.

4-H Summer Leadership Academy

By Dillon Bybee
Prairilands GCD Staff Geologist



This summer, I had the opportunity to serve as a chaperone for the Texas 4-H Water Ambassadors Tier 1 Leadership Academy. The program offered a group of 30 high school students the chance to learn the importance of water resources and see firsthand how organizations across Texas work to protect and manage this valuable resource. For both the students and I, this was a rewarding experience filled with education and leadership opportunities.

Our journey began in San Marcos, where we visited The Meadows Center and the San Marcos River Foundation. Students learned about river ecosystems, conservation efforts, and the importance of protecting Texas waterways. We received Texas Stream Team Training, sampled water from Spring Lake, and enjoyed a glass-bottom boat tour.

The next day our group continued to Austin. We visited Lloyd Gosselink Rochelle & Townsend, the Texas State Capitol, and the Texas Water Development Board. These interactions helped students understand how water policies are developed and how government, science, and communities function together to address water needs across the state.

The academy also included visits to our very own District office in Cleburne as well as our neighboring groundwater conservation district, Upper Trinity GCD. We enjoyed teaching these students about aquifers, water wells, groundwater management, and the role we play in preserving local water supplies.



We ended the trip by exploring surface water processes in North Texas. We travelled to Lake Bois d'Arc: the first major reservoir constructed in Texas in over 30 years. We also toured the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center, gaining a better understanding of how reservoirs and wetlands support booming populations.

One of the highlights of the trip was watching these students, aged 15-17, represent the Texas 4-H Water Ambassadors Program with maturity and respect. The ambassadors engaged in every activity, and they showed genuine curiosity throughout the week. The experiences gained during this Leadership Academy will help them become informed citizens and future leaders.

Prairielands GCD is proud to have been recognized as a signature sponsor of the Texas 4H Water Ambassadors Program in 2025 and is looking forward to welcoming four new participants from our area to the program in 2026!



Upcoming

August 17

PGCD Board Meeting

9:00 a.m.
208 Kimberly Dr
Cleburne, TX 76031

September
7

Labor Day

Office closed

September
10

Deadline to apply for operating permits to be heard at the September board meeting

September
21

PGCD Board Meeting

9:00 a.m.
208 Kimberly Dr
Cleburne, TX 76031

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Conservation District



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Prairielands Groundwater
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Prairielands GCD is always working with our permittees to keep them informed, making sure they always have the information they need to manage their groundwater resources. That partnership starts with our permitting department, which works one-on-one with local well owners to answer questions and help them stay up-to-date.

Just a few months ago, Rylee Barton joined our team as a Permitting & Compliance Specialist. Rylee is native to the District, and she served at the Johnson County District Clerk's office for several years. Now, Rylee looks forward to continue growing the District's relationships with its well owners.



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.



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