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Colorado County Groundwater District

By Jim Brasher
 Wow, I must confess that I've encountered a lot of wide-ranging opinions about our little district here in Colorado County. Some have been positive, some insightful, some have been rather inflexible and some have been, how shall I say, colorful. It's given me a different perspective. I know that there are some people who have a hatred of all things government and a corresponding distrust of all things and people remotely political. To those people, I'm not sure what I could say that would alleviate their anxiety. But to those that have some specific concerns and interest about district policy, I hope I can help. Many people have anxiety about rules of the district that haven't even been created yet. Only recently has the district board started to investigate potential district rules. Therefore, I'd like to invite anyone that would like to have some input on shaping our district rules to attend and participate in the monthly board meetings. If you're unable to do that, come by our office and I'll certainly take note of your concerns and present them to the board as such. Obviously, any district rule that the board creates cannot countermand state law. So, I'll try to clarify some issues of state law. Concern: The district is forcing me to register my well. Response: Technically, it's Texas state law that is requiring you to register your well with the district. Until district rules are finalized, I'm not sure what the consequences of not registering your well will be. One thing I can say with certainty is that if you choose not to register your well, it will tend to cause us to underestimate how much groundwater is being used in the district and consequently we will overestimate how much water is available.

The more water that is deemed available, the higher is the probability that an outside interest will look to Colorado County as a potential source of water for their needs. Concern: The district will force me to apply for a permit for any new well I want to drill. Response: Again, until the district rules are finalized, the exact criteria for requiring a permit are uncertain at this time. But, Texas state law essentially says that a district may not require a permit for a well used solely for domestic use. Nor may it require a permit for a well used solely for providing water for livestock or poultry on a tract of land larger than ten acres with a well equipped to produce less than 25,000 gallons of groundwater a day. The district could increase the production criteria for well exemption if it so chooses. Concern: The district will mandate that I have a meter on my well. Response: By Texas state law, the district cannot meter wells that are exempt from permitting (see above) unless the well owner wishes it to be monitored. The vast majority of wells in the district will be exempt from permitting. Concern: The district can restrict water usage from my well. Response: Again, if your well is exempt from permitting, Texas state law says that a district may not restrict production on your well. A decision on how much water a particular non-exempt well (i.e. high-capacity well) is permitted to produce will be determined in part after public hearing. Further restrictions could occur should there be a critical situation such as a sustained drought. Hopefully this clears up a few items. More details of state law can be found in Chapter 36 of the Texas State Water Code. In the meantime, if you have questions or concerns about government policy as it regards to groundwater, feel free to access our website at www.cegcd.net or e-mail me at jim@cegcd.net. Of course, you're always welcome to come visit us at our office at the Stafford Opera House in Columbus.

New Golf Cart Laws In Effect

-in master planned communities with a uniform set of restrictive covenants in place, on public or private beaches, -during the daytime and no more than two miles from where the owner usually parks the golf cart and for transportation to or from a golf course, or -to cross intersections, including a road or street that has a posted speed limit of more than 35 mph. "Cities also can allow golf carts with the proper equipment on certain roads, but you need to check with your city government to find out where or if they are permitted," Davio said. A city can pass a local ordinance allowing golf cart use on roads with a posted speed limit of 35 mph or lower. However, the golf cart must be insured and have the following minimum equipment: -headlamps, -tail lamps, -reflectors, -parking brake, -mirrors, and -a slow-moving vehicle emblem. The state, a county, or a city can ban golf cart operation on all or part of a public road in the interest of safety. More information on golf carts, neighborhood electric vehicles, all-terrain vehicles and recreational off-highway vehicles is available at www.txdot.gov.

Colorado County Crimestoppers

Continued from page 3
 progressive tool I have ever seen in my career," said Lt. Ron Myers, Columbus Police Department. "There is no doubt that this program will dramatically increase our crime solving capabilities!" Using Tip Soft Text Tips, information may be anonymously received and securely replied to with complete confidence. The service was built specifically to allow text messaging informants to remain anonymous by encrypting the text messages and routing them through several secure servers, protecting the personal details of the informant. Tip Soft SMS also allows police to respond by text message to the originating cell phone without ever knowing the identity of the individual who left the tip. The user's information is always given an alias and a unique ID before being sent. This secure application allows the tipster and the investigator to have two-way dialog while always keeping the user's identity completely anonymous. The Columbus Police Department encourages everyone to report information about any non-urgent illegal activity, such as unsolved cases, vandalism, theft, the sale and distribution of drugs or information about crimes that are being planned in the community or schools. Tip Soft is currently used by NYPD, LAPD, Chicago Police Department, New Scotland Yard

and across Canada. Additional information on Tip Soft Text Tips can be found on the Web at <http://www.smscrimetips.com>. For more information contact the: Colorado County Sheriff's Department, 979-732-2388; Columbus Police Department, 979-732-3351; Eagle Lake Police Department, 979-234-2727; or the Weimar Police Department, 979-725-8060.

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Quail Workshop Sept. 30

Helping landowners and others understand the reduction in quail in the Blackland Prairies and Post oak Savannas of Texas, and how they might be restored, is the focus of the 2009 Texas Quail Study Group workshop. The workshop will be held Sept. 30 - Oct. 1 in Cat Spring. According to Dr. Jim Gallagher, Wildlife Specialist with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Washington County and the surrounding area were once billed as "the quail capitol of Texas." Over the past century, however, much of the quail habitat has been converted to other uses and quail populations in the region have plummeted. "We want to give folks a better understanding of what kind of landscape quail require and examine the things that have been done to try to restore their habitat and populations," said Gallagher. The workshop begins Sept. 30 with a full-day session at the Cat Spring Ag Society Hall (13035 Hall Road, Cat Spring). Discussion topics include quail habitat and population management, habitat and population restoration techniques, economic considerations in restoration, and landowner co-operation. There will be a half-day session on Oct. 1, which will be spent in the field looking at habitat restoration techniques on the ground and will conclude with a habitat evaluation exercise. Registration is \$50 by Sept. 14 and \$75 thereafter, includes two meals, refreshments and a copy of the proceedings. A registration form is available from the Texas Wildlife Association at http://www.texas-wildlife.org/files/TQSG_catspring_2009.pdf. For more information, contact Gallagher at (830) 278-9151 or JF-Gallagher@ag.tamu.edu, or Justin Dreibelbis at (512) 551-3004 or jdreibelbis@texas-wildlife.org.

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