

North Plains Water News



A Publication of the NORTH PLAINS GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

VOLUME 58, NO. 4

“Maintaining our way of life through conservation, protection, and preservation of our groundwater resources.”

Winter 2012

District Working to Serve New Dallam County District Residents

Residents of the former Dallam County Priority Groundwater Management Areas (PGMA's) voted in November not to assume the current tax rate paid by the rest of the North Plains Groundwater Conservation District to fund the district's services. Nevertheless, district personnel have been working closely with residents in those areas to be able to provide the same services that are available throughout the rest of the district.

The three previously unaffiliated areas (shown in white on the map) were ordered into the district by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality in July. The order resolved a situation that began when the areas were designated as Critical Management Areas in 1990 and later legislation recognized them as Priority Groundwater Management Areas, because of the potential for critically low groundwater conditions in the future.

In September after the TCEQ's order, the district began the process

of surveying the more than 400 square miles of new territory to locate and document producing wells. “Thanks to the cooperation of many landowners in the areas, the process is progressing smoothly,” said Steve Walthour, North Plains Groundwater Conservation District General Manager. The district is conducting a survey in the newly acquired areas to identify and map water wells. The purpose of the mapping is to insure that any new wells comply with the district's rules designed to protect existing wells. The well survey primarily includes noting the location, size, condition and use of the well. Well owners are responsible for registering their wells in these areas, however through the district's survey, the staff hopes to register the wells for the owners. Well registration is free. All well owners in these areas that have not contacted the district to register their wells should contact Kristen Alwan at 806-935-6401 or email kalwan@northplainsgcd.org.

The district requires owners of



non-exempt wells to begin reporting their 2013 water production beginning in 2014. Exempt wells include small residential or livestock wells that are not connected with a confined animal feeding operation. As part of the reporting process, non-exempt well owners must notify the district of the measuring method the owner will use to measure production. The different metering methods are found in the district's metering manual. A copy of the manual can be obtained from the district offices or from the web site www.northplainsgcd.org. The measuring method should be provided by the well owner to the district before pumping begins for the 2013 production year. In addition, well owners must choose a measuring method and report production

based on that method for 2010-2012, if they intend to take advantage of the district's groundwater conservation reserve (GCR) for those years.

Since the residents voted not to pay the ad valorem tax that normally funds the district, the district will develop a production fee schedule as part of the district's rule making process beginning in 2013.

Important Dates for PGMA Transition into District:

December 31, 2012 - Metering method recorded with the district for all reporting wells

March 1, 2013 - Production reports due to qualify for Groundwater Conservation Reserve for 2010-2012

March 1, 2014 - Production reports due for all qualifying PGMA area properties.

You Should Have Received Your Production Report Forms for 2012 ...

Groundwater Producers in the North Plains Groundwater Conservation District should have already received their 2012 Production Reporting Forms and Worksheets. If you are a producer in the district and you have not received your forms, please call the district office at 806-935-6401. March 1, 2013 is the deadline for production reports to be completed and turned-in to the office to avoid late fees. Anyone who paid late fees on their 2011 reports by May 21, 2012 may be eligible for a refund if their 2012 reports are completed and in the office by January 15, 2013.

The district will be participating in the Crop Production Clinics sponsored by Pioneer Hi-bred. The 2013 Texas &

Oklahoma Panhandle Crop Production Clinics will be held in three locations in our district. The dates and locations for the Clinics are: January 7th – Dumas, January 8th – Dalhart, and January 10th – Spearman. District staff will be available at the Clinics to answer questions regarding production reporting and the Groundwater Conservation Reserve program, and to assist producers in completing their production reports. If you have any questions about filing production reports please call the district office at the number listed above, or stop by the office at 603 E 1st Street in Dumas. District staff will be happy to assist you.

Rules Review and Management Plan Review Process Update

The district wishes to thank stakeholders for providing comments over the last few months regarding the proposed management plan and two proposed rules. The management plan must be reviewed every five years and was last adopted in 2008. The plan is scheduled for re-adoption in 2013. Following a mandatory review by the Texas Water Development Board, the district should take action to adopt the new plan in early 2013.

The district proposed to adopt a new District Rule 3.5 E and District Rule 3.5 F. The proposed rules are as follows:

Proposed District Rule 3.5E. Effective January 1, 2013, an Owner may use an Alternative Metering

System or a central collection point to report groundwater withdrawals from a Property until the Owner applies for a Permit to construct a Well or amend an existing Well Permit on the Property. At that time, the Owner must install meters at the pump on all Wells on the Property within 150 days after the Permit or amended Permit approval.

Proposed District Rule 3.5F. After January 1, 2013, an Owner may use an Alternative Metering System or a central collection point to report groundwater withdrawals from a Property until the owner Pools the Property. Before the Owner can complete the Pooling, the Owner must install meters at the pump on all Wells on the Property to be Pooled.

(continued on page 2)

North Plains GCD Supports Ag Water Forum

Texas is talking water in a big way . . . and the topic is likely to heat up further as the Texas Legislature convenes January 8 for its regular biennial session. The consensus is that water will be a priority topic for lawmakers.

The 2011 drought – the worst one-year drought in the state’s history – coupled with the sobering water demand projections contained in the 2012 Texas State Water Plan have focused attention on the critical question of how to ensure that Texas has adequate water supplies well into the future.

Texas’ population is expected to double over the next 50 years and the need for food and fiber will not go away. But the availability of water for agriculture in Texas will diminish as the demands for municipal and industrial uses take an upward trajectory.

So how can Texas help its farmers do more with less in the face of uncertain water supplies?

The North Plains Groundwater Conservation District will be helping to provide some answers to that question at the 2013 Texas Ag Water Forum in Austin on February 25.

The Forum is intended as an informational event to raise awareness among Texas lawmakers about the issues affecting water use in agriculture and trends for the future.

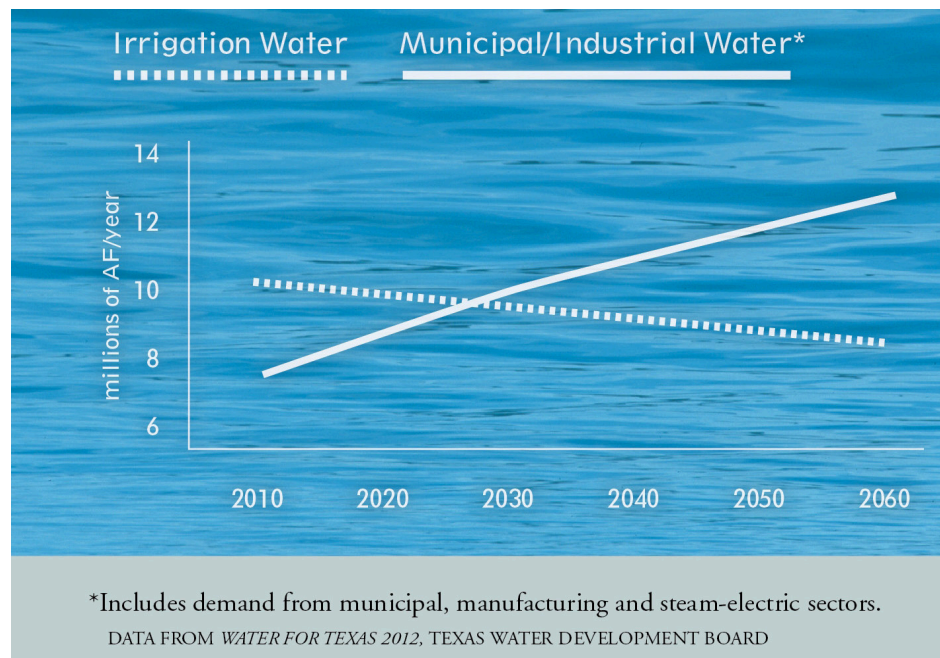
The district is helping sponsor the Forum as part of a coalition of irrigation and groundwater conservation districts, regional water authorities with substantial agricultural irrigation in their service areas, and industry groups representing irrigated agriculture in Texas.

Other sponsors include El Paso County Water Improvement District

#1; Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority; Harlingen Irrigation District; High Plains Underground Water Conservation District; Lower Colorado River Authority; Lower Rio Grande Valley Water District Managers Association; Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District; Rio Grande Regional Water Authority; Texas Irrigation Council; and Texas Rice Producers Legislative Group.

and at what cost, with the goal of identifying potential cooperative opportunities to put talk into action and ensure sustainable supplies for all.

The district will also be presenting on our “200-12 Reduced Irrigation on Corn Project” which was honored with last year’s Blue Legacy Award by the Texas Water Conservation Advisory Council.



“We believe our 200-12 Project and other demonstrations across the state have shown that combining common sense practices with the latest science and technology can extend the life of our aquifers and the viability of agriculture in the state,” said Steve Walthour, North Plains Groundwater Conservation District General Manager.

The Forum seeks to bridge the knowledge gap about what’s possible

Future Condition process and overall streamlining of procedures. The board also discussed how the new areas just added to the district would be affected as a result of the deadlines in the proposed rules.

After discussion the board elected to postpone further action on these proposed rules until mid January to allow more time to review the testimony from the hearings and public comment. The postponement will also give the board and staff time to consider alternate rule language that might address public concerns registered at the hearings. If the board moves forward with these proposed rules in January, proposed dates for implementation will need to be amended. “Stakeholder input into the district’s rulemaking process is key to providing the district’s board and staff the information needed to make aquifer management decisions,” said Steve Walthour, North Plains Groundwater Conservation District General Manager. A copy of the proposed management plan and the district rules can be found on the district’s website: www.northplainsgcd.org.

- Ag Water in the 2012 Texas State Water Plan, Carolyn Brittin, Executive Deputy Administrator, Water Resources Planning and Information, Texas Water Development Board

Proving the Science: Ag Water Demonstration Projects

- Texas Project for Ag Water Efficiency (Harlingen Irrigation District)
- Texas Alliance for Water Conservation (High Plains UCD / Texas Tech)
- 200-12 (200 bushels of corn on 12 inches of irrigation water/acre), North Plains GCD

Legislative Perspectives on Irrigated Agriculture in Texas:

- Sen. Robert Duncan and Rep. Eddie Lucio III (invited)

Ag Water for Texas Food Security:

- Comm. Todd Staples, Texas Department of Agriculture (invited)

Options for Ag Water in the 83rd Session:

- Chairman Allan Ritter, House Natural Resources Committee (invited)

Three panel sessions also will look at the special topics:

- Challenges in Meeting Regional Conservation Goals: Report from Ground Zero
- Crops & Water: The Perspective from the Farm
- Partnerships for Ag Water Efficiency & Conservation: Who & How?

More information on the Forum at www.TexasAgWaterForum.org.

Contributed by Linda Fernandez, Editorial and Analysis, WaterPR, Austin, TX

Rules Review and Management Plan Review

(continued from page 1)

The district conducted Stakeholders’ Meetings for public comment and questions on the proposed rules in Perryton, Texas at 7 pm on November 19th and in Dalhart Texas at 7 pm on November 20th. The district conducted a public hearing concerning the district’s intent to adopt these proposed rules on November 29, 2012. The purpose of these meetings was to provide interested members of the public the opportunity to appear and provide oral or written comments on the proposed revisions to the rules. Written comments regarding the proposed rules were accepted in district offices and at the meetings.

On December 18th, the board considered the public comments and discussed how these rules fit into the larger set of proposed amendments slated for consideration in 2013. Future revisions would address the the Desired

FORUM SESSIONS HIGHLIGHTS TO DATE:

Setting the Stage: Texas Ag Water Facts

- Economics of Irrigated Agriculture in Texas, Kevin Wagner, Associate Director, Texas Water Resources Institute, Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources

Extending the Reach of the “200-12 Project”

As data is being compiled for completion of the “200-12 Project Report” for the 2012 season, district personnel have been on the road promoting the benefits of a comprehensive irrigation water management system. During the fall, the

“200-12 Project” has been displayed at both the Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts’ Texas Water Summit and at the 2012 Amarillo Farm and Ranch Show. The “200-12 Project” will also be featured during the Texas Ag Water Summit in Austin on February 25, 2013.



District Assistant General Manager/Hydrologist, Dale Hallmark talks with attendees at the Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts’ Texas Water Summit.

Spurlock is Farmer of the Year

Wesley Spurlock, district director for Sherman County, was recognized at the Amarillo Ag Appreciation Luncheon in November as the KGNC Radio and Amarillo Chamber of Commerce 2012 Farmer of the Year. Vicki Fuller of Duncan and Boyd Jewelers of Amarillo presented the award to Spurlock during the luncheon at the 2012 Amarillo Farm and Ranch Show.

Spurlock has raised corn, cotton, wheat, soybeans and sorghum, as well as cattle, in Sherman County since 1980. His family has been working the land since his grandfather settled there in 1898. Between his own property and custom harvesting operations, Spurlock farms over 20,000 acres annually. In addition to stewarding a large farming enterprise by any standards, Spurlock

is a leader in shaping policy that affects agriculture and the communities that rely on agriculture.

Spurlock has served on the North Plains Groundwater Conservation District Board of Directors for 10 years. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Economics from West Texas State University. He is a current elected board member of the National Corn Growers Association and serves as the finance chairman. 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 also serves on the Texas State Technical Committee in cooperation with Farm Service Agency.

Spurlock's leadership reaches beyond agriculture to his community where he serves as President of the



Vicki Fuller of Duncan and Boyd Jewelers of Amarillo presented the KGNC Radio and Amarillo Chamber of Commerce 2012 Farmer of the Year Award to Wesley Spurlock during the Amarillo Ag Appreciation Luncheon at the 2012 Amarillo Farm and Ranch Show.

Stratford Area Youth Care Agency, founding member and Director of the Stratford Education Foundation, member of the Stratford Area

Foundation, and Administrative Board Chairman and member of the First United Methodist Church in Stratford.

District Sponsored EPIC Project Wins 2012 Blue Legacy Award

AMARILLO – The Water Conservation Advisory Council recognized the 2012 winners of the Save Texas Water Blue Legacy Award in Agriculture during the annual Texas Commodity Symposium Nov. 28 at the Amarillo Farm and Ranch Show.

The Blue Legacy Award in Agriculture is an annual award recognizing outstanding water conservation efforts and successes by the agriculture community. Winners are selected based on their demonstrated willingness and commitment to incorporate water conservation practices into their operations, as well as their leadership in furthering water conservation in their communities or within the industry, according to the award announcement. The district's "200-12 Project" was selected as a recipient of the Blue Legacy Award for Agriculture for 2011.

Two groups involving Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service personnel were among those recognized. They were the Ogallala Aquifer Program and the AgriLife Extension-Panhandle District 1 2011 North Plains Corn Irrigation Demonstration Project: Efficient Profitable Irrigation in Corn, or EPIC.

EPIC includes project members Nich Kenny, AgriLife Extension irrigation specialist in Amarillo; and AgriLife Extension county agents Scott Strawn, Ochiltree County; J.R. Sprague, Lipscomb County; Marcel Fischbacher, Moore County; Michael Bragg, Dallam/Hartley counties; Kristy Synatschk, Hutchinson County; and Brad Easterling, Sherman County.

EPIC is a demonstration effort conducted by AgriLife Extension and funded primarily by the North Plains Groundwater Conservation District,

Kenny said. It is designed to address the adoption of improved irrigation management strategies to increase water-use efficiency, crop productivity and production profitability.

He said EPIC's approach utilizes two side-by-side field plots – one plot as a control and management of irrigation on the experimental plot – to meet two objectives: maintain or improve yield as compared to the control and reduce pumped irrigation water by 1 to 4 inches.

From the preliminary results the implication is that grain corn yields can be maintained or increased with a reduction in applied irrigation water, he said. To further develop this concept and verify early results, the EPIC program will be continued through 2014.

The Ogallala Aquifer Program, a university and federal agency research-education consortium, was created by Congress in 2003 to find solutions to problems arising from declining water levels in the High Plains aquifer, according to Dr. David Brauer, research agronomist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service at Bushland and manager of the program.

Brauer said the program includes approximately 80 state and federal scientists from the Agricultural Research Service, Kansas State University, AgriLife Research, AgriLife Extension, Texas Tech University and West Texas A&M University.

Dr. Kevin Wagner, the Texas Water Resources Institute's associate director and Texas A&M's representative on the program's leadership team, said the Blue Legacy Award annually recognizes outstanding water conservation efforts and successes of the agriculture community.

"For the Ogallala Aquifer Program to win this award illustrates the progress

and achievements that have been made in promoting water conservation while helping to maintain or improve the profitability of farming and the prosperity of farming communities in the Texas High Plains," Wagner said. "The institute is proud to support the Texas A&M AgriLife researchers and Extension specialists involved in this important program."

AgriLife Research and AgriLife Extension personnel at Amarillo, Vernon and Lubbock extensively involved in the Ogallala Aquifer Program include Dr. Steve Amosson, Dr. Jim Bordovsky, Dr. Ken Casey, Dr. Paul DeLaune, Nicholas

Kenny, Dr. Shuyu Liu, Thomas Marek, Dr. Jaroy Moore, Dr. Seong Park, Dr. David Pointer, Dr. Dana Porter, Dr. Pat Porter, Dr. Nithya Rajan, Dr. Charlie Rush and Dr. Qingwu Xue.

The Council also recognized the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation and the Robert Meyer Farms with Blue Legacy Awards at the ceremonies.

*Contributed by Kay Ledbetter
associate editor/communications
specialist for Texas AgriLife Research
and Texas AgriLife Extension Service in
Amarillo & Vernon.*



The Water Conservation Advisory Council recognized the 2012 winners of the Save Texas Water Blue Legacy Award in Agriculture during the annual Texas Commodity Symposium Nov. 28 at the Amarillo Farm and Ranch Show. Winners included the EPIC Project, the Ogallala Aquifer Program, and Bob Meyer, Deaf Smith County Producer. Appearing in the photo (front l to r) Bob Meyer, Dr. Kevin Wagner – Ogallala Aquifer Program, Nicholas Kenny – AgriLife Extension irrigation specialist, Kristy Synatschk – Hutchinson County AgriLife Extension county agent, Michael Bragg – Dallam/Hartley counties AgriLife Extension county agent, and Brad Easterling – Sherman County AgriLife Extension county agent (rear l to r) C. E. Williams – Advisory Council Member, David Brauer – Ogallala Program, Scott Strawn – Ochiltree County AgriLife Extension county agent and J.R. Sprague – Lipscomb County AgriLife Extension county agent. Marcel Fischbacher – Moore County AgriLife Extension county agent is not shown.

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Annual Irrigation Conference Helps Farmers Make the Most of What They Have

AMARILLO – The annual High Plains Irrigation Conference and Trade Show hosted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will be held Jan. 17 in the Regency Room of the Amarillo Civic Center, 401 S. Buchanan St., Amarillo. The program, hosted by AgriLife Extension and the Texas Agricultural Irrigation Association, addresses a wide variety of topics, said Nich Kenny, AgriLife Extension irrigation specialist. The registration fee will be \$30, payable at the door only, and includes lunch. “We have made some large advances recently in irrigation management,” Kenny said. “Now producers are looking

for the next steps to fine-tune their water-use efficiency. This program will feature many speakers who will introduce or expand upon some cutting-edge ideas.” Topics of this year’s conference will be: natural gas generation unit; variable frequency drives; irrigation management tools; highly efficient natural gas engines; non-traditional influences such as insects, fungicides and fertilizers on crop water use; tillage and residue management; efficient irrigation systems and soil conditioners. Five Irrigation Association certified irrigation designer and six certified crop advisor continuing education units – five soil and water and one

crop management - will be offered for conference attendees, he said. The trade show will include about 30 booths from the irrigation industry, area groundwater districts and educational institutions, Kenny said. For more conference information or to register for the trade show, go to the Texas Agricultural Irrigation Association website, <http://taia.org/>. Questions about the program can be directed to Kenny at 806-677-5600 or npkenny@ag.tamu.edu. Trade show questions should be directed to Kern Stutler at 806-786-5644.

*Contributed by Kay Ledbetter
associate editor/communications
specialist for Texas AgriLife Research
and Texas AgriLife Extension
Service in Amarillo & Vernon.*

Calendar of Events		
Event	Where	Date and Time
Pioneer Hi-Bred Crop Production Clinics	Dumas Dalhart Spearman	January 7, 2013 January 8, 2013 January 10, 2013
North Plains Groundwater Conservation District Board Meeting	District Office 603 E. 1st St. Dumas, TX	January 15, 2013 9:00 AM
2013 High Plains Irrigation Conference	Amarillo Civic Ctr. Amarillo, TX	January 17, 2013
Texas Ag Water Forum	Sheraton Austin Austin, TX	February 25, 2013
North Plains Groundwater Conservation District Annual Production Reports Due	District Office 603 E. 1st St., Dumas Reports can be mailed to PO Box 795, Dumas, TX 79029	March 1, 2013

U.S. Drought Monitor

December 18, 2012
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Texas

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	4.54	95.46	88.31	64.13	33.95	9.89
Last Week (12/11/2012 map)	5.91	94.09	87.72	65.04	32.22	8.45
3 Months Ago (09/18/2012 map)	11.28	88.72	76.12	51.82	22.90	4.88
Start of Calendar Year (12/27/2011 map)	0.01	99.99	97.83	84.81	67.32	32.36
Start of Water Year (09/25/2012 map)	9.13	90.87	78.73	57.41	24.91	5.18
One Year Ago (12/13/2011 map)	0.00	100.00	99.83	90.20	76.41	41.29

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

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

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>

Released Thursday, December 20, 2012
Brian Fuchs, National Drought Mitigation Center

Electronic Communication Saves

If you would prefer to receive this newsletter and other district communication via email, please send your email address to kwelch@northplainsgcd.org. Also, you can find us on the web at: www.northplainsgcd.org On Facebook just search “North Plains Groundwater” On Twitter: www.twitter.com/NorthPlainsGCD

