



Panhandle Water News

JANUARY 2021

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87th Texas Legislative Session Overview

The 87th Texas Legislative Session began on Tuesday, January 12th. There are many new protocols now in effect to enter the capitol building due to the pandemic. The legislature also has many pre-filed bills that will be considered over the session. Bills currently filed that impact groundwater include:

HB 152, by Representative Buckley, relating to a study by the Texas Water Development Board of groundwater conditions in certain counties.

HB 668, by Representative Harris, relating to the regulation of groundwater conservation districts.

HB 666, by Representative Harris, relating to the regulation of groundwater conservation districts.

SB 152, by Senator Perry, relating to the regulation of groundwater conservation districts.

HB 966, by Representative Burns, relating to the award of attorney's fees and other costs in certain suits involving a groundwater conservation district.

The Senate Water and Rural Affairs Committee Release Interim Study

Interim Charge #3 Groundwater Regulation - Study the state's groundwater regulatory framework and make recommendations to improve groundwater regulation, management, and permitting.

Recommendations:

Landowner Input - There is still room for improvement in our groundwater regulations in the state. It is concerning that there are cases which occur where a landowner obtains the best available science with no method to submit their findings to a Groundwater Conservation District (GCD). Private property rights combined with sound science is paramount to our success as a state, which means our residents must have a seat at the table.

•**Right to Challenge a Regulation** - The same applies to a private property owner's right to challenge a regulation they feel is impractical or burdensome on their water rights. Thanks to recent court cases, those who challenge a GCD can do so in federal court and avoid the attorney's fees tied to district courts. We should therefore revisit a loser pay system or adjust the current standards; and if not, eliminate the attorney's fee requirement.

•**Transparency** - GCDs, the state, local jurisdictions, water users, and private property owners must continue the progress made over the last several years for transparency, collaboration, and the use of the best available science to manage the water resources of our state. Following the 86th Legislative Session, many GCDs worked to create a collaborative, transparent environment engaging local leaders, the public, and state officials. These efforts should continue as they have provided much needed clarity on the inner workings of rules, permits, and enforcement at the GCD level.

Notice of Transfer - In order to protect the basin of origin and keep the highest level of transparency, there should be consideration for notifications to the public and affected persons for transfers out of the basin. The basin of origin user groups should have the opportunity to purchase the rights in order to protect their interests. While an individual's private property rights include the right to pump permitted water under their property, transfer water to another user, and possibly outside the basin, the total impact on the basin should be considered. Specifically, the opportunity for the water right holder to convert water to financial gain should be part of the conversation within the basin of origin.



Jerry Horace Green Remembered

Jerry Horace Green, also known as "Big Jerry", and sometimes referred to as the Mayor of Ashtola, 68, passed away of COVID-19 complications on November 25, 2020, at Northwest Texas Hospital in Amarillo.



Jerry Horace Green

Burial was in Citizens Cemetery in Clarendon with arrangements by Robertson Funeral Directors. To celebrate Jerry's life, be a good steward, get your hands dirty, grow something and worry about the weather.

Green served as PGCD Precinct 3 Director from 1992—1999.

PGCD Scholarship Reminder

Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District offers scholarships to all high school graduating seniors living within the District (Armstrong, Carson, Donley, Gray, Potter, Roberts and Wheeler counties) planning to further their education. With rising tuition costs, scholarships can tremendously help in reducing financial burdens. Take advantage of the PGCD scholarship program and apply by **Monday, March 1st.**

PGCD established a scholarship program in 2002 and has since awarded \$162,000 to District students. First place is awarded a four-year scholarship of \$4,000; second place receives \$3,000 and \$2,000 goes to third place. Applicants must write a 500-1,000 word essay on the topic chosen by the District. In order to receive the scholarship, recipients are required to enroll as a full-time student, attend the college of their choice the fall semester immediately following selection and maintain at least a 2.5 grade point average. To apply, please visit www.pgcd.us and click on the Scholarship Link under Programs. For questions regarding the scholarship, please contact Suzy Pool at (806) 883-2501 or by email at sdp@pgcd.us.

The 2020/2021 essay topic is:

“With the ever-growing population of the State of Texas, which is expected to double in the next 50 years, list and explain what steps need to be taken now to ensure that there is plenty of water for not only the next generation but future generations of Texans.”

District Honors Employees

The Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District recently recognized two employees for their length of service to the District.



Williams receives 30 yr. award

During the November Board of Directors meeting, President Phillip Smith congratulated both CE Williams for his 30 years of service and Britney Britten for her 5 years of service to the District.



Britten receives 5 yr. award

General Manager, Williams began his career with PGCD in 1990. He oversees the day to day activities, programs and employees of the District. He is actively involved with groundwater issues in the Texas Legislature and the with various State water agencies. Williams serves as Chairman of Panhandle Regional Water Planning Group – Region A. He also serves on the Board of Texas Water Foundation.

“In reflecting over the past thirty years of my service”, Williams stated, “several things come to mind. The District has grown from a small, two employee District to one with multiple employees and more than 250,000 residents. This District is a well-known and respected multi-county District within the state of Texas.

Britten began her career with PGCD five years ago as the Public Relations/Education Director. During this time, she was able to work closely with Williams on many projects regarding rules and regulations, biennial symposiums, water level depletion and meter implementation. In September she stepped into the role as Assistant General Manager.

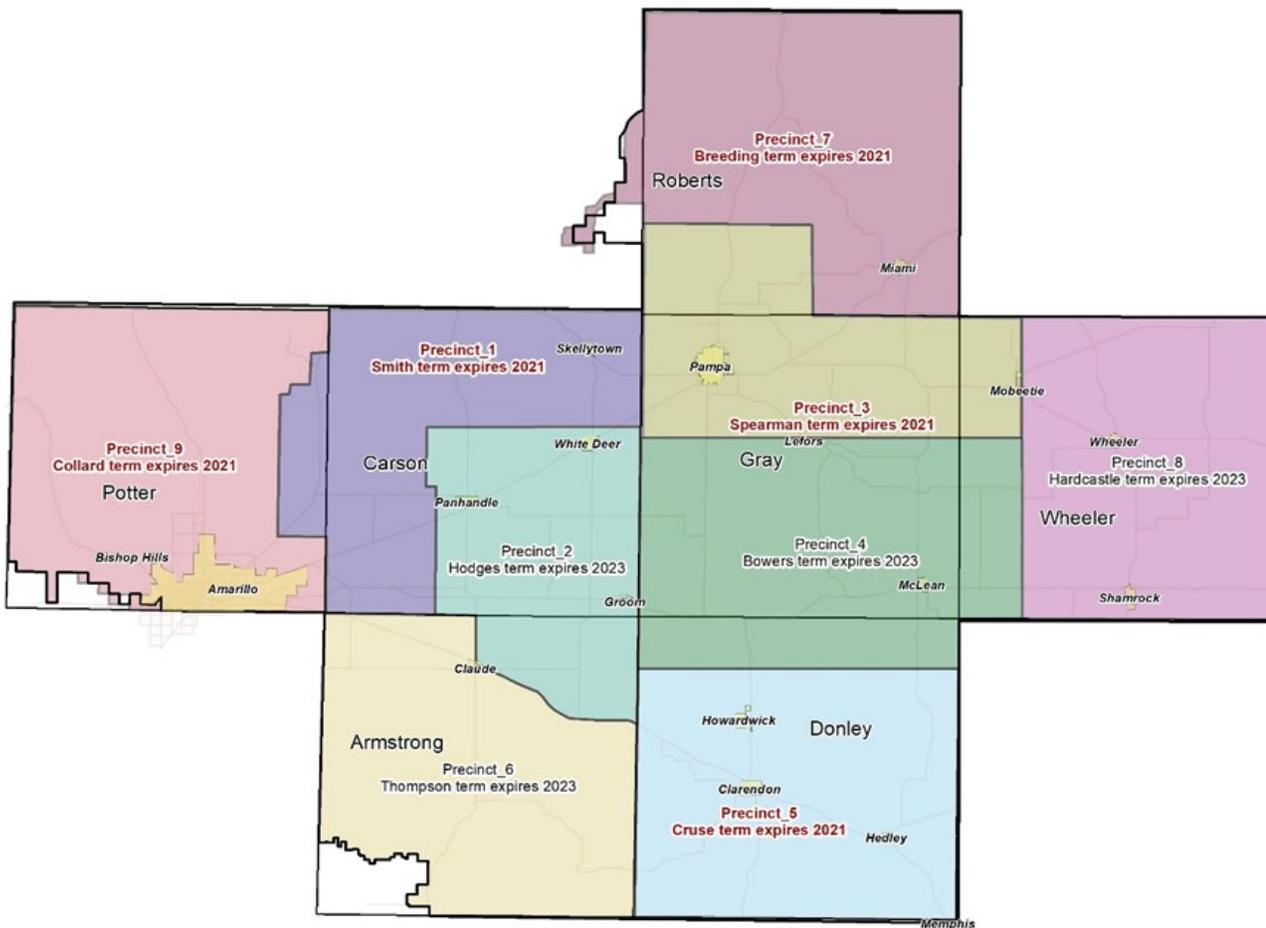
“I have always been proud to be an employee of PGCD, and I will continue to help and assist our Board of Directors in communicating with and educating constituents about groundwater conservation,” said Britten.



District To Hold Board Elections

Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District Board of Directors elections are scheduled for Saturday, May 1, 2021. The four-year terms of five District Directors are set to expire this year. These five include: Phillip Smith – Precinct 1, John R. Spearman Jr. – Precinct 3, Chancy Cruse – Precinct 5, William Breeding – Precinct 7 and F. G. (Butch) Collard – Precinct 9.

The timeframe to file an application for ballot placement is January 13 - February 12. Qualified candidates must be a registered voter in the precinct that the person wishes to represent. Forms needed to file for a seat are available at the District office, 201 W. Third St., White Deer. Please contact the office at (806) 883-2501 to have the forms e-mailed to you or to arrange a pickup time. For additional information or questions please call the office or visit our website at www.pgcd.us.



Annual Winter Level Measurements

Each year Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District takes measurements on a network of 800+ wells throughout the District to determine yearly aquifer changes in water levels. The measurements are taken not only to determine the water level in the aquifer, but also to collect data, provide information for our 50/50 goal, provide data for the saturated thickness map and future planning. The measurements are taken during the winter months when demands for irrigation are lower so that a more representative static water level can be obtained.

Our field technicians began water level measurements in November and will finish in the next couple months. The measurements taken can be viewed in our July 2021 newsletter. If you have questions please call the office for assistance at (806) 883-2501.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS
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Chancy Cruse, V-President
Bill Breeding, Secretary
Charles Bowers, Director
John R. Spearman Jr., Director
Jim Thompson, Director
Danny Hardcastle, Director
F. G. "Butch" Collard, Director
David Hodges, Director

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PGCD Rain Gauge Program

PGCD has a vast rain gauge network used to measure rainfall totals in all areas of the District. Rainfall varies greatly across the District from west to east, and rain gauges help obtain a more accurate average per county, rather than an average for the entire District.

The rainfall data collected is used within the District in many of our programs, especially our Precipitation Enhancement Program, which is designed to stimulate clouds to generate more rainfall than they would otherwise. On average, our precipitation enhancement program, produces an additional 10-15% increase in rainfall. The program operates from April through September.

How it works

The Rain Gauge Program currently consists of 189 rain gauges that are read by either District Field Technicians or program partners. District rain gauges are read monthly during the Precipitation Enhancement Program period while partner rain gauges are read and recorded daily. The daily readings are recorded on a card which is mailed to our office at the end of each month. Partners in our Rain Gauge Program are provided a rain gauge, pre-paid postage rain gauge cards, and instructions on how to set up and read their rain gauge. After the District has received 12 months of readings, an Annual Precipitation Report is created and mailed to the partner.

To Become a Partner

To become a partner in our Rain Gauge Program, please contact the District Hydrogeologist, Ashley Ausbrooks, by email at ara@pgcd.us or by phone at (806) 883-2501.