



**Barton Springs
Edwards Aquifer**
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

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Aquifer District Adopts Additional Rules to Protect Groundwater

Austin, Texas; September 11, 2009 – The Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District has changed its rules to manage more equitably its groundwater resources and to respond more effectively to severe and prolonged droughts. At its Board meeting last night, the District’s Board of Directors approved a sweeping set of rule changes to accomplish those objectives. The changes were adopted after an extraordinary amount of stakeholder input over the last nine months, with public interest heightened by the ongoing severe groundwater drought in the District.

The adopted rules establish a new Exceptional Drought stage, with mandatory 40% curtailments in pumping for all permitted users; differentiate among several aquifers as to drought management measures and other regulations; specify accelerated and additional curtailments for certain types of permits if the aquifer water levels fall to historic low levels; and also propose a new temporary transfer permit system that allows certain permittees to contractually transfer water pumpage rights under certain conditions during extreme drought to minimize socioeconomic impacts and that provides at the same time a net benefit to the aquifer accompanying the transaction.

“The new rules evidence the District’s commitment to conserving and protecting the groundwater in the District and the uses that are dependent upon it under all aquifer conditions”, remarked Kirk Holland, the District’s General Manager. “This is a finite and shared resource, and right now, anyone using groundwater in the District should consider their water supply in peril. These rule changes balance aquifer protection and groundwater use for the benefit of all users for as long as possible during drought.”

Holland noted that, “Despite the severity of the current drought and the very hot and dry summer, the District’s permittees and their end-user customers have performed admirably in meeting the required 30% curtailments in authorized pumpage. The current aquifer conditions and the new rules are not caused by profligate well pumping but by a lack of rainfall and creek flow, which replenish the primary Edwards aquifer, for

more than two years. But there is no avoiding the fact that if the current drought worsens, the larger curtailments and water-source substitutions required under the new rules will be more difficult to make and likely more expensive for virtually all those who use the aquifer.”

A tabular summary of the rule changes and the new Rules & Bylaws document may be viewed on the District website early in the week of September 14th. For more information, contact the District office at (512) 282-8441.

The Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District is charged by the State of Texas to manage the groundwater resources of southern Travis, northern Hays, and adjacent parts of Bastrop and Caldwell Counties. These groundwater systems serve more than 50,000 Central Texans as a water supply and feed the iconic recreational and cultural resource of Barton Springs and its habitat of federally-protected endangered species living there.

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