

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE
TEXAS GROUNDWATER PROTECTION COMMITTEE

RECORD OF MEETING

Second Quarter Meeting, Fiscal Year 2021

Meeting Date: December 9, 2020
Place: Virtual Teleconference
Meeting No. 68

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Subcommittee Members

Diane Boellstorff (Co-Chair)
Peggy G Hunka (Co-Chair)
Julia Stanford
David Villarreal
TJ Helton
Rebecca Storms
Lynne Fahlquist

Affiliation

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (AgriLife Extension)
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts (TAGD)
Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA)
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB)
Texas Water Development Board (TWDB)
U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

Other Agency Staff

Joel Pigg
Guy Fipps
Anish Jantrania
Abiy Berehe
Alan Cherepon
Grant Gibson
Cindy Hooper
Kathy McCormack
Leah Martinsson

Affiliation / Program

AgriLife Extension
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TCEQ / Water Availability Division (WAD)
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MEETING HANDOUTS

1. Texas Groundwater Protection Committee (TGPC) Public Outreach and Education (POE) Subcommittee Meeting Agenda, December 9, 2020
2. TGPC POE Subcommittee Meeting Record, September 9, 2020
3. Outreach Events Status Report, December 4, 2020
4. Texas Well Owner Network (TWON) Training Activities Schedule
5. Google Analytics reports on TGPC website activity, FY2020 and September 1 - November 30, 2020
6. Final Draft Update to *Landowner's Guide to Plugging Abandoned Water Wells*

MEETING RECORD OF DECEMBER 9, 2020

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Diane Boellstorff Co-Chair of the TGPC POE Subcommittee called the meeting to order at 1:38 p.m. Due to COVID-19 this meeting was held via a videoconference using the Microsoft Teams platform.

STATUS REPORTS

Recent and Upcoming Outreach Events

The current Outreach Events Status Report was reviewed, and is available on the POE Subcommittee webpage, <https://tgpc.texas.gov/tgpc-subcommittees/tgpc-public-outreach-and-education-subcommittee/> under the “Additional Resources” heading:

- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (AgriLife Extension) Water Well Screening:
 - One event was held in Limestone County during the past quarter with 20 participants. It was a hybrid type meeting in coordination with the county agent, who collected samples and sent them to the Texas A&M campus for processing. A Zoom meeting was then held to talk about the results and provide the educational component of the event. AgriLife Extension is hoping to perform in-person screening again after the first of the year.
- TGPC Exhibit Booth
 - There were no booth events for this quarter.

TWON Training Activities

Joel Pigg (AgriLife Extension) reviewed the TWON training schedule. He noted that screening / water sampling is an important aspect of the program, along with the educational component. AgriLife Extension held two events, one in Sutton County and one in Real County. They worked with the GCDs who would conduct the sampling rather than taking them back to College Station. There have been over 10,129 samples or attendees at TWON events since April 2011, with 39 during the previous quarter. Diane Boellstorff (AgriLife Extension) plans to go to south Texas in the spring to conduct a series of training activity and has tentatively planned to go to Marlin. Julie Stanford (TAGD) asked if the TWON program would like to encourage partnerships with GCDs. She suggested that it would be useful to have a list of GCDs with laboratory facilities that could help with the hybrid type of events. Leah Martinsson (TAGD) offered for TAGD to compile a list.

TGPC Website Activity Statistics

Peggy Hunka reviewed the Google Analytics activity report on the TGPC web page for the period September 1 through November 30, 2020. A comparison to the previous quarter of 2019, was also discussed. The Search Term page of the report showed a search for “Boron in drinking water.” Possible reasons for the search were discussed with recent lignite or lithium being the associated area of interest.

ANNOUNCE FUTURE MEETING DATE

The next TGPC POE Subcommittee meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, March 3, 2021 at 1:30 PM CST. At this time the videoconference format is expected to remain for the next meeting. **UPDATE:** Due to the winter storm public meeting notification was not submitted in the required timeframe and the TGPC POE Subcommittee meeting was rescheduled to March 10, 2021.

REVIEW, DISCUSS AND APPROVE DOCUMENTATION

TGPC Groundwater Educational Outreach Plan Topic Updates (see: https://tgpc.texas.gov/POE/TGPC_POE_GW_EduOutreachPlan10Sep2013.pdf):

Abandoned Wells

David Gunn (TDLR) reported that Adam Foster is working on a white paper for the TGPC Groundwater Issues Subcommittee.

Texas Evapotranspiration Networks

Guy Fipps (AgriLife Extension) reported that the Texas ET network is the last remaining ET network as it is defined in the ET Fact Sheet. He had suggested to the Water Conservation Advisory Council (WCAC) that the Texas ET Network be rolled into the Texas Mesonet Network. Dr. Fipps also reported that the *Water my Yard* project was started about a year ago. The application draws on the Texas ET network and is being promoted in the Houston area. David Villarreal (TDA) said that the WCAC was interested in the role that ET plays in water conservation and would continue to discuss ways in which the WCAC could support an ET network. Julia Stanford (TAGD) mentioned that TAGD has had two separate efforts that have combined to bring new resources to those interested in ET. She hosted a webinar on Open ET which is a mapping platform developed in partnership with the Environmental Defense Fund, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and Google Earth that provides satellite data on a field level. A copy of the webinar can be found here <https://texasgroundwater.org/webinar-openet>. Kathy McCormack (TCEQ) mentioned that the ET network continues to be a recommendation made in the TGPC *Report to the Legislature* and that the Groundwater Issues Subcommittee is considering adding the ET Network topic to its agenda.

Septic Tanks

Anish Jantrania (AgriLife Extension) reported that during Fall-2020, Texas AgriLife Extension in cooperation with TOWA (Texas Onsite Wastewater Association) conducted an online survey to assess the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Texas' on-site sewage facility (OSSF) industry. Dr. Jantrania designed a ten-question survey using Qualtrics and emailed the survey link to the more than 4,000 TOWA members. The survey remained open for November-2020, during which AgriLife received 101 complete and 138 partial responses. The overall response rate was about 2.5%. The survey results indicated that the OSSF industry generally fared better than other industries (such as restaurants) in terms of adverse impact on business revenue due to COVID-19. Of the survey respondents, 75% indicated no adverse impact, while 25% indicated some adverse impact on revenue. The responses also indicated that 93% of OSSF businesses did not have to lay off any employees due to COVID-19. The service providers responded receiving more calls for repairs due to increased use of OSSF during the "work-from-home/stay-at-home" period. AgriLife plans to present the results at the TOWA Conference scheduled for March 2021.

Dr. Jantrania also reviewed and summarized two articles. One of the articles, *Increased Use of Septic Tanks Raises Concerns for Environment, Public Health* was reviewed at the September 9, 2020 POE meeting. The other article was titled *A \$3 billion problem: Miami-Dade's septic tanks are already failing due to sea rise*. The main ideas from the articles is that (1) use of OSSFs will continue to meet the demand for wastewater treatment in areas not served by public sewer, and (2) sea-level rise is an issue that is typically addressed by use of appropriate engineered onsite systems, like the ATU-Spray systems used in Texas.

Publications

Publications Report

Cindy Hooper (TCEQ) reported on the status of recent TCEQ publications.

AgriLife Extension Reprints

There are no reprints needed at this time.

FAQs and Fact Sheets:

The Final Draft of *Landowner's Guide to Plugging Abandoned Water Wells* was discussed, and a few minor changes were made to the wording of the document. David Gunn (TDLR) then made a motion to approve the document with minor changes and forward to the TGPC for approval at their January 2021 meeting. The motion was seconded by Rebecca Storm (TWDB) and passed with a unanimous vote from the Subcommittee.

An FAQ tentatively titled *What do I Need to Know to Prepare a Well for Flooding or Storm* will be written by Alan Cherepon (TCEQ). Rebecca Storms (TWDB) stated that they receive calls on water well testing that appears to be coming from a new requirement by real estate lenders. The lenders are asking for inspections and water sampling. Joel Pigg (TWON) volunteered to work on this issue.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 3:04 p.m.