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Groundwater management group holds quarterly meeting

By: Kassia Micek , Courier staff

The Groundwater Resources director for the Texas Water Development Board laid out desired future conditions that must be submitted to the board by 2010.

Robert Mace presented the information to the Groundwater Management Area 14 Joint Planning Group, which includes Montgomery County, during a meeting Tuesday in Conroe.

"Basically it's a management goal, what you want your aquifers to look like in the future, not the amount of water in it," Mace said.

Desired future conditions can include such things as a no more than a 10-foot decline in the groundwater level in a certain timeframe or having 50 percent of the groundwater left in the aquifers in 50 years, he said.

"If you understand what everyone's issues are, it makes it easier," Mace said. "Also, recognize aquifers don't honor district boundaries. What your neighbor does affects your district and vice versa."

With a clarification from the TWDB on what the desired future conditions should be, GMA 14 members are prepared to present information that would help achieve that goal, said Lloyd Behm, GMA 14 chairman and Bluebonnet Groundwater Conservation District general manager.

"We will start now actually assembling the numbers for those desired future conditions," Behm said. "We certainly don't want to do anything that will deplete the aquifer or cause 500 to 600 feet of drawdown."

Each groundwater conservation district and subsidence district in GMA 14 will present its current and projected population, water demand and water availability at future meetings. The information will be used to create the GMA's desired future conditions, Behm said.

Bluebonnet, Southeast Texas and Lone Star groundwater conservation districts will present their data at the next meeting, scheduled for 10 a.m. Oct. 24. The Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District oversees Montgomery County.

GMA 14 includes 21 counties along the upper Gulf Coast region. Bluebonnet Groundwater Conservation District represents Austin, Grimes and Walker counties. Brazos Groundwater Conservation District represents Brazos County. Brazoria County Groundwater Conservation District represents Brazoria County.

Lower Trinity Groundwater Conservation District represents Polk, San Jacinto and Liberty counties. The Harris-Galveston Subsidence District represents Harris and Galveston counties. The Fort Bend Subsidence District represents Fort Bend County. Southeast Texas Groundwater Conservation District represents Newton, Hardin, Tyler and Jasper counties.

Orange, Jefferson, Chambers, Waller and Washington counties are not represented, so Southeast Texas Groundwater Conservation District will contact Orange, Jefferson and Chambers regarding GMA 14, and Bluebonnet Groundwater Conservation District will contact Washington and Waller.

"What we're trying to do is work with them, so the numbers we work with are compatible with what they see as available in their county," Behm said.

The 79th Texas Legislature amended the Texas Water Code and passed House Bill 1763, which requires GMAs to participate in a joint planning process that went into effect Sept. 1, 2005.

Once the TWDB receives a GMA's desired future conditions, it will review them, as well as any petitions against them and take any action necessary. Every five years after 2010, GMAs will consider groundwater availability models and other data or information for the management area to establish desired future conditions for the relevant aquifers within that GMA, according to HB 1763. Kassia Micek can be reached at kmicek@hcnonline.com.