

In Midst of Drought, New Report Makes Hard-hitting Recommendations for State Action on Groundwater

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(AUSTIN, TX – Mar. 5, 2009) An ongoing and disastrous statewide drought paves the way for a new report released today from Environmental Defense Fund. **Down to the Last Drop** dissects current flaws and inefficiencies with Texas' current groundwater management process and makes hard-hitting recommendations for state action.

"Groundwater is the lifeblood of Texas' future," said [Laura Marbury, Texas Water Projects Director for Environmental Defense Fund](#) and co-author of the report, "Now that many parts of the state are in a drought of record, Texans are finally starting to wake up to the limitations of the resource."

According to State Comptroller Susan Combs' [recent report](#) on Texas' water resources, groundwater provides almost 60 percent of all fresh water available in the state, but that is decreasing due to groundwater pumping in excess of its ability to replenish itself.

"Our state's groundwater resources face many pressures today," Marbury said. "Not only is Texas' population expected to double over the next 50 years, but a variety of interests are lining up to get a straw into the dwindling groundwater pool. If we don't strengthen our groundwater system to handle increasing pressures, we could completely devastate the resource."

Down to the Last Drop highlights three issues that Texas' groundwater resources face: the connection between groundwater and surface water and the lack of consideration this receives in current management; flaws in the current Groundwater Management Area process, which sets goals for how healthy our groundwater resources should be in the future; and opportunities to modernize the groundwater management process.

One recommendation found in the report concerns regionalizing groundwater management in parts of the state experiencing significant groundwater development pressures. Often covered by a hodge-podge of single-county groundwater districts, areas such as east of I-35 overlying the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer would benefit from a consistent, predictable and sustainable management framework. The economic and environmental benefits from consolidating into regional entities, similar to the Edwards Aquifer Authority, far surpass single-county management.

The report's section on the Groundwater Management Area process, which was initiated by legislation in 2005, is one of the first detailed reports on this process that offers concrete direction for improving it.

“We must ensure our aquifers are effectively managed so that they remain viable into the future,” Marbury said.

Co-authors of the report include Laura Marbury and [Mary Kelly, Senior Counsel of the Center for Rivers and Deltas at Environmental Defense Fund](#).

An electronic copy of the report is available
http://www.edf.org/documents/9326_2009_TX_Groundwater_Report.pdf.

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