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# Groundwater Conservation Districts: Success Stories

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The aquifers in Texas have different quantities of groundwater, recharge characteristics, and susceptibility to contamination. Demand for water from these limited resources is increasing, so our aquifers must be conserved and protected for the benefit of the state's economy, our natural ecosystems, and our quality of life. The Texas Water Code, Chapter 36, calls for the creation of Groundwater Conservation Districts "in order to provide for the conservation, preservation, protection, recharging, and prevention of waste of groundwater, and of groundwater reservoirs or their subdivisions, and to control subsidence caused by withdrawal of water from those groundwater reservoirs or their subdivisions." In Texas, local decision making through Groundwater Conservation Districts has been the rule and not the exception. In fact, Groundwater Conservation Districts are the state's preferred method of groundwater management.

Texas' diverse climatic systems, aquifers, water use patterns, population growth projections, and economy make planning for water use a complex issue. Groundwater Conservation Districts are formed according to local needs; therefore, the roles of the districts reflect differences in local needs. Some districts serve primarily to protect water quality; others work mainly to promote conservation of limited supplies, or to combat subsidence.

Groundwater Conservation Districts are carrying out a number of successful programs to protect and conserve the state's water supplies.

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At special conferences, demonstration projects, field days, and public events, districts showcase conservation practices, demonstrate best management practices, and distribute educational materials. For example, the South Plains Underground Water Conservation District sponsors an annual South Plains Water and Soil Conservation Conference and Trade Show, which includes agricultural water conservation practices updates and water level measurement reports for the area. This conference targets agricultural producers, offers continuing education units, and fosters communication among agricultural producers, irrigation industry representatives, and conservation professionals.

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# Success

The High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1 has built a strong Information/Education program, initiated in June 1954 with the first publication of *The Cross Section* newsletter. This newsletter is mailed free of charge to a subscriber list of more than 6,900 local, state, national and international readers. The District has received two Watermark Awards for communications excellence from the Texas Section of the American Water Works Association for its timely news releases to local, state and national news media. The District also maintains a public service announcement campaign through which 60-second pre-recorded water conservation messages are aired on local radio stations, and 30-second water-related public service announcements are aired on a local TV station. The District regularly displays informative exhibits at area events, fairs and trade shows, and makes informational materials available to the public through their Lubbock office. Many of their publications are on the Internet at <http://www.hpwd.com/>.

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## Purpose of Groundwater Districts

Groundwater Conservation Districts have assigned duties, and they may invoke authorized powers necessary to fulfill their duties.

### *A Groundwater Conservation District is required to:*

- Develop and adopt a comprehensive management plan for efficiently using groundwater and preventing its waste. The plan also must include measures for preventing land subsidence. This plan must be submitted to, and certified by, the Texas Water Development Board and filed with other districts within a common groundwater management area.
- Adopt rules necessary to implement the management plan.
- Require permits for drilling, equipping, completing, or substantially altering the size of water wells.

### *A Groundwater Conservation District may also:*

- Make and enforce rules necessary to implement the water management plan.
- Make surveys of the groundwater resources.
- Regulate the spacing of wells and/or production of wells.
- Require that unused or abandoned wells be capped or plugged.

The common goal of all Groundwater Conservation Districts is to conserve groundwater resources through local management in order to ensure adequate water for their districts in the future.

## Promoting Water Conservation through Education and Public Awareness

Groundwater Conservation Districts use a variety of programs and media to inform the public about water issues and to raise public awareness of the need for water conservation. News releases and public service announcements distributed through newspapers, radio



This Cessna 340 aircraft, equipped with belly racks and wingtip generators, is used for cloud seeding by three Groundwater Conservation Districts in the Texas High Plains.