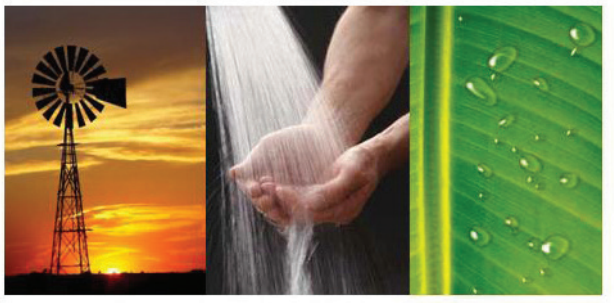
North Plains Water News



A Publication of the NORTH PLAINS GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

VOLUME 60, NO. 1 SPECIAL RULES EDITION 2014

District Proposes New Rule to Meet Conservation Goals

In a major step toward reaching the District's conservation goals, the North Plains Groundwater Conservation District board of directors has proposed a new Rule 4 to replace the previously repealed rule regarding acceptable levels of decline. The new proposed Rule 4 is the same as Chapter 8 of the proposed draft rules presented back in March.

The new Rule 4 would create a process for reducing annual production limits to meet the Desired Future Conditions (DFC's) that were set in 2009. The DFC's are currently being reviewed by the four groundwater conservations districts that comprise Groundwater Management Area (GMA) 1, however the North Plains GCD board has voted to recommend that the DFC's remain the same for counties in the North Plains GCD. DFC's for the four western counties of Dallam, Hartley, Sherman and Moore call for 40-percent of the aquifer to be left in 50 years, while the goal for the eastern counties of Hansford, Hutchinson, Ochiltree and Lipscomb is 50-percent. Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code requires groundwater conservation districts to create rules to achieve the DFC's.

The board also voted to propose changing Rule 3.4 to allow any accrued Groundwater Conservation Reserve to transfer with the sale of a property. Excerpts of the proposed new rules and rule amendments are as follows:

Rule 3.4 Groundwater Conservation Reserve: An Owner may accumulate a Groundwater Conservation Reserve…The Reserve shall only be available to an Owner if Annual Production Reports for the Property have been timely filed. Any Reserve may only be applied after the Property's Allowable Annual Production for the current year has been depleted.

(continued on page 2)

New Directors Join Board

The North Plains Groundwater Conservation District would like to introduce the two newest members to the Board of Directors, Mark Howard and Zac Yoder both of Dalhart.

Howard received a degree in Ag Economics from Texas Tech University in 1981 where he graduated Summa Cum Laude. Upon completion of his degree, Howard began farming with his father in 1982. Together, they farmed in Texas and New Mexico in Curry, Parmer, and Castro Counties.

Howard is the Texas Corn Producers Board representative for the H_2O for Texas committee and the Texas Water Conservation Association. He worked with the Agricultural Workgroup of the Texas Water Development Board as well as the Water Conservation Advisory Council. He has served on the Parmer County Cotton Growers Board since 1999 and the Texas Corn Producers Board since 2004. In 2004, Howard, along with his father and his brother, were awarded the Parmer County Soil and Water Conservation District's Outstanding Conservation Farmer award and named the Agriculturalists of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce.

Mark Howard, Hartley Co.

Howard married his wife, Robin, in 1984 and they have two kids, Bryce and Mason. He is an active member of the Central United Methodist Church in Dalhart. Howard is the Director for Hartley County, a position he won in the May 2014 election.

Mark Howard replaces Phil Haaland. Haaland is a Past-President of the board of directors and served on the board for over 21 years. He was a member of the agriculture committee that developed the district's award winning "200-12 Project" and has participated in the project since its inception. Haaland has farmed in the Texas Panhandle for over 35 years and became a Pioneer seed dealer in 1979. He is a member of the Farm Bureau of Texas and Hillside Christian Church in Dalhart.

Yoder is a 2006 graduate of LeTourneau University in Longview, Texas where he received a Bachelor of Science in Aeronautical Science. Yoder then went on to work for L-3 Communications where he was a team leader. In 2007, he joined Yoder Land & Cattle as a partner in the family-owned and operated farming and ranching business.

Zac Yoder, Dallam Co,

Yoder produces corn, cotton, wheat, soybeans, and sunflowers. He is a member of the Texas Corn Producers Association.

Yoder takes Brian Bezner's place on the board representing Dallam County. Bezner served the district for seven years beginning in 2007. During his term he held the offices of Secretary and Vice President of the board. Bezner has participated in the district's award winning "200-12 Project" for the last three years.

"Both Bezner and Haaland helped lead the district through some of the most significant changes in water policy in the history of the district. Both men were involved in the implementation of mandatory metering for all new wells and mandatory production reporting, as well as annual allowable production limits. These are clearly management strategies that will ultimately save groundwater within the district. Bezner and Haaland were devoted advocates for the stakeholders they represented and for the logical and reasonable stewardship of groundwater. Their service has made a positive impact on the quality of life in district and is appreciated," said Bob Zimmer, board president.

Texas Water Development Board Partners With District

In the span of less than a month, the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) has given the North Plains Groundwater Conservation District (district) a few substantial votes of confidence—to the tune of about $1.4 million in grants and loans for specific conservation projects. "We believe this means the agency that oversees groundwater districts in the state is okay with what we're doing and we believe that's a good thing," said District General Manager, Steve Walthour. "It also means we are bringing additional state funds into the area to help our stakeholders deal with the challenges of stewarding a declining resource."

The first grant award was for $197,313.27 from the TWDB Agricultural Water Conservation Grant Program for the continuation of the district's award winning "200 -12 Reduced Irrigation on Corn Demonstration Project." Since 2010, the

(continued on page 3)

Crowds gather at the 2013 "200-12 Project" Field Days to learn more about getting the most out of every drop of irrigation.

New Rules: Where We've Been, Where We're Going

One of the central responsibilities of the district's board of directors is to develop policies that will allow the district to fulfill its mission of maintaining our quality of life through the conservation, protection and preservation of our groundwater resources. Since the State of Texas has identified groundwater conservation districts as the preferred means of stewarding groundwater in the state, we do retain local control with direction and oversight from the Legislature. Through the process of regional planning with districts in our area, we, the stakeholders were able to determine our own conservation goals for the future. Having established those goals, known as Desired Future Conditions (DFC's), the stakeholders, through their groundwater conservation districts, are now required to put policies and rules in place to make sure those conservation goals are achieved.

The North Plains Groundwater Conservation District Board of Directors and staff has been exploring management strategies for more than two years to determine the best ways to balance the needs of the region's groundwater-based economy with our stated conservation goals. The district has continued receiving public comment and meeting with stakeholder groups to gather input. In August of 2013, the Texas Water Development Board approved the district's updated management plan, including a new section devoted specifically to the DFC's. With the approval of the management plan, the district then had one year to make sure its rules were designed to achieve those DFC's.

The board began reviewing the rules back in 2012 for the purpose of streamlining processes and simplifying language, as well as addressing the DFC's. While other changes have been explored, the DFC rules have taken priority as the one-year deadline has gotten closer. The new Rule 4 has been proposed to address the DFC's and is available for review in this issue of the North Plains Water News and on the website at www.northplainsgcd.org, along with the proposed amendments to Rule 3.4. The formal hearing on Rule 4 and 3.4 will be held on July 14th at 9:00 am at the Hampton Inn Meeting Room at 2010 S. Dumas Avenue.

The board will continue working on other proposed changes to the rules with the goal of simplifying some of the groundwater management procedures used by the district. The goal is to complete the process over the next year with an effective, user-friendly set of rules.

Some of the other proposed changes being considered include eliminating the waiting period before a completed well can be pumped, allowing a digital copy of a permit to be displayed for proof of permission to drill, requiring rig supply wells to meter and report water use, modifying check valve requirements for municipal or industrial wells where the valve could cause a risk of contamination, and allowing centralized metering on isolated sections where it can be proven that no water leaves the property.

District Proposes New Rule

(continued from page 1)

~~The Reserve shall automatically terminate as to any portion of the Property sold to a third party. Property passing by gift or inheritance shall not be considered as being "Property sold to a third party."~~ If a Property is sold or transferred, the Owner may transfer the Conservation Reserve with the Property. If only a portion of the Property is sold or transferred, the Conservation Reserve shall be prorated based upon the acreage of the Property sold or transferred.

Rule 4 - ~~Acceptable Decline Rate~~ (Repealed in its entirety.)

Adjustments to allowable annual production limits to achieve desired future conditions

4.1 Desired Future Conditions: Desired Future Conditions ("DFC's") are set by Groundwater Management Area I Joint Planning and are as follows:

A. Ogallala aquifer and Rita Blanca aquifer Desired Future Conditions Management Zone 1: Dallam, Hartley. Sherman and Moore Counties-40% volume in storage remaining in 50 years: and Management Zone 2: Hansford, Hutchison, Ochiltree and Lipscomb Counties
-50% volume in storage remaining in 50 years.

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

4.2 Different Rules for Management Zones: The District may adopt different Rules for each Management Zone overlying the aquifer.

4.3 Allowable Annual Production Limit Review: At the beginning of a GMA 1 joint planning cycle, and at least every five (5) years thereafter, the District shall review the Allowable Annual Production limit for each Management Zone. The Allowable Annual Production limit may be increased or decreased. However, any increase shall not exceed the current Allowable Annual Production limit of 1.5 acre-feet per acre per year.

4.4 Conditions to Reduce Allowable Annual Production: The Allowable Annual Production limit shall be reduced so as to achieve the DFC if the average annual production in a Zone exceeds the average MAG (modeled available groundwater) amount for the first three (3) years of the five-year cycle.

4.5 Calculation of the Allowable Annual Production: If the annual production in a Management Zone exceeds the MAG as calculated in Rule 4.4 and the average MAG for all preceding years is less than the average annual production for the same period, then the average MAG for all preceding years shall be divided by the average annual production for the same period and multiplied by the current Allowable Annual Production limit.

4.6 Date New Allowable Annual Production Will Be Effective: The revised Allowable Annual Production limit will be effective on the first day of January of the next GMA planning cycle.

4.7 Board Variance: The Board may set an Allowable Annual Production limit for a Management Zone which varies from the calculation in Rule 4.4 if a review of all of the aquifer characteristics and conditions warrants such a variance.

4.8 Publication of Aquifer Report: On or before the first day of August of each year, the District shall publish a Report of the characteristics and conditions of the aquifer.

A public hearing of the rules changes is set for the next board meeting, July 14 at 9:00 a.m. The changes are available on the district website for review or by request at the district office.

200 Bushels on 12 Inches... Almost in 2013

The 2013 season saw a "200-12 Project" cooperator come as close as anyone so far to achieving the stated goal. Joe Reinart, cooperator from Stratford, applied 12.55 inches to produce 200 bushels per acre. Reinart stated, "An additional 600 acres across the rest of our farm that mirrored the "200-12" field averaged 185 bushels per acre. We will continue to plant early and late corn using the strategies learned from the '200-12 Project'".

The intensity of the drought subsided somewhat for most of the district in 2013. While the annual rainfall for some of the area was still only about half of the historical average, timely rain helped improve yields. In 2013, the demonstration project's average yield for the eleven producers was 200 bushels per acre, and the average seasonal irrigation was 18.36 inches. The average of 18.36 inches of irrigation combined with an average of 7.88 inches of rain and soil moisture, still equates to a savings of 5.09 inches, compared to total water used in traditional irrigation practices. The graph shows the net pounds of yield per acre inch of irrigation water applied. The final report for this fourth year of the "200-12 Project" is located on the district's website, northplainsgcd.org.

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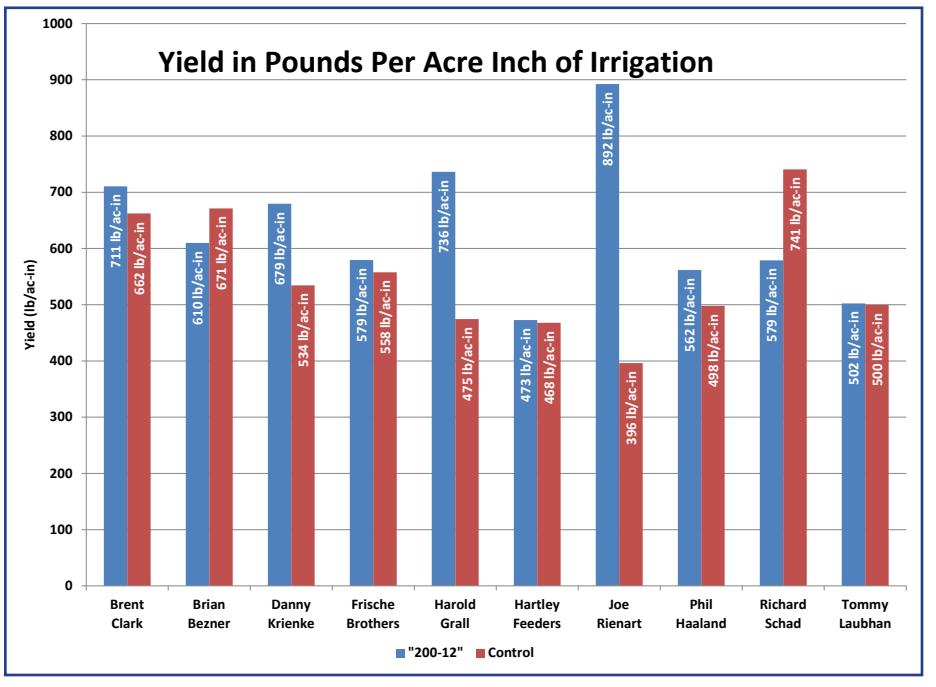

District Joins With Cities to Distribute Free Conservation Tools

While summer time is time for vacations and fun, it also usually means record temperatures, limited rainfall, and peak water demands for the cities of the northern Panhandle. To help city's conserve water during this difficult time, the cities and the district have combined efforts with local media outlets to present *Operation: Summer Showers*. *Operation: Summer Showers* is a program to provide residents with conservation tools and information to show them how they can save water everyday.

Operation: Summer Showers is intended to address water conservation issues related to lack of showers outdoors and the high percentage of water used for showering and other household uses. Lawn watering is the number one domestic use in the summer, while showering, laundry, and other uses indoors account for most of the domestic water use year-round. "While we have received more rainfall, this summer, we are still experiencing severe drought conditions, so conservation will remain a priority," said Kirk Welch, Assistant General Manager-Outreach. "While supplies last, low-flow showerheads and rain/sprinkler gauges are being distributed along with tips on efficient lawn watering and in-home water use."

The free water-saving tools are available at the North Plains Groundwater Conservation District Office at 603 E 1st Street in Dumas and at City Hall in Booker, Spearman, Stinnett, Stratford, Dumas, Dalhart and Perryton. For more information on Operation: Summer Showers call the district office at 806-935-6401, email kwelch@northplainsgcd.org or log onto www.northplainsgcd.org. This following is a list of water saving tips to get you started saving right away:

1. Don't water things that don't grow, like streets and sidewalks.
2. Water early or late in the day when there is less heat to cause evaporation.
3. Water when there is as little wind as possible to keep the water on your lawn.
4. Make sure you don't over water. Lawns rarely need more than one inch of water per week.
5. Use a rain gauge to measure rainfall so you don't water if you don't need to.
6. Water when your lawn needs it, not on a timer. Use a rain gauge or tuna can to know when you've applied no more than one inch of water per week.
7. Allow grass to dry between watering to promote deeper root growth.
8. Cut your lawn to 2 ½ - 3 inches. Taller grass shades the soil, reducing evaporation.
9) Don't bag your clippings. Using a mulching blade saves you time and the clippings create a natural mulch to hold moisture.

For more water saving tips go to www.northplainsgcd.org/news/extra.

Angie Hannah, creator of the website highplainsgardening.com, spoke at this year's Water Wise Living Conference presented by North Plains Groundwater Conservation District, Texas AgriLife Extension and the Moore County Extension Leadership Advisory Board. Hannah provided information about low-water use landscaping. Other presenters included, Jourdan Bell, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Research Agronomist, and Chad Dietz, Rainwater Harvesting Engineer.

Save Paper and Water by Choosing our E Newsletter

North Plains GCD now offers our district newsletters by email. If you would like us to send you a digital copy of the newsletter, you can go online at www.northplainsgcd.org and fill out the form on the right side of the page, or just email kwelch@northplainsgcd.org. You can also go online and download previous newsletters.

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

North Plains GCD Receives Friend of Extension Award

AMARILLO – The North Plains Groundwater Conservation District and Joe Davis with Davis Broadcasting-KLSR were recognized as "Friends of Extension" by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service District 1 during its annual awards program recently in Amarillo.

The district works closely with Texas AgriLife County Extension Agents on various conservation projects annually. District board and staff and Extension Agents are shown as the district is presented the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service District 1 Friend of Extension Award. Article and photo courtesy of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

In addition, the Roberts County Commissioners Court – Judge Vernon Cook and Commissioners Cleve Wheeler, Ken Gill, Kelly Flowers and James Duvall Jr. - was presented the Outstanding Contributor to Extension Programming award.

Brandon Dukes, AgriLife Extension district administrator, said it is important to recognize those people and organizations that "help us carry out our AgriLife Extension mission on a daily basis."

The North Plains Groundwater Conservation District, represented by Kirk Welch, Paul Sigle, Steve Walthour, Gene Born and Dale Hallmark, was recognized for supporting the educational efforts of AgriLife Extension with technical information, financial and physical resources, and professional expertise.

North Plains GCD partnered with AgriLife Extension on the Efficient Profitable Irrigation in Corn project, or EPIC, which is a results demonstration effort conducted in six counties in the northern Panhandle.

For other Extension awards go to www.northplainsgcd.org/news/extra.

Texas Water Development Board

(continued from page 1)

"200-12 Project" has demonstrated best practices for saving water and allowing agricultural irrigation producers to remain profitable and financially viable with limited and diminishing groundwater resources. The "200-12 Project" yielded compelling results and garnered awards, support and statewide and national recognition under some of the most intense drought conditions in modern history.

Days after receiving the grant, Walthour attended a board meeting of the TWDB to make a presentation about the district's North Plains Water Conservation Center (Center), and to receive approval of a low-interest loan in the amount of $620,000 for the development of the Center. At the end of the current lease, the district will take over management of the Center and begin upgrading the facilities to enhance the opportunities for more practical demonstrations of water-saving strategies that can be applied today. Planned improvements include upgrading irrigation and monitoring systems with the latest technologies.

Finally, the district was notified that it was awarded an additional $600,000 in funding from TWDB's Agricultural Water Conservation Grant Program. These funds, while they last, will help offset the cost of required meters for qualified producers in the district.

"The contracts will have to be finalized before any of the funds will be available for the projects, and the meter program will take some time to get up and running," said Walthour. "But before long, these funds will be making a difference in water conservation in the northern Panhandle. We appreciate the partnership with the Texas Water Development Board helping to make these important projects happen."

For more information go to www.northplainsgcd.org/news/extra.

Summer Interns

The district is pleased to welcome two temporary members of the team this summer as part of the summer internship program. 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.

Vanessa Ledesma is a sophomore journalism and public relations double-major at Texas Tech University. Vanessa graduated in 2013 from Dumas High School in Dumas, Texas. She chose Texas Tech because of its rich traditions, the opportunities that are offered on campus, and the outstanding alumni that the university has produced. Vanessa is involved with many on campus organizations including Raider Running Club and Delta Gamma Fraternity, a Greek sorority, where she is the Director of Chapter Archives. Vanessa will be working with the Public Outreach department to provide the surrounding communities with important information on how to conserve water through the hot panhandle summers. Through the internship, Vanessa is hoping to gain real world experience and produce material that can build her portfolio.

David Wolff is a senior at Texas A&M University where he studies biological and agricultural engineering. David is from Louisiana, but decided on A&M because of the opportunities the engineering department would offer him. David is involved with many organizations on campus. He is a member of the Corps of Cadets, where he serves as an executive officer for company D-2, and is a member of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE). David will be assisting with the "200-12 Project" to demonstrate best practices for agriculture water conservation. David said through this internship he hopes to gain insight into the Panhandle's water systems that can apply to his career in the future.

200 Bushels

(continued from page 2)

In the meantime, the 2014 project season is moving forward with all fields planted and data collection underway. Field days are scheduled for September 8th in Stratford, September 10th in Perryton and September 11th at the North Plains Water Conservation Center at Etter. 2014 is the final year of the original five-year, "200-12 Project" but the district board of directors has plans to continue and update the demonstrations into the future. Recently acquired grant support from the Texas Water Development Board will assist in evolving the demonstrations to reflect the ongoing challenges and the latest developments. You can read more on this and other developing conservation projects in the article in this issue titled Texas Water Development Board Partners with District."

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Over 900 students and teachers attended this year's three Save Our Planet's Water Festivals in Dalhart, Dumas and Perryton. Highlights included a 30 foot interactive water education trailer provided by the West Harris County Regional Water Authority and the Green Magic show presented by Environmental Magician, Kevin Barnes (shown).