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Hamilton Pool
Hill Country Alliance
By Dave Wilson

Groundwater Truths and Myths in Southwestern Travis County

Clear, clean water
in our aquifers, rivers,
lakes, streams and springs

The Mission of the Southwestern Travis County Groundwater Conservation District (SWTCGCD) is to preserve and protect groundwater through conservation, education and waste prevention.

Myth #1 – A Groundwater Conservation District (GCD) will meter and monitor my household well.

TRUTH: The enabling legislation that created the District states that individual domestic wells capable of producing less than 10,000 gallons per day, and wells used solely for domestic or livestock purposes on tracts that are more than 10 acres and that are capable of producing no more than 25,000 gallons of water per day, are considered exempt and cannot be permitted, metered, or regulated. Well owners are encouraged to register their wells with the GCD to help develop an inventory of existing wells and to protect their production.

Myth #2 - A new GCD means higher taxes.

TRUTH: The SWTCGCD revenue is solely fee-based. The enabling legislation does not allow the SWTCGCD to levy ad-valorem property taxes. The SWTCGCD will not collect taxes.

Myth #3 – I do not use groundwater so I should not have to worry about the aquifer and don't need to be concerned about groundwater management.

TRUTH: A healthy and sustainable aquifer is essential for this area. Aquifers feed springs and creeks that become our rivers and lakes. Surface water, groundwater, springs, and seeps are interconnected within the Hill Country water system. Our rivers, lakes, creeks, and springs provide quality of life for residents, tourism, recreation opportunities, wildlife habitat, and irreplaceable natural beauty. Property values and economic vitality may decline if groundwater becomes unreliable in our community. Protecting groundwater in our aquifer benefits the entire community.

Myth #4 - We don't know enough about the aquifer at this time to conclude the need for a GCD.

TRUTH: In 1990 this area was designated as part of the larger Hill Country Priority Groundwater Management Area (PGMA) by the Texas Legislature, meaning that this region was expected to experience groundwater shortages, land subsidence, or contamination of groundwater in the future. According to state legislation, if an area is within a designated PGMA, its citizens should create or be annexed into a GCD within 2 years. Failure to do so can result in the establishment of a GCD by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). We are nearly 30 years into the original window of concern, and Southwestern Travis County is the only remaining portion of the Hill County PGMA that does not have a confirmed GCD in place to care for its aquifer.

It is well documented that groundwater wells in our area have been going dry during times of drought. Creating a Groundwater Conservation District is the only way we will begin to gather data and evaluate the aquifer in order to make smart decisions about managing the resource for future generations. The problem needs to be addressed now, before it is too late to resolve problems without severe disruption in water quality or supplies.

Myth # 5 – If I drill a well now before the election it will be grandfathered and not subject to the new rules.

TRUTH: There are no provisions for grandfathering wells that are drilled prior to the creation of the district or passage of the confirmation election.

The GCD rules will be applied solely on the basis of the type of groundwater use, well characteristics, land characteristics, and amount of use, regardless of whether the well currently exists.

A Final TRUTH:

“Groundwater is and will continue to be a major source of water for Texans. However, in many parts of the state, more groundwater is being used than is being replenished through natural means. If this practice continues, Texas water costs will rise, land could subside, water quality could decline and people in some areas could run out of water.”

From: Questions about Groundwater Conservation Districts in Texas, Texas Cooperative Extension at Texas A&M University.



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