

Environmental Stewardship

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A Sustainable Ecosphere

Project Game-Changer: Truth #1

June 2011

"Desired Future Conditions" threaten the Colorado River

Is this the future you desire for the Colorado River?



In 2005 the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1763 which changed the rules for managing groundwater in the State. Unfortunately, some did not follow the new rules. By setting science standards to determine the amount of groundwater available, known as the "desired future conditions or DFC," they were to estimate the amount of water for beneficial use so regulators could issue water well permits *based on the standards*. *The law clearly defined a series of steps to guide the process.*

Outflows of groundwater to the surface provide "base-flows" to rivers and streams such as the Colorado River, Big Sandy Creek, Alum Creek, Yegua Creek, and many more streams in Bastrop, Lee and surrounding counties. We recognize these outflows as "springs" when they flow from the ground to the surface in a location outside the banks of a river or stream. These outflows to the surface also provide essential water to terrestrial vegetation in times of drought. Our pine trees, oak trees, and other major terrestrial vegetation depend on outflows of groundwater.

Over-pumping of the aquifers threaten to "de-water" the shallow portions of our aquifers, thereby threatening our rivers, streams, springs and terrestrial vegetation. These outflows were supposed to be considered in setting the desired future conditions. Rather, they were considered "leaks to the surface" to be captured by pumping, and exported.

Truth #1: The adopted Desired Future Conditions for our aquifers will cause the Colorado River to lose its base-flow by 2060.

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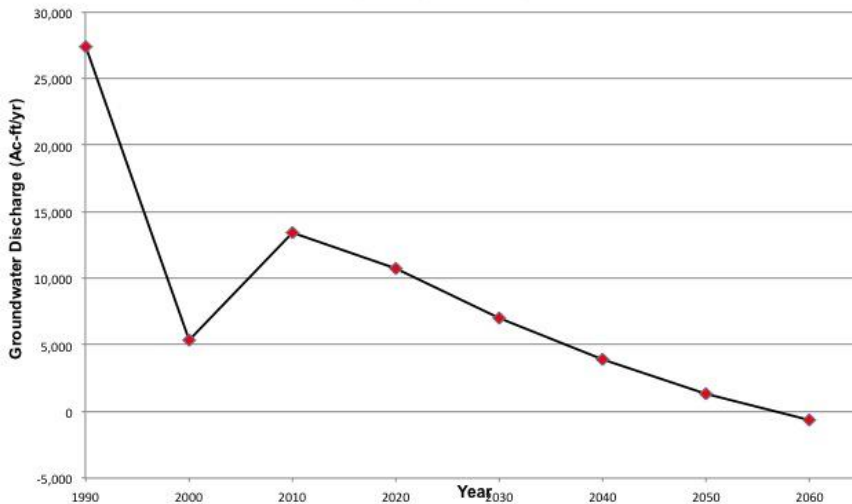
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GMA-12 MODFLOW Predictions of Net Groundwater Discharge to Colorado River and Tributaries
(Stream segments 36 - 48)



The graph above predicts that the groundwater discharge to the Colorado River and its tributaries will decline to ZERO acre-feet per year by 2060. The data to produce this graph came from the Groundwater Management Area 12 (GMA-12) desired future conditions Groundwater Availability Model (GAM) files provided to Environmental Stewardship in May 2011. These are the same files provided to the Texas Water Development Board for their use in determining the amount of groundwater available in the management area.

Environmental Stewardship's groundwater hydrologist extracted the information from the file and plotted the data as evidence that the groundwater-surface water relationship between the Colorado River and the Carrizo-Wilcox aquifers is predicted to change dramatically under the adopted desired future conditions of GMA-12.

This groundwater-surface water relationship is critical to the rural character and ecological health of our communities under normal conditions, and is even more critical during drought conditions. Central Texas is in, perhaps, the worst drought of record since the 1950's. The current and future climatic conditions in Central Texas, combined with declining aquifers, threaten our quality of life. In addition, we have to consider pressures of growth and development, and export of water to urban areas. **Combining all of these factors, it is clear that we are facing a crisis of massive proportion for the future of Central Texas.**

Why should you care? The simple truth is that if we don't find a game-changer for our region our way of life and our natural water resources will be forever damaged, affecting every one of us and future generations. We can act now with vision and boldness before it is too late.

Over the next weeks and months I will be providing you with more information about how the "water marketers" game has been played over the past six years. I will also be revealing a plan to change the rules back in favor of sustainable management of our groundwater and surface water resources, with increased local control over the critical decisions that will shape our future. **Stay tuned, and please help us protect the water that you depend on by making a generous contribution to Project Game-Changer today.**

Our Mission



Environmental Stewardship is a charitable nonprofit organization whose purposes are to meet current and future needs of the environment and its inhabitants by protecting and enhancing the earth's natural resources; to restore and sustain ecological services using scientific information; and to encourage public stewardship through environmental education and outreach.

We are a Texas nonprofit 501(c) (3) public charity headquartered in Bastrop, Texas.

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