

The Saga of the Hill Country PGMA: The Plot Thickens

The fate of these unprotected areas – including southwestern Travis County adjacent to BSEACD – is anybody’s guess at this point, with the story taking as many plot twists and turns as a “whodunit” novel. After these areas were designated as areas in need of groundwater management, the issue remained relatively dormant, until recently. Meanwhile, the residents in these areas who were experiencing well problems, especially during droughts, became increasingly frustrated by the lack of attention to this situation. In the 2009 legislative session, the District attempted to answer the call by supporting bills filed by Sen. Kirk Watson and Rep. Valinda Bolton that would have allowed the residents of southwestern Travis County to vote to be annexed (or not) into the BSEACD’s jurisdiction. At the time, the BSEACD was agreeable to the annexation idea because of the limited

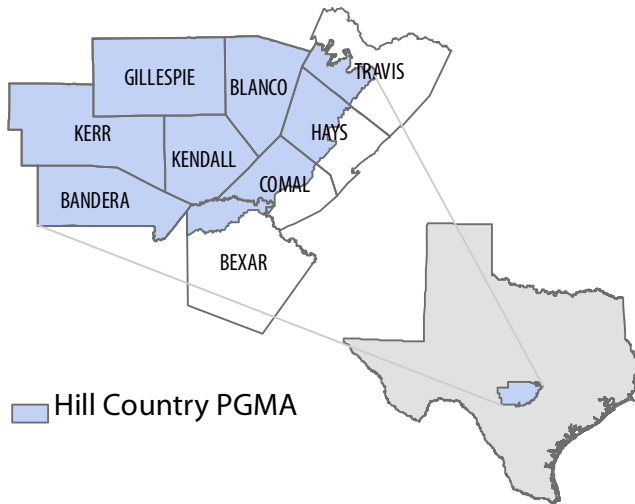
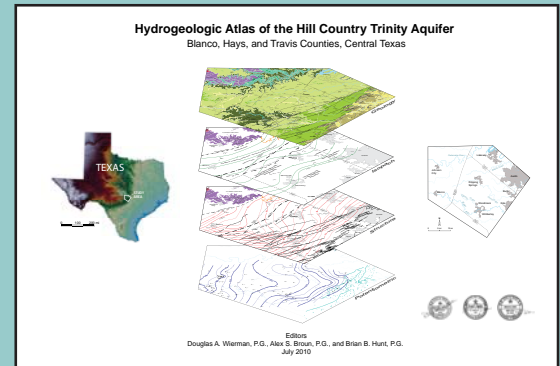


Figure 12. The Hill Country Priority Groundwater Management Area and associated counties.

alternative options available for GCD creation, and in fact had established a Trinity Aquifer-specific management zone. The bills, however, failed to pass.

Since then, the TCEQ has issued a long-awaited report that recommended a regional multi-county GCD be created to include western Comal County, southwestern Travis County, and the area currently within the existing Hays Trinity GCD, which TCEQ considered as unable to offer effective groundwater management on a sustained basis. This recommendation was aligned with the clear legislative intent that new GCDs are preferably multi-county GCDs so that they can focus on integrated local management of an aquifer system, which of course does not conform to county line boundaries; many GCDs in the state are multi-county, including BSEACD. At the time the final report was being drafted, this multi-county recommendation for the Hill Country PGMA was widely supported by all of the area governments, including the then-Board of the Hays Trinity GCD. In another plot twist, the Hays Trinity GCD experienced a changing of the guard with a majority of the previous Directors being replaced in recent elections. A quorum of the new Board then flipped the GCD’s previous position by opposing the multi-county district, insisting on “more local” control. In response, the TCEQ also flipped their recommendation in favor of annexation of southwestern Travis

Recent Publication: Hydrogeologic Atlas of the Hill Country Aquifer, Blanco, Hays and Travis Counties, Central Texas



The BSEACD was one of many sponsors, and its staff contributors, of a science-based, public-service document recently published. The effort was spearheaded by three groundwater conservation districts, numerous volunteers, agencies, and foundations. The document consists of 19 plates that cover a range of geologic information and hydrogeologic information about the Hill Country Trinity Aquifer in parts of Hays, Blanco, and Travis Counties, and extends into the BSEACD. The University of Texas has put the document in their Digital Repository and is located at the following link:

<http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/8977>

County by the BSEACD – the same option that has already once failed to be approved by the legislature. To make things even more interesting, the Travis County Commissioners Court has recently imposed a moratorium on new subdivisions relying on Trinity Aquifer wells, to provide time for a GCD to be in place. More public and evidentiary hearings on the TCEQ’s recently revised position are scheduled to be held and as always, the legislature could weigh-in during the upcoming session before TCEQ is scheduled to order a resolution to this puzzle.

One way or the other, these areas in this PGMA will have to be managed by some form of GCD(s) that can provide effective groundwater management. How GCD creation happens and what form it will take remains a mystery. But stay tuned. If the story continues at this pace, more plot twists await and it will definitely be worth watching.

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A full version Aquifer Bulletin is available for download at:
<http://www.bseacd.org/outreach/newsletters/>

