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County Groundwater District Gives Report

**By Jim Brasher,
General Manager**
The Mission Statement of the Colorado County Groundwater Conservation District (CCGCD) is to evaluate, preserve and protect the groundwater of Colorado County and to prevent waste and ensure an adequate supply for current and future residents, industry and agriculture.

This is the first of what I hope will be an ongoing series of columns regarding the operations of the District and ways in which we can conserve and protect our groundwater resources.

The CCGCD was created under authority of Section 59, Article XVI of the Texas Constitution and in accordance with Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code, by the 80th Texas Legislature with the Act of May 23, 2007, 80th Legislature, House Bill 4032, as a governmental agency and a body politic and corporate.

The CCGCD was later approved by the voters of Colorado County in November, 2007, after having failed twice in previous elections. The Board of Directors hired me to the position of General Manager in October of 2008.

I've come to realize that there was quite a lot of healthy debate regarding the need for a groundwater conservation district. While I wasn't involved in these debates, I am a firm believer in the value of a groundwater conservation district for Colorado County.

With the exception of Lavaca County, where the proposal has been voted down three times, every county surrounding Colorado County is part of a local conservation district.

Lawmakers decided that it was in the best interest of the citizens of Texas that decisions on groundwater resources be made by local entities rather than by a state or regional agency.

Residents of those counties that are not part of a GCD are at the mercy of policies enacted by state or regional entities that may not be in the best interests of the local constituency.

The Board of Directors and CCGCD staff are committed in ensuring that private property rights are not abused and that groundwater resources are used to the collective benefit of the present and future constituents of the District.

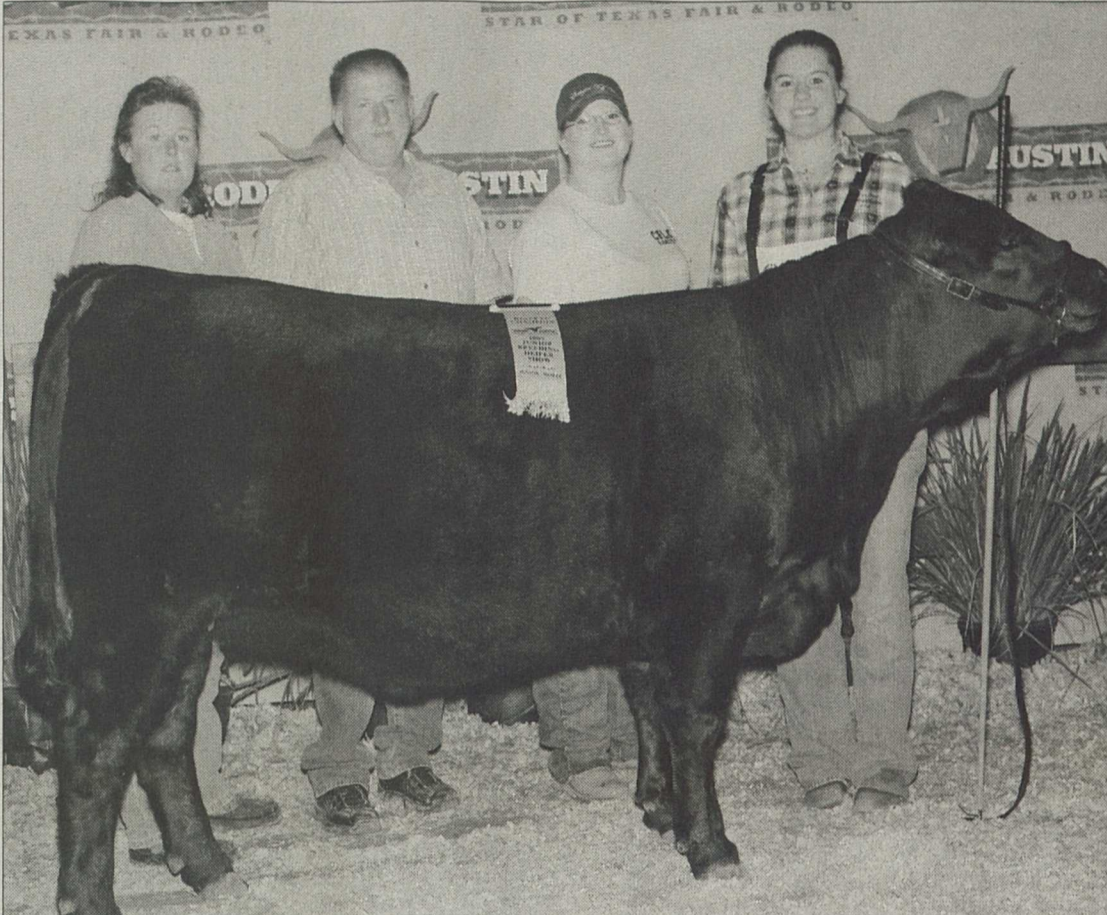
Because CCGCD is a relatively new district, we are in the process of submitting the necessary documentation to the Texas Water Development Board prior to beginning the process of creating district rules and regulations.

The most important document to be submitted is the CCGCD Management Plan. The management plan is a lengthy document with the primary purpose of defining the District goals. Among the key goals for CCGCD are: 1) providing the most efficient use of groundwater; 2) controlling and preventing waste of groundwater; 3) addressing conjunctive surface water management issues; 4) addressing drought conditions; and, 5) addressing, in a quantitative manner, the future conditions of

the groundwater resources. Over the past several months, I've been presenting various components of the draft Management Plan to the Board of Directors during the monthly meetings. These meetings are open to the

public and we encourage the public to attend and provide input. Notices for the meetings are posted at least 72 hours prior to the meeting at the District's office at 425 Spring St., Columbus, TX and at the County Courthouse and city halls of Eagle Lake and

Weimar. The notice is also posted on the District's website www.coloradocountygcd.com. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact the CCGCD at 979-732-9300.



Rice FFA would like to congratulate all the members who exhibited livestock at this year's major shows. Congratulations to Kaytlyn Ford for exhibiting first place in her class and then for being awarded Reserve Division Champion with her Limousin heifer, Rosebud on March 26. Pictured from left to right are Vikki Ford, Monte Ford, Jennifer Council (PITA) AST, Kaytlyn Ford with heifer. A special congratulations goes out to Kaylee Janow for exhibiting 1st place in her class with her goat on March 20 and making the auction sale on March 26.

Pollinators Important For Crop Production

By Texas Parks & Wildlife
Pollinators are crucial for our survival, yet pollinator populations are plummeting in the United States, affecting the foods we eat and the lives we live.

For example, the number of commercially managed honey bee colonies in the U. S. has declined from 5.9 million in the 1940s to 2.7 million in 1995 and less now.

Commercial honey bees are needed to pollinate one-third of the approximately 130 agricultural crops grown in the U. S., a service valued at \$14.6 billion annually.

Texas crops benefited by pollinators include tomatoes, berries, alfalfa, soybeans, cotton, rice and many other vegetables and fruit.

Worldwide, of the estimated 1,330 plants grown for food, beverages, fibers, spices and medicines, 75 percent (approximately 1,000) are pollinated by animals (bees, flies, bats, wasps, beetles, birds, butterflies and moths).

The National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) calculates that 1 out of every 3 mouthfuls of food we eat and beverages we drink, are delivered to us by pollinators.

Worldwide, pollinators are in trouble. Destruction or alteration of habitat removes vital food and shelter sources.

Management of habitats to discourage insect populations affects pollinators. Pesticide use has doubled in North America since 1960.

Insecticides kill pollinators while herbicides remove potential food sources. Yet, there is hope for pollinators – you!

As a landowner you can help pollinators living and working your land. There are over 500 native species of bees in Texas, not to mention all the native pollinating flies,

beetles, butterflies, moths and hummingbirds.

Conserving pollinators might be as simple as rethinking your routine.

Reconsider the idea that "weeds" have no place on your land.

Many of those milkweeds, thistles and other native flowers and forbs provide nectar and nesting sites for pollinators all through the year.

Treat those "weedy" plants as "pollinator plants" rather than weeds.

Allow pollinator plants to grow at field boundaries, turning corners, along fence lines, in buffer strips, riparian zones or in designated areas.

Encourage wildflowers to bloom and set seed before cutting pastures or fields for hay.

Avoid the use of pesticides when crops are in bloom and being utilized by pollinating insects. Target specific problem areas, rather than using broad-based sprays.

Set aside herbicide-free zones to allow foraging by pollinators. You can actively plant for pollinators, too.

In small fields, plant different crops that provide nectar-rich blooms in every season.

Or grow flower/herb gardens to promote pollinator abundance and diversity.

Choose native plant species that have been unaltered.

Avoid horticulturally improved plants, especially "double" blooms, or flowers with very little nectar, such as roses, marigolds, mums, begonias and others.

Good pollinator plants include: asters, milkweeds, coreopsis, coneflowers, sunflowers, verbenas, liatris, phlox, bee balm, penstemons, herbs, native honeysuckles, hawthorns, plums, sumacs, lantanas, turk's cap, goldenrods, clovers, soybeans, peas and more.

Try not to spray water on flower blooms in the heat of the day to provide as much nectar for pollinators as possible.

Once you've started conserving pollinators on your own land, encourage your neighbors and work with wildlife management associations to spread the word and share successful techniques.

The new 2008 Farm Bill provides new landowner cost-share programs for pollinator conservation practices.

And take the time to get down at eye level with your pollinators.

Observe your insects and other pollinators, identify them, and continue learning about the species that share your land.

You might just be amazed at what you find! If you would like to contact your local biologist, see our Web site at <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wildlifebiologist>.

Businesses To Pay Franchise Tax

Texas Comptroller Susan Combs reminds businesses that their annual franchise tax is due May 15.

This is the second franchise tax-filing deadline since the Legislature's revisions that changed the tax calculation.

The comptroller's office continues to help business owners and tax preparers adjust to the changes.

"We took note of the most common errors and misunderstandings from last year's franchise tax reports," Combs said.

"Then our office offered Webinars to help taxpayers avoid those errors and we have also contacted many taxpayers directly to correct their forms."

Franchise tax forms and general information are available online at www.window.state.tx.us/taxinfo/franchise/. To speak to a franchise tax specialist, call (800) 252-1381.

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