

Major groundwater users violate permits, must explain why

- [Click to share on Twitter \(Opens in new window\)](#)
- [Click to share on Facebook \(Opens in new window\)](#)

08/18/23 | [Dakota Morrissiey](#)



The city of Highland Haven is one of six major groundwater users that violated their annual permitted water allotment from the Central Texas Groundwater Conservation District in 2022. Representatives from each entity must attend a show-cause hearing on Aug. 21 to explain why. File photo

Several major groundwater users in Burnet County will have to explain why they've gone over their permitted water allotment to the Central Texas Groundwater Conservation District's Board of Directors. A show-cause hearing is 9 a.m. Monday, Aug. 21, in the district's office at 225 S. Pierce St. in Burnet.

Six entities, including the city of [Highland Haven](#), [Corix Utilities](#), and [River Oaks Water Systems](#), all used more than their annual groundwater allotment in 2022 during severe drought conditions that have persisted through most of 2023.

"I want to hear from these entities that they are taking this seriously," board President Ryan Rowney told DailyTrib.com. "I want them to know that we are in a severe drought. Maybe folks don't understand the seriousness of the situation."

After hearing from the groundwater users, the board will determine the next steps, which could be as simple as a verbal warning or as severe as heavy fines or revoking permits.

"The worst case is somebody totally ignores the rules or requirements," Rowney said. "We don't want to go there (to severe punishments), but if we were pushed to, we would."

[The district](#) manages groundwater use in Burnet County through permitting, regulations, and research. As of June 13, 2022, the entity has been in [Stage 4](#) of its drought management plan, the most severe stage. The district also imposed [mandatory 15 percent reductions](#) on permitted groundwater users for the first time in its history in December 2022 due to serious concerns over groundwater viability.

Central Texas has fluctuated between severe and extreme drought conditions since March 2022, according to the [Palmer Hydrological Drought Index](#), which the Groundwater Conservation District uses to determine drought stages and guide management decisions.

The following permitted groundwater users will be presenting during the show-cause hearing:

- The city of Highland Haven
- Corix Utilities
- Eagle Mountain Ranch Ltd. (formally Willburr & Co Inc.)
- RFHDAH LP
- River Oaks Water Systems
- Tributary Sporting Club

The show-cause hearing is an opportunity for the users in violation and the district board to get on the same page, Rowney said.

“With the growth that (Burnet County is) having, there is a high demand (for water),” he said. “It’s a juggling act for the utilities to manage that. It is troubling, it’s concerning. Maybe folks don’t understand the seriousness of the situation. Maybe there needs to be a better job at communicating.”