

For more information on water use, management and conservation, please see the other publications by Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District.

Lone Star GCD—What Every Well Owner and Driller Should Know

Water For Our Future—Understanding Texas Water Management

Or visit us online at www.lonestargcd.org.



A publication of

Lone Star Groundwater
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Water for Growth

Management of the Resource for Montgomery County







A publication of

Lone Star Groundwater
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Local Resource Local Management

Texas, and more specifically Montgomery County, is a land rich in natural resources. The most precious of these is an adequate supply of clean, affordable water.

In 1949, recognizing that the rapid growth of Texas' population was beginning to put strains on its water resources, the Texas Legislature allowed for the creation of "Groundwater Conservation Districts (GCDs)" to provide for local control of groundwater resources.

The Legislature has established that GCDs are "*the state's preferred method of groundwater management*", and the Legislature codified this policy decision in Section 36.0015 of the Texas Water Code. Chapter 36 establishes that GCDs will manage groundwater resources through rules developed and implemented in accordance with this section of the Texas Water Code, and it provides them with the directives and statutory authority to ensure they are given the proper tools to protect and manage the groundwater resources within their boundaries.

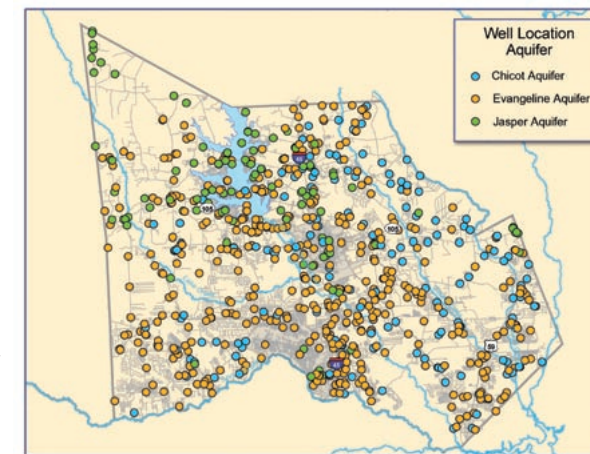
In order to respond to the rapid growth of Montgomery County and the urban sprawl of the City of Houston, a group of concerned gov

ernment and business leaders promoted the idea for the **Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District**, which was created in 2001 by action of the 77th Texas Legislature. According to state law, the need for the District was communicated to the public, and a local confirmation election was held on November 6, 2001. The creation of the Lone Star GCD was confirmed by local voters, with nearly 75% percent of the total votes cast being in favor of the District.

With the formation of any groundwater conservation district, the method of funding its operation is left up to the local voters, choosing between the assessment of an ad valorem tax or the establishment of well production fees; the voters of Montgomery County elected to fund their own Lone Star GCD with the latter method.

In a mostly residential county like ours, the bulk of these fees are paid by the water utilities and private water providers and passed on to their consumers. As it entered its third year of operation, the Lone Star GCD has rolled back its fee structure for the second time since its inception, and the cost to the average homeowner in Montgomery County is only a few dollars per year—**averaging less than one fifth of the cost of tax-supported groundwater conservation districts across the state!**

Montgomery County
Water Well Distribution



YOUR Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District: Insuring a supply of clean, affordable water for our future.

The Lone Star GCD is a governmental entity with a core mission to preserve, conserve and protect the groundwater supplies available to the citizens of Montgomery County for the long-term benefit of all users. The Legislative Act that established the District provided for a nine-member Board of Directors to provide local management of our groundwater resources. Board appointments are for staggered four-year terms, with positions appointed as follows so that all Montgomery County citizens are represented:

- Commissioners Court of Montgomery County 2 seats
- Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District 1 seat
- San Jacinto River Authority 1 seat
- City of Conroe 1 seat
- Other Montgomery County cities . . 1 seat
- Woodlands Joint Powers Agency . . 1 seat
- Municipal utility districts 2 seats

The Board of Directors has adopted a set of Rules for the Lone Star GCD to define how the District will operate. It has also drafted a long-term Management Plan, which has been approved and certified by the Texas Water Development Board. By the end of 2005, the District will have completed a detailed study of long-term water supply needs in Montgomery County. This study will allow the District to identify water planning options in areas experiencing the highest rate of growth

District Rules

The District's Rules were developed to carry out the powers and duties provided by the Texas Water Code to control subsidence, prevent degradation of water quality, or prevent waste of groundwater. A major objective of the Rules is the establishment of a permitting program for the collection of accurate and comprehensive

information regarding the historic and current demands on the Gulf Coast aquifer, from which we draw all our groundwater.

An important milestone for the Lone Star GCD to achieve is the "Registration" of all existing and new wells in the District. This process, *which has no associated cost to the well owner*, allows the District to know how many "straws" are drawing water from our groundwater supplies.

Upon Registration, each water well is classified as either

"exempt" or "non-exempt".

Exempt wells, under the laws of

this State, are not required to have a permit to withdraw water from the aquifer. **Non-exempt** wells are those capable of producing more than 25,000 gallons of groundwater a day; they are subject to permitting and must comply with the District's production fee schedule. For complete information on Well Registration and Permitting, please refer to the District publication, "Lone Star GCD and You—What every well owner and driller should know."

In addition to the Registration and Permitting processes, by law the District has the specific power to:

- Require metering of **non-exempt** water wells in the District in order to scientifically monitor water pumping
- Limit groundwater production to conserve supplies and fairly share them across the County
- Regulate well spacing to minimize interference and prevent over-pumping of the aquifer
- Regulate the export and transportation of groundwater out of the District

- Establish Management Zones to further localize the varying demands and strains on the groundwater resources of the District.

Management Plan

The Lone Star GCD's Management Plan was approved by the Texas Water Development Board in October 2003. The Management Plan forecasts future demands on our available groundwater supplies, outlines the goals for conservation and sets forth the steps needed to

achieve these goals. A main goal of the LSGCD is to limit production of groundwater to a "sustainable

level", so that the groundwater resources of Montgomery County are not depleted for future generations. Very simply, we must insure that the amount of water taken from the aquifer never exceeds the annual recharge.

The Lone Star GCD's Management Plan scientifically estimates Montgomery County's available groundwater supplies to be approximately 64,000 acre feet (an acre foot equals 325,851 gallons), and forecasts no major changes to that supply. However, the demands on our groundwater resources are growing dramatically, as Montgomery County is among the fastest-growing counties in the entire State. The demand for water is forecast to soar more than 250% in the years ahead, from its Year 2000 level of 54,250 acre feet (over 90% of supply), to over 140,000 acre feet by the year 2050, a figure that represents an annual consumption that is **nearly two and half times the available supply**.

With our current growth and current per-capita usage of water, Montgomery County can

expect water shortages to begin to materialize by the Year 2010—only 5 years from now—if we don't take appropriate actions in the area of conservation and prudent water management.

It is important for everyone to realize that the prospect of wells running dry is a very real threat. The central goal of Lone Star GCD is to pre-empt that possibility through accurate data collection and responsible management strategies.

Of course, it is every citizen's responsibility to do all they can to conserve our precious water resources by exercising intelligent and responsible use of water at every opportunity.

Regulatory Plan

The final piece of the puzzle is the District's Regulatory Plan, which will identify water planning options in our region to facilitate the conversion from groundwater to surface water. Without some conversion to surface water, groundwater resources could be ultimately depleted and severe water supply shortages would occur throughout the County. The Plan will develop not only the method to convert from groundwater to surface water, but also:

- Projections for population growth and water demand for the next 40 years
- The forecast possibility and/or probability of aquifer overdrafting (withdrawing more water than is replenished through natural means)
- Set goals for future water level declines
- Establish the need for cuts in groundwater usage to meet goals

The Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District exists to ensure that all citizens of Montgomery County will enjoy an adequate supply of clean, affordable groundwater for generations to come. We invite you to learn more about water supplies and use in Texas, and encourage you to practice responsible conservation of water wherever you have the chance.

"... it is every citizen's responsibility to conserve our precious natural resource..."