



# Panhandle Water News

OCTOBER 2020

## Points of Interest

**Paxton asked to Consider Boundary Issue**

**District's Rain Gauge Program**

**2020 PGCD Precipitation Enhancement Review**

**2020—2021 Tax Rate**

**Director Britten Tenders Resignation**

**PGCD Education Program Enters 21st Year**

**2020 Amarillo Farm & Ranch Show Canceled**

**PGCD Welcomes New Employees**

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## Paxton asked to Consider Boundary Issue

Texas State Senator, Charles Perry, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Water & Rural Affairs, recently asked Attorney General Ken Paxton to put into consideration the boundary line between the High Plains Underground Water District (HPWD) and the Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District (PGCD). More specifically, clarification on “[w]hat boundary line Potter-Randall County Appraisal District (PRAD), HPWD, and PGCD are all required to recognize for purposes of property tax collection and groundwater management in Potter County?”

The HPWD, formed in March of 1951, was the first groundwater conservation district created in the State of Texas and in 1953 was charged with managing the area within “Subdivision No. One of the Underground Water Reservoir, High Plains Area, Ogallala Formation, South of Canadian River”. The legal description noted in the HPWD Metes and Bounds read as follows: “...Thence along the west [Amarillo] city limit to the caprock of the High Plains Escarpment; Thence, west *along the meanders of the caprock* to the Potter-Oldham Count line...” This boundary was designed by the Board of Water Engineers to correspond with the underlying Ogallala Aquifer and was based upon geologic formations that are present along the caprock boundaries using the best available science at the time. The caprock boundaries were historically drawn following the caliche layer of the geologic formation know as the Llano Estacado.

The PGCD was created in 1955 and began operating in 1956 in Gray, Carson, Armstrong, and a portion of Potter Counties. In the 2000 election the border of PGCD was extended to include all land in Potter County that was not within the bounds of HPWD. It was noted twice in the signed petition “[t]he territory which it is hereby petitioned to add to and become part of (PGCD) is part of the County of Potter, State of Texas, *not currently within the bounds of the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1...*”

The PRAD is currently seeking an accurate representation of the “meanders of the caprock” boundary line. In 2018 PRAD requested that HPWD confirm this location. The Chief Appraiser clarified in an e-mail at the time that “[i]t is our opinion that the appraisal district records *should be corrected to reflect the boundary as stated in the original order*” and further clarified that it is not attempting to change the boundary, but update its records with new technology “to reflect the original boundary as stated in the original documentation”.

HPWD now utilizes the latest in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology to precisely map the “meanders of the caprock” in Potter County and has provided this information to PRAD. The GIS mapping technology currently presents the most accurate method to track the “meanders of the caprock” boundary that is required to be followed by statute. At the time the boundaries were drawn, the current level of GIS mapping technology was not available. It is also different from the description in PGCD’s election petition which states the line in which the metes and bounds “follows approximately”. If the boundary line were to change based on HPWD’s latest map, there would be constituents who voted to be in Panhandle’s District over 20 years ago that would now be in High Plains’ District. The District does not plan to accept the GIS mapping provided by HPWD at this time.

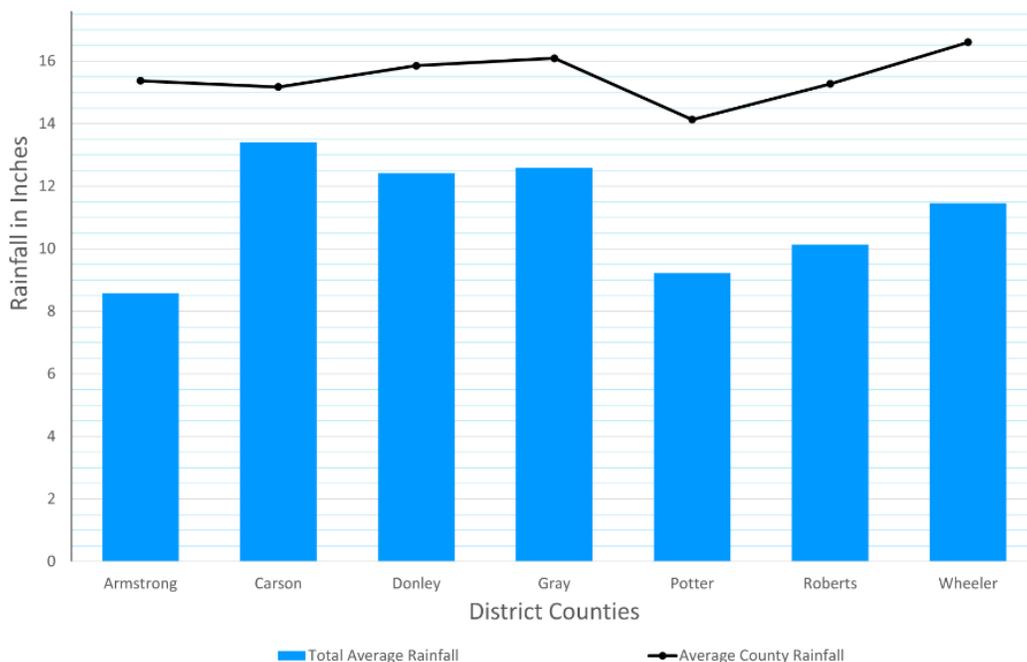


## District's Rain Gauge Program

PGCD has a vast rain gauge network that is used to measure rainfall totals in all areas of the District. We have a total of 140 gauges that are strategically placed through each county in the District.

PGCD mainly uses this information for its Precipitation Enhancement Program. Precipitation enhancement is designed to stimulate clouds to generate more rainfall than they would otherwise through the induction of seeding agents, such as silver iodide and calcium chloride. These seeding agents are used because it has a similar crystalline structure to ice, allowing it to induce freezing. Seeding normally takes place at the smooth, rain free base of the cloud where the updrafts for the storm are located. These updrafts carry the seeding agent to the super-cooled portion of the cloud. Precipitation enhancements is very similar to a farmer fertilizing their crops to produce more yield from the crops. On average, our precipitation enhancement program, which runs from April-September produces an additional 10-15% increase in rainfall.

This year, according to the District's rain gauges on average, all our counties are below normal rainfall through the end of September. The graph shows the county average rainfall totals in blue with the black representing that county's normal rainfall for the season. The normal rainfall total comes from the average collected by District field personnel on data collected from 2000-2020.



## 2020 PGCD Precipitation Enhancement Review

The Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District had a challenging year overall however, District Precipitation Enhancement operations proved to be successful. In total there were 18 operational days (one in May, two in June, ten in July, three in August, and two in September).

A total of flight time of 1921 minutes (32 hours and 1 minute) flown by our two pilots. Flight tracks are available at [www.pgcd.us](http://www.pgcd.us).

We are hoping for a much more favorable year with many more cumulus clouds to seed in 2021. An annual review of our project will be preformed later in the year. The results will be reported in the District's annual report.

County	Number of BIP Flares	Number of Hygroscopic Flares	Percentage of Total
<b>Armstrong</b>	73		17.42%
<b>Carson</b>	92		21.96%
<b>Donley</b>	75		17.90%
<b>Gray</b>	32		7.64%
<b>Potter</b>	109	3	26.01%
<b>Roberts</b>	20		4.77%
<b>Wheeler</b>	18		4.30%

*The total number of Flares used in the 2020 operational season are shown in the table above.*



## 2020-2021 Tax Rate

During the September 17 Board Meeting, Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District's Board of Directors approved the 2020-2021 tax rate. As Required, the District placed proper notices in newspapers and online. PGCD received no public comment regarding the proposed increase.

Directors voted to set the tax rate of \$0.010200 per \$100 of taxable valuation. The increase from \$0.0096 was due mainly to the drop in the oil and gas valuations. All funds will be used to fund the District's general operations.

## Director Britten Tenders Resignation

At the September 25 Board of Director's Meeting Director Brett Britten tendered his resignation and thanked the board for time served. Britten has served on the board since his election in May 2019 as Precinct 2 chair which covers parts of Carson and Armstrong Counties.

Britten, a farmer and cattle rancher, resides in Groom. He expressed appreciation to the constituents in the District for supporting him during his time on the Board.

The Board may appoint someone to fill the seat if it see fit before the next election.

## PGCD Education Program Enters 21st Year

Created in 1999, the program has reached over thousands of children throughout the District. PGCD's management plan states for the District to reach at least 75 percent of its schools however, it has always been our goal to reach 100 percent as we stress the importance of water conservation to our future generations. Last year PGCD started to focus on all grades, K-12, discussing the importance of water conservation at each level. Presentations include information about the water cycle, the Ogallala Aquifer, information on Playa Lakes and water quality.

PGCD is happy to announce their newest Education Director, Suzy Pool. She excited to share with the students the importance of water conservation.

With this year's COVID-19 pandemic changing the way schools and groups are handling visitors and presentations in person, PGCD wants everyone to feel safe while still receiving the best education possible. Pool is available for a Zoom, Skype or any other type of Virtual Presentation. There are various YouTube links that she has available to e-mail.

For more information, contact Suzy Pool at the PGCD office at (806) 883-2501 or by e-mail at [pgcd\\_education@yahoo.com](mailto:pgcd_education@yahoo.com).

## 2020 Amarillo Farm & Ranch Show Canceled

On Tuesday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, it was announced that this year's Amarillo Farm & Ranch Show had been canceled due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The show was scheduled for December 1-3, 2020 and had been serving the agriculture community of the Panhandle for over 35 years.

According to an e-mail sent from Scott Odin, Sales Manager from the IDEAg Group, LLC, an agricultural event group charged with organizing the show, "the safety, health, and well-being of everyone involved with the show, their families, and surrounding communities is paramount". "[T]he method with which we would have to conduct the show to comply with safety standards and state laws makes having a successful, face-to-face even impractical".

However, there will still be a couple of virtual events that will still be provided to those looking to obtain their CEU credits and furthering education. On December 1 Texas A&M Panhandle Farm & Ranch Management Symposium for CEU Credits. On December 3 Cotton U with High Plains Journal will be presented.

General Manager, CE Williams said he was disappointed the show was cancelled, but understood the decision to keep the public safe. "The annual Farm and Ranch Show is one of the District's favorite events to attend because we get to interact with our constituents. It is something we will miss this year, and we hope to see it come back to Amarillo next year."

For more information about the cancellation of the 2020 Amarillo Farm and Ranch Show and for more details on the Virtual Events including how to sign up please visit <https://www.ideagroup.com/amarillo/news/2020-amarillo-farm-ranch-show-canceled>.

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## PGCD Welcomes New Employees



(L-R) Ashley Ausbrooks, Britney Britten and Suzy Pool

Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District is pleased to announce the arrival of three new employees to the District.

Ashley Ausbrooks is a hydrogeologist with PGCD. Ausbrooks graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science with an emphasis in Geology in 2020. As the District's hydrogeologist, she is responsible for mapping, data analysis for the Depletion, Water Quality, and Water Level Programs, management of the Rain Gauge network, and aquifer analysis.

Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District would like to welcome back staff member Britney Britten. Britten is rejoining the District staff as the new Assistant General Manager. Britten was previously employed with the District as the Public Relations/Education Director for the last five years. During her time as the PR/Education Director, she was able to work closely

with General Manager, CE Williams on many projects regarding rules and regulations, biennial symposiums, water level depletion and meter implementation.

Suzy Pool is the Public Relations/ Education Director for the Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District. Pool attended Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene where she studied Communications with an emphasis in Public Relation and Advertising. Some of her responsibilities will be putting together the newsletters as well and maintaining the website and all social media platforms. She will also be working closely with the local school districts assisting them with water conservation education.

Please join PGCD in welcoming their newest employees.