

The Boerne Star

Texas Water Development Board finds GMA 9 future conditions unreasonable

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In a special meeting Thursday in Austin, the Texas Water Development Board said the desired future conditions adopted by the executive committee of Groundwater Management Area 9 are unreasonable.

The board of directors of the Cow Creek Groundwater Conservation District has strongly backed the GMA-9 position and Cow Creek Board President Tommy Mathews is a member of the GMA-9 executive committee.

Thursday's ruling was a significant blow to local water planners.

The conflict centers on a decision about "desired future conditions" that was made on Aug. 29, 2008 by the GMA-9 executive committee, which is made up of one representative from each of the groundwater districts in northern Bexar, Bandera, Blanco, Comal, Hays, Kendall, Kerr, Medina and Travis counties.

The GMA-9 committee voted to set a desired future condition of "no net increase in average drawdown" for what is known as the Edwards-Trinity (Plateau) Aquifer. The Plateau Water Planning Group and the Upper Guadalupe River Authority, both based in Kerr County, contend that the future conditions the GMA-9 desires would be unreasonably burdensome for property owners in western Kerr County. They appealed to the TWDB for relief and they got it.

The TWDB recommended that the desired future condition be changed from no net increase of average drawdown to nine feet of average drawdown. A TWDB spokeswoman said this recommendation would allow the desired future condition to be achievable given the projected growth of exempt use in the area.

In September Cow Creek GCD directors voted unanimously to send a letter to the TWDB protesting the appeals and taking the TWDB to task for waiving the deadline and accepting the appeals.

Kerr County Precinct 3 Commissioner Jonathan Letz, who led the appeal effort, said a no-net drawdown scenario for the Edwards-Trinity (Plateau) Aquifer would mean that just 46 domestic wells could be drilled in a large swath of western Kerr County. He also said GMA-9 had not complied with TWDB rules in arriving at its decision and alleged that one meeting of the planning group was improperly posted, violating the Texas Open Meetings Act.

GMA-9 countered that there were nine good reasons why no net increase in average drawdown for the Edwards-Trinity (Plateau) Aquifer is reasonable and said the decision was made in accordance with TWDB rules and procedures.

Cow Creek General Manager Micah Voulgaris said the contention about the 46 wells was misleading because it assumes an unusually large amount of pumping from each well and

disregards the option for a landowner to drill through the relatively shallow Edwards-Trinity (Plateau) formation to reach underlying water-bearing aquifers.

The Edwards-Trinity (Plateau) Aquifer extends westward from the Balcones Fault Zone and covers many West Texas counties. Kendall County is on the southeastern edge of the plateau. Below the Edwards Plateau is the Trinity Aquifer, which is the primary source of groundwater in the northern portion of Bexar County and Kerr, Kendall, Comal and Bandera counties. A portion of the aquifer known as the Middle Trinity underlies all of Kendall County and most wells in the county draw from that portion of the aquifer.

However, two fingers of the Edwards Trinity poke into Kendall County from the west, one in the northern portion of the county and the other in the southern portion of the county, in an area roughly coterminous with the watershed of Upper Cibolo Creek above Boerne City Lake.

Mathews says it is vitally important to residents in the Cow Creek District to have planning documents that state a desired future condition of "no net increase in average drawdown" for the Edwards-Trinity because the flow from springs, like Champee Springs, originate in the Edwards limestone and are a primary source of the water in Cibolo Creek which feeds Boerne City Lake which is a primary source of drinking water for the City of Boerne.

"We need to protect that resource," Mathews has said.

The groundwater conservation districts in GMA-9 are now required to hold a public hearing on the TWDB-recommended revisions and after considering comments from the public and the TWDB comments, they must revise the desired future condition and resubmit it to the TWDB.

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