

Colorado County Groundwater District News

By Jim Brasher

I've developed a hypothetical yet realistic scenario that may help illustrate the role of a groundwater conservation district.

WaterCo approaches John Doe and offers him half a million dollars for all groundwater rights for the next 75 years on his 500 acre tract of land.

Their intent is to send this water, via pipeline, to a distant city that seems to be running out of the precious commodity.

Now, who can begrudge Mr. Doe from making a buck (so to speak)? It's his land and it's his water. Bravo to him for his wind-fall of cash.

WaterCo, like most companies, wants to make a profit and provide a product and service to its market.

After an economic review, they've determined a minimum amount of groundwater that they absolutely MUST make in order to have a suitable return on their investment.

Any water they can produce

above this minimum is 'gravy' and just adds to their profit.

After a short study of the Gulf Coast Aquifer, WaterCo determines that there is plenty of accessible groundwater for the next 50 years.

They cut Mr. Doe his half million dollar check and start devising their plan to maximize their profit. They start by drilling ten wells with 6 inch diameter casing.

The wells will continuously produce at maximum rate. After a few years of observation and depending on aquifer conditions, they may decide to double the number of wells in order to maximize their profitability.

The big question of course is, "Can this rate of groundwater production be sustainable and what impact will it have on the aquifer and surrounding wells?"

In its study, WaterCo has determined that as long as the water lasts for 30 years, they will make sufficient money from the investment to have an acceptable return

on their investment.

Unfortunately, what the residents of the area do not know is that 30 years of concentrated production at that rate will do permanent damage to the aquifer. Whereas WaterCo can pick up and move to another area for its operations, the residents are stuck with a depleted aquifer.

Obviously, this unhappy scenario takes place where there is no groundwater conservation district or where there is one, but with no rules.

If it seems as if I'm trying to justify my job, then clearly you have a good understanding of what I'm trying to say!

Now, let's consider this scenario where there IS a GCD.

WaterCo comes in and makes its offer to Mr. Doe, but won't cut the check to him without some assurances first. Since the GCD has rules that regulate production of high-rate wells and the spacing between these wells, WaterCo must determine whether the amount they can produce is

sufficient to meet their economic criteria.

Armed with this knowledge, WaterCo undertakes a project feasibility study. What are the results of the study? Heck if I know. This is just a fictional scenario.

The point is that the District will not allow production beyond what the aquifer can sustain.

If WaterCo can make a profit with the limitations put on it by the District, then it's a win-win scenario. If it can't, then they will have to adjust their economic criteria or perhaps even abandon the project.

That may cause Mr. Doe to go into a state of depression, but the rest of the constituents of the District will know that their aquifer will remain intact.

Hopefully, this scenario is not as depressing as the first (except perhaps for Mr. Doe).

And while I don't want anyone to think anything heroic is going on here at the CCGCD, I think we can make a positive difference.

TPWD Give Fire Break Advice

By: Texas Parks Department

Perhaps we should start by explaining what a firebreak is.

A firebreak can be any break or gap in a fuel source.

In this case the fuel is plant matter: grass, brush and trees.

An example of a firebreak might be a road.

Now perhaps you are wondering why do I need firebreaks?

Well there might be many reasons.

Hopefully so that you can conduct prescribed burns on your property, that when done under the right conditions are very beneficial for wildlife habitat, but there are other benefits for having them.

Shredding then disking to bare ground or soil most often creates firebreaks.

This creates an area that has no grass or fuel for a fire to burn across.

Firebreaks can be maintained either by period disking, spraying herbicide or even by keeping them planted in something green, such as oats in the winter.

Using firebreaks as annual food plots for wildlife is a great

way to get added benefit for your effort.

Maintaining firebreaks on your property can be cheap insurance against an unplanned fire occur. Burning brush piles and trash are the leading cause of escaped fires.

You should be proactive to prevent property loss by protecting your property if a fire should get away from a neighbor.

Chances are you have heard of ranchers who lost many bales of hay from fire.

A well maintained firebreak around a hay yard seems cheap compared to the expense of replacing what can be lost so easily.

Firebreaks can vary in width, depending on how tall the flame length is you need to stop.

A simple way to look at it is the taller the grass; the wider the break needs to be.

Let's say you have a hay field next to tall grassy field with scattered cedar trees and briars along the fence.

It will not take as wide of a fire brake to contain a fire moving from the hay field to the overgrown field because the flames will be shorter.

If you switch the direction of fire travel, the same disking line next to the fence may not be sufficient.

If you were down wind of such a tender-box, you could either make the fire break wider or you could simply move it away from the fence a few yards and keep the grass between the firebreak and the tall fuel mowed down.

Factors that influence fire behaviors are wind speed, temperature and humidity; all of which we have no control.

One thing we can control is the amount and the height of fuel that is available to burn.

So if you have a sensitive area you want to protect or a possible ignition source such as trash barrel or brush pile, creating a firebreak around them is an easy way to reduce the chance of having a problem.

Wildfires typically happen when it is hot, dry and windy so keep that in mind if you are doing anything outdoors that might create a spark.

If you would like to contact your local biologist, see our website at <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wildlifebiologist>.

Cattle On Feed Up Slightly

Cattle and calves on feed for slaughter market in Texas feedlots with capacity of 1,000 head or more totaled 2.6 million head on Oct. 1, up slightly from a year ago.

According to the monthly report released by the Texas Field Office, the estimate was up three percent from the revised Sept. 1 level of 2.53 million head.

Producers placed 570,000 head in commercial feedlots during September, up 12 percent from both a year ago and the August 2009 total.

Texas commercial feeders marketed 485,000 head during September, down one percent from last year but up one percent from last month.

On Sept. 1, there were 2.22 million head of cattle and calves on feed in the Northern High Plains, 85 percent of the state's total.

The number on feed across the

area was up one percent from last year and up three percent from the revised September total.

September placements in the Northern High Plains totaled 502,000 head, up 13 percent from the August total.

Marketings were the same as last month at 414,000 head.

Cattle and calves on feed for slaughter market in the United States in feedlots with a capacity of 1,000 head or more totaled 10.5 million head on Oct. 1.

This inventory was one per-

cent above Oct. 1, 2008.

Placements in feedlots during September totaled 2.39 million head, five percent above September 2008.

September placements of cattle and calves weighing less than 600 pounds totaled 490,000 head; 600-699 pounds totaled 450,000 head; 700-799 pounds totaled 593,000 head; 800 pounds and greater totaled 855,000 head.

Marketings of fed cattle during September totaled 1.75 million head, four percent below 2008.

Jobless Rate At 6.6 Percent

September figures show the Colorado County unemployment rate sitting at 6.6 percent, a .1 percent decrease from August.

There is still an increase of 2.7 percent from September 2008.

In September in Colorado County, there were 11,495 people employed with 762 seeking work.

Fayette County unemployment sat at 5.7 percent, an increase of .1 percent from August.

It represents a total increase of 2.1 percent from September 2008.

In September for Fayette County, there were 12,818 people employed and 737 looking for work.

Lavaca county unemployment was 6.4 percent in September, showing an increase of .4 percent from August.

That is a total increase of 2.7 percent from September 2008.

In September in Lavaca County, there were 10,108 people employed and 644 unemployed.

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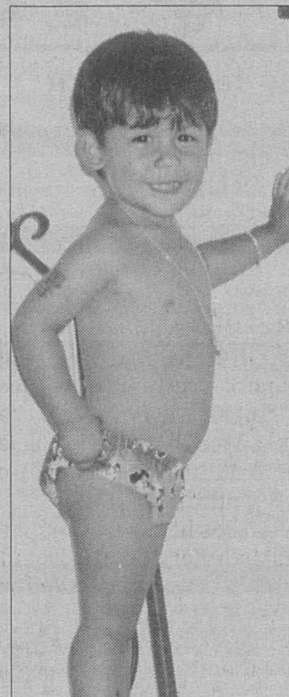
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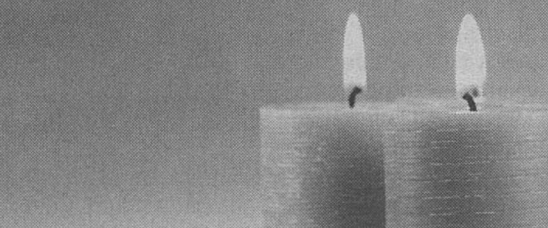
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