

TWDB to Decide "Desired" Future of Trinity Aquifer on March 1st, 2012

The Texas Water Development Board ([TWDB](#)) was scheduled to review two challenges and decide on the reasonableness of the Desired Future Conditions for the Trinity Aquifer in the Texas Hill Country at their February 1st board meeting. At the request of the Wimberley Valley Watershed Association ([WVWA](#)), the Board President granted a continuance yesterday and moved the agenda item to the March 1st scheduled board meeting. TWDB is expected to rule on a protest to the Desired Future Condition (DFC) goal adopted by GMA 9, a goal that some argue is not sustainable. The proposed DFC allows for an average of 30 feet of additional [groundwater](#) decline over the next 50 years (an average of 19 feet across Hays County).

WVWA appealed the ruling to the TWDB on the [grounds that a 2 to 3 feet drop in aquifer level](#) above Jacob's Well will cause the spring to stop flowing and that this level of decline is unreasonable and unsustainable. WVWA, along with other licensed hydrologists, citizens, and local professionals asserted that the ruling fails to protect the flow of water to individual well owners and to the springs and creeks that are the economic engines of the Hill Country. [Read more about WVWA's appeal.](#)

The impacts of this action affect natural springs across the region, and the productivity of private and public drinking water supply wells. Public comments recorded at meetings throughout the Hill Country over the past five years have illustrated the public's desire to set Desired Future Conditions with a goal of zero drawdown on the aquifers. One hundred and sixty interested parties filed 777 pages of notarized statements with the TWDB in support of [WVWA's appeal \(PDF\)](#).

In addition to the appeal by WVWA, the TWDB will also consider and rule on an appeal of the DFC petition that was filed by the developers of the Flying "L" Guest Ranch, Ltd in Bandera County. In their appeal, Flying L appeal argued that the proposed DFC allowed for too *little* drawdown and would make it difficult for groundwater districts to guarantee existing permitted uses.

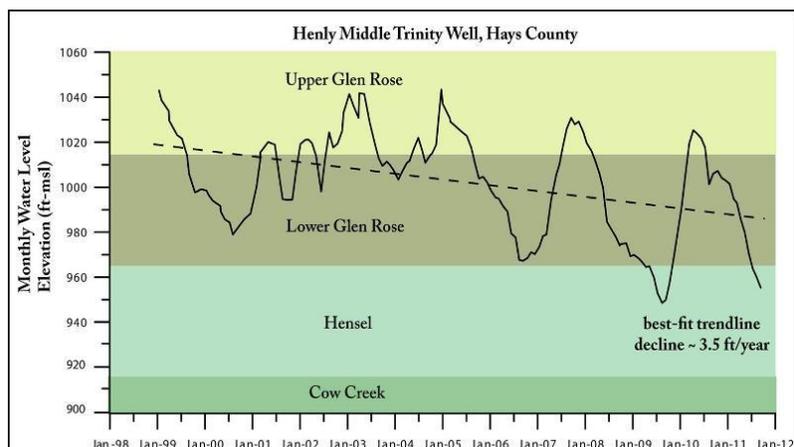
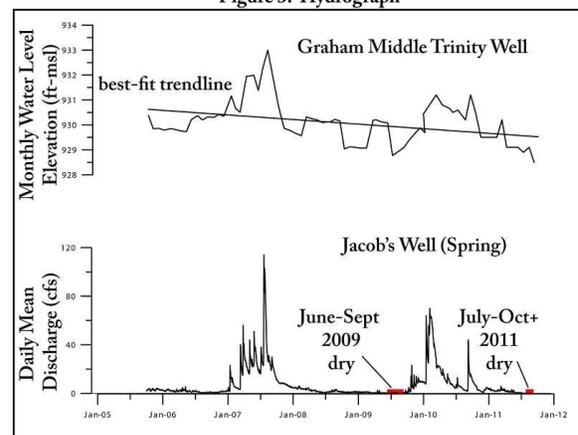
TWDB staff released a 65 page briefing [memo](#) on January 25 that outlines the two petitions and maintains that the proposed 30 ft. DFC is reasonable. The full text of the memo can be read [here](#). The staff memo's definition of "reasonableness" is outlined by the fact that the process GMA9 followed to adopt the DFC was administratively complete and met all of the legal requirements. The TWDB report notes that "the statutes do not contain a requirement that the DFC ensure the aquifer is managed sustainably."

The memo does not address the technical information and scientific evidence presented by WVWA demonstrating negative impacts the drawdown in the aquifer will have on the Wimberley Valley, its economic base, and its natural resources.

Negative impacts include: domestic (privately-owned) wells going dry more frequently under short periods of dry weather as well as with severe droughts; Jacob's Well and Cypress Creek flowing intermittently except in wet years; reduction in income for businesses throughout the Hill Country that rely on a flowing surface waters to attract customers; and a reduction of sub-surface flows from the Trinity to the Edwards Aquifer, recharge that sustains Barton Springs during times of severe drought.

In their recommendation, TWDB staff state that "the reasonableness of the DFC with respect to socio-economic impacts,

Figure 3. Hydrograph



environmental impacts, and the exercise of personal property rights will depend on the way in which the Districts incorporate the MAG into their management plans and rules and make related decisions regarding permit authorizations and administration." The report does not address the impact that the DFC and the associated large increase in pumping will have on the area.

Local Groundwater Conservation Districts are the State's preferred method of groundwater management, and state and regional planners provide the important role of leadership, balancing the complex issues involved in groundwater management. The WVWA encourages TWDB members to consider advising GMA 9 to revise the DFC in Hays County to address the needs of private landowners and businesses reliant on flowing springs and rivers.

Ultimately, the prospective TWDB Board ruling on March 1st is not binding on GMA 9 or local Districts. Residents and landowners interested in sustainable groundwater management are encouraged to contact HTGCD, GMA 9, and their elected officials to voice their concerns. WVWA encourages residents and concerned citizens across the region to attend this meeting to show support for adoption of a more sustainable DFC. If you cannot attend the meeting, please email the TWDB at boardmembers@twdb.texas.gov with your comments.

TWDB is scheduled to hear arguments and rule on the DFC appeals on Thursday, March 1st, at 10:30am, at Stephen F. Austin Building, 1700 N. Congress, Room 170, Austin

This Bulletin Courtesy of the Wimberley Valley Watershed Association