



## WHAT IS A GRP AND WHY DO WE NEED ONE?

We live in a world chock full of *acronyms* and keeping up with exactly what they stand for is a difficult task. The federal government is famous for them -- FBI, CIA, EPA, DOE, EOB, FAA, -- to name just a few. We seem to put everything into shorthand... even, sadly, the date of the terrorist attack on America -- now known simply as 9-1-1.

We have a bunch of acronyms in Texas, too. There are various levels of regulation involving water, and there's a whole new language to learn when it comes to the state agencies that have the responsibility for regulating this vital resource. (See page 4 for an explanation of these acronyms.)

One of the most important abbreviations to come along is **GRP**. The initials stand for **Groundwater Reduction Plan** -- a critical process that has been mandated by the *Harris-Galveston Coastal Subsidence District* (HGCS D) to shift us away from our reliance on groundwater to surface sources of drinking water. This requirement impacts wells pumping 5 million gallons a year or more, and it does not affect private residence wells, wells used for agricultural purposes, or wells that are used to generate electricity.

There is a specific timetable implemented by the HGCS D for the reduction of groundwater to

occur in the service area of the North Harris County Regional Water Authority (NHCRWA): by 30% in 2010, by 70% by 2020, and by 80% in 2030. This is something that will affect all of us who live and work in north Harris County.

### *A Little Bit of History...*

On January 15, 2000, there was a special election held to confirm the creation of the NHCRWA as enacted by the Texas Legislature, and to elect Directors from each of the five single member voting districts.

The reason for the legislation was that in 1999, the HGCS D had issued a new Regulatory Plan which required water districts and individual well owners to detail specifically how they will replace groundwater with alternate sources of water by developing a GRP.

This GRP must be approved by the HGCS D no later than January 1, 2003. The HGCS D Regulatory Plan made it costly for those who fail to comply with this mandate by assessing a *disincentive fee* of \$3 per thousand gallons of groundwater water pumped after that deadline.

The NHCRWA is creating the GRP for the 158 water utilities and 1300+ independent, non-residential well owners in north Harris County within its



boundaries. The NHCRWA will plan for -- and accomplish -- the conversion from groundwater to surface water by negotiating to secure this water supply at the lowest responsible cost.

The NHCRWA also has the assignment to: 1) Promote conservation; 2) Identify and provide cost-effective alternate water sources; 3) Maintain regulatory compliance; and, 4) Encourage intergovernmental cooperation in achieving its objectives.

Since its creation, the NHCRWA has been working toward meeting the HGCS D mandate and plans to have the first draft of the GRP delivered by midyear 2002 to allow for review and modification in time for the January 1, 2003 deadline. During the past two years, the NHCRWA's engineering consultants have explored every reason

*Continued on page 4*

## Authority Director Election Set For February 2, 2002

Area residents will once again have an opportunity to elect Directors to represent them on the North Harris County Regional Water Authority Board. As a result of the 2000 federal census and changes in the boundaries of the Authority, new voter district boundaries were required to be drawn. The redistricting requirements are set forth in the Authority's enabling legislation, H.B. 2965.

The Authority is governed by five elected Directors who serve 4 year staggered terms. There is generally one regularly scheduled Board meeting each month, where public comment is invited at the beginning and at the end of the meeting.

According to the Authority's General Manager, Ed Shackelford, "The Board of Directors is responsible for setting policy for the Authority. They work closely with the General Manager to establish the Authority's goals for conversion to alternate water supplies, and to confirm compliance with the Subsidence District's mandate."

Policies already implemented by the Board have guided the Authority's quest for water supplies and have set the current water users fee that is included in water bills. Some of the more important future policies to be considered include pricing the delivery of drinking water to new and existing developments, and identifying when areas within the Authority will convert to surface water to meet the 2010, 2020 and 2030 HGCSO mandates. ♦

# HEY! It's COLD Out There!

The new year is already sending some chilly weather our way, with more forecast in the weeks ahead. Since this doesn't happen every year, it is easy to forget that more than our plants and pets need some special care when the thermometer dips into the freezing zone.

During prolonged cold snaps, with more than 36 hours of temperatures below 32 degrees, water pipes that pass through outside walls without adequate insulation may begin to freeze. This causes one of the nastiest of household calamities -- broken pipes that can cause amazing damage.

Here are some common sense things you can do to minimize the risk of pipe damage...

**1. Insulate your house.** Reduce air leaks to keep heat in and cold out. Caulk or weatherstrip doors and windows. Pay special attention to outside walls where pipe are likely to be located -- near kitchens, bathrooms and laundry rooms -- and add insulation if possible.



**2. Leave cupboard doors open** under kitchen and bathroom sinks to keep the pipes warm when temperatures drop below freezing.



**3. House check...** If you plan to be away during the winter months, ask a neighbor or family member to make a special house check if the temperatures take a nose dive. If you have taken care of winterizing basics, these spot checks will make sure nothing has gone wrong to cause a water leak to occur.

**4. Keep pipes from freezing.** Wrap any pipes you can access that are near outside walls, mostly under sinks, in water pipe insulation or in layers of old newspaper, tying them around the pipes. Cover

### FEBRUARY 2, 2002 DIRECTORS ELECTION

On December 28, 2001, a drawing was held to determine the order for the candidates' names to appear on the ballots. The ballot order for each voting district will be as follows:

District Number 1	JIM BURKE (Incumbent) RON GRAHAM
District Number 2	LENOX A. (LEN) SIGLER (Incumbent)
District Number 3	BILL ROWDEN JIM PULLIAM (Incumbent) RAY DENSON
District Number 4	TIM LOWRY ALAN J. RENDL (Incumbent) CASEY E. WESTELL, JR.
District Number 5	TERRY THOMAS KELLY P. FESSLER

the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture. Wrap all outside faucets and all exposed pipes, as well.



**5. Hot tubs and spas...** Fortunately, cold spells don't usually stay around long enough to threaten in-ground pools, but check your owner's manual for winterizing above ground spas.

**6. Irrigation systems...** turn off the water to the sprinklers at the main valve. It is usually not necessary to drain the water out of any irrigation components because the ground doesn't usually freeze that deep in Houston. The above-ground equipment does need to be protected, however. Self-sticking foam insulating tape or tubes work well. Do make sure that the main shut-off valve for the system is "freeze proof."

**7. Let the faucets drip** a little when there is imminent danger of pipes freezing. This may waste water, but it may help prevent freezing damage. Know where the valve for shutting off the water coming into your home is located. If the pipes freeze despite all your efforts to prevent it, open faucets wide to allow for expansion of the frozen water.

When the pipes thaw, listen carefully for the sound of water running when the faucet is turned off. This could indicate a break somewhere in the line, and this should be reported at once.

A little planning and preparation can significantly reduce the risk of winter pipe damage. 💧

## Be a Leak Detective!

*Water leaks waste money and a valuable resource!*

One of the first indications of a water leak is an unexplained increase in the monthly water bill. If an increase in usage can't be explained (extra people in the house, lawn watering, faucet left on, etc.), there is a good possibility that a toilet is leaking, a faucet is dripping, or there is a break in the water line between the meter and the house. Other sources of leaks can be the sprinkler system, the water softener, or the automatic fill on the swimming pool.

To identify leaks, start by monitoring the water meter, but you'll need to do this when no one is home to be using water. First, turn off all water inside and outside the house. Write down the reading on the meter and the position of the sweep hand. Don't use any water for at least two hours. At the end of that time, read the meter again. If the second reading is different from the first, you'll know that water flowed through the meter, and the challenge is to find the leak.

Check the **toilets** first; this is where most household water leaks occur. *A leaking toilet tank can waste up to 200 gallons of water per day and cost you 62 cents per day, or \$18.60 per month!*



To check for a leaking toilet, you will need some food coloring (any color). Flush the toilet. Then put enough coloring in the tank to color the water. Do not flush the toilet again for at least an hour. If the water in the bowl of the toilet shows the coloring, there is a leak that will need to be repaired.

**Water faucets**, inside and outside of the house, can also leak undetected. *Even the smallest drip can waste up to 20 gallons per day. That's about 6 cents per day, \$1.83 per month, and \$21.96 per year!* In most cases, a leaking faucet is caused by a worn washer or "O" ring, and they are not difficult to replace.

Water softeners, sprinkling systems and swimming pools with automatic fill devices are other possible source for leaks.

Once the source of the leak is discovered, fix it. Every day it continues, valuable water and money are wasted...right down the drain! 💧

### WATER FACTOIDS...

- 💧 The human body is made up of 65 percent water; the brain is 75 percent water.
- 💧 If every home in this country had a faucet that dripped one drop a second, we would waste 928 million gallons of water each day -- that's enough water to fill more than 7-1/2 billion 8 oz glasses.
- 💧 99 percent of the earth's water is in the oceans. Only 1 percent is available for human consumption.

## WHAT'S A GRP...

*Continued from page 1*

able source of potential water supplies, and recently voted to pursue negotiations with the City of Houston (City) for a long term supply agreement. (The City controls or has access to water rights in the Trinity River, Lake Houston, Lake Conroe and Lake Livingston, and is therefore one of the logical sources for our future supplies.)

### Phasing Out Groundwater...

The HGCS D's Regulatory Plan outlines the minimum requirements for an acceptable GRP. It must include, for example, information about current and projected water demand within the NHCRWA's boundaries through the year 2030.

The GRP must also contain a description of the infrastructure necessary to deliver water sufficient to meet the projected demand; a timetable for constructing this infrastructure; and an explanation of how the construction will be financed.

The HGCS D also requires that the GRP identify the source of the water supply, the water provider, and the amount of water available. They also ask for evidence (e.g., an executed contract or financial agreement) that the

water supplier has sufficient water supplies and/or rights, and is willing to meet the present and projected demands as outlined in the GRP.

The GRP must also contain conceptual schematic plans of the proposed facilities to be constructed for the year 2020 and 2030 requirements. Specific details of conservation and/or alternative water strategies to be implemented are also expected to be outlined in the GRP.

The HGCS D also recommends that as the GRP is developed, consideration should be given to the implementation of an aggressive water conservation and/or reuse program. Water reuse is something that the NHCRWA has been studying aggressively and expects to implement. Water users that can switch to reclaimed water for neighborhood esplanades, parks, golf courses, and industrial sites would have a favorable impact on the GRP.

The NHCRWA expects to conclude water supply negotiations in time to submit its initial GRP draft in June or July of 2002.

We will provide a progress update on these negotiations in the next issue of **WATERLINES**. For information, visit us online at [www.nchrwa.com](http://www.nchrwa.com). ♠

## Texas Water-Related Acronyms

**HGCS D** -- The Harris-Galveston Coastal Subsidence District, created in 1975 by the Texas Legislature to regulate the withdrawal of groundwater within Harris and Galveston Counties. The District was created "...for the purpose of ending subsidence, which contributes to or precipitates flooding, inundation, or overflow of the district, including without limitation rising waters resulting from storms or hurricanes." [www.hgsubsidence.org](http://www.hgsubsidence.org)

**TNRCC** -- Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission; is the lead environmental agency for the state and "strives to protect our state's human and natural resources consistent with sustainable economic development. TNRCC's goal is clean air, clean water, and the safe management of waste." [www.tnrcc.state.tx.us](http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us)

**TWDB** -- Texas Water Development Board is the state agency charged with statewide water planning and administration of low-cost financial programs for the planning, design and construction of water supply, wastewater treatment, flood control and agricultural water conservation projects. The TWDB can make financial assistance available primarily to political subdivisions. [www.twdb.state.tx.us](http://www.twdb.state.tx.us)



3648 FM 1960 West, Suite 110  
Houston, Texas 77090

**ATTENTION VOTERS!**  
Watch our website for information about Early Voting and Regular Voting Locations...  
[www.nchrwa.com](http://www.nchrwa.com).

Ed Shackelford, General Manager

1/02-125K



**STOP THE DROP!**  
Use water wisely...

PRESORT STD  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
Int'l Mailing Systems