

# The Future of Rural Texas is Groundwater

## Groundwater is the backbone of rural Texas.

Groundwater provides:

- 54% of all the water used in Texas. The single largest source.
- 77% of the water used for irrigation. The largest category of water use.
- >99% of drinking water for many rural communities.
- 30% of the flow in Texas rivers – the second largest source of water in Texas.
- 72% of Community Water Systems depend entirely on groundwater.
- 1.32 million Texans rely on groundwater from their own wells.
- 6 million Texans depend on public water systems that pump 1 billion gallons of groundwater per day.

## We are losing our groundwater.

- Texas has grown twice as fast as the rest of the country over the past decade.
- The state's population is anticipated to increase 73% in the next 50 years while its existing supplies are projected to decline by 18% in the same period. Most of this decline is from groundwater depletion.
- Many newcomers are moving to subdivisions that were once ranches in areas of the state that don't have a lot of water or any development regulations, now watering lawns instead of cattle.
- Texas is losing groundwater at nearly twice the maximum sustained rate. That rate is likely to increase in coming years according to plans already pending with local management agencies.
- Perhaps the clearest sign of groundwater decline: the number of dry springs statewide has nearly tripled since the early 1980s.
- Texas' climate is drying as well. This century, Texas could face the driest conditions it has seen in the last 1,000 years, according to the state climatologist.

**Do you know your Groundwater Conservation District?**  
**Find it here:**



## How does groundwater management work in Texas?

**Groundwater Conservation Districts (GCDs):** In response to record drought, the state created groundwater conservation districts or GCDs. Local GCDs regulate groundwater usage, set pumping limits, and issue permits to conserve aquifers and prevent over-extraction. The purpose of a GCD is to use the best available science to protect property rights and balance the conservation and development of groundwater.

**Priority on Local Control:** Texas emphasizes local management, giving GCDs the authority to enforce rules based on regional conditions and water availability. Unlike surface water, which is regulated by the state, groundwater management is decentralized, with varying rules across different districts. To make a difference in our community, we need to support our local GCD.

**Private Ownership:** Under state law, landowners own the groundwater beneath their property and have a right to pump groundwater; however, landowners are not entitled to a certain amount of groundwater. A landowner's right to pump is also subject to GCD regulation.

**The Rule of Capture:** The Rule of Capture is a legal doctrine that prohibits a landowner from being sued if they pump groundwater and it negatively impacts a neighbor's well. Exceptions include subsidence, malice, and negligence.

## What can rural Texans do?

- Your voice matters – show up and participate in your local groundwater district and advocate for what matters to you. Scan the QR code below to find your GCD.
- Meet with your state representatives and let them know how important groundwater is to you, to your family, to your way of life in rural Texas. Ask your elected leaders to support GCD data and science efforts so they're equipped to manage your groundwater.
- Partner with us, the Texas Farm Bureau and the Texas Alliance of Groundwater Conservation Districts as we seek to save the backbone of rural Texas.

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