

Press Release: Uranium Mining in the Ander Area

Surface or in-situ mining of uranium is conducted at relatively shallow depths underground and can affect groundwater quality. To protect the quality of groundwater in Goliad County, the Goliad County Groundwater Conservation District (The District) along with Goliad County contested the in-situ uranium mining project near the Ander area about 13 years ago. Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) approved the permits along with permits for two injection wells to dispose of uranium mining waste deeper underground. The efforts by the District and County yielded meaningful changes to the permits. To date, no uranium mining has occurred under those permits.

The mining and disposal permits are up for renewal. TCEQ granted the District a contested hearing regarding renewal of the two waste disposal injection wells, Permit Numbers WDW423 and WDW424. The preliminary hearing is scheduled for July 17, 2023, at 10:00 am and will be held online via Zoom Meeting. The District plans for the public to be able to view and participate in the preliminary hearing at our office or a larger venue if there is enough interest. Anyone wishing to be considered an affected party and the right to participate in the TCEQ's decision whether to renew the permits must appear at the preliminary hearing to ensure they are protecting their water rights. The notice and zoom meeting information for the preliminary hearing can be found on our website: <http://www.goliadcogcd.org/uranium-mining.html>. The preliminary hearing will be limited to designating parties to the proceeding and establishing a procedural schedule. The issues to be considered by the Administrative Law Judge and ultimately decided by the TCEQ are limited to items that were timely raised and are identified in the Commissioners Interim Order found here:

https://www14.tceq.texas.gov/epic/eCID/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.download&doc_id=751580562022356&doc_name=InterimOrder%202022%2D1553%2DWDW%2Epdf&requesttimeout=5000.

The uranium mining Permit No. UR03075 is also up for renewal. Unlike the waste disposal injection well permits, there is still time to act and request public meetings or provide public comments. Requesting a public meeting from the TCEQ would be beneficial and informative, however, the TCEQ will only grant a public meeting if there is enough public interest. Potential issues referred to SOAH will be framed from public comments that are filed. Requests for a public meeting and public comments can be filed online or by simply sending a letter to the TCEQ. For further information go to: <https://www14.tceq.texas.gov/epic/eComment/>.

Comments already made by GCGCD are available at:

https://www14.tceq.texas.gov/epic/eCID/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.download&doc_id=248430212023104&doc_name=GCGCD%20Comments%20on%20UR03075%20Renewal%2Epdf.

In 2001, voters in Goliad County approved the formation of The District. It has operated for 22 years in a professional and conservative manner serving the groundwater users in Goliad County. The District has accomplished this with an annual tax rate of approximately 1 cent per \$100 valuation, well below many other groundwater conservation districts. The District is using some of its reserves to engage professional expertise to further evaluate the requested permit renewals for uranium mining. It is early in the process so potential costs are not known and may depend on the response from the public, TCEQ, and the mining company. The District will make every effort to protect the groundwater supply for all of us that depend on it for our livelihoods, but there may come a time when the District has to ask the public to support an increase in tax rate.

Again, The District is asking potential affected parties and the public to attend the preliminary hearing regarding the waste injection well permits on July 17, 2023. In addition, The District asks its constituents to request TCEQ hold a public meeting and make public comments to TCEQ regarding the mining permit UR03075. Please also let our State Representative and State Senator know how you feel about the renewal of these permits. They can request that TCEQ hold a public meeting in Goliad County to provide information and answer questions regarding the mining permit.

If you have questions, need assistance, wish to have a public information meeting, or review permit data, please contact the District office at 361-645-1716 or gcgcd@goliadcogcd.org.