

Desired Future Conditions (DFCs) for Dummies

Prepared by LEAGUE OF *independent* VOTERS (LIV) • LIVTexas.org • 512.213.4511

These “DFCs for Dummies” provide some basics without presuming how wise, or not, the reader is. To learn more, visit WaterDefenders.org, two non-profit organizations that urge rejection of the currently proposed Desired Future Conditions in Groundwater Management Area 12, ten counties east of Austin.

Desired Future Conditions (DFCs) are a planning tool used by groundwater conservation districts in Texas to manage (not over-pump) the water in aquifers beneath our feet. The DFCs are configured every five years to plan for what we want our aquifers to look like in 50 years, by balancing conservation against production, *without unreasonable impacts on aquifers, or the people and ecosystems that depend on them*. Do we want the aquifers pumped dry? Or, do we want to leave a legacy for future generations?

A Few Big Picture Water Basics

Don't let anyone fool you into thinking more water than we can use “always comes from the sky”, or that our aquifers will “always be full.” Just remember the Ogallala – look it up on Wikipedia! Water is finite. Today, sixty percent (60%) of Texans' drinking water comes from aquifers (groundwater). Over-pumping of groundwater reduces potable water levels, and can induce contamination and salty water infiltration into aquifers.

These fundamental water realities are coming to haunt western states hit hard by drought. Texas is on the same side of the US drought map as California and Arizona, where extreme drought has forced severe cutbacks in water usage, especially for farming. Over the last 100 years, California intentionally moved masses of water from northern California for real estate development in areas without a natural water supply – like Los Angeles. They cannot reverse the effects of these policies now that a mega-drought has hit. Their future is frightening, yet many officials in both parties are mute.

Don't let Texas water policy make a fool of you as far as our rivers are concerned either. Allowing over-pumping of groundwater deprives surface water (the water above ground) of the extra water it receives from aquifers, turning river systems into “losing” rather than “gaining” streams. This interaction of groundwater and surface water is well-known, but Texas water policy fails to take it seriously.

Today's Texas groundwater law says water managers must balance the production of water for human use (agriculture, municipal needs, and industry) with conservation of the aquifers. But Texas allows those with the biggest pumps to overrule conservation --- under the “Rule of Capture,” an outdated 1917 policy that continues to heel good water policy to the demands of growth. Today, municipalities under the influence of the real estate lobby are hell-bent on as much growth as possible. They place unsustainable demands on groundwater, threatening rural communities' wells for household and livestock needs, and the water future for incoming generations – rural, suburban and municipal. *We call those who push these water follies “the growth machine.” It is not the Texas way!*

Water is the most precious resource on planet earth. In Texas, water really is more valuable than gold.

Subsidized Growth and the California Water Model

Just 40 miles east of the Capitol Dome in Austin, we see unrelenting mega-permit demands for groundwater by private profiteering water marketers in cahoots with municipal water utilities. Learn more about Vista Ridge (aka “the San Antone hose”) at LIVTexas.org/Vista-Ridge. Even a quasi-government river authority -- the Lower Colorado River Authority – is pushing a groundwater “grab” in Bastrop County.

We call moving masses of water to build-out areas with inadequate local supply, “The California Water Model.” Luring new residents to Texas, by subsidizing in-migration growth with water and other developer giveaways is a disaster. Texas is growing far too fast to keep up with the infrastructure to serve the population with new roads, water lines and energy. Need we remind you of the failure of the Texas grid last February? Visit LIVTexas.org/Costs-of-growth to understand how growth could begin to pay for itself. So far, most officials are too busy fighting with each other to notice what is happening to us ordinary Texans, of any or no party persuasion.

Your Tool to Fight for YOUR/OUR Water Future

DFCs are what we want our aquifers to look like in fifty-year intervals in the future. They reset in rolling five-year intervals. And, for the Carrizo-Willcox Aquifer, they are usually expressed as drawdowns in that aquifer. (OVER)

The DFCs are established by Groundwater Management Areas (GMA) – a planning group involving groundwater districts that share a common area, like the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer.

A battle over the DFCs is happening in GMA-12 involving five groundwater Districts and these counties: Bastrop, Lee, Burleson (the home of Vista Ridge) Milam, Brazos, Robertson, Freestone, Madison, Leon, and Fayette.

WaterDefenders.org Urges GMA-12 to Reject the Proposed DFCs and Requests Your Help to Get Them Rejected.

What is the recommendation to reject the proposed DFC based on?

The need for:

- Sustainable management of aquifers;
- Protection of all livestock and domestic wells;
- Sustaining the resilience of our rivers to withstand drought; and
- DFCs that are not based solely on a calculation to fulfill too many new demands, like Vista Ridge and more. If the current proposed DFCs go unchallenged, they will be just a fancy and expensive tool for aquifer depletion.

Your groundwater district and GMA are supposed to consider these 9 areas of concern in developing the DFC. Once you've reviewed these, think about your own water concerns and speak to any one of them. You can also send them as written comments. (Go to WaterDefenders.org to access the hearing/comments page.)

(1) aquifer uses or conditions within the management area, including conditions that differ substantially from one geographic area to another;

(2) the water supply needs and water management strategies included in the state water plan;

(3) hydrological conditions, including for each aquifer in the management area the total estimated recoverable storage as provided by the executive administrator, and the average annual recharge, inflows, and discharge;

(4) other environmental impacts, including impacts on spring flow and other interactions between groundwater and surface water;

(5) the impact on subsidence;

(6) socioeconomic impacts reasonably expected to occur;

(7) the impact on the interests and rights in private property, including ownership and the rights of management area landowners and their lessees and assigns in groundwater as recognized under Section 36.002;

(8) the feasibility of achieving the desired future condition; and

(9) any other information relevant to the specific desired future conditions.

Live in Bastrop or Lee County?

This hearing is in person, online and by call-in!
August 18, 6 pm at the Bastrop Convention Center

Comments are due on the night of this hearing.

For info go to LIVTexas.org/Events or call 512.213.4511 (no texts) or Email: contact@LIVTexas.org

Environmental Stewardship and Simsboro Aquifer Water Defense Fund have come together and linked their sites at WaterDefenders.org, in order to challenge the DFCs in GMA-12.

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