

Heartbeat of the Hickory

Spring 2006

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Bill Sloan.....Vice-President
Bert Striegler.....Secretary
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The Role of the Water District

You've probably seen our articles in the newspaper lately requesting well permits and registrations, reminding landowners to submit water use reports and asking for access to unused wells for water levels. Many people regard us as 'the enemy,' an entity out to 'get the water.' The truth is we work for the citizens of the District.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The need for a local underground water conservation district to properly manage water from the Hickory Aquifer in Central Texas was first identified in the early 70's. In November 1981, local citizens submitted a petition to the Texas Water Commission calling for the creation of the Hickory UWCD No. 1. A confirmation election was held August 14, 1982. The District was officially established at that time with 94% of the votes in favor.

On August 12, 1999 the District's petition of creation was amended to include all aquifers within the legal boundaries of the District. Those boundaries were extended in 2003, when an election was held in Mason County, annexing the remainder of that county. Eighty-eight percent of Mason voters approved of the annexation.

OUR PURPOSE

We are here to protect your water. The District was formed to "formulate, promulgate, and enforce" rules

and regulations for the purpose of conserving, preserving, prevention of waste, protecting and recharging the underground water of the Hickory aquifer and associated aquifers, and to minimize as far as practicable, the draw-down of the water table or reduction of artesian pressure within the District boundaries.

REGISTER OR PERMIT WELLS

We ask that well-owners register or permit all of their wells in order to secure their water rights in the future.

Any well that is NOT capable of producing 25,000 gallons a day and is used for domestic or stock should be registered. The registration process is quite simple. Merely complete a registration form, sign and submit to the district office. Permitting is a little more complicated. Any large producing well (more than 25,000 gallons a day) that is used for irrigation, public water supply, or industry, must be permitted according to Chapter 36, Texas Water Code. (§36.113. Permits for Wells (a) A district shall require permits for the drilling, equipping, or completing of wells or for substantially altering the size of wells or well pumps.)

Smaller wells covered by registrations are exempted from permitting by §36.117. Aside from the legality is-

sue, documentation of wells and water used will definitely benefit the landowner in the long run. First and foremost, there is a definite possibility that in the future, the State will take control of groundwater much as it has surface water, doing away with groundwater districts. Should this occur, having documented your wells in the past will likely preserve your water rights in the future.

For the time being, as water legislation becomes stricter, so will District Rules. The District will have no choice. Now is the time to register and permit wells so they will be grandfathered under the more lenient, current rules.

Accurate records are vital to the preservation of water in this area. Unless the District has documentation to support its "usage" numbers, there will be a misrepresentation of data. In other words, it will falsely appear that the District has more water than it actually does.

WATER USE REPORTS

At the end of every year, the District mails Water Use Reports to all persons with permitted wells within the District. Our rules require these forms be completed and returned to the District by March 15 of the year following the reporting period. Every three years, permits are reviewed and renewed. Those not admin-

istratively complete are subject to cancellation.

As with all data collected by the District, this information is not being gathered to infringe upon the rights of the landowner. Just the opposite is true. Accurate data will be necessary in the future to protect water rights.

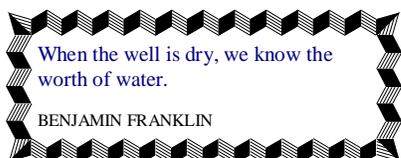
WATER LEVELS

Twice a year the District measures water levels in a select group of almost 200 wells. As the years have gone by, this group has grown smaller and smaller for various reasons. Some wells cave in, some change owners, and some are put back into production. Ideally, the wells we measure should be unused wells within the District boundaries with some sort of opening through which we can run our tape. Accurate and regular water level measurements help us to better understand and manage the aquifers within the District boundaries.

If you have an unused well in the District and would be willing to allow us to regularly access it, please, give us a call at 325-597-2785 or send us an email at hickoryuwcd@yahoo.com.



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IT'S SPRING AGAIN! MORE ON XERISCAPE

What is Xeriscape? Xeriscape is a landscaping technique utilizing low water usage plants and implementing water conscious maintenance principles. Many people confuse Xeriscape with a zero-scape. Xeriscape landscapes are not strictly cactus and rock gardens. If you just look around in nature, you'll see that Texas is blessed with an abundance of beautiful, drought tolerant natives plants.

Recently the McCulloch County Master Gardeners held a Lunch and Learn at which they introduced a series of plants known as the Texas Superstars. Each of these plants must prove itself before it can wear the badge of Texas Superstar. These beauties undergo a rigorous and extensive trial period by Texas

A&M University's Agricultural Program. For more information on these plants, go to <http://www.TexasSuperstar.com>. If you're interested in the Master Gardener Program, contact your local Extension Service.

Other websites that offer Xeriscape tips and information are: <http://www.txsmartscape.com/> <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/xeriscape/xeriscape.html>

And of course, you can visit our website at <http://www.hickoryuwcd.org> for more information. We also have free brochures available to the public at our office at 111 East Main Street, on the Square in Brady.



Claret Cup, *Echinocereus triglochidatus*
Fearsome spines topped with delicate flower, these unusual cacti seduce hummingbirds to venture into the danger zone. The Claret Cup are the first cactus to bloom in the spring, flowering from April to June. The fruit of the Claret Cup are edible, though the picking might be a bit difficult.
The Latin name for this cactus is *Echinocereus triglochidatus*. *Echinocereus* means hedgehog, which is quite fitting as this plant grows in a spiny clumps.

District Happenings

Many of you probably wonder what we do all day here at this District. This month we've completed the majority of water level measurements and across the board, levels are down. One set of measurements is never the best indicator of activity however. The District is also working on revising its rules. A copy of the current set of rules is available online at our website. Spring is always the busiest season for educational programs. The District will be presenting a short class to students at North Ward Elementary through the Texas Farm Bureau Program. Later in the month, we will participate in the Soil and Water Conservation Field Day for McCulloch County 5th Graders held at Brady Lake. We're very excited about a water sampling project we're doing in conjunction with the LCRA and Ms. Harris's 8th Grade Class in Mason. Students will go out into the community and obtain and test water samples for local citizens. This project

reaches beyond science class. The students will conduct the analyses in their science lab, calculate percentages in math class, and write letters to residents in English class. We are also taking orders now for Major Rivers. Major Rivers is a 4th grade water education curriculum designed to teach students about Texas' major water resources, how water is treated and delivered to their homes and schools, how to care for their water resources, and how to use them wisely. We provide these educational sets to area teachers free of charge. We are also once again inviting area high school students to submit essays in our annual Water Camp Scholarship Contest. Each year we sponsor two students to attend Water Camp. Texas State Youth Water Camp is set for July 9-13 in the George and Opal Bentley 4-H Center in Monahans. Derek Scasta, extension agent in Ward County and the camp's coordinator, said the five-day camp helps older Texas youth learn about water issues. "We strive

to build an appreciation among the campers of the implications water management has on agriculture, industry, municipalities and homes," Scasta said. "The camp is an excellent opportunity for high school boys and girls from across the state to learn more about our water resources." The camp will be conducted by extension agents and specialists, U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service personnel and other water resource experts. Any interested student is encouraged to contact the District office for more information.

