

Dateline: October 7, 2004

Groundwater district proposes pumping rates

WHITE DEER – The Board of Directors of the Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District proposed well production rates last week that are a guaranteed amount of water that can be pumped annually in a management sub-area.

The Board decided that public comment on proposed Rule 15, where the floor rates were added, will be taken until October 29. A final public hearing will be held on November 10.

The customary maximum annual production rate is one acre-foot per acre. An acre-foot of water is the amount needed to cover one land-acre to a depth of one foot.

Under the proposed rule, if an area is proven to have declines over 1.25 percent per year, the Board may reduce the maximum annual production rate for that area by 0.1 acre-foot every two years until compliance is achieved. The area cannot be restricted below its production floor rate. The guaranteed floor rates range from 0.1 to 0.5 acre-foot of water per land-acre over 15 sub-areas.

The floor rate is the volume of water that can be pumped in a sub-area and still meet the District's 50/50 Management Standard if all sections were producing. The District board can review the floor rates no more often than every ten years.

Production floor rates were proposed in response to well owners' requests for more certainty in the regulatory environment.

Proposed Rule 15 sets out a 1.25 percent acceptable decline rate that will limit the annual drop in the Ogallala Aquifer to ensure compliance with the 50/50 Management Standard. The standard says that at least 50 percent of the aquifer must be left in 50 years, starting in 1998.