

# FAYETTE COUNTY GROUNDWATER NEWS

## DISTRICT COMPLETES MANAGEMENT PLAN

### DISTRICT OFFICE

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Rodney Willis	Vice-President
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### OUR MISSION:

to provide for the conservation, preservation, protection, recharging, and prevention of waste of the groundwater and of groundwater reservoirs for the people of Fayette County.

*Fayette County Groundwater News* is a quarterly publication of the Fayette County Groundwater Conservation District. Subscriptions are free upon request.

The District offers free brochures and information sheets concerning many aspects of water conservation and protection. Just drop by the office at the above address during regular office hours.

The Fayette County Groundwater Conservation District has completed its Management Plan. This comprehensive plan, which is a requirement of Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code, addresses the management goals of providing the most efficient use of groundwater, controlling and preventing waste of groundwater, controlling and preventing subsidence, addressing conjunctive surface water management issues, addressing natural resource issues, addressing drought conditions, and addressing conservation.

The plan was submitted to the Texas Water Development Board for certification, as required by Chapter 36, ahead of schedule. The plan takes effect upon certification by the executive administrator of the Texas Water Development Board.

Within 60 days of receipt of a management plan, the TWDB executive administrator must certify the plan as administratively complete if it complies with the requirements.

The District held a public hearing on the proposed Management Plan on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2003 at 8:30 a.m., in accordance with a newspaper notice published on October 7, 2003. Copies of the proposed Management Plan were made available at the District Office and at the office of the Fayette County and District Attorney prior to that hearing. All comments at the public hearing were favorable to the plan and the District's general philosophies. No comments were submitted in writing. The District passed a Resolution adopting the Management Plan at their Meeting held on October 20, 2003 at 10:00 a.m., after the public hearing.

The District also provided a copy of the management plan to the regional water

planning group in which the District is located – the Lower Colorado Regional Water Planning Group (Region K), as well as to the two area surface water management entities – the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) and the Lee-Fayette Counties Cummins Creek Water Control and Improvement District #1.

The District's board of directors is now in the process of finalizing the District Rules. The purpose of these rules is to implement the goals and objectives defined in the management plan. One public hearing was held on the proposed rules on May 28, 2003. Another public hearing will be held prior to adoption of the rules.

*The management plan is available for public review at the District office during regular office hours.*



### Did You Know...???

- That 99.7% percent of all water on the planet (oceans, seas, ice, and atmosphere) is not usable by humans.
- Rivers represent about 1/10,000ths of one percent of all Earth's water. Yet rivers are the source of most of the water we use every day.
- Groundwater represents only 0.61% of all the water on the planet. Yet groundwater makes up the vast majority of the fresh water available for our uses.
- Groundwater provides 99% of drinking water for the rural population and 51% of all drinking water for the total population.

## HOW BRUSH MANAGEMENT CAN CONSERVE GROUNDWATER

The clearing of “brush” species—Ashe juniper, mesquite, and saltcedar—is a popular technique to increase spring flows and improve livestock grazing and wildlife habitat, and has been identified as a key “water management strategy” by several regional water planning groups. There have been a number of field studies done in Texas in recent years to monitor the effectiveness of using brush clearing to augment water supplies. Scientists generally agree that upland brush management will only benefit areas that receive at least 18 inches of rain per year; the likelihood of its effectiveness is increased in areas that enjoy significantly more rainfall than this.

On certain sites, brush clearing might be effective because it could enhance groundwater recharge. Brush management on sites with shallow soils that drain rapidly and are underlain by fractured material, such as the Carrizo-Wilcox deep sand, are most likely to increase groundwater recharge.

Brush management can be very beneficial for an array of species that depend on shrubby vegetation and/or

grasses, including white-tailed deer and quail.

The appropriate management practice (bulldozing, shearing, burning, spraying, etc.) depends on the brush species, density of the stand, age of the brush, soil and slope characteristics, and other site-specific factors. The extent to which brush clearing will increase water yield depends in part on the plant species present at the site. More than any other brush species, it is likely that eliminating saltcedar in certain areas, such as along rivers, could yield major water benefits. Saltcedar is not native to Texas and has caused extensive environmental damage. A mature stand of saltcedar has been shown to consume between 4 and 6 acre-feet of water per acre per year. Any saltcedar control program should also include aggressive restoration of native species to lessen the chance that saltcedar will re-establish on its own.



*Mesquite and other woody vegetation growing in a rangeland riparian zone. Mesquite can grow along riparian as well as in upland zones. It is in a riparian zone such as this that mesquite will likely have the greatest effect on streamflow.*

Honey mesquite is the most common brush species found in Texas. It draws water from far below the surface, and it is very hard to kill because it has a dual root system.

However, brush control on mesquite-dominated uplands is unlikely to effect streamflow significantly, because, among other reasons, the soils where mesquite occur are typically deep, the evaporative demand high, and the area is likely to be quickly re-vegetated.

Ashe juniper is the species most commonly managed in the Texas Hill Country to increase water yield. Juniper can be controlled by shearing the green part of the plant (the plant will die if its leaves are cut off, even if the roots are left in place).

Prescribed burning is an effective, relatively inexpensive method of managing brush that is good for wildlife and grazing. Burning can be used as a primary control method in certain areas, or as a follow-up to chemical or mechanical treatment. Following up a chemical or mechanical treatment with a prescribed burn will lengthen the effectiveness of that treatment.

At a minimum, brush control plans should examine their potential effects on local wildlife communities and be designed to minimize conflicts. More positively, a properly designed brush control plan can improve habitats for a variety of wildlife.

Maintenance of the brush control area is critical to ensure continued benefits, including water production and habitat value. Brush control plans should be designed to require low maintenance where possible. In any case, a long-term maintenance plan should be established and committed as part of a brush control strategy.

*Adapted from “Brush Management: Myths and Facts” by Environmental Defense.*

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