

Fayette County Groundwater Conservation District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From: Fayette County Groundwater Conservation District
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VANITY PONDS A GROWING PROBLEM

In spite of the drought that Fayette County, and almost all of Texas, is experiencing, the Fayette County Groundwater Conservation District's office continues to receive reports about people filling vanity ponds with groundwater. After the District's last newspaper article about how damaging and wasteful this practice is, the District received overwhelming support from the community. People are concerned about the wasteful use of groundwater to fill vanity or scenic ponds, particularly during the severe drought conditions Fayette County is currently experiencing. These wasteful vanity ponds are in contrast to the historic tanks that cattlemen use to catch rainwater for their stock. Ranchers' tanks are normally only filled by rainwater, and when these run dry, cattle are generally watered using cattle troughs.

Pumping groundwater into earthen tanks is not only expensive, but also extremely wasteful. Given Fayette County's climate conditions, an average tank or vanity pond will lose about 1/5th of an inch a day (more in the summer and less in the winter). This equals about 6 feet of water per year. On average, Fayette County receives 35 inches (or 3 feet) of rain per year, so including run-off from the surrounding terrain, a properly built and sited rain-fed tank will sustain itself from year to year. In the current drought, with only half of the normal rainfall, the average pond is only going to be about half full. To try to fill these ponds with groundwater is not practical. Ranchers normally utilize troughs or other sources when the ponds are not sufficient. However, this does not seem to be the case with vanity ponds, as evidenced by the number of complaints the District has received. Given Fayette County's climate and small aquifers, however, filling a vanity pond with groundwater cannot be justified.

Fayette County is comprised of approximately 599,000 acres, which are served by four minor aquifers. These aquifers receive a total of no more than 50,000 acre feet of water per year through recharge. (One acre foot is equivalent to one acre of land covered by one foot of water, which equals 325,851 gallons.) This equates to an average of 0.075 acre feet of water for each acre in the county (or 24,000 gallons) per year.

To keep a one-acre pond filled with groundwater, it is estimated to take 6 acre feet of water per year. That is almost two million gallons! Fayette County's aquifers have met our needs in the past, and are capable of supporting our future needs, but we cannot be wasteful. Filling ponds with groundwater is a waste of our most precious resource.

More information about this and other water-related topics can be found on the District's website at www.fayettecountygndwater.com.

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SOURCE: FAYETTE COUNTY GCD