

Item 6 – Update on Legislative Efforts

For several months, BVGCD has been addressing the issues relating to HB 1318 (use of service area water rights with no contiguous production acreage at the well site) and its direct effect on the permitting process and protection of landowner property rights. Following last month's board meeting, a final draft white paper factually expressing background information, Texas Rural Water Association's legislative priorities, and how these priorities fall short of groundwater conservation district's mandated obligations, was finalized and sent to cooperating districts for their approval. The GCDs involved, all of which been identified as having similar rules governing production acreage associated with the well site are Panhandle, North Plains, High Plains, Middle Trinity, Rusk County, and Brazos Valley.

The white paper met with unanimous approval of the cooperating districts and was presented to the entire Texas Association of Groundwater Districts (TAGD) membership on January 31, 2018. I gave a short presentation to the membership explaining the effort and stressing the white paper is the first step educating all stakeholders including groundwater conservation districts. The message was clear we would give our best effort to involve all parties over the next several months (ahead of the June 6, 2016 House Committee on Natural Resources (HNRC) meeting) to lead discussions seeking a resolution between opposing positions.

The white paper is currently undergoing a slight revision adding an executive summary. TAGD has set up a subcommittee within the Legislative Committee to address this issue. No date has been set for the initial meeting. I have asked and have been assigned to this committee. It is still unknown how the Texas Water Conservation Association (TWCA) Legislative Committee will address this issue, if at all. No date has been set for the TWCA Groundwater Subcommittee to meet. I will ask to be a member of this committee when formed.

Heather Harward, BVGCD legislative consultant, has been an instrumental part of the development of the white paper. The paper will certainly be introduced to members of the Legislature in the coming weeks and months. The paper gives both Heather and I the ability to clearly address the issue in a concise manner.

During the TAGD meeting, we were made aware that the HNRC will hold a meeting tentatively set for November 14, 2018 and address the beefing up of school curriculum on water conservation. With our vast experience in school presentations and working directly with teachers to develop curriculum and presentations, I asked Heather to work with Chairman Larson to involve BVGCD staff on this effort.

A copy of the white paper was sent to you via email and is attached to this summary.