
PRESS RELEASE



Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Planning Focus Committee Meeting Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District

June 27, 2005, Conroe, Texas – Montgomery County is the 5th fastest growing county in Texas, and the 26th fastest growing county in the United States. The current source of water for the entire population of Montgomery County is produced from groundwater. More than 800 wells have sought permits under the current well permitting system we have in place. Current water usage is estimated at 68,000 ac-ft per year (about 61 million gallons per day). On the other hand, the Texas Water Development Board indicates the sustainable recharge of the aquifer is limited to 64,000 ac-ft annually (about 58 million gallons per day). We have begun to see the effects of pumping groundwater with water level declines along the IH-45 corridor and along the southern portions of Montgomery County.

The District's engineering consultant indicates that in the next 40 years, the demand for water will increase to 149,000 ac-ft, more than twice the current usage. Computer models indicate that if this amount of water were to be obtained solely from groundwater resources in Montgomery County, very serious declines in the water surface would occur. Land subsidences in excess of 2 feet are being estimated by the consultant and issues of water quality could come into question.

Fundamentally, to meet the future water needs, an alternative source of water will be necessary. A major portion of that alternative source is likely to be from treated surface water.

The Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District is charged with conserving the groundwater resources in Montgomery County. In designing its rules, the District wanted to honor the commitment to all existing well owners by protecting their historic usage of water. Through our permitting system, well owners have documented almost 60,000 ac-ft of water historically used. This was somewhat of a surprise to us, and could not be determined until we had all the permit applications in place. Fundamentally what it means is the historic use almost equals the sustainable recharge of the aquifer. Under the District's current commitment to maintain the level of pumpage to that of the recharge, this means all new development would require an alternative source of water. At the same time, we realize this is not a realistic mandate. No infrastructure is in place to provide surface water and it will take at least 6 years of very aggressive hard work to try to

implement one. Moreover, the District is not responsible for implementing a surface water program, merely to develop a management plan to conserve the groundwater resources.

We are currently in a study process that will lead to a form of groundwater management for both existing and future growth in the county. The engineering consultant is studying options that will help us to develop a sound plan for regulation that is both technically feasible to administer and practically acceptable to stakeholders who will be requiring surface water for future growth in the county.

The consultant has looked at three options for managing the groundwater withdrawal, each has advantages and disadvantages. The engineer is using a groundwater computer model provided by the Texas Water Development Board to evaluate the effectiveness of these management plans. While there is some question as to the accuracy of the groundwater model itself, the results seem to show positive results if these plans are implemented. In some cases, declines in water levels will be reduced by 75% compared to a plan of no action at all.

Surface water infrastructure will be expensive. It is a cost for conserving the water resources that we have. In order for us to successfully continue to grow economically in the county, we will all have to work together to figure out how to share the cost of implementing this new system. Historic Use Permittees will have to work with newly developing areas so that we can minimize the cost of the surface water system. For our management plan to be successful, we have to develop a fair system for everyone.

For more information, contact:

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