



## Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District

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# Presented

February 2, 2015

County Judge Roger Harmon & County Commissioners  
Johnson County Courthouse  
2 N. Main St.  
Cleburne, TX 76033

Commissioners Court

MAR 9 2015

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the ongoing activities of the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District, its Board of Directors, and staff. There has been considerable activity in the district over the last half of 2014, and the following is a summary.

### Report on Activities of Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District for July – December 2014

#### District Staff Changes

As previously reported, the district experienced staff changes in the early part of 2014. The board and remaining staff worked diligently to fulfill the district's management plan and fill open positions with minimal disruptions to district business. By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, the district once again attained desired staffing levels.

In August 2014, the board confirmed the transition of Jim Conkwright to General Manager. Stepping in as Interim General Manager on May 1, 2014, Mr. Conkwright came to the district from the Lubbock area after more than 26 years experience with the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District (12 years as their general manager after 14 years as a board member.) He has a degree from Texas Tech University in Animal Science, and leads a staff of four in the Prairielands office which includes existing staff members: Rosetta Douthitt, office administrator and Stephanie Lindsey, records administrator and two additions acquired after his appointment as general manager.

Mr. Conkwright employed Field Technician Shawn Davis in September. Mr. Davis, the former Texas AgriLife county agent for Somervell County, has 20 years of experience with the Texas Department of Agriculture in positions throughout the state. He has a bachelor's degree from Tarleton State University in Agribusiness. As field technician, Mr. Davis will monitor water well drilling, develop sites for the placement of monitoring wells, and track groundwater levels in the aquifers underlying the four counties.

Additionally, Karen Siddall began work in October as the Public Relations and Education Administrator. Ms. Siddall worked in the municipal sector for 34 years spending the last 20 as the stormwater program coordinator for the City of Irving, Texas, where she gained extensive experience in regulatory compliance, public education and outreach. She has undergraduate and graduate degrees in Criminal Justice from the University of Texas at Arlington, and her tasks will include developing and presenting water conservation education and outreach programs to residents, schools, and civic groups.

#### Rules Development and Compliance

The district's Rules and Bylaws Committee met on a regular basis to review the district's temporary rules and ensure they adequately addressed the various needs of well owners. The district is currently in the process of developing amendments to the district's rules related to the conversion of oil and gas wells to water wells.

JIM CONKWRIGHT – GENERAL MANAGER  
CHARLES BESEDA – PRESIDENT  
DENNIS ERINAKES – 1<sup>ST</sup> VICE PRESIDENT

RANDY KIRK – 2<sup>ND</sup> VICE PRESIDENT  
MAURICE OSBORN – SECRETARY/TREASURER  
MARTY MCPHERSON – DIRECTOR

BARNEY PUSTEJOVSKY – DIRECTOR  
CRAIG DODSON – DIRECTOR  
PAUL TISCHLER – DIRECTOR

The district addressed compliance and enforcement matters related to violations of the district's rules at its monthly board meetings. District staff track and monitor violations and make every effort to work with well owners to help them achieve compliance and avoid penalties for failure to comply with district rules.

#### **Annual Report on Management Objectives**

An annual report on the fulfillment of the district's management plan is currently being prepared with a targeted release date to occur in April 2015.

#### **Joint Planning Activities and Technical Studies – Northern Trinity/Woodbine Groundwater Availability Model**

The district continued its collaboration with other districts in Groundwater Management Area 8 (GMA 8) conducting a detailed study of the various aquifers and their subdivisions as they occur within the district and surrounding areas. The project, which also included an update of the current groundwater availability model, will assist the district in making informed, long-term management plans for groundwater resources. The final draft of the updated groundwater availability model was released for public review and a 45-day comment period which concluded on July 21, 2014. Subsequently, the finalized report and model were submitted for review to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) on September 2, 2014. The TWDB evaluated, and ultimately designated, the updated Northern Trinity and Woodbine Aquifer Groundwater Model as the official groundwater availability model for the Northern Trinity and Woodbine aquifers on November 21, 2014.

#### **Well Information Database Updated**

Upon completion of the updated Northern Trinity/Woodbine Groundwater Availability Model, the well database was able to incorporate stratigraphy from the new model to more accurately identify the aquifers where current wells are located. This will enable the district to better estimate which aquifers can best support proposed wells in the future.

#### **Aquifer/Well Monitoring Program**

With the employment of Field Technician Shawn Davis, implementation of an aquifer/well monitoring program began immediately with the installation of monitoring equipment in the first of four inactive water wells (one in each county by the end of December). Results from the monitoring equipment at each location are available for viewing via the internet at [www.waterdatafortexas.org](http://www.waterdatafortexas.org) under "Groundwater." Wells are listed by county and the information currently available includes: the aquifer the well accesses, aquifer type (confined vs. unconfined), monitoring entity (e.g., Prairielands GCD), data transmission mode (e.g., satellite), latest transmission date, and daily high water level (feet below land surface).

#### **Public Outreach and Education**

The district's approach to public outreach and education is a balanced effort toward providing information and water conservation awareness to both adult and juvenile audiences. Staff continued to schedule speaking engagements with adult community organizations (e.g., Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists) and with teachers for school programming.

Outreach efforts at schools during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2014 totaled two schools, four presentations, and approximately 195 participants.

Press releases regarding district activities were submitted to the various newspapers in the counties and a couple of items were printed by the Cleburne Times-Review and Burleson-Crowley Connection: ("Prairielands GCD preserves groundwater resources" – general district information, activities, and background, "Acting out: Adams fifth-graders get

into the water conservation act” – details of a water conservation presentation at Adams Elementary in the Cleburne ISD in November).

District staff remained active in the groundwater community through frequent participation in conferences and meetings. Over the past several months, district staff and board members attended conferences held by the Texas Water Conservation Association (TWCA), Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts (TAGD), and joint planning meetings held by Groundwater Management Area 8. In addition, contacts have been established with water resources groups such as the Regional Water Planning Groups “C” and “G,” the Texas Water Utilities Association (TWUA), and the Water Efficiency Network of North Texas (WENNT).

The district sought out partnering opportunities with other regional groups with water conservation goals such as the North Central Texas Council of Governments, the cities of Burleson and Cleburne, and Texas AgriLife to present adult programming regarding water-conserving landscaping. Collaborative events are currently scheduled for the upcoming year including a basic class in using native and adaptive plants in home landscapes and a native plant sale and educational fair in conjunction with Home Depot stores throughout the greater Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. Additional information regarding this regional initiative is available online at <http://www.txsmartscape.com/events/plantsale.asp>.

**Former Board Members Honored**

After the final board meeting of 2014, the Board of Directors and staff members gathered at a dinner to honor the service by two former board members, Mr. James Hallman (Director, Johnson County, 2009 - 2013) and Mr. Eddie Pollock (Director, Somervell County, 2009 - 2011). Each man was presented with an engraved stone award commemorating their service to the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District.

**Submission of Amicus Curiae Briefs**

The district, in conjunction with other groundwater districts and the assistance of legal counsel, took the opportunity to weigh in on existing cases that could impact local control and the way groundwater conservation districts and other local political subdivisions carry out their duties and functions as regulatory bodies. As groundwater becomes more scarce, it is more important than ever that the district’s statutorily mandated functions and obligations be clearly recognized and understood by the State of Texas and its various agencies in order to ensure the long-term management of groundwater so that it is available for future generations of existing and new users.

**Financial Matters – Final County Loan Repayments**

On January 20, 2015, during the first board meeting of the new year, the district’s Board of Directors unanimously approved payment of the final county loan repayments. Repayment checks will be hand-delivered by General Manager Jim Conkwright to each of the four counties along with the quarterly report.

**State Audit Results**

Annually, the State Auditor’s Office (SAO) selects a dozen or so groundwater conservation districts to audit compliance with the objectives set forth within each district’s management plan. Upon reviewing the work of the Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District occurring in 2013, the SAO found the district to be compliant in all areas with the sole exception of one management objective deemed partially compliant. It was recognized that this was due to the lack of staff for much of the audited period.

**Current Priorities and Future Efforts**

With the fulfillment of staffing in the latter part of 2014 and the adoption of the groundwater availability model, the district is poised to move ahead with installing monitor wells, tracking water levels in the underlying aquifers, informing

and educating the residents of the four counties on water conservation, and establishing more realistic long-term goals for desired future conditions.

The coming year will see district employees engaging with a diverse array of citizen groups and the general public spreading the word about water conservation and the role of the district. Additionally, the district is actively pursuing opportunities to convert suitable abandoned wells to water well monitor sites, enhance the capabilities of the well information database, and work toward improving the customer/well owner/user experience. Last, but not least, staff will continue to monitor legislation and regulatory strategies to ensure local needs are promoted, preserved, and protected.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Conkwright". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Jim Conkwright  
General Manager

cc: Mr. Dennis Erinakes, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District  
Mr. Paul Tischler, Director, Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District