North Plains Water News

A Publication of the NORTH PLAINS GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Amending Management Plan and Rules to Achieve Desired Future Conditions

Since 2012, the district has been reviewing its management plan and rules to achieve the desired future conditions for the water resources in the district. A desired future condition (DFC) is a goal set through joint planning with other districts in the area that includes Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District, Hemphill County Underground Water Conservation District, and the northern part of High Plains Underground Water Conservation District. The district's DFCs are as follows:

1. Ogallala aquifer and Rita Blanca aquifer Desired Future Conditions –

A. Management Zone 1 - 40% volume in storage remaining in 50 years in Dallam, Hartley, Sherman and Moore Counties; and

B. Management Zone 2 - 50% volume in storage remaining in 50 years in Hansford, Hutchinson, Ochiltree and Lipscomb Counties.

2. Dockum aquifer Desired Future Conditions - the average decline in water levels will decline no more than 30 feet over the next 50 years.

The last public hearing for the district's proposed management plan is scheduled for May 14th at 9:30 am at the Hampton Inn. The proposed management plan can be viewed at www.northplainsgcd.org. new plan. In addition to the management plan, district stakeholders have been providing suggestions regarding how the district should develop rules to achieve DFCs, as well as amending the rules to potentially simplify some of the groundwater management procedures used by the district. "We want to clean up rules that need to be either modified or discarded as a result of the district's changing water conservation responsibilities to the state and local stakeholders," said Steve Walthour, District General Manager. Over the next several months the district will continue receiving public comment and meeting with stakeholder groups to gather input and suggestions regarding the proposed draft rules. Members of the board and staff have been receiving comment from interested parties in formal meetings and informal conversations for almost a year, since the preparations for the rule review process started. In February 2013, the general manager presented a draft of proposed rule amendments for discussion by the board. At the March board meeting directors discussed and reached consensus on necessary revisions. The board will be working on the specifics of the draft rules throughout the spring and summer.

Once the board has considered the draft, it will then propose the rule(s) to the public for public comment. After public comment has been received the board may adopt, amend or decline to adopt the proposed rule(s). An example of this process happened earlier this year with a rulemaking process that started last September when the board adopted Rule 3.5E that requires a landowner to meter all wells on a property when the owner applies for a permit to construct a well or amend an existing well permit on the property. During that same meeting the board declined to pass another proposed rule that would have caused a landowner to meter all of the wells on a property when the property was pooled.

Any proposed rule amendments will be posted for review on the district website and published in the newspaper prior to presentation at a public meeting. No proposed new or amended rules will take effect until adopted by the board of directors. The board proposing a rule does not mean it will be automatically adopted.

District and AgriLife Present Water Wise Living Conference

North Plains Groundwater Conservation District, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and the Moore County Extension Leadership Advisory Board hosted the first-ever Water Wise Living Conference in Dumas on Monday and Tuesday, April 15th and 16th at the Moore County Community Building. The program featured residential water conservation presentations on topics ranging from rainwater harvesting to lawn irrigation efficiency.

The keynote speaker for the event was Panhandle freelance writer/retired rancher/historian Delbert Trew. Trew wrote weekly news columns for almost 13 years for the Amarillo Globe News under the title "It's All Trew." He has been practicing rain water harvesting, brush and weed control and prevention of soil erosion for more than 18 years. Trew explained how he has constructed rain catchment systems to revitalize springs and creeks on his ranch near Alanreed.

Texas rainwater harvesting expert, Billy Kniffen, presented at the first Water Wise Living Conference in Dumas.

Also featured at the Water Wise Living Conference was Texas' Rainwater Harvesting Expert, Billy Kniffen. Kniffen served as Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's statewide water resource specialist, focusing on rainwater

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North Plains GCD "200-12 Project" Annual Report is Available

Though it was another dry growing season for the farmers in the North Plains Groundwater Conservation District, the "200-12 Reduced Irrigation on Corn Demonstration Project" did have a few bright spots in its third year. You can read about all the highs and lows in the 2012 Annual Report now available at the district offices or by logging on to www.northplainsgcd.org.

2012 was a challenging year for the demonstrators in the "200-12 Project" as it was for all producers in the High Plains. Participants encountered hail storms, high winds and drought. Overall, despite the challenging conditions in 2012, the "200-12 Project" yielded improved results compared to 2011, with 10 of 12 fields (83%) reaching bona fide grain harvest. In 2011, the worst drought in recorded history, only three of nine cooperators (33%) achieved grain harvest. For 2012, one demonstration field was cut for silage, while another was all but abandoned to redirect irrigation to another field. Of

the remaining 10 demonstration fields in 2012, four (40%) showed a net revenue gain compared to the control fields using traditional irrigation practices. All of the demonstrations saved precious groundwater.

For more on the 2012 report log on to www.northplainsgcd.org/news/extra.

General Manager's Legislative Update

By Steve Walthour

Steve Walthour, District General Manager

In 2012, hundreds of bills have been filed in the House and Senate of the Texas Legislature. All of the filed bills can be viewed on the State of Texas Legislature's website at www.legis.state.tx.us. This is an overview of just a few of the bills relating to water resources that the district is tracking.

HB 4

In March, the Texas House of Representatives approved House Bill 4 (HB 4) that would create a fund to finance water infrastructure projects listed in the State Water Plan. The State Water Plan is a result of 1997 Texas legislation that requires planning for the future of water in Texas. The plan is designed to meet the needs of people, businesses, and agricultural enterprises during times of drought. In 2012, the State Water Plan identified projects across the state to meet the water demands for a state whose population is expected to increase by 82 percent over the next 50 years.

HB 4, which was primarily authored by Representative Allen Ritter, Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, sets up the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT). The SWIFT is an infrastructure bank that operates as a revolving fund for financing to provide loans for reservoirs and other water supply projects in the State Water Plan. According to the plan municipal water providers will need nearly $27 billion in financial assistance from the state to implement the projects. The proposed fund would provide that amount over time with the help of a one-time withdrawal from the state's economic stabilization (rainy day) fund, along with $6 billion in general obligation bonds authorized by Texas voters for water in 2011. The bill focuses on conservation projects as part of the overall strategy to meet future needs and recognizes the need to ensure rural areas are supported by providing that:

- 20% of projects funded are for water conservation or reuse;
- 10% of projects funded are designed to serve rural areas;
- water conservation plans are developed and implemented; and
- overall conservation efforts are considered in the state's prioritization of strategies.

The governor, the Texas Association of Business, North Plains Groundwater Conservation District and others, support tapping the rainy day fund for water projects. Representative Ritter has a separate proposal to draw $2 billion from the rainy day fund to help finance the loans. There are several other bills in the House and the Senate that propose using the rainy day fund for the same purpose. North Plains GCD has voiced its support for Senator Seliger's SB 224 that would use $1.6 billion from the rainy day fund. The board supports Seliger's bill because the Senator's office presented a well designed plan for financing water projects through a system of low cost loans. The board believes that it is critical to provide access to low cost loans for rural communities to develop and improve their water systems and overall conservation efforts within the state.

SB 272

Senate Bill 272, authored by Senator Seliger, relating to water well recordkeeping and reporting requirements, including the production and use of groundwater, passed favorably out of the Senate Natural Resources Committee in March. The bill requires that a groundwater conservation district keep records, and reports be made, of the drilling, equipping, and completing of water wells and of the production and use of groundwater. The bill further requires groundwater conservation districts to provide those records and reports to the Texas Water Development Board. The bill does not specifically require metering or reporting of metered data from individual producers. North Plains GCD supports the bill because we believe that collecting accurate production data is important for planning purposes. North Plains GCD has been collecting meter and alternative metering data since 2007. We analyze this data set, as well as other data sets, to characterize the aquifer conditions in our area. From these sets we create production reports on a county by county basis as well as for smaller geographic areas. The information is used in our district management planning, Groundwater Management Area planning, regional water planning, rulemaking, and working with the Texas

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Sherman County Director Resigns from North Plains GCD Board

Members of the North Plains Groundwater Conservation District Board of Directors accepted the resignation of Sherman County board representative, Wesley Spurlock. Spurlock submitted his resignation citing other obligations that are interfering with his ability to devote the time necessary to do the job. Spurlock serves as the finance chairman of the National Corn Growers Association Board. He is a liaison to the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and also an elected board member of the Texas Corn Producers Association and is serving as treasurer. He has served on the Texas State Technical Committee in cooperation with Farm Service Agency. Spurlock has represented Sherman County on the North Plains GCD Board for ten years. His father, Neal Spurlock represented the county on the board from1982 until Wesley took over the seat in 2003. Spurlock recommended Justin Crownover of Stratford to complete the remainder of his term. The board voted to accept the recommendation of Crownover as the new director for Sherman County.

***Rebekah Purl** is the district's public relations intern for the spring semester. A requirement for her internship credit is to create a blog about her experiences. Here's a sample of what she's been saying about being an intern at North Plains Groundwater Conservation District.*

I am a senior mass communication major at West Texas A&M University. As part of my degree plan, I am required to complete an internship to be able to graduate. Over my college career I have dabbled in a little bit of everything broadcasting-wise. I've worked with WT's college radio station, KWTS. I've managed WT's campus wide digital signage, and I have worked as a technical assistant managing and maintaining broadcasting equipment. When I first started my internship at North Plains Groundwater Conservation District, I realized another aspect of mass communication that I hadn't perused yet, public relations. This was a whole new world to me. I hadn't realized how intertwined the world of mass communication was. I thought that since I was a broadcaster I would always do broadcasting. Oh how wrong I was. I am beginning to love the PR world more and more everyday.

For my internship to count towards my degree, I have to complete a major project. After talking it over, Kirk Welch decided that a social media plan would help North Plains GCD the most right now. He wanted to know how to better use social media as an outlet to convey information and to gain understanding from the community. As I was doing research for the plan I learned numerous things about how social media can help advance your business and get your message out. I compiled multiple pages of research and then started to weed through the information I had found. Once I had the all the information I thought would be useful for North Plains GCD, I doctored it up to look presentable. After multiple edits and proof readings, I called it complete and sent it to Mr. Welch.

As the intern I have helped out wherever I can. On my first big day of work, I helped Mr. Welch with a soil lab. North Plains GCD goes to schools inside the district and teaches fourth and fifth graders about water conservation and soil. During the soil labs, the students complete an experiment testing which type of soil is more permeable. It was a blast getting to interact with all the kids and watch them learn and have fun. I look forward to being the teacher instead of the assistant during upcoming soil labs.

I also got to participate in a big media project. North Plains GCD broadcasts an advertisement on the radio stations in the district. I got to create this advertisement and then set up the run schedule for each radio station. It was really great to be able to bring in an aspect of mass communication that I know, but I still learned throughout the whole process.

This internship has been a great opportunity to learn more about the mass communication industry and what I can do within it. I enjoy coming to work everyday because I know I am going to learn something new that will help me succeed for the rest of my life.

For more on Rebekah's experiences at North Plains GCD go to purlinternwisdom.blogspot.com. The district's internships are designed to give students real world work experience, an overview of the mission and functions of the district, and an opportunity to apply their specific skills to contribute to the district's conservation efforts.

USGS Back in the District for Second Year of Water Quality Testing

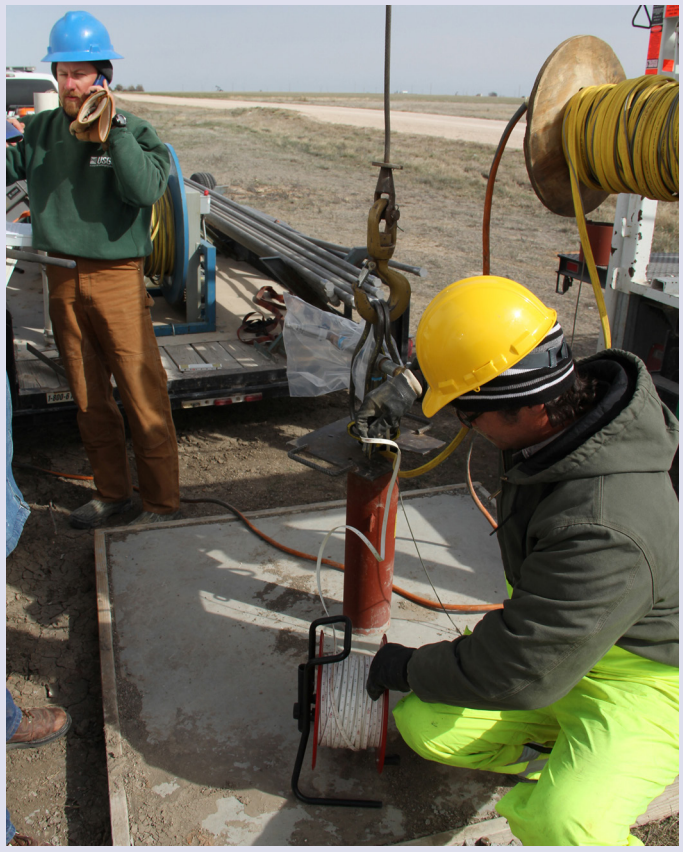
The United States Geological Survey (USGS) was back in the area in late March 2013. USGS personnel and district staff were collecting groundwater samples from select district wells for water quality testing. These 2013 activities are part of Phase II of a joint water quality sampling project that is to take place over three years. Phase one was completed in 2012 and Phase II is currently underway. Phase III scheduled for 2014 will bring the project to completion with published results.

Dale Hallmark, District Assistant General Manager/ Hydrologist said the preliminary data from the first year's samples help to confirm and quantify the area's water quality conditions. "While we are seeing no surprises so far, we now know specific values for various characteristics of the groundwater in the wells that have been tested."

According to Hallmark, the study will establish a scientific water quality baseline by performing extensive testing on samples taken from about 35 existing monitor wells drilled by the district. The samples will be analyzed for standard mineral analyses as well as select trace element analyses. The project results will form the core informational database of the district's on-going groundwater monitoring program and will be expanded upon into the future.

"While it is premature to draw conclusions with only half the results available, the preliminary first year results do not indicate unsafe water quality issues in the areas sampled. However, when complete, it is possible the study will identify areas of concern that we will need to investigate in more detail," said Hallmark.

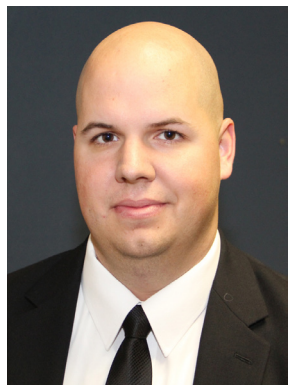
The USGS was created by an act of Congress in 1879 and is the only science agency of the Department of the Interior. According to the USGS official website, the mission of the USGS is to serve "…the nation by providing reliable scientific information to describe and understand the Earth; minimize loss of life and property from natural disasters; manage water, biological, energy, and mineral resources; and enhance and protect our quality of life." USGS employs 10,000 scientists and professionals from diverse fields to address some of our nation's greatest natural resource concerns.



USGS crew takes water quality samples as part a joint project with the district to enhance both agencies' data in the region.

The samples will all be analyzed by the USGS National Water Quality Laboratory (NWQL) in Denver, CO, and the USGS Organic Geochemistry Research Laboratory (OGRL) in Lawrence, KS. The USGS will also benefit from the joint project by expanding their water quality database for the Texas Panhandle.

North Plains GCD Hires Agriculture Engineer



Paul Sigle,
New District Ag Engineer

North Plains Groundwater Conservation District is pleased to announce the hiring of Paul Sigle as an Agriculture Engineer. Sigle graduated from Texas A&M University in December 2012 with a degree in Biological and Agricultural Engineering with an emphasis on environmental and natural resources. Sigle will be coordinating the Efficient Profitable Irrigation on Corn or EPIC Project. The EPIC Project is commercial-scale irrigation efficiency demonstration program funded by the district and operated in cooperation with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Sigle will also help expand agriculture conservation programs, act as liaison with other organizations, monitor research and other activities at the North Plains Research Field, and research funding opportunities for conservation programs. Sigle said he is looking forward to his time with the district as he continues to learn and gain experience in his field. He also said he is excited to contribute to the district's mission of maintaining the community's way of life through conservation, protection, and preservation of our groundwater resources.

Sigle served as an intern for the district last summer installing and maintaining monitoring equipment related to the "200-12 Project." Previous internship experiences include irrigation, cultivation and pest control of an organic orchard in Spicewood, Texas, and quality control and testing at the Spoetzl Brewery in Shiner, Texas.

General Manager's Legislative Update

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Water Development Board on their statewide estimates. Annually we create a report for the public based on hydrologic conditions which include our estimated groundwater production within our area. Through our metering program we have shown we actually use less groundwater in our area than indicated by previous indirect estimates by the state.

Since districts must address how we will achieve DFCs, a district keeping records and reporting groundwater use annually seems reasonable. Whether a district uses meters, measurements from aquifer declines or tea leaves; this information, and understanding the quality of this information, will be necessary for Groundwater Management Area planning, regional water planning groups, the Texas Water Development Board and the district's own planning process.

SB 302

The committee substitute for SB 302 (CSSB 302), authored by Senator Seliger, was passed out of the Senate Natural Resources Committee in April to the full Senate. The bill relates to the management, operation, rulemaking authority, and oversight of groundwater conservation districts. Groundwater conservation districts (GCD) across the state are working together within groundwater management areas (GMA) to establish desired future conditions (DFC) for their aquifers and regions. CSSB 302 requires a GCD to adopt or amend rules as necessary to limit production or allocate groundwater accordingly in order to meet and achieve the DFC. According to the author, the intent is simple—that management plans establish necessary components in order for the region to actually meet the DFC. CSSB 302 requires that the management plan be submitted to the executive administrator of the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) for administrative approval. TWDB is then required to review the management plan to determine whether the goals of the management plan are consistent to achieve the DFC. If TWDB determines that the management plan is not adequate to achieve the DFC, TWDB may recommend that a GCD make changes to that plan. After changes are made, and TWDB has confirmed that the management plan in place will achieve the DFC, the GCD must readopt the management plan. The bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency. North Plains GCD supports CSSB 302 because it is the district's intent to develop its management plans and rules to achieve our DFCs. The district believes that this bill simply clarifies a responsibility for groundwater management that the district has already embraced.

Find us on the the web at: www.northplainsgcd.org
On Facebook just search "North Plains Groundwater"
On Twitter: www.twitter.com/NorthPlainsGCD

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Water Wise Living Conference

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harvesting from 2008 until he retired in 2011. Previously, he served as an AgriLife Extension agent in South and Central Texas for 26 years. During his presentation, Kniffen talked about how to get started in rainwater harvesting and demonstrated the principles using fully-functional models mounted on a trailer. Kniffen also showed slides of rainwater harvesting projects he has completed, including his own home in Menard that relies completely on harvested rainwater for its water supply.

Finally, current Amarillo Globe-News columnist and former Master Gardner and Executive Director of the Amarillo Botanical Gardens, Bob Hatton, discussed the topic of "Common Sense Gardening." Hatton avoids the word xeriscape because he said it conjures up images of rocks and cactus. He said he prefers the idea of common sense gardening, which in our semi-arid climate may likely include some low water-use plants, but may also include plants that require more water. Hatton said his approach considers the climate, while providing a framework of information that allows the gardener to customize their experience to create a landscape that fits their lifestyle.

Other presenters included Arbie Taylor, City of Dumas; Rick Stevens, Texas Panhandle Irrigation Association; Mike Caldwell, Natural Resources Conservation Service; and Kirk Welch, North Plains Groundwater Conservation District.

Billy Kniffen biographical information re-printed with permission from txH2o Magazine of the Texas Water Resource Institute.

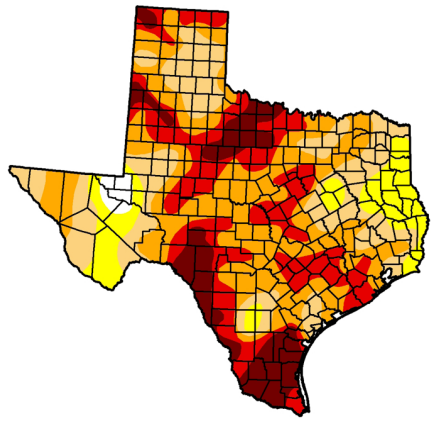
U.S. Drought Monitor

April 2, 2013
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Texas

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	1.40	98.60	88.21	65.44	32.95	11.81
Last Week (03/26/2013 map)	1.40	98.60	87.26	62.02	29.74	10.54
3 Months Ago (01/01/2013 map)	3.04	96.96	87.00	65.39	35.03	11.96
Start of Calendar Year (01/01/2013 map)	3.04	96.96	87.00	65.39	35.03	11.96
Start of Water Year (09/25/2012 map)	9.13	90.87	78.73	57.41	24.91	5.18
One Year Ago (03/27/2012 map)	12.67	87.33	67.07	55.37	36.38	17.92



Intensity:
- *D0 Abnormally Dry*
- *D1 Drought - Moderate*
- *D2 Drought - Severe*
- *D3 Drought - Extreme*
- *D4 Drought - Exceptional*

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu

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National Drought Mitigation Center,

NORTH PLAINS GROUNDWATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOX 795
DUMAS, TEXAS 79029

"Save Our Planet's Water" Festivals Recruiting Water Rangers

Saving our planet's water is serious business and North Plains Groundwater Conservation District is looking for the kids with the right stuff to make sure we have plenty of water for future generations. North Plains Groundwater Conservation District's "Save Our Planet's Water" (SOPW) Festivals allow Panhandle fourth graders to learn more about their water resources and other natural resources, and get all wet at the same time. "The SOPW Festivals are fun-filled days of hands-on learning designed to train a new generation of Water Rangers who will protect and defend water resources everywhere," said District Assistant General Manager for Outreach, Kirk Welch. More than 800 students and their teachers are expected to attend this year's three festivals in Dalhart, Dumas and Perryton. Students will have the opportunity to attend nine different interactive presentations during the day to learn more about water and water conservation, as well as aquatic organisms and Panhandle wildlife.

"Engaging our young people with their natural resources at this stage in their lives is important because they are forming their own opinions about the world around them right now," said District General Manager, Steve Walthour. "If we can show them they can make a difference and why they should want to, they'll remember that when they are older." A program like this is only possible with community support. Contributing agencies include, 4-H, Texas AgriLife Extension, USDA-NRCS, West Texas A&M University, Texas Parks and Wildlife, City of Dalhart, Frank Phillips College-Allen Campus, Conoco-Phillips, Valero, Inc. and Xcel Energy, just to name a few.

"This is a great opportunity for members of the community to lead by example," said Welch. "We need adults and older kids to sacrifice a day, risk the possibility of getting wet, and invest in teaching environmental responsibility to the leaders of tomorrow." For information about volunteering at any of the "Save Our Planet's Water" Festivals, contact Kirk Welch at 806-935-6401 or kwelch@northplainsgcd.org.

For more water festival information log on to northplainsgcd.org/news/extra.