

Vision and the Desired Future Condition (DFC)

*by Jack Hollon,
President, Wimberley Valley Watershed Association*

Recently I had an opportunity to visit briefly with Hays County Judge Bert Cobb when he came to Jacob's Well Natural Area for a Saturday tour of the preserve. He asked a question that has stayed with me, though we had no time to discuss it then: "What is your vision for this area? What would you like to see here?"

After some thought, my short response for the Spring-Creek system is: "Keep it clean, clear, and flowing," a sort of mantra for those who have worked on the [Cypress Creek Project](#).

But we recognize that achieving this will not be easy. The trajectory we are on is demanding more and more from the aquifer, more than natural recharge supplies, which leads to a gradual lowering of the water table. Some call this "mining." The result is that when rainfall is below average, the aquifer's base flow to springs and streams falters much earlier than it used to. During the 7-to-10 year "drought of record" (1950s), Jacob's Well continued to flow. However, twice in the past decade (2000 and 2009), with many new wells competing for the same water, the flow ceased during dry times of about two years each.



Jacob's Well with no [flow](#) for the first time in recorded history June 2000

So, our vision or plan to keep the well and Creek flowing must involve area-wide support to do two things, along with sound water conservation: First, protect and enhance recharge through land conservation in the recharge area; and Second, reduce demand on the aquifer by making rainwater (RW) harvesting systems the standard Hill Country-Western Hays water supply choice..., basically for all new construction, plus an incentive to phase out many wells now pumping and replace with RW systems. (This proposal will be expanded in a future article and compared with the costs of bringing in surface water or groundwater - if any such water exists - via [big pipes](#).)

Back to the Judge's vision question: Surveys of area residents preceding the vote on Hays Parks and Open Space Bonds showed a large majority concerned about our water resources, as well as open space and habitat for wildlife. The bond issue passed by a large margin.

This vision, which I share with many local residents, is to imagine a [Hill Country](#) landscape, mostly rural, with beautiful vistas, healthy wildlife habitat, and clear flowing valley streams. Add the possibility of quiet and solitude and you have perhaps the opposite of crowding and noise and traffic. This is not a selfish vision, for our fellow urban dwellers will be thankful that such places have been preserved for them to visit and enjoy... for re-Creation.

These thoughts on Vision can be compared to the [DFC Process](#) now under way in area water planning. "Desired Future Condition" and "Vision" do sound roughly similar. But, hang on.

Western Hays Co. is part of [GMA-9](#), one of the State's [16 groundwater management areas](#). By law, each GMA

has been working for the past several years to determine the DFC for its local aquifer(s). Last July, the members of GMA-9 voted to allow, or manage toward, a [30 ft average drawdown](#) over the next 50 years in the Trinity Aquifer across nine Hill Country counties.

Desired indeed. In attending many meetings and several hearings concerning the DFC process, I have never once heard an individual citizen express a **desire** to have the local water table lowered by any amount, much less 30 ft. Such a drawdown would be certain to cause widespread well problems and to dry up local springs and streams in all but very wet years.

The vote for a 30 ft average decline in the aquifer is a cynical and temporary victory for widespread development and urbanization, over local efforts to retain Hill Country values. It reflects the power of land speculators and developers in politics and law, and in brainwashing the populace that their "growth vision" is inevitable.

The DFC decision will not be accepted without a fight, without resistance from the people who live here and care about the Home Place and their communities. State law allows an appeal.

On March 28, the Wimberley Valley Watershed Association filed a petition protesting the DFC and its probable effects on Western Hays County. The [14-page petition](#) was accompanied by a 6-inch stack of attachments: related science and law, testimony by professionals, and affidavits. The petition will also be sent to the other districts in GMA-9 and to the Texas Water Development Board. Stay tuned.

We shall work vigorously to establish a Desired Future Condition for water resources that is consonant with the Vision that most residents hold dear for our Texas Hill Country. I believe it was Pericles who said: "Without a vision the People perish."

[WVWA DFC Petition Press Release](#)

[DFC Petition](#)



[Become a Friend of Jacob's Well](#)
[Donate](#)