



GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
933 EAST COURT STREET □ SEGUIN, TEXAS 78155 □ FAX [830] 379-9718

MEETINGS FOCUS ON TRINITY AQUIFER MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION

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Contact: Judy Gardner, [830] 379-5822, or email jgardner@gbra.org

SEGUIN. . . .As demand for water increases, agencies charged with managing and protecting groundwater supplies are working diligently to improve public awareness and develop new tools to help them study and allocate this important resource.

Approximately 50 elected city and county officials from the Hill Country Priority Groundwater Management Area (PGMA) attended an open discussion meeting on current state laws and policies covering groundwater management and protection for the Trinity Aquifer area on Friday, Jan. 14 at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). The meeting was sponsored by the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA), the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA) and the Center for Water Research at UTSA.

The Center for Water Research was established in 1987 with a grant from the National Science Foundation. It is a non-profit organization funded by UTSA and various public and private research projects whose primary goal is to provide water resource technical support and research to the San Antonio/South Texas/Texas Hill Country region.

In his opening remarks, GBRA general manager Bill West said that because of the current and projected rapid population growth in Texas, everyone involved in local government should have a basic understanding of the state laws that relate to groundwater protection. "This knowledge will help them deal with the problems that accompany substantial growth, especially in those areas that are primarily dependent on groundwater as their major source of supply. These problems include water shortages, contamination and significant reduction in water levels for groundwater supplies," said West.

West then introduced Carolyn Brittin, director of special projects in the Texas Water Development Board's office of planning, who presented an overview of that agency's plans and regulations relating to groundwater issues.

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Dr. Weldon Hammond, founder of UTSA's Center for Water Research and interim dean of the College of Science and Engineering, introduced Steve Musick, section manager in the Groundwater Assessments Division of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, and Kelly Mills, staff geologist with TNRCC's Water Quality Planning and Assessment Section. Musick and Mills discussed the role of local and state government in groundwater management and also explained the Hill Country PGMA.

The final speaker was Greg Ellis, EAA general manager, who discussed the legal issues regarding PGMA's.

Groundwater risk areas were formally identified beginning in 1985 when Texas documented specific areas likely to have critical groundwater problems within the next two decades. In 1992, the legislature established rules for these critical areas, which were renamed Priority Groundwater Management Areas in 1997 by Senate Bill 1.

PGMA's can be created in response to local petitions or at the discretion of TNRCC. The Executive Director of TNRCC may initiate various PGMA study options including hydrogeology and current water use, water availability, projected demand, and the effect of groundwater management on natural resources.

The Hill Country PGMA was initially created in 1990 after a study report indicated that the increased demands on the Trinity Aquifer were resulting in severe water-level declines and decreases in well yields. These effects were projected to continue, particularly in areas where groundwater is expected to be the only source of water available to meet the increasing needs of the Hill Country area.

The PGMA covers Bandera, Kerr, Kendall, Gillespie and Blanco counties, as well as those portions of Travis and Comal counties that rely on the Trinity Aquifer for much of their water supply. To ensure that the Trinity Group Aquifers would be adequately studied, the Trinity Aquifer Water Planning Group (TAWPG) was formed in 1998 to protect and focus attention on this vital resource.

Working closely with the Texas Water Development Board, TAWPG helped initiate the Trinity Aquifer Modeling Project, a computer simulation that will allow water planners to 'see' how decisions about pumping, well spacing and other factors will affect the aquifer. Phase 1 of this project is almost complete and representatives from the TWDB will conduct a working demonstration on Friday, March 17, from 10 A.M. to 12 noon at the Science Building on the UTSA Campus.

A workshop is also being planned for Tuesday, May 30, and will feature opportunities for the public to engage in a 'hands-on' interaction with the computer simulation.

For more information about the project or future meetings, contact Pamela Hodges by email at hodges@gvvc.com or by telephone at (830) 537-5052.