

STATEMENT TO GMA-9 re: **DFC Process and the Future of the Hill Country Aquifers and Streams**

-- From: Jack Hollon, former Board Member (2000-2010) HTGCD, and President of the Wimberley Valley Watershed Association

GMA-9 plays a critical role in determining the future of the Texas Hill Country. "DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS" is a phrase that participates in a kind of vision we have for this region, this place where we live and which we care for. The presence of clear flowing water in our streams is critical to both land values and our quality of life.

Given the population growth and development pressures we are under, maintaining these flows will be a real challenge. That was made very clear at the meeting in all the talk about "drawdown" ranging from 3,, to 20... to 30... to 40 feet over the coming four or five decades, if not sooner. Al Broun and Doug Wierman spoke persuasively about what such drawdown would mean for the Blanco-Cypress Valley..., not a good prospect.

I urge GMA-9 to adopt a proactive role in exploring ways to insure that our local management of groundwater resources places a proper value on maintaining the health of these flows. Do not give up the battle before we have even discussed the issues fully. If we understand what is at stake, there is every likelihood that we can mobilize planning, investment, and actions to deal with the problem. What follows is the sketch of an idea to begin that discussion – that work:

Recommendation: **The GMA-9 recommendation to the TWDB must not be for increased pumping.**

The DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION: No additional drawdown of the aquifer.

Discussion Points:

1. We now have adequate data in western Hays County to demonstrate that we are drawing water from the Trinity Aquifer in quantities that are not sustainable, conditions leading to a long-term decline in water levels. (See graphs of two monitoring wells (Henly and Mt. Baldy) -- with regression lines -- supplied by HTGCD/David Baker.) The combination of frequent drought and over-pumping are ratcheting down water levels, thus shutting off flow to springs and streams. (I strongly suspect that a similar situation is true over much of the Hill Country.) In the Wimberley Valley, the effect on Jacob's Well and Cypress Creek has been especially severe..., documented in three droughts in the past fifteen years.

So... we cannot afford to increase pumping. Rather, we must work to **reduce** pumping over time, even in the face of intense growth and development pressures. (This may sound like foolish advice, but I have been pondering this situation for some years. And there does appear to be a path toward a solution.)

2. **The key** to accommodating more citizens and **not** drying up our spring and stream flows in the Texas Hill Country is to **require that all new construction (homes and businesses) include well-engineered rainwater collection systems to provide for essentially all water needs.** This will necessarily be coupled with intelligent conservation measures, with landscape and recreational design oriented toward the natural systems and plant communities that are native here. Also, an information and education program to inform citizens of the connection between pumping and local spring flows will be needed across the region. Rainwater harvesting and water conservation provide the enlightened routes to living the good life here.

3. A program to gradually replace existing dependence on wells/groundwater must also be created. Incentives for this will need to be offered and will require leadership and "thinking out of the box." Replacing wells with RW systems and finding an alternate source for public water supply systems -- at least a portion of their needs -- are possible options. I strongly urge that the investment be guided toward rainwater harvesting and needed support systems, rather than bringing expensive, disruptive, and, in the long run, less reliable and more expensive surface water via pipeline. But that is another argument -- which we need to have.

4. Part of the incentive funding to promote this "Transition to Rainwater Harvesting in the Texas Hill Country" (see 3 above) would be provided by gradually increasing production fees on groundwater, taking us from the present system of treating groundwater as a "free good...", to one in which rainwater would clearly be the more economical alternative.

We citizens of the Texas Hill Country face a time of critical decision making. We have blundered along for too long, hoping that the huge population and resource issues we face would somehow magically solve themselves. Those of us with a history here, who appreciate fully the treasure that Nature has provided, must step up and provide ideas and leadership to help make the transition we face without destroying the natural assets that make the Hill Country desirable in the first place.

Thank you for listening,
Jack Hollon, 3700 River Rd., Wimberley TX 78676
512-847-2708