



August 28, 2010

Water Battle Lines Cross in Bastrop Co.

The battle lines in the Central Texas water wars are being drawn – and they cross in Bastrop County. The lines are between the water marketers who want to take water out of Bastrop County to satisfy the needs of rapidly growing communities along the 130 corridor, local water suppliers who are struggling to reserve the groundwater resources needed for local use, and the environmental needs of the Colorado River and Matagorda Bay. On the front lines are End-Op and Aqua Water Supply Corporation. End-Op has the ear of the Region L Water Planning Group and plans to move 30,000 acre-feet/year of water from Bastrop County, and 26,000 acre-feet/year of water from Lee County to the San Marcos-New Braunfels area under private contract with the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA). Aqua Water Supply Corporation, a nonprofit cooperative in Bastrop County, is attempting to reserve groundwater to meet the needs of water user groups in our rapidly growing region. You may recall that I wrote you at the opening of the water wars in September of 2008 when Aqua Water was denied four of seven water well permits by the Lost Pines Groundwater Conservation District. Both of the above groups are now vying for the same water.

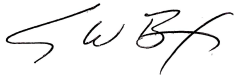
It is no surprise that the GBRA needs water and is looking to the Simsboro Aquifer to satisfy their shortfall; that has been going on for years. What is surprising and infuriating is how this “conflict” has been technically resolved by declaring this double-dipping to be an “overdraft”. Somehow it is OK for those outside of our region to declare an “over-draft” leaving us to deal with the damage to our economy, our ecology and the integrity of our aquifers. According to the Lost Pines Groundwater Conservation District, who opposes this action, “an overdraft of the aquifer could be defined as pumping more than natural recharge, having negative effects on the aquifer and existing wells. The negative effects could include drawdown of hydraulic pressure, decrease or cease of spring flows, commingling with water of poorer quality, and decreased recharge to other aquifers. These can be translated to increased pumping cost from having to pump water from deeper depths, lowering of pumps, loss of springs, reversed interaction with springs, loss of flow to artesian wells, loss of water quality and lower recharge rates to other aquifers”.

Sure over-drafting is done in other parts of the State – like the much stressed Ogallala Aquifer in the panhandle – but that is not what we want in Bastrop County. It is like what would happen to your checking account if an unauthorized person were to write checks against it, taking more money than you could ever hope to deposit; however in this case, the bank is declaring it legal and you must pay the bill and the penalties, too! To add insult to injury, our regional desire to protect our aquifers is being over-ridden by the desires of Region L as they protect their own aquifers from these very damages.

While this is all playing out there are two independent stakeholder groups working to determine the environmental needs of the Colorado River and Matagorda Bay. Each will set flow standards to get the river and bay through drought conditions and keep them ecologically sound during normal rainfall periods. One of the key impacts of “over-drafting” the aquifer is depletion of surface water that feeds the Colorado River and streams of the region. If the overdraft situation is allowed to occur we could also see a decline in the water available to keep the river healthy. So yet another battle line is being drawn – one to ensure that our river and bay have the water they need to stay healthy.

With two water planning groups targeting the same 30,000 acre-feet/yr of water from Bastrop County, it looks like the Lost Pines Groundwater Conservation District is caught in the cross-hairs. Though letters of protest have been written by both Lost Pines and the Lower Colorado Regional Water Planning Group (Region K), the South Central Texas Regional Water Planning Group (Region L) has refused to amend their plans while they protect their own water supplies from over-production. The bottom line is that more water has been permitted in Bastrop County than is available. If this type of shenanigan is allowed to play out, we will lose our water, economy, and ecology. It's time for the people of Bastrop County to let their elected officials know they stand behind the Lost Pines Groundwater Conservation District and Aqua Water Supply Corporation in this water battle.

Respectfully submitted,



Steve Box
Executive Director
Environmental Stewardship

Contact information:

Lost Pines Groundwater Conservation District – Joe Cooper, General Manager @ (512) 360-5088, FAX (512) 360-5448, e-mail: lpgcd@lostpineswater.org.

Aqua Water Supply Corporation – Bill Loven, General Manager @ 512-581-3116, FAX 5512-303-4881, e-mail bloven@aquawsc.com.

South Central Texas Regional Water Planning Group (Region L) -- Laura Raun, Public Relations @ (512) 583-0929, Fax: (512) 236-8890, Email: laura@raunpr.com

Lower Colorado Regional Water Planning Group (Region K) – John Burke, Chairman @ 512-303-3943, FAX 512-303-4881, e-mail jburke@aquawsc.com

Environmental Stewardship – Steve Box, Executive Director @ 512-300-6609, FAX 512-321-3045, e-mail Steward@environmental-stewardship.org

Environmental Stewardship is a charitable nonprofit organization whose purposes are to meet current and future needs of the environment and its inhabitants by protecting and enhancing the earth's natural resources; to restore and sustain ecological services using scientific information; and to encourage public stewardship through environmental education and outreach. It is a Texas nonprofit 501(c) (3) public charity headquartered in Bastrop, Texas. For more information visit www.Environmental-Stewardship.org .