

# PECAN GROVE MUD NEWS

WINTER 2007

## Deadline to Reduce our Dependence on Groundwater Just Around the Corner

It seems that the years speed by faster and faster. Birthdays arrive without warning and creep up on us again in a flash, while our children change from toddlers to teenagers to grown adults in the blink of an eye.

Over the years, our area, too, has seen its share of change. Fort Bend has been, and continues to be, one of the fastest growing counties in the United States. With that growth, we have not only seen impressive communities expand and thrive, but we have also been faced with a whole new set of challenges. One of the most important is the ability to provide our ever-increasing population with fresh, safe water, while at the same time, protecting our water sources from depletion and contamination.

### Our Current Water Source

The majority of Fort Bend County's residential drinking water comes from groundwater - drawn from wells drilled into the Chicot and Evangeline aquifers beneath the earth's surface. The area's unprecedented growth, along with decades of aggressive water usage, has not only raised concern about meeting the water needs of the community today and in the future, but has also resulted in a decline of the aquifers, resulting in *subsidence* - the actual "dropping" or "sinking" of land. In fact, some areas within Fort Bend's boundaries have dropped as much as five feet since 1906. With continued population growth (census numbers show an increase of 800 percent in 35 years, from 50,000 in 1970 to over 400,000 in 2005) the threat of additional subsidence is all too real.

### Battling Subsidence in the Fort Bend Area

The Fort Bend Subsidence District (FBSD) was created by the Texas Legislature in 1989 as a conservation and reclamation district. The District's purpose is "to provide for the regulation of the withdrawal of groundwater within the District to prevent subsidence that contributes to flooding, inundation, or overflow of areas within the District, including rising waters resulting from storms or hurricanes."

In short, declining water levels from excessive groundwater pumpage is extremely serious, and in addition to the subsidence problem, studies have identified the following effects:

- Saltwater encroachment from salt domes: There are eight salt domes in Fort Bend County, six of which pierce the Chicot and Evangeline aquifers. When groundwater pumpage creates a cone of depression near a salt dome, it can draw the lower quality groundwater that surrounds the salt dome into the fresh water sands.

- Possible increased incidence of surface fault movement: There are numerous faults located in Fort Bend County and although fault movement is not yet a problem, many are located in areas where population growth is rapid and where property damage could be costly.

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## **Reduce dependence on GW**

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- Increased groundwater pumpage costs
- Increased incidence of flooding
- Increased potential for water quality impacts.

### **Fort Bend Subsidence District Mandate**

As a result of incidents of subsidence and concerns over the threat of additional subsidence in the future, the FBSD Regulatory Plan, adopted in 2003, mandated that areas of Fort Bend County (including Pecan Grove) reduce their groundwater pumpage by 30% by 2013 and 60% by 2025. The reduction in groundwater will be supplemented by a soon-to-be-decided-upon alternate water source.

### **Conversion Dates and Surface Water Supply Options**

The groundwater to surface water conversion dates discussed in this article are not a suggestion - they are mandated by law. Failure to meet the requirements by the 2013 and 2025 deadlines will result in severe disincentive fees. The Pecan Grove MUD Board of Directors is required to have a Groundwater Reduction Plan (GRP) approved by the Fort Bend Subsidence District no later than January 1, 2008, and we are on track to supply them with that plan by September of 2007.

Surface water options are being investigated and include either building our own surface water treatment plan to treat water from the Brazos River or joining with Richmond and Rosenberg in a program that will meet the needs of all three communities. A final decision will be made in the near future and will be announced at

*In 1990, groundwater pumpage in Fort Bend County was at 63 million gallons per day. By 2005 -- just fifteen years later -- there had been an increase of almost 60 percent to 99 million gallons per day!*



**Brazos River**

our monthly board meeting (generally held the last Tuesday of each month) and on our website at [www.pecangrovemud.com](http://www.pecangrovemud.com).

### **The Days of Cheap and Plentiful Water Are History**

Although the Pecan Grove MUD Board is working to provide residents with the most economical conversion options possible, the bottom line is this: your water bills will be going up. For many years, we have paid some of the lowest rates in the country, and although you will see a rise in those rates as plans are put into place and initial conversion dates are met, comparatively, your bills will be very reasonable... and still less than those living in the City of Houston.

### **How Can You Curb Rising Water Costs**

Water conservation is not only crucial for the protection of our future water supply, but is also a really great way to take control over how much you spend on your monthly water bill. By following some of the simple tips in this newsletter and in the "Conservation" section of our website, you can begin to make the changes today that will keep costs down now and in the future.

As always, feel free to contact us with any questions and/or comments. You can write us through the "Contact Us" section of the Pecan Grove website or call our Customer Service Office at 281-238-5000.

## Project Updates....

### Waste Water Treatment Plant Conversion

Construction at the Pecan Grove MUD Waste Water Treatment Plant is progressing. The contractor, LEM Construction Co., Inc., is about three months into this ten-month construction project, designed to convert the plant to a complete aeration process. Work to date includes the removal of old equipment, demolition of the headworks structure, and preparation of the new aeration basins.

The work is being phased to take place without interrupting the on-going treatment plant operations or service to Pecan Grove residents. However, residents should be aware that there might be odor issues on a more persistent basis during the construction process.



### Disaster Preparedness

After the hurricanes of the past few years, the Pecan Grove MUD Board of Directors took a look at areas where measures could be taken to provide additional levels of redundancy to the District's water, sewer and drainage systems. Pecan Grove MUD currently maintains diesel back-up generators at the wastewater treatment plant, storm water pump stations, and water plants.

The District decided to take steps to provide protection from sanitary sewer overflows in the event of lost power. During a loss of power, sewage fills up the sanitary sewer collection lines and lift stations. Should the power loss continue for an extended period of time, sewage in the lift stations must be pumped down and sewage in the collection lines must be drained. In order to do this, the District purchased a portable diesel generator that can be connected to any of the ten lift stations, and is in the process of installing a natural gas generator at the largest lift station near the intersection of Old South and Colonel Court. In addition, construction has begun on underground sewers in five locations throughout the District that will provide relief to sanitary sewers that become full due to power loss at the lift stations. ■

## As Spring Arrives - It's Time to Turn Over a New Leaf

Spring is a time of rebirth for your lawn...grass wakes from its winter hibernation and plants and trees show the first signs of sprouting leaves and blooming flowers. Spring may also be a time - for those who haven't already - to reevaluate your lawn care practices. In this era of rising water costs, new irrigation techniques - paired with tried and true conservation practices - are more important than ever.

How much water does your yard REALLY need? Odds are it needs a whole lot less than you give it. In fact, landscape irrigation can account for more than 50% of all the water used in Texas during the summer - and about half of that water is wasted due to over-watering or runoff.

We've all seen the automatic sprinkler systems running in the middle of a downpour or water streaming down the driveway from an already saturated lawn. These are classic examples of wasteful watering practices and all too prevalent. Consider the following tips this spring to save water in our community while providing your lawn with the proper amount of water to help it thrive:

- Add a water sensor to your irrigation system. This may well be the most important thing you can do to avoid excessive and unnecessary watering, and it will save you money on your water bill!
- Remember, it is always better to water deeply versus frequently - it encourages well established root systems. Soil should be soaked to a minimum depth of six inches, and should not be watered again until the soil an inch below the surface is dry. Healthy, properly irrigated lawns rarely require more than one inch of water per week during the summer months (unless there is an extended dry spell).



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## Spring Lawns...

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- Check irrigation system timers. It's always best to water in the early morning hours (3-5 a.m.) for maximum effectiveness. Watering in the heat of the day can cause much of the water to evaporate before it ever reaches your lawn or plants/flower beds.
- If you don't have one, or are looking into a more effective, cost-efficient irrigation system than you currently have, consider low output sprinkler heads, bubblers, or drip irrigation systems. And make sure you work with an experienced, licensed professional, well-versed in designing and installing the system that will work best for your unique yard. Individuals should be licensed by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and should be able to show you their license number. Ask for it to ensure you're working with a qualified specialist.
- Don't cut your grass too short. Mowing grass at the proper height (three inches for St. Augustine and one inch for Bermuda) decreases the need for watering. Cutting grass any lower can cut into the stem and cause it to lose its ability to photosynthesize - making

it more susceptible to disease and insect problems.

## Go Organic...

We can't stress strongly enough the benefits of using organic mulches such as pine needles, pine bark, straw, leaves, wood shavings, compost or sawdust to help your yard reach its full potential. Organic mulches reduce soil temperature, conserve moisture, and control weeds that compete with desirable plants for a drink. Two inches of mulch used around plants twice a year will allow your plants and flowers to thrive.

When fertilizing, we also recommend using an organic fertilizer. Synthetic fertilizers can kill off beneficial organisms in the soil, resulting in more insect, disease and weed problems, while organic fertilizers allow the good microorganisms to grow stronger. Just as important, synthetic fertilizers can pollute our streams and other waterways and can also be a potential danger to ourselves, our pets and ironically, to our plants. It just pays to go organic. You will see a wonderful difference in the quality of your lawn, plants and shrubs, while eliminating any worries about your family's health and that of your neighbors. ■



## GREAT LAWN LINKS!

**Texas A&M Cooperative  
Extension Service:**

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/>

**Texas Water Development Board:**

[www.twdb.state.tx.us/assistance/conservation/pubs.asp](http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/assistance/conservation/pubs.asp)

**Southeast Texas Gardening:**

[http://www.houstongardening.info\\_recommendedplants.htm](http://www.houstongardening.info_recommendedplants.htm)

## Every Yard is Unique...

Finding out what your lawn needs to be fed is extremely valuable information and well worth the minimal cost of around \$25-\$30. Send a soil sample to the Texas A&M Soil Science Lab to find out what deficiencies you may have in your soil and what nutrients are needed to bring it back to beautiful! And, as always, when purchasing new plants, consider native, drought-tolerant varieties...they'll require less work and less water and can be just as beautiful as other less-tolerant options.

Visit your local nursery to find out more about creating the best yard possible in the best way possible. *Happy planting!*



## What Does Composting Have to Do With Water Conservation?

More than you'd think, actually. The simple fact is, composting or not, most of us are over-watering our lawns. Follow some or all of the simple water-conservation techniques outlined in the "As Spring Arrives - It's Time to Turn Over a New Leaf" article and you're well on your way to conserving water and saving money. Add compost to the mix, and you're not only adding to your savings, but you'll create a healthy, beautiful lawn fed by safe and natural ingredients.

### ***How do compost materials minimize the amount of water my yard needs?***

When rich compost mulch is used in flower beds and landscape areas, it holds in the moisture and cuts down on the amount of water needed to keep plants healthy. Composted materials are full of microorganisms, which prevent disease, cycle nutrients and create soil structure, and the humus in compost helps increase your soil's water-holding capacity. The cost of water is rising and it's up to each of us to do what we can to curb our expenses while working to become responsible stewards of our limited natural resources.

### ***What is compost?***

Compost - often called "black gold" by experienced gardeners - is, by definition, a "microbial process that promotes rapid decay and converts organic materials such as grass clippings, leaves, and kitchen waste into a rich, organic soil amendment and mulch." In layman's terms, compost is a science, involving a complex "food chain" of bacteria, fungi, worms, beetles, mites and a host of other beneficial organ-

isms that "eat up" organic materials and produce humus. There are a number of different composting processes, so odds are you can find the one that's right for you.

### ***Is composting for me?***

Absolutely. The fear of the unknown, or at the least, concerns about the time-commitment composting may pose is far outweighed by the benefits it brings to your lawn and plants and to the environment as a whole.

Think about this: Every year, more than five million tons of yard trimmings and other organic materials end up in Texas landfills instead of building up the soil. Disposing of all this organic matter in landfills costs more than \$150 million a year!

This is not someone else's problem. It affects our community today. As landfills run out of space and are forced to shut down - and over the last few decades, Texas landfills have shut down by the hundreds - the cost of garbage pickup rises. Simple separation of materials, paired with the reduction or elimination of the use of harmful chemicals and pesticides will create positive changes in our yards, in our pocketbooks and in our global community as a whole.

### ***But it just seems like a lot of work.***

Composting comes in many forms. From the simple - changing from a bagged mower to a mulching mower or constructing a very basic compost pile - to the more involved, such as building compost bins made of everything from inexpensive pallets to cinder blocks or molded plastic. It's all up to you and what fits best with your lifestyle. The goal is to use your grass clippings, leaves and pine needles, and organic kitchen debris in the best way possible. And if creating compost isn't your cup of tea, consider purchasing fully organic compost from your local nursery. It will bring your yard to life, while protecting you, your family and your neighbors from potentially harmful pesticides.

For those interested in "cooking up" their own batch of compost, visit the Pecan Grove website ([www.pecangrovemud.com](http://www.pecangrovemud.com)) and click on the "Conservation" link to check out detailed information on different composting methods and compost bin options. ■

Hi Neighbor,

**On behalf of the Officers and Members of the Pecan Grove Volunteer Fire Department, we wish you all a very Happy New Year!**



The start of 2007 brings exciting news. A project that your fire department started more than 18 months ago to gain a better fire rating for homeowner's insurance has completed its first phase, and the Department is very happy to announce the results. I'm referring to the Public Protection Classification rating (or PPC for short) that makes up a part of your overall homeowner's insurance rates. The PPC rating classifies the fire protection for your area, with 1 being the best and 10 being the worst, and measures everything from available water supplies and hydrants to manpower, equipment, and location of fire stations. These factors are evaluated, graded and put into an overall point total, which is then converted into a PPC rating. The current Pecan Grove Fire Department PPC rating is 5, but effective April 1, 2007, I'm pleased to announce that a new PPC rating of 3 will take effect. Depending upon your current insurance company and the price of your home, this new rating could mean lower coverage rates. Please check with your carrier, and advise them of the effective date and the new rating. They can assist you in determining your savings.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of the dedicated and hard working people who had a role in completing this project, including YOU! It is only with your continued support of the Pecan Grove Fire Department through your monthly donations that an effort of this size could be undertaken. A sizable amount of time and funds were expended to make this a success, and the Department is extremely proud of the results. It is our sincere hope that this new rating will mean a noticeable decrease in your insurance rates, and that it shows our continued commitment to providing the BEST possible service to you and your family. The men and women of the Pecan Grove Fire Department work hard every day to help make this area a safe and great place to live and work.

If you have any questions or comments on this or any other subject related to your emergency services, please feel free to call the Fire Station at (281) 341-6677. We are always happy to assist you in any way we can. Remember..... We depend on YOU, so you can depend on US!

Sincerely,

*Larry B. Perry*

Chief, Pecan Grove  
Volunteer Fire Department

**Serving the Best....With the Best**



**Hi kids!** My name is Pansophigus (sounds like PAN-SOF-A-GUS). It's a funny-sounding name, I know, but it has special meaning. It was bestowed

upon my father years ago by King Alexander I, ruler of the tropical paradise of Gaea.

How was the name chosen by the great king, you ask? Well, my father was a great philosopher, the wisest of the wise eagles, and a respected advisor to his majesty.

The name Pansophigus (derived from the word "pansophical", meaning "all-wise" or "claiming universal knowledge") was

given to him after he helped young residents of Gaea save their home from drought and pollution.

In the years since, my father has passed down the important stories and knowledge necessary to help protect and preserve our precious natural resources...especially water. That's why I'm here today, to begin teaching you about our water supply and how YOU can help conserve it.

**Consider this fact:** We have no more water on this planet today than we did in the days of the dinosaurs - not one drop! If you look at the earth from outer space, it would appear that our water supply is limitless. In fact, 80% of the earth is covered with water or ice. But looks can be deceiving. Only TWO PERCENT of that water is drinkable! That means every being on this planet...humans, animals and plants, must share that same tiny piece of the pie. It sure makes you think, doesn't it?

**If the earth's population continues to grow but our water supply stays the same, how can we help to conserve what we have and protect it from pollution?**



The great part is, by making simple adjustments in your everyday life, you, your family and friends can make a difference today. **Here are a few simple tips to get started:**

- Turn off that faucet while you brush your teeth!  
You only need it to rinse the brush and sink.
- Ask your parent or guardian to install a low-flow showerhead. It's a minimal up-front cost, simple to attach, and will save your family money on the water bill while helping to conserve your community's water supply.
- Help out with the lawn. Instead of using a water hose to clean off the sidewalk or driveway, use a broom to sweep leaves and other debris into piles that can be bagged. It saves water and keeps trash from polluting our storm sewers.

As you can see, it doesn't take much to start saving water today. Now that you've got the ball rolling, check out the new Kid's Can Conserve section of our website ([www.pecangroovemud.com/kids](http://www.pecangroovemud.com/kids)) for more tips and games.

Make your parents, your community, and especially me, Pansophigus, proud by making positive changes in your water use habits and becoming a real hero for your community and our planet! ■

## **The Votes Are In: Keep it Simple!**

Pecan Grove MUD residents have spoken and the message is clear - an overwhelming majority of you chose to keep the Pecan Grove MUD newsletter name as is: Pecan Grove MUD News. We appreciate your votes and are encouraged by your response.

It is our hope that you will use our communication materials -- this newsletter and our newly updated website ([www.pecangrovemud.com](http://www.pecangrovemud.com)) -- not only to access the informational tools we've provided, but also as a direct way to pay bills and a convenient way to communicate with us regarding any concerns you may have in our community.

Pecan Grove is home to us all and we are here to represent you.

## **WHO TO CALL:**

### **Water, sewer and drainage questions:**

PGMUD Customer Service Office  
1421 F.M. 359, Suite D (Plantation Center)  
(281) 238-5000

**Office Hours:** 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and  
2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

**After Hours:** (281) 238-5000;  
24 hrs/7 days a week

**NOTE:** *If you have water or sewer related problems, PLEASE CALL US BEFORE YOU CALL THE PLUMBER! We will investigate the problem at no cost to you. If it is found to be a water district-related problem, we will arrange to correct it. If it is not a water district issue, we will provide our advice. Remember, we are here to help!*

### **Garbage or recycling service:**

PGMUD at (281) 238-5000  
WCA/TEW at (281) 368-8397

### **PGMUD Tax Questions:**

Tax Tech at (281) 499-1223

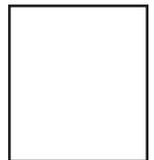
### **Park Reservations:**

Ben Anders, YMCA at (281) 341-0791

**The Pecan Grove MUD Board generally meets the last Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Pecan Grove Country Club. Meetings are open to the public and residents are encouraged to attend.**

**Pecan Grove Municipal  
Utility District**

**1421 FM 359, Suite D  
(Plantation Center)  
Richmond, TX 77469**



**Visit us online:**

**[www.pecangrovemud.com](http://www.pecangrovemud.com)**