

# **GATEWAY GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**Childress, Cottle, Foard, Hardeman, King, and Motley Counties, Texas**

## **DISTRICT RULES**

ADOPTED July 1, 2003

Amended August \_\_\_, 2014

Amended \_\_\_\_\_, 2016

Amended December 16, 2021

Amended January 4, 2023

Amended September 4, 2025

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## **RULE 1 -- DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS**

### **1.1 Definitions of Terms**

In the administration of its duties, the Gateway Groundwater Conservation District follows the definitions of terms set forth in the District Act in Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code and in other definitions as follow:

- (1) "Abandoned well" means a well that is not in use. A well is considered to be in use, as defined by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, if:
  - (A) the well is not a deteriorated well and contains the casing, pump, and pump column in good condition;
  - (B) the well is not a deteriorated well and has been capped;
  - (C) the water from the well has been put to an authorized beneficial use, as defined by the Water Code;
  - (D) the well is used in the normal course and scope and with the intensity and frequency of other similar users in the general community; or
  - (E) the owner is participating in the Conservation Reserve Program authorized by Sections 1231-1236, Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. Sections 3831-3836), or a similar governmental program.
- (2) "Acre-foot" means the amount of water necessary to cover one acre of land one foot deep, or 325,851 gallons of water.
- (3) "Agricultural" means any of the following activities:
  - (A) cultivating the soil to produce crops for human food, animal feed, or planting seed or for the production of fibers;
  - (B) the practice of floriculture, viticulture, silviculture, and horticulture, including the cultivation of plants in containers or non-soil media, by a nursery grower;
  - (C) raising, feeding, or keeping animals for breeding purposes or for the production of food or fiber, leather, pelts, or other tangible products having a commercial value;
  - (D) planting cover crops, including cover crops cultivated for transplantation, or leaving land idle for the purpose of participating in any governmental program or normal crop or livestock rotation procedure;
  - (E) wildlife management; and
  - (F) raising or keeping equine animals.
- (4) "Agricultural use" means any use or activity involving agriculture, including irrigation.

- (5) “Aquifer” means a geologic formation, group of formations or part of a formation that is capable of yielding a significant amount of water to a well or spring.
- (6) “Beneficial use” or “beneficial purpose” means use of groundwater for:
- (A) agricultural, gardening, domestic, stock raising, municipal, mining, manufacturing, industrial, commercial, or recreational purposes;
  - (B) exploring for, producing, handling, or treating oil, gas, sulfur, lignite, or other minerals; or
  - (C) any other purpose that is useful and beneficial to the user that does not commit or result in waste as that term is defined in these rules and Chapter 36, Texas Water Code.
- (7) “Best Available Science” means conclusions that are logically and reasonably derived using statistical or quantitative data, techniques, analyses, and studies that are publicly available to reviewing scientists and can be employed to address a specific scientific question.
- (8) “Board” means the District’s Board of Directors.
- (9) “Casing” means a tubular, water tight structure installed in the excavated or drilled hole to maintain the well opening and, along with cementing, to confine the ground waters to their zones of origin and to prevent the entrance of surface pollutants.
- (10) “Cement” means a neat Portland or construction cement mixture of not more than seven gallons of water per 94 pound sack of dry cement, creating a cement slurry in which bentonite, gypsum, or other additives may be included.
- (11) “Contiguous acreage” means land with the same continuous boundary within the District that is owned or legally controlled for the purpose of groundwater withdrawal by the well owner or operator. A majority of the contiguous acreage assigned to the well shall bear a reasonable reflection of the cone of depression impact near the pumped well, as based on the best available science. Land that is owned or legally controlled by the well owner or operator that is separated only by a road, highway or river from other land owned or controlled by the well owner or operator is contiguous.
- (12) "Desired future condition" (DFC) means a quantitative description, adopted in accordance with Section 36.108, Texas Water Code, of the desired condition of the groundwater resources in a management area at one or more specified future times.
- (13) “Deteriorated well” means, as defined by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, a well that, because of its condition, will cause or is likely to cause pollution of any water in this state, including groundwater.
- (14) “De-watering well” means a well used to remove water from a construction site or excavation, or to relieve hydrostatic uplift on permanent structures.
- (15) “District” means the Gateway Groundwater Conservation District.

- (16) "District Act" means Acts 2001, 77th R.S.,ch. 1352, General and Special Laws of Texas (House Bill 3626), as amended by Acts 2007, 80th R.S.,ch. 192, General and Special Laws of Texas (Senate Bill 1950), which are codified in Chapter 8839 of the Texas Special District Local Laws code, and the non-conflicting provisions of Chapter 36, Water Code.
- (17) "District office" means the office of the District as established by resolution of the Board.
- (18) "District's territory" means all of the counties of Foard, Hardeman, Childress, Cottle, King, and Motley in the State of Texas.
- (19) "Drilling Permit" means a permit for a water well issued by the District allowing a water well to be drilled.
- (20) "Exempt well" means a well that is defined in Rule 8.1 and is not required to be permitted with the District, but must be registered with the District under Rule 8.2.
- (21) "Existing Well" means a groundwater well within the District's boundaries, for which drilling or significant development of the well commenced before the voters of a county confirmed the creation of the District.
- (22) "Exported Water" means any water leaving the District.
- (23) "General Manager" means the employee of the District described in Rule 3.1.
- (24) "GPM" means gallons per minute.
- (25) "Groundwater" means water located beneath the earth's surface within the District.
- (26) "Hearing Body" means the Board, any committee of the Board, or a Hearing Examiner at any hearing held under the authority of the District Act.
- (27) "Hearing Examiner" means a person appointed by the Board of Directors to conduct a hearing or other proceeding.
- (28) "Injection well" means, as defined by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation:
- (A) an air-conditioning return flow well used to return water used for heating or cooling in a heat pump to the aquifer that supplied the water;
  - (B) a cooling water return flow well used to inject water previously used for cooling;
  - (C) a drainage well used to drain surface fluid into a subsurface formation;
  - (D) a recharge well used to replenish the water in an aquifer;
  - (E) a saltwater intrusion barrier well used to inject water into a freshwater aquifer to prevent the intrusion of salt water into the freshwater.
  - (F) a sand backfill well used to inject a mixture of water and sand, mill tailings, or other solids into subsurface mines;

- (G) a substance control well used to inject fluids into a non-oil or gas producing zone to reduce or eliminate subsidence associated with the overdraft of fresh water; or
- (H) a closed system, geothermal well used to circulate water, other fluids, or gases through the earth as a heat source or heat sink.
- (29) “Landowner” means the person who bears ownership of the land surface.
- (30) “Leachate well” means a well used to remove contamination from soil or groundwater.
- (31) "Modeled available groundwater" means the amount of water that may be permitted by a district for beneficial use in accordance with the desired future condition of the aquifer as determined under Section 36.108, Texas Water Code.
- (32) "Management Area" means an area designated and delineated by the Texas Water Development Board under Chapter 35, Texas Water Code, as an area suitable for management of groundwater resources.
- (33) “Management Plan” means the comprehensive management plan which the District must prepare and submit to the Texas Water Development Board under Section 36.1071, Texas Water Code, and as further described in Rule 4.7.
- (34) “Monitoring well” means a well installed to measure some property of the groundwater or aquifer it penetrates, and does not produce more than 5,000 gallons of groundwater per year.
- (35) “New well” means any Well other than an existing well. “New well application” means an application for a permit for a water well that has not yet been drilled. For compliance with Rule 6.1 that was adopted on December 16, 2021, a “new well” is defined as a well for which an administratively complete application for a Registration/Permit to Drill was submitted to the District after December 16, 2021.
- (36) “Open Meetings Act” means Chapter 551, Texas Government Code, which governs the manner in which the meetings of the District must be conducted.
- (37) “Permit to Drill” means a written permit issued by the District for a water well, allowing a well to be drilled.
- (38) “Public Information Act” means Chapter 552, Texas Government Code, which governs the manner in which the records of the District must be made available to the public. It is sometimes called the Open Records Act.
- (39) “Person” includes corporation, individual, organization, government or governmental subdivision or agency, business trust, estate, trust, partnership, association, or any other legal entity.
- (40) “Presiding officer” means the President, Vice-President, Secretary, or other Board member presiding at any hearing or other proceeding or a Hearing Examiner conducting any hearing or other proceeding.
- (41) “Registration” means a certificate issued by the district for exempt wells required under Rule 8.2, which may be required to comply with the District’s Spacing Rule 6.1.
- (42) “Rule or Rules” means the rules of the District compiled in this document and as may be

supplemented or amended from time to time.

- (43) "Section" means the number section of a surveyor block as shown in "Original Texas Land Survey."
- (44) "Texas Rules of Civil Procedure" and "Texas Rules of Civil Evidence" mean the civil procedure and evidence rules as amended and in effect at the time of the action or proceeding. Except as modified by the rules of the District, the rights, duties, and responsibilities of the presiding officer acting under the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure or the Texas Rules of Evidence are the same as a court acting under those rules.
- (45) "Transport" means exporting, transferring, or moving groundwater outside the District.
- (46) "Transport Permit" means an authorization issued by the District allowing the transport of a specific quantity of groundwater outside the District's boundaries for a designated time period. All applicable permit rules apply to transport permits.
- (47) "Waste" means any one or more of the following as defined in Section 36.001(8), Texas Water Code:
- (A) withdrawal of groundwater from a groundwater reservoir at a rate and in an amount that causes or threatens to cause intrusion into the reservoir of water unsuitable for agricultural, gardening, domestic, or stock raising purposes;
  - (B) the flowing or producing of wells from a groundwater reservoir if the water produced is not used for a beneficial purpose;
  - (C) escape of groundwater from a groundwater reservoir to any other reservoir or geologic strata that does not contain groundwater;
  - (D) pollution or harmful alteration of groundwater in a groundwater reservoir by saltwater or by other deleterious matter admitted from another stratum or from the surface of the ground;
  - (E) willfully or negligently causing, suffering, or allowing groundwater to escape into any river, creek, natural watercourse, depression, lake, reservoir, drain, sewer, street, highway, road, or road ditch, or onto any land other than that of the owner of the well unless such discharge is authorized by permit, rule, or order issued by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality under Chapter 26, Texas Water Code;
  - (F) groundwater pumped for irrigation that escapes as irrigation tail water onto land other than that of the owner of the well unless permission has been granted by the occupant of the land receiving the discharge; or
  - (G) for water produced from an artesian well, "waste" also has the meaning assigned by Section 11.205, Texas Water Code.
- (48) "Water meter" means a water flow measuring device that can accurately record the amount of groundwater produced during a measured time.

- (49) “Water rights” means property rights defined in Section 36.002, Texas Water Code.
- (50) “Well” means any facility, device, or method used to withdraw groundwater from the groundwater supply within the District.
- (51) “Well Owner” or “Well Operator” means the person who owns a possessory interest in: (1) the land upon which a well or well system is located or to be located; (2) the well or well system; or (3) the legal right to occupy the property and to capture groundwater withdrawn from a well or well system located on the property. The term “well owner” includes but is not limited to a person that holds a well permit for the well.
- (52) “Well system” means a well or group of wells tied to the same distribution system.
- (53) “Withdraw” means extracting groundwater by pumping or by another method.
- (54) “Windmill” means a wind-driven or hand-driven device that uses a piston pump to remove groundwater.

## **1.2 Purpose of Rules**

These rules are adopted to achieve the provisions of the District Act and accomplish its purposes.

## **1.3 Use and Effect of Rules**

The District uses these rules as a guide to exercise the powers conferred by law and in the accomplishment of the purposes of the District Act. They may neither be construed as a limitation or restriction on the exercise of any discretion; nor be construed to deprive the District or Board of the exercise of any powers, duties or jurisdiction conferred by law; nor be construed to limit or restrict the amount and character of data or information that may be required to be collected for the proper administration of the District Act.

## **1.4 Amending of Rules**

The Board may, following notice and hearing, amend these rules or adopt new rules when necessary.

## **1.5 Headings and Captions**

The sections, headings, and captions contained in these rules are for reference purposes only. They do not affect the meaning or interpretation of these rules in any way.

## **1.6 Construction**

A reference to a title, chapter, or section without further identification is a reference to a title, chapter, or section of the Texas Water Code. Construction of words and phrases are governed by the Code Construction Act, Subchapter B, Chapter 311 of Government Code.

## **1.7 Methods of Service Under the Rules**

Except as otherwise expressly provided in these rules, any notice or documents required by these rules to be served or delivered may be delivered to the recipient, or the recipient's authorized representative, in person, by agent, by courier receipted delivery, by certified mail sent to the recipient's last known address, by email, or by telephonic document transfer to the recipient's current telecopier number. Service by mail is complete upon deposit in a post office or other official depository of the United States Postal Service. Service by telephonic document transfer is complete upon transfer, except that any transfer occurring after 5:00 p.m. will be deemed complete on the following business day. If service or delivery is by mail and the recipient has the right, or is required, to do some act within a prescribed time after service, three days will be added to the prescribed period. Where service by one or more methods has been attempted and failed, the service is complete upon notice publication in a general circulation newspaper in the county involved.

## **1.8 Severability**

If any one or more of the provisions contained in these rules are for any reason held to be invalid, or unenforceable in any respect, the invalidity, illegality, or unenforceability may not affect any other rules or provisions of these rules, and these rules must be construed as if such invalid, illegal or unenforceable rules or provision had never been contained in these rules.

# **RULE 2 – BOARD**

## **2.1 Purpose of the Board**

The Board was created to determine policy and regulate the withdrawal of groundwater within the boundaries of the District for conserving, preserving, protecting, and recharging the groundwater within the District, and to exercise its rights, powers, and duties in a way that will effectively and expeditiously accomplish the purpose of the District Act. The Board's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the adoption and enforcement of reasonable rules and other orders.

## **2.2 Board Structure, Officers**

The Board consists of the members appointed and qualified as required by the District Act. The Board will elect one of its members to serve as President, to preside over Board meetings and proceedings and to serve as the chief executive officer of the District; one to serve as Vice President to preside in the absence of the President; and one to serve as Secretary to keep a true and complete account of all meetings and proceedings of the Board. The Board, at its discretion, may combine the offices of Secretary and Treasurer into the office of Secretary-Treasurer. The Board will elect officers annually at the first regular meeting of the calendar year. Members serve until their successors are appointed and have qualified in office in accordance with Section 36.055, Texas Water Code. Officers serve until their successors are appointed.

## **2.3 Meetings**

The Board will hold a regular meeting at least quarterly, or as required, on the date the Board may establish. At the request of the President, or by written request of at least three members, the Board

may hold special meetings. All Board meetings will be held in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

## **2.4 Committees**

The President may establish committees for formulation of policy recommendations to the Board, and shall appoint the chair and membership of the committees. Committee members serve at the pleasure of the President.

## **2.5 Ex Parte Communications**

Board members may not communicate, directly or indirectly, about any issue of fact or law in any contested case before the Board, with any agency, person, party, or their representatives, except on notice and opportunity for all parties to participate. A Board member may communicate ex parte with other members of the Board. This rule does not apply to a Board member who abstains from voting on any matter in which ex parte communications have occurred.

# **RULE 3 -- DISTRICT MANAGEMENT**

## **3.1 General Manager**

The Board may employ a person to manage the District and title this person General Manager. The General Manager will have no power, duty, or responsibility other than gathering information and performing water district functions as determined by the Board. The Board will determine the salary and review the position of General Manager during the third quarter of each fiscal year.

## **3.2 Management Employees Other Than General Manager**

Subject to the provisions of the annual budget, the General Manager may employ those persons for whom positions are specified in the annual budget. Those employees shall serve at the pleasure of the General Manager.

# **RULE 4 – FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**

## **4.1 Fiscal Year**

The District's fiscal year begins on October 1 of each year and ends on September 30 of the following year.

## **4.2 Annual Budget**

The recommended annual budget for the oncoming fiscal year shall be submitted by the President to the Board annually at the regular meeting in the month of August. The Board shall adopt the annual budget for the oncoming fiscal year at its regular meeting in September of each year. During the fiscal year, the Board may amend the annual budget as it deems necessary.

### **4.3 Annual Levy of Taxes**

At its regular meeting in September of each year the Board shall levy taxes to pay the maintenance and operating expenses of the District at a rate not to exceed .01 cents on each \$100 of assessed valuation.

### **4.4 Annual Audit**

At its regular meeting in September of each year the Board shall designate the person or accounting firm to perform the annual audit required by Section 36.153, Texas Water Code. The annual audit report shall be considered and acted upon at the regular meeting in January of each year.

### **4.5 Minutes and Records of the District**

All documents, reports, records, and minutes of the District are available for public inspection and copying following the Texas Open Records Act. Upon written application of any person, the District will furnish copies of its public records. There will be a copying charge pursuant to policies established by the District. A list of the charges for copies will be furnished by the District.

### **4.6 Certified Copies**

Requests for certified copies must be in writing. Certified copies will be made under the direction of the Board. A certification charge and copying charge may be assessed pursuant to charges established by the Board.

### **4.7 Management Plan**

The Board shall adopt a Management Plan that specifies the acts, procedures, performance and avoidance necessary to minimize as far as practicable the drawdown of the water table or the reduction of artesian pressure, to prevent interference between wells, to prevent degradation of water quality to prevent waste, and to avoid impairment of a Desired Future Conditions. The District shall use the District's rules to implement the Management Plan.

The Board will review and readopt or amend the plan at least every fifth year after its last approval by TWDB. If the Board considers a new plan necessary or desirable, based on the District's best available data and groundwater availability, a new plan will be adopted and submitted to TWDB in accordance with TWDB rules. The District will amend its plan to address goals and objectives consistent with achieving the Desired Future Conditions within a reasonable time after the adoption of the Desired Future Conditions by the Groundwater Management Area. The District will update its rules, if necessary, to implement the Desired Future Conditions before the anniversary of the date that TWDB approves the District Management Plan that has been updated to include the adopted Desired Future Conditions.

## **RULE 5 -- WASTE PREVENTION**

### **5.1 Waste Prohibited**

- (1) Groundwater shall not be produced within, or used within or without the District, in such a manner or under such conditions as to constitute waste as defined in Rule 1.1 (47).
- (2) Any person producing or using groundwater shall use every possible precaution, in accordance with the most approved methods, to stop and prevent waste of such water.
- (3) No person shall pollute or harmfully alter the character of a groundwater aquifer of the District by means of salt water or other deleterious matter admitted from other stratum or strata or from the surface of the ground.

### **5.2 Orders to Prevent Waste/Pollution**

After providing notice to affected parties and opportunity for a hearing, the Board may adopt orders to prohibit or prevent waste or pollution. If the factual basis for the order is disputed, the Board shall direct that an evidentiary hearing be conducted prior to entry of the order. If the Board determines that an emergency exists, requiring the immediate entry of an order to prohibit waste or pollution and protect the public health, safety, and welfare, it may enter a temporary order without notice and hearing provided; however, the temporary order shall continue in effect for the lesser of 15 days or until a hearing can be conducted.

## **RULE 6 -- SPACING REQUIREMENTS**

### **6.1 Required Spacing**

- (1) A new well may not be drilled within 50 feet from the property line of any adjoining landowner.
- (2) A new permitted well may not be drilled within 300 feet of an existing exempt well.
- (3) Chart of Spacing and Density of Permitted Wells:

<b>Discharge Pipe Size</b>	<b>Spacing From Existing Well of Same Size</b>	<b>Density (Number of Wells) per 160 Acres</b>
2 Inch	50 Yards	10
3 Inch	75 Yards	6
4 Inch	100 Yards	4
5 Inch	125 Yards	3
6 Inch	150 Yards	2
8 Inch	200 Yards	1

If the wells to be spaced between are different sizes, the average will be used. If the acres are not 160, the proportional amount of well density will be calculated.

- (4) If an owner desires to drill a new well that is too close to an existing well, the existing

well may be flow tested and reclassified based on the following chart:

<b>Gallons per Minute</b>	<b>Reclassified Size</b>
Up to 35 GPM	2 Inch or less
36 – 70 GPM	3 Inch
71 – 265 GPM	4 Inch
266 – 390 GPM	5 Inch
391 – 560 GPM	6 Inch
561 – 1,000 GPM	8 Inch

- (5) Rule 6.1 (2), (3), and (4) apply only to new wells for which an administratively complete permit application is submitted to the District after December 16, 2021, the date on which the spacing requirements were adopted by the Board.

## **6.2 Exceptions to Spacing**

- (1) If the applicant presents waivers signed and notarized by the adjoining landowner(s) stating that they have no objection to the proposed well site location, the spacing requirements will not apply to the proposed well site location.
- (2) If any landowner requests an exception to the density requirement, they will be required to prove they are producing less than two acre-feet per acre on the contiguous acres. In order to do this, the landowner must install and maintain in good working order flow meters that capture all flow on the property. They will also be required to file a report with the District annually by March 1 listing total production on the property. Compliance with the production limit will be calculated on a three-year rolling average. Owners who do not file the report on time or exceed the production limit will be assessed a civil penalty as listed in Rule 14.6.
- (3) The Board may, if good cause is shown by clear and convincing evidence, enter special orders or add special permit conditions increasing or decreasing spacing requirements.
- (4) A well that is used solely for a single-household domestic use may comply with the Alternative Siting Methods listed in *16 Texas Administrative Code* §76.100(b), as an alternative to the spacing requirements list in Rule 6.1

## **RULE 7 -- PRODUCTION LIMITATIONS**

### **7.1 Maximum Allowable Production for Permitted Wells**

- (1) Determination of maximum allowable production will always and only be for the tract of land where the well or wells will be permitted. Other acres owned but not contiguous to the tract where a well or wells are being permitted will not be included in the computation for maximum allowable production.
- (2) The maximum allowable production for a permitted well shall not exceed two acre-feet/acre/year for contiguous acreage.

In no event may a well or well system granted the density exception in Rule 6.2 (2) be operated such that the total annual production exceeds two acre feet of water per acre owned for a well

permitted under Rule 8.3.

## **RULE 8--REGISTRATION AND PERMITTING**

### **8.1 Exclusions and Exemptions**

(1) The following wells, listed below, require a District registration under Rule 8.2, but are exempt from applying for a permit under Rule 8.3:

(A) drilling or operating a well used solely for domestic use or for providing water for livestock or poultry if the well is:

(a) located or to be located on a tract of land larger than 10 acres; and

(b) drilled, completed, or equipped so that it is incapable of producing more than 25,000 gallons of groundwater a day;

(B) drilling a water well used solely to supply water for a rig that is actively engaged in drilling or exploration operations for an oil or gas well permitted by the Railroad Commission of Texas provided that the person holding the permit is responsible for drilling and operating the water well, and the water well is located on the same lease or field associated with the drilling rig; or

(C) drilling a water well authorized under a permit issued by the Railroad Commission of Texas under Chapter 134, Natural Resources Code, or for production from the well to the extent the withdrawals are required for mining activities regardless of any subsequent use of the water.

(D) A groundwater well drilled for temporary use to supply water for a rig that is actively engaged in drilling a groundwater production well permitted by the District. An exemption for a well described herein may not exceed 180 days. The District may grant an extension of the exemption until the well is complete.

(2) The District may cancel a previously granted exemption, may require a permit for, may restrict production from a well, and assess any appropriate fees if:

(A) the groundwater withdrawals that were exempted under Rule 8.1 (1) (A) are no longer used solely for domestic use or to provide water for livestock or poultry;

(B) the groundwater withdrawals that were exempted under Rule 8.1 (1) (B) are no longer used solely to supply water for a rig that is actively engaged in drilling or exploration operations for an oil or gas well permitted by the Railroad Commission of Texas; or

(C) the groundwater withdrawals that were exempted under Rule 8.1 (1) (C) are no longer necessary for mining activities or are greater than the amount necessary for mining activities specified in the permit issued by the Railroad Commission of

Texas under Chapter 134, Natural Resources Code.

- (D) the groundwater withdrawals that were exempted under Rule 8.1 (1) (D) and are no longer used solely to supply water for a rig that is actively engaged in drilling a groundwater production well permitted by the District.
- (3) The District may require compliance with the District's well spacing rules for the drilling of any well, except a well exempted under Rule 8.1 (1) (C).
- (4) Registrants shall equip and maintain exempt wells to conform to the District's rules requiring installation of casing, pipe, and fittings to prevent the escape of groundwater from a groundwater reservoir to any reservoir not containing groundwater, and to prevent the pollution or harmful alteration of the character of the water in any groundwater reservoir.
- (5) An exemption provided under Rule 8.1 (1) does not apply to a well if the groundwater withdrawn is used to supply water for a subdivision of land for which a plat approval is required by Chapter 232, Local Government Code.
- (6) Groundwater withdrawn under an exemption provided in accordance with this section and subsequently transported outside the boundaries of the district is subject to any applicable production and export fees under Sections 36.122 and 36.205, Texas Water Code.

## **8.2 Registration of Exempt Wells**

All water wells exempt under Rule 8.1 from the requirement to obtain a permit must be registered with the District by the well owner or the well operator in order to be protected by the District, as authorized by Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code. If the exempt well is in existence on December 16, 2022, the well owner or operator shall file a registration application with the District on form(s) prescribed by the General Manager. Existing exempt wells will be registered in accordance with the application schedule adopted by the District. The owner or operator shall be issued a registration certificate after the well is reviewed and determined exempt by the General Manager. A fee may be charged for the registration of exempt wells.

- (1) For a new well that is exempt under Rule 8.1, a well registration form must be submitted to the District prior to the well being drilled. The applicant and/or the well driller will violate the District's rules and Chapter 36, Texas Water Code, by drilling or causing to be drilled a well(s) without prior authorization from the District.
- (2) New wells that are exempt under Rule 8.1 (1) (A) and (B) and have submitted an administratively complete well registration application after December 16, 2021, shall comply with the spacing requirements in Rule 6.1.
  - (A) Upon receiving an administratively complete well registration application for a new well, the District staff shall verify that the application complies with Rule 6.1 and other applicable District rules. The General Manager may then authorize the issuance of a well registration, and the Board shall approve the authorized well registration

at the following scheduled Board meeting. Applications that meet Rule 6.1 and other applicable District rules are not required to have a hearing under Rule 13.

- (B) Application that requests an exception to Rule 6.1 or other District rules may not be authorized by the General Manger, and are subject to a public hearing by the Board prior to Board action on the application. The public hearing on the application shall comply with Rule 13 including the notice provisions of Rule 13.2

### **8.3 Permitting of Non-Exempt Wells**

#### Permit to Drill

- (1) No person, including a well owner or well driller, shall construct or drill a well without first obtaining a permit to drill a groundwater well, unless the well is exempt under Rule 8.1. An application for a permit to drill groundwater must be completed in accordance with Rule 8.4.
- (2) No person shall modify, alter, or operate a well without a permit to drill and produce groundwater, unless the well is exempt under Rule 8.1.

Except as provided by Rule 10.1(A), no person shall modify or alter an existing well or alter the size of a pump without a permit to drill and produce groundwater, unless the well is exempt under Rule 8.1.

- (3) Before granting or denying a permit for a well, or permit amendment under §36.1146, Texas Water Code, the District shall consider whether:
  - (A) the application conforms to the requirements prescribed by these rules and Chapter 36, Texas Water Code, is accompanied by the prescribed fees, and is administratively complete;
  - (B) the applicant violated the District's rules and Chapter 36, Texas Water Code, prior to submitting its application to the District by either drilling or operating a well(s) without a permit;
  - (C) the proposed use of water unreasonably affects existing groundwater and surface water resources, existing permit holders, or wells that are registered with the District and exempt from the requirement to obtain a permit under District rules;
  - (D) the proposed use of water is dedicated to a beneficial use and whether sufficient evidence of an intended beneficial use is presented;
  - (E) the proposed use of water is consistent with the District's Management Plan, including the District's Availability Goals;
  - (F) the applicant has agreed to avoid waste and achieve water conservation;

- (G) the applicant has agreed that reasonable diligence will be used to protect groundwater quality and that the applicant will follow well plugging guidelines at the time of well closure; and
  - (H) would not be otherwise contrary to the public welfare.
  - (I) This section does not apply to the renewal of a permit issued under §36.1145, Texas Water Code.
- (3) The District may impose more restrictive permit conditions on new permit applications, provided that such limitations apply to all subsequent new permit applications, regardless of type or location of use.
  - (4) Permits and permit amendments may be issued subject to the rules promulgated by the District and subject to terms and provisions with reference to the drilling, equipping, completion, alteration, operation of, or production of groundwater from wells or pumps that may be necessary to prevent waste and achieve water conservation, minimize as far as practicable the drawdown of the water table or the reduction of artesian pressure, lessen interference between wells, or control and prevent subsidence.
  - (5) Changes in the amount or rate of withdrawal or use of groundwater under a District permit may not be made without the prior approval of a permit amendment issued by the District.
  - (6) In regulating the production of groundwater based on tract size or acreage, a district may consider the service needs or service area of a retail public utility. For the purposes of this subsection, "retail public utility" shall have the meaning provided by §13.002, Texas Water Code.
  - (7) Upon receiving an administratively complete application for a Permit, the District staff shall verify that the permit application complies with Rule 6.1 and other applicable District rules. The General Manager may then authorize the issuance of the Permit. The Board shall approve the authorized Permit at the following scheduled Board meeting. Applications that meet Rule 6.1 and other applicable District rules are not required to have a permit hearing under Rule 13.
  - (8) Permit applications that request an exception to Rule 6.1 or other District rules may not be authorized by the General Manger, and are subject to a public permit hearing by the Board prior to Board action on the permit application. The public hearing on the permit application shall comply with District Rule 13, including the notice provisions of Rule 13.2.

#### **8.4. Applications**

- (1) Each original application for a registration, permit to drill groundwater, transport permit, and permit renewal or amendment requires an application by the applicant. Application forms will be provided by the District and furnished to the applicant by request.
- (2) An application shall be in writing and sworn and shall contain:

- (A) the name and mailing address of the applicant and the name and address of the owner of the land, if different from the applicant, on which the well is to be located;
- (B) if the applicant is not the owner of the property, documentation establishing the applicable authority to construct and operate a well on the owner's property for the proposed use;
- (C) the applicant must agree they have the legal authority to produce the groundwater associated with the land surface on the permit/registration application, and that the permit/registration may be amended or revoked based on the legal transfer of the associated groundwater rights or right to produce groundwater to another person/entity. A notarized original of any legal document affecting the legal authority to produce groundwater on property in a county within the District is required to be filed with the county's deed records for which the property rights are located;
- (E) a statement of the nature and purpose of the proposed use and the amount of water to be used for each purpose and any evidence supporting the authenticity of the intended beneficial use;
- (F) certification that the applicant will comply with the District's Management Plan. If the applicant or any subsequent user of the water is a municipality or entity providing retail water services, the water conservation plan of that municipality or entity shall also be provided along with a copy of the contract between the applicant and any subsequent user of the water, indicating that the applicant and that municipality or entity will comply with the District's Management Plan.
- (G) the location of the well(s) and the estimated rate at which water will be withdrawn and where the water is proposed to be used;
- (H) a well closure plan or a declaration that the applicant will comply with well plugging guidelines and report closure to the applicable authorities, including the District;
- (I) the identity of the well driller, including the well driller's license number; and,
- (J) the permit application may also require additional information, including but not limited to: a physical address of the well site location, a legal description of the property (plat or survey); a site map that shows the location and distance of the proposed well to existing wells, property lines, septic tank, drain field, structures, neighboring septic systems if located closer than 100 feet and any other sources of contamination within 50 feet; and a copy of the warranty deed, a construction diagram for well construction and/or plugging, pump specifications (including type, horsepower, and pump curve).

## **8.5 Permit Term**

Duration of Permits to drill within the District are effective for six months. Wells must be

completed within those six months. Permits may be amended by application by the well-owner or by the District under Rule 8.7. Permits may be terminated if the well or well owner is not in compliance with District rules and is subject to enforcement. Permits may be renewed for one six month term at the written request of the applicant.

## **8.6 Permit to Drill Groundwater Provisions**

All permits are granted subject to these rules, orders of the Board, and the laws of the State of Texas. In addition to any special provisions or other requirements incorporated into the permit issued by the District, each permit issued shall contain the following standard permit provisions:

- (1) This permit is granted in accordance with the provisions of the District rules, and acceptance of this permit constitutes an acknowledgment and agreement that the permittee will comply with all of the terms, provisions, conditions, limitations, and restrictions of the District rules, Chapter 36, Tex. Water Code, and the District Act.
- (2) This permit confers only the right to operate the permitted well under the provisions of the District rules and its terms may be modified or amended pursuant to the provisions of those rules. To protect the permit holder from the illegal use of a new landowner, the permit holder must notify the District in writing, within 10 days after the sale date of property containing a well having been issued a permit to drill and produce groundwater. Any person who becomes the owner of a currently permitted well must, within 45 calendar days from the date of the change in ownership, file an application for a permit amendment to affect a transfer of the permit under Rule 8.7.
- (3) The operation of the well for the authorized purposes must be conducted in a non-wasteful manner.
- (4) Withdrawals from all non-exempt wells granted a density exception under Rule 6.2 (2) must be measured or estimated by the owner or operator using a device or method approved by the District that is within plus or minus 10 percent of accuracy. The permit holder shall maintain records of withdrawal on the property where the well is located or at its business office, and shall make those records available to the District for inspection. Whether measured or estimated by an approved method, water use shall be reported to the District annually, as requested by the District.
- (5) The well site must be accessible to District representatives for inspection, and the permittee agrees to cooperate fully in any reasonable inspection of the well and well site by District representatives.
- (6) The permit is granted on the basis of and contingent upon the accuracy of the information supplied in that application. A finding that false information has been supplied is grounds for immediate revocation of the permit.
- (7) Violation of this permit's terms, conditions, requirements, or special provisions, including pumping amounts in excess of authorized withdrawal, is punishable by civil penalties as provided by the Rule 14.6, as well as revocation of the permit.

- (8) The permittee will use reasonable diligence to protect groundwater quality and will follow well-plugging guidelines at the time of well closure.

## **8.7 Permit Amendments**

- (1) Amendment to Transfer Ownership of a Permit. The General Manager may rule on any application for a permit amendment to transfer the ownership of any permit. The written, sworn application shall include a request to make the ownership change and show the authority for requesting the change. The General Manager may grant such an amendment without notice, hearing, or further action by the Board. While the application is pending, the new owner may continue to operate the well.
- (2) District-Initiated Amendments. The District may initiate a permit amendment(s) to permits with reference to the drilling, equipping, completion, alteration, operation of, or production of groundwater from wells or pumps that may be necessary to prevent waste and achieve water conservation, minimize as far as practicable the drawdown of the water table or the reduction of artesian pressure, including but not limited to enforce the adopted desired future conditions of the aquifer(s), lessen interference between wells, or control and prevent subsidence. District-initiated permit amendments are subject to notice and hearing under Rule 13. If the District initiates an amendment to a permit, the permit as it existed before the permit amendment process shall remain in effect until the conclusion of the permit amendment or renewal process, as applicable.

## **8.8 Measuring and Reporting Requirements**

- (1) All well logs, pump test data, water level data, water quality data, or any other data pertinent to a well shall be submitted to the District office within 60 calendar days after completion of the well or well project. In accordance with Section 36.111, records shall be kept and reports be made to the District regarding the drilling, equipping, and completing of water wells and of the production capability and use of groundwater by the well owner.

Well drillers who drill, deepen, or alter any water well within the District shall comply with 16 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 76.70, in completing and submitting a State of Texas Well Report. The regulation includes the requirement to deliver, transmit electronically, or send by first-class mail a copy of the State of Texas Well Report to the groundwater conservation district in which the well is located, if any. Every well driller shall also deliver, transmit electronically, or send by first-class mail a copy to the owner or person for whom the well was drilled, within 60 days from the completion or cessation of drilling, deepening, or otherwise altering a well.

- (2) The permittee or registered well user shall submit complete, accurate, and timely metered pumpage and transport reports as required by the District, for wells with a transport permit or wells granted a density exception under Rule 6.2 (B). The report shall be filed on a form obtained from the District. The meter shall be installed at the well owner's expense at the time of drilling.

A registrant holding a mining permit issued by the Railroad Commission of Texas under

Chapter 134, Natural Resources Code, that authorizes the drilling of a water well shall report monthly to the district:

- (A) the total amount of water withdrawn during the month;
- (B) the quantity of water necessary for mining activities; and
- (C) the quantity of water withdrawn for other purposes.

## **RULE 9 -- TRANSFER OF GROUNDWATER OUT OF THE DISTRICT**

### **9.1 Permit Required**

Groundwater produced from a well within the District may not be transported outside the District's boundaries unless the Board has issued the well owner or operator a transport permit, except as provided within these rules.

### **9.2 Applicability**

- (1) A person proposing to transport groundwater out of the District must obtain a transport permit, in addition to a permit to drill and produce groundwater for a well, to:
  - (A) increase, on or after March 2, 1997, the amount of groundwater to be transferred under a continuing arrangement in effect before that date; or
  - (B) transfer groundwater out of the District on or after March 2, 1997, under a new arrangement.
- (2) The District may not prohibit the export of groundwater if the purchase was in effect on or before June 1, 1997.
- (3) A transport permit for the transportation of water outside the District is not required for the transportation of groundwater that is part of a manufactured product, or the groundwater is to be used on property that straddles the District boundary line, or the groundwater is used within the existing contiguous service area of an existing retail public utility that straddles the District boundary line. Transportation of groundwater, created by the expansion of an existing retail public utility into counties that are not contiguous to the District, will require a transport permit.

### **9.3 Application**

An application for a transport permit must be filed in the District office and must include the information required under Rule 8.4 for a permit to drill and produce groundwater, plus the following information:

- (1) the availability of water in the District and in the proposed receiving area during the period for which the water supply is requested, including the:

- (A) location of the proposed receiving area for the water to be transported;
  - (B) information describing alternate sources of supply that might be utilized by the applicant and the groundwater user, and the feasibility and practicability of utilizing such supplies; and
  - (C) description of the amount and purpose of use in the proposed receiving area for which water is needed.
- (2) the projected effect of the proposed groundwater transport on aquifer conditions, depletion, subsidence, or effects on existing permit holders or other groundwater users within the District, including:
- (A) a hydrogeological report by a registered professional in hydrogeology assessing the impact of the proposed well on existing wells and the aquifer from which withdrawals are proposed;
  - (B) information describing the projected effect of the proposed transporting of water on aquifer conditions, depletion, subsidence, or effects on existing permit holders or other groundwater users within the District;
  - (C) the names and addresses of the landowners and/or registration/permit holders and the location of their water wells, that are located within the spacing-requirement circumference of the applied-for well from which water to be transported to the proposed receiving area is to be produced; and
  - (D) any proposed plan of the applicant to mitigate adverse hydrogeologic impacts of the proposed transport of water from the District.
- (3) the approved Regional Water Plan and certified District Management Plan, including a description of how the proposed transport is addressed in any approved regional water plan(s) including the Region B Regional Water Plan and, the certified District Management Plan.
- (4) a technical description of the facilities to be used for transportation of water and a time schedule for any construction thereof, that will be used to establish the term of the transport permit, under Section 36.122 (i) of the Texas Water Code.

#### **9.4 Hearing and Permit Issuance**

- (1) Applications for transport permits are subject to the hearing procedures provided in Rule 13.
- (2) In determining whether to issue a permit to transfer groundwater out of the District, the Board shall be fair, impartial, and nondiscriminatory and shall consider the following factors when deciding whether to issue or impose conditions on drilling, operating, or transporting:

- (A) the availability of water in the District and in the proposed receiving area during the period for which the water supply is requested;
  - (B) the projected effect of the proposed transfer on aquifer conditions, depletion, subsidence, or effects on existing permit holders or other groundwater users within the District; and
  - (C) the approved Region B Regional Water Plan and certified District Management Plan.
- (3) The District may not deny a transport permit based on the fact that the applicant seeks to transport groundwater outside of the District, and may not impose more restrictive permit conditions on transporters than the District imposes on existing in-District users, unless:
- (A) such limitations apply to all subsequent new permit applications and permit amendment applications regardless of type or location of use;
  - (B) such limitations bear a reasonable relationship to the existing District Management Plan; and
  - (C) such limitations are reasonably necessary to protect existing use.
- (4) In addition to conditions provided by Section 36.1131, Texas Water Code, the permit to transport water out of the District shall specify:
- (A) the amount of water that may be transferred out of the District; and
  - (B) the period for which the water may be transferred, which shall be:
    - (a) at least three years if construction of a conveyance system has not been initiated prior to the issuance of the permit, and shall be automatically extended to the terms 30 years if construction of a conveyance system is begun before the expiration of the initial term; or
    - (b) at least 30 years if construction of a conveyance system has been initiated prior to the issuance of the permit.
- (5) Periodic Review
- (A) The District may periodically review the amount of water that may be transferred out of the District under a permit and may limit the amount if additional factors are considered relevant.
  - (B) After conducting its periodic review, more restrictive permit conditions may only be imposed if the factors in Subsection (c), above, are met.

## **9.5 Fees Included with Application**

An application processing fee, sufficient to cover all reasonable and necessary costs to the District, for processing the application will be charged. The application must be accompanied by the fee. If the fee is determined by the General Manager or the Board to be insufficient to cover anticipated costs of processing the application, the applicant may be required to post a deposit in an amount

determined by the General Manager or the Boards representative to be sufficient to cover anticipated processing cost. As costs are incurred by the District in processing the application, those costs may be reimbursed from funds deposited by the applicant. The District shall provide a monthly accounting of billings against the application processing deposit. Any funds remaining on deposit after the conclusion of application processing shall be returned to the applicant. If the applicant fails to deposit funds as required by the District, the application may be dismissed.

## **9.6 Export Fees**

- (a) The transport permit application must be accompanied by the application processing fee, inspection fee, or other fees as appropriate. Such fees must be paid before notice is published and mailed. Payment of all fees, including export fees, remain the responsibility of the permit holder.
- (b) The District may impose a reasonable fee or surcharge for an export fee using one of the following methods, after a public hearing:
  - (1) a fee negotiated between the District and the transporter; or
  - (2) a rate not to exceed 20 cents for each thousand gallons, in addition to the District's production fee.
    - (A) The maximum allowable rate the District may impose for an export fee or surcharge under (2) above, increases by three percent each calendar year.
    - (B) The District may use funds obtained from an increase in an export fee imposed under (A) above, after January 1, 2024, only for costs related to assessing and addressing impacts associated with groundwater development, including:
      - (i) maintaining operability of wells significantly affected by groundwater development, including wells located outside the District by interlocal contract;
      - (ii) developing or distributing alternative water supplies;
      - (iii) conducting aquifer monitoring, data collection, and aquifer science.
- (c) The administrative, production, or export fees may be used to pay the cost of operating the District, including for any purpose consistent with the District's approved management plan, including, without limitation, making grants, loans, or contractual payments to achieve, facilitate, or expedite reductions in groundwater pumping or the development or distribution of alternative water supplies or to maintain the operability of wells significantly affected by groundwater development to allow for the highest practicable level of groundwater production while achieving the desired future conditions established under Section 36.108.

## **RULE 10 -- REWORKING AND REPLACING A WELL**

### **10.1 Procedures**

- (1) An existing well may be reworked, re-drilled, or re-equipped in a manner that will not change the existing well status without obtaining a permit amendment.
- (2) A permit must be applied for and the Board will consider approving the permit, if a person wishes to increase the rate of production of an existing well to the point of increasing the

size of the column pipe or GPM rate by reworking, re-equipping, or re-drilling such well as described in this section.

- (3) A permit must be applied for and granted by the Board if a person wishes to replace an existing well with a replacement well.
- (4) A replacement well must be completed in the same aquifer as the well it replaces, and shall not be drilled, equipped, or completed so as to increase the rate of production of water from the well it replaces. A replacement well must not be located closer to any other well or authorized well site unless the new location complies with the minimum spacing requirements of Rule 6.1; otherwise, the well shall be considered a new well for which an application must be made.
- (5) The landowner or his/her agent must within 120 days of the issuance of the permit declare in writing to the District which one of these two wells is desired to be produced. If the landowner does not notify the District of his/her choice within the 120 days, then it will be conclusively presumed that the new well is the well he/she desires to retain. Immediately after determining which well is retained for production, the other well shall be:
  - (A) Properly equipped in such a manner that it cannot produce more than 25,000 gallons of water a day; or
  - (B) Closed in accordance with applicable state law and regulation Section 756.002, Texas Health and Safety Code;
  - (C) Violation of such Article is made punishable by a fine as provided by law.
- (6) In the event the application meets spacing and production requirements, and satisfies all requirements of these rules, the Board or General Manager may grant such application without further notice.
- (7) Emergency Authorization: Any person, who has a permit or Certificate of Registration from the District to operate a well, may apply to the District for emergency authorization to drill and operate a replacement well as set forth below. The emergency must meet all of the following conditions:
  - (A) The “emergency” must present an imminent threat to the public health and safety or to an agricultural activity, must be explained to the satisfaction of the District and include any documentation requested by the District.
  - (B) Neither the emergency authorization nor an applicant for a permit to drill the well has been denied.
  - (C) A completed application as required by these rules must be sent by telecopy or hand delivery within three business days after notifications of the emergency conditions is given.
  - (D) All application fees must be paid within seven days of the emergency notifications.
  - (E) Such other information as requested has been received by the District.

- (F) The well must comply with all the other provisions for a replacement well as specified in Rule 10.1.

## **RULE 11 -- WELL LOCATION AND COMPLETION**

### **11.1 Place of Drilling Well**

After an application for a well permit has been granted, if drilled, the well must meet the spacing requirements specified in Rule 6 and be drilled within 50 feet of the location specified in the permit, and not elsewhere. If the well should be commenced or drilled at a different location, the drilling or operation of such well may be enjoined by the Board pursuant to Chapter 36, Texas Water Code. As described in the Texas Water Well Drillers' Rules, all well drillers and persons having a well drilled, deepened, or otherwise altered shall adhere to the provisions of this Rule and Rule 11.2 prescribing the location of wells and proper completion of the wells under Rule 11.3.

### **11.2 Location of Domestic, Industrial, Injection, and Irrigation Wells**

With regard to potential sources of contamination, wells shall be located in conformity with the rules and regulations promulgated by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, as applicable.

### **11.3 Standards of Completion for Domestic, Industrial, Injection, and Irrigation Wells**

Water well drillers must indicate the method of completion performed on the Texas Department of Licensing and Registration Well Report form. Unless otherwise ordered by the Board, domestic, industrial, injection, and irrigation wells must be completed in accordance with all applicable state and local standards, including but not limited to 31 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 290 (TCEQ Water Hygiene Rules for Public Water Supply Systems) and 16 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 76 (Rules for Water Well Drillers and Water Well Pump Installers).

### **11.4 Completions**

- (1) The well owner shall have the continuing responsibility of insuring that a well does not allow commingling of undesirable water and fresh water, the unwanted loss of water through the well bore to other porous strata, and shall comply with the Water Well Drillers and Pump Installers Administrative Rules under 16 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 76.
- (2) If a well is allowing the commingling of undesirable water and fresh water or the unwanted loss of water, and the casing in the well cannot be removed and the well re-completed within the applicable rules, the casing in the well shall be perforated and cemented in a manner that will prevent the commingling or loss of water. If such a well has no casing, then the well shall be cased and cemented, or plugged in a manner that will prevent such

commingling or loss of water. The plugging of abandoned and/or deteriorated wells must comply with the Water Well Drillers and Pump Installers Administrative Rules under 16 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 76. The District may require a well plugging application prior to the well being plugged.

- (3) The Board may direct the permit holders to take steps to prevent the commingling of undesirable water and fresh water or the unwanted loss of water.

### **11.5 Requirement of Drillers Log, Casing, and Pump Data**

- (1) Records and Reports. Complete records shall be kept and reports thereof made to the District concerning the drilling, maximum production potential, equipping, and completion of all wells drilled. Such records shall include an accurate driller's log, any electric log which shall have been made, any additional data concerning the description of the well, its potential, hereinafter referred to as "maximum rate of production", and its actual equipment and rate of discharge permitted by said equipment as may be required by the Board. Such records shall be filed with the District Board within 60 days after completion of the well.
- (2) State Well Report. The well driller shall deliver either in person, by fax, email, or send by first-class mail a photocopy of the State Well Report to the District within 60 days from the completion or cessation of drilling, deepening, or otherwise altering a well.
- (3) Well Production. No person shall produce water from any well hereafter drilled and equipped within the District, except that necessary to the drilling and testing of such well and equipment, until the District has been furnished an accurate driller's log, any electric log which shall have been made, and a registration of the well correctly furnishing all available information required on the forms furnished by the District.

## **RULE 12 -- FEES AND DEPOSITS**

### **12.1 Application, Registration, and Other Fees**

The Board, by Order, shall establish a schedule of fees. The Board will attempt to set fees that do not unreasonably exceed the costs incurred by the District for performing the administrative function for which the fee is charged. District Monitor Wells are exempt from application, registration, and well log deposits. The General Manager shall exempt District monitoring wells from any other fee if it is determined that the assessment of the fee would result in the District charging itself a fee.

### **12.2 Inspection and Plan Review Fees**

The Board may, by Order, establish fees for: the inspection of wells, meters, or other inspection activities; plan reviews; special inspection services requested by other entities; or other similar services that require significant involvement of District personnel or its agents. Fees may be based on the amount of District time and involvement, number of wells, well production, well bore,

casing size, size of transporting facilities, or amounts of water transported.

### **12.3 Returned Check Fee**

The Board may, by Order, establish a fee for checks returned to the District for insufficient funds, account closed, signature missing, or any other problem causing a check to be returned by the District's depository.

### **12.4 Accounting Fee**

The Board may, by Order, establish a fee for permittee-requested accounting of pumpage reports, water use fee payments, or other accounting matters pertaining to the permittee's account which the District does not routinely maintain in its accounting of a permittee's records. Should a District error be discovered, the accounting fee, if any, will be fully refunded. Permittees may request one review of their account per fiscal year without charge.

### **12.5 Well Log Deposit**

A well log deposit must be filed with every application. All deposit funds shall be deposited in the District's escrow account. Driller's well logs must be submitted to the District within 60 days following surface completion of the well. The deposit will be refunded when the applicant's drillers' log is returned to the District's office. A portion of the deposit may be kept as a fee to cover field check expenses. The deposit and fee amount will be set by the Board. All unclaimed deposits are forfeited after one year.

## **RULE 13 -- HEARINGS**

### **13.1 Types of Hearings**

The District conducts two general types of hearings: (1) hearings involving permit matters, in which the rights, duties, or privileges of a party are determined after notice and an opportunity for an adjudicative hearing, and (2) rulemaking hearings involving matters of general applicability that implement, interpret, or prescribe the law or District policy, or that describe the procedure or practice requirements of the District. The District, however; may use its discretion to conduct a hearing on other relevant subject matters. Any matter designated for hearing before the Board may be referred by the Board for hearing before a Hearing Examiner, at the Board's discretion.

#### **(1) Permit Hearings:**

- (A) Permit Applications, Amendments, and Revocations:** The District will hold hearings on water well drilling permits, permits, transport permits, permit renewals or amendments, and permit revocations or suspensions. Hearings involving permit matters may be scheduled before the Board or a Hearing Examiner, at the Board's discretion. If no person notifies the General Manager of their intent to contest the application, and if the General Manager does not contest the application, the application will be presented directly to the Board for a final decision under Rule 13.3. The Board may grant the application, in whole or in part, or refer the

application to the Hearings Examiner for a hearing. If a Person requests a contested case hearing, the Board shall proceed under Rules 13.

(B) Hearings on Motions for Rehearing: Motions for rehearing will be heard by the Board pursuant to Rule 13.5 (17).

**(2) Rulemaking Hearings:**

District Management Plan: as required by Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code, the Board will hold hearings to consider amendments to the District's Management Plan and District rules pursuant to Rule 13.7.

**(3) Other Matters:**

A public hearing may be held on any matter within the jurisdiction of the Board if the Board determines a hearing to be in the public interest, or necessary to effectively carry out the duties and responsibilities of the District.

**13.2 Notice and Scheduling of Permit-Related Hearings**

(1) The District shall promptly consider and act on each administratively complete application for a permit. If, within 60 days after the date an administratively complete application is submitted, the application has not been acted on or set for a hearing on a specific date, the applicant may petition the District court of the county where the land is located for a writ of mandamus to compel the District to act on the application or set a date for a hearing on the application, as appropriate.

Applications that are not administratively complete will be sent back to the applicant with a list of needed information. If the District does not receive an administratively complete application within 60 days of the District sending the incomplete application notice, then the District may consider the application expired. If an incomplete application expires, the applicant will be required to submit a new application and the deadlines under this Rule will begin again.

For applications requiring a hearing, the initial hearing shall be held within 35 days after the setting of the date, and the District shall act on the application within 60 days after the date the final hearing on the application is concluded. An administratively complete application requires information set forth in accordance with Sections 36.113, 36.1131, and these rules.

**(2) Notice of permit hearing:**

(A) If the general manager or board schedules a public hearing on an application for a permit or permit amendment for which a hearing is required, the General Manager or Board shall give notice of the public hearing as provided by this section.

(B) The notice must include:

- (a) the name of the applicant;
- (b) the address or approximate location of the well or proposed well;

- (c) a brief explanation of the proposed permit or permit amendment, including any requested amount of groundwater, the purpose of the proposed use, and any change in use;
- (d) the time, date, and location of the public hearing; and
- (e) any other information the General Manager or Board considers relevant and appropriate.

(C) Not later than the 10th day before the date of a hearing, the General Manager or Board shall:

- (a) post notice in a place readily accessible to the public at the district office;
- (b) provide notice to the County Clerk of each county in the district; and
- (c) provide notice by:
  - (i) regular mail to the applicant;
  - (ii) regular mail, facsimile, or electronic mail to any person who has requested notice under Rule 13.2 (D); and
  - (iii) regular mail to any other person entitled to receive notice under the rules of the District.

(D) A person may request notice from the District of a public hearing on a permit or a permit amendment application. The request must be in writing and is effective for the remainder of the calendar year in which the request is received by the District. To receive notice of a public hearing in a later year, a person must submit a new request. An affidavit of an officer or employee of the District establishing attempted service by first class mail, facsimile, or e-mail to the person in accordance with the information provided by the person is proof that notice was provided by the district.

(E) Failure to provide notice under 13.2 (C) (c) (ii) does not invalidate an action taken by the District at the hearing.

(3) The General Manager may schedule as many applications at one hearing as the General Manager deems necessary. The District may require each person who participates in a public hearing to submit a hearing registration form stating:

- (A) the person's name;
- (B) the person's address; and
- (C) whom the person represents, if the person is not there in the person's individual capacity. Hearings will be held in accordance with Rule 13.

- (4) Hearings may be scheduled during the District's regular business hours, Monday through Friday of each week, except District holidays. All permit hearings will be held at the District Office. However, the Board may change or schedule additional dates, times, and places for permit hearings by resolution adopted at a regular Board meeting. The General Manager is instructed by the Board to schedule hearings involving permit matters at such dates, times, and places set forth above for permit hearings. Other hearings will be scheduled at the dates, times, and locations set at a regular Board meeting.
- (5) The District may assess fees to permit applicants for administrative acts of the District relating to a permit application. Fees set by the District may not unreasonably exceed the cost to the District of performing the administrative function for which the fee is charged.

### **13.3 Board Action; Contested Case Hearing Request; Preliminary Hearing**

- (1) The board may take action on any uncontested application at a properly noticed public meeting held at any time after the public hearing at which the application is scheduled to be heard. The board may issue a written order to:
  - (A) grant the application;
  - (B) grant the application with special conditions; or
  - (C) deny the application.
- (2) The board shall schedule a preliminary hearing to hear a request for a contested case hearing filed in accordance with rules adopted under Section 36.415. The preliminary hearing may be conducted by:
  - (A) a quorum of the board;
  - (B) an individual to whom the board has delegated in writing the responsibility to preside as a Hearing Examiner over the hearing or matters related to the hearing; or
  - (C) the State Office of Administrative Hearings under Section 36.416.
- (3) Following a preliminary hearing, the Board shall determine whether any person requesting the contested case hearing has standing to make that request and whether a justiciable issue related to the application has been raised. If the Board determines that no person who requested a contested case hearing had standing or that no justiciable issues were raised, the Board may take any action authorized under Subsection (a).

An applicant may, not later than the 20<sup>th</sup> day after the date the board issues an order granting the application, demand a contested case hearing if the order:

- (A) includes special conditions that were not part of the application as finally submitted;
- or

(B) grants a maximum amount of groundwater production that is less than the amount requested in the application.

### **13.4 Determination of Contested Status of Permit Hearings**

#### **(1) Written Notice of Intent to Contest.**

Any person who intends to protest a permit application and request a contested case hearing must provide written notice of the request to the District prior to the day of the public hearing and possible board action on the application.

#### **(2) Participation in a Contested Permit Hearing.**

The Board or Hearing Examiner may limit participation in a hearing on a contested application to persons who have a personal justiciable interest related to a legal right, duty, privilege, power, or economic interest that is within the District's regulatory authority and affected by a permit or permit amendment application, not including persons who have an interest common to members of the public.

#### **(3) Informal Hearings.**

Permit hearings may be conducted informally when, in the judgment of the Board or Hearing Examiner, the conduct of a proceeding under informal procedures will save time or cost to the parties, lead to a negotiated or agreed settlement of facts or issues in controversy, and not prejudice the rights of any party.

#### **(4) Agreement of Parties.**

If, during an informal proceeding, all parties reach a negotiated or agreed settlement that, in the judgment of the Board or Hearing Examiner, settles the facts or issues in controversy, the proceeding will be considered an uncontested case and the Board or Hearing Examiner will summarize the evidence and make findings of fact and conclusions of law based on the existing record and any other evidence submitted by the parties at the hearing.

#### **(5) Decision to Proceed as Uncontested or Contested Case.**

If the parties do not reach a negotiated or agreed settlement of the facts and issues in controversy or if any party contests a staff recommendation, and the Board or Hearing Examiner determines these issues will require extensive discovery proceedings, the Board or Hearing Examiner will declare the case to be contested and convene a pre-hearing conference as set forth in Rule 13.4 and 13.5. The Board or Hearing Examiner may also recommend issuance of a temporary permit for a period not to exceed four months, with any special provisions the Board or Hearing Examiner deems necessary, for the purpose of completing the contested case process. Any case not declared a contested case under this provision is an uncontested case and the Board or Hearing Examiner will summarize the evidence, make findings of fact and conclusions of law, and make appropriate recommendations to the Board.

### **13.5 General Permit-Related Hearing Procedures**

#### **(1) A hearing must be conducted by:**

- (A) a quorum of the Board; or
  - (B) an individual to whom the board has delegated in writing the responsibility to preside as a Hearings Examiner over the hearing or matters related to the hearing; or
  - (C) the State Office of Administrative Hearings under Section 36.416 of the Texas Water Code.
- (2) Except as provided by Subsection (4), below, the Board President or the Hearings Examiner shall serve as the presiding officer at the hearing.
- (3) If the hearing is conducted by a quorum of the Board and the Board President is not present, the Directors conducting the hearing may select a Director to serve as the presiding officer.
- (4) Hearings under the State Office of Administrative Hearings
- (A) If the District contracts with the State Office of Administrative Hearings to conduct a hearing, the hearing shall be conducted as provided by Subchapters C, D, and F, Chapter 2001, Government Code. The District may adopt rules for a hearing conducted under this section that are consistent with the procedural rules of the State Office of Administrative Hearings.
  - (B) If requested by the applicant or other party to a contested case, the District shall contract with the State Office of Administrative Hearings to conduct the hearing. The applicant or other party must request the hearing before the State Office of Administrative Hearings not later than the 14th day before the date the evidentiary hearing is scheduled to begin. The hearing must be held in Travis County, at the District office, or regular meeting location of the board, unless the board provides a different location for hearings to be held. The District shall choose the location.
  - (C) The party requesting the hearing before the State Office of Administrative Hearings shall pay all costs associated with the contract for the hearing, and shall deposit with the District an amount sufficient to pay the contract amount before the hearing begins. At the conclusion of the hearing, the District shall refund any excess money to the paying party. All other costs may be assessed as authorized by this chapter or District rules.
  - (D) An administrative law judge who conducts a contested case hearing shall consider applicable district rules or policies in conducting the hearing, but the district deciding the case may not supervise the administrative law judge.
  - (E) The District shall provide the administrative law judge with a written statement of applicable rules or policies.

(F) The District may not attempt to influence the finding of facts or the administrative law judge's application of the law in a contested case except by proper evidence and legal argument.

(5) Final Decision; Contested Case Hearings.

(A) In a proceeding for a permit application or amendment in which the District has contracted with the State Office of Administrative Hearings for a contested case hearing, the board has the authority to make a final decision on consideration of a proposal for decision issued by an administrative law judge consistent with.

(B) The board may change a finding of fact or conclusion of law made by the administrative law judge, or may vacate or modify an order issued by the administrative judge, only if the board determines:

(a) that the administrative law judge did not properly apply or interpret applicable law, district rules, written policies provided under Section 36.416(e), or prior administrative decisions;

(b) that a prior administrative decision on which the administrative law judge relied is incorrect or should be changed; or

(c) that a technical error in a finding of fact should be changed.

(C) A final decision issued by the Board under this section must be in writing and must either adopt the proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law as proposed by the administrative law judge or include revised findings of fact and conclusions of law consistent with (B) above.

(D) The Board shall issue a final decision under this section not later than the 180th day after the date of receipt of the final proposal for decision from the State Office of Administrative Hearings. The deadline may be extended if all parties agree to the extension.

(E) If a motion for rehearing is filed and granted by a Board under Rule 13.5(17), the Board shall make a final decision on the application not later than the 90th day after the date of the decision by the Board that was subject to the motion for rehearing.

(F) The Board is considered to have adopted a final proposal for decision of the administrative law judge as a final order on the 181st day after the date the administrative law judge issued the final proposal for decision if the Board has not issued a final decision by:

(a) adopting the findings of fact and conclusions of law as proposed by the administrative law judge; or

(b) issuing revised findings of fact and conclusions of law as provided by (B) above.

(G) A proposal for decision adopted under (F) above is final, immediately appealable,

and not subject to a request for rehearing.

(6) The presiding officer may:

(A) convene the hearing at the time and place specified in the notice;

(B) set any necessary additional hearing dates;

(C) designate the parties regarding a contested application;

(D) establish the order for presentation of evidence;

(E) administer oaths to all persons presenting testimony;

(F) examine persons presenting testimony;

(G) ensure that information and testimony are introduced as conveniently and expeditiously as possible without prejudicing the rights of any party;

(H) prescribe reasonable time limits for testimony and the presentation of evidence; and

(I) exercise the procedural rules adopted herein; and

(J) determine how to apportion among the parties the costs related to:

(a) a contract for the services of a presiding officer; and

(b) the preparation of the official hearing record.

(7) The District may allow any person registered to speak, including the general manager or a district employee, to provide comments at a hearing on an uncontested application, consistent with these rules.

(8) The presiding officer may allow testimony to be submitted in writing and may require that written testimony be sworn to. On the motion of a party to the hearing, the presiding officer may exclude written testimony if the person who submits the testimony is not available for cross-examination by phone, a deposition before the hearing, or other reasonable means.

(9) If the board has not acted on the application, the presiding officer may allow a person who testifies at the hearing to supplement the testimony given at the hearing by filing additional written materials with the presiding officer not later than the 10th day after the date of the hearing. A person who files additional written material with the presiding officer under this subsection must also provide the material, not later than the 10th day after the date of the hearing, to any person who provided comments on an uncontested application or any party to a contested hearing. A person who receives additional written material under this subsection may file a response to the material with the presiding officer not later than the 10th day after the date the material was received.

(10) The District may authorize the presiding officer, at the presiding officer's discretion, to issue an order at any time before the board takes final actions on a permit application that:

- (A) refers parties to a contested hearing to an alternative dispute resolution procedure on any matter at issue in the hearing;
- (B) determines how the costs of the procedure shall be apportioned among the parties; and
- (C) appoints an impartial third party as provided by Section 2009.053, Government Code, to facilitate that procedure.

**(11) Hearing Registration:**

The District may require each person who participates in a hearing to submit a hearing registration form stating:

- (A) the person's name;
- (B) the person's address; and
- (C) whom the person represents, if the person is not there in the person's individual capacity.

**(12) Evidence:**

- (A) The presiding officer shall admit evidence that is relevant to an issue at the hearing.
- (B) The presiding officer may exclude evidence that is irrelevant, immaterial, or unduly repetitious.

**(13) Recording:**

- (A) Except as provided by Subsection (b), the presiding officer shall prepare and keep a record of each hearing in the form of an audio, video recording, or a court reporter transcription. On the request of a party to a contested hearing, the presiding officer shall have the hearing transcribed by a court reporter. The presiding officer may assess any court reporter transcription costs against the party that requested the transcription or among the parties to the hearing. Except as provided by this subsection, the presiding officer may exclude a party from further participation in a hearing for failure to pay in a timely manner costs assessed against that party under this subsection. The presiding officer may not exclude a party from further participation in a hearing as provided by this subsection if the parties have agreed that the costs assessed against that party will be paid by another party.
- (B) If a hearing is uncontested, the presiding officer may substitute minutes or its report under subsection (m), below, for a method of recording the hearing.

**(14) Continuance:**

The presiding officer may continue a hearing from time to time and from place to place without providing notice under Section 13.2(b). If the presiding officer continues a hearing without announcing at the hearing the time, date, and location of the continued hearing, the presiding officer must provide notice of the continued hearing by regular mail to the parties. A continuance may not exceed the time limit for the issuance of a final decision under (5) above.

**(15) Proposal for Decision:**

(A) Except as provided by Subsection (m)(5), below, the presiding officer shall submit a report to the board not later than the 30th day after the date the evidentiary hearing is concluded.

(B) The proposal for decision must include:

(a) a summary of the subject matter of the hearing;

(b) a summary of the evidence or public comments received; and

(c) the presiding officer's recommendations for board action on the subject matter of the hearing.

(C) The presiding officer or general manager shall provide a copy of the proposal for decision to:

(a) the applicant; and

(b) each designated party.

(D) A party may submit to the board written exceptions to the proposal for decision.

(E) If the hearing was conducted by a quorum of the board and if the presiding officer prepared a record of the hearing as provided by Subsection (k)(1), herein, the presiding officer shall determine whether to prepare and submit a report to the board under this section.

(F) The board shall consider the proposal for decision at a final hearing. Additional evidence may not be presented during a final hearing. The parties may present oral argument at a final hearing to summarize the evidence, present legal argument, or argue an exception to the proposal for decision. A final hearing may be continued under subsection (l).

**(16) Board Action:**

(A) The board shall act on a permit or permit amendment application not later than the 60 days after the date the final hearing on the application is concluded. The

Board shall ensure a decision on a permit or permit amendment application is timely rendered in accordance with the provisions set forth in Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code. In deciding whether or not to issue a permit to drill and produce groundwater and/or transport permit, and in setting the terms of the permit, the board will consider the Water Code Chapter 36, District Act, District's rules and Certified Management Plan, whether the application is accompanied by prescribed fees, and all other relevant factors.

- (B) For the purposes of making a final decision on a permit or permit amendment application by the Board, a concurrence of a majority of the directors eligible to vote is sufficient for taking an action on the application.

**(17) Requests for Rehearing and or Finding and Conclusions:**

- (A) An applicant in a contested or uncontested hearing on an application or a party to may administratively appeal a decision of the board on a permit or permit amendment application by making a request in writing to the Board. A party seeking to appeal a decision by the Board must request written findings of fact and conclusions of law not later than 20 days after the date of the board's decision unless the Board issued findings of fact and conclusions of law as part of the final decision.
- (B) On receipt of a timely written request, the board shall make written findings of fact and conclusions of law regarding a decision of the board on a permit or permit amendment application. The board shall provide certified copies of the findings of fact and conclusions of law to the person who requested them, and to each designated party, not later than 35 days after the date the board receives the request. A party to a contested hearing may request a rehearing not later than 20 days after the date the board issues the findings of fact and conclusions of law.
- (C) A request for rehearing must be filed in the District office and must state the grounds for the request. If the original hearing was a contested hearing, the party requesting a rehearing must provide copies of the request to all parties to the hearing.
- (D) If the board grants a request for rehearing, the board shall schedule the rehearing no later than 45 days after the date the request is granted.
- (E) Failure of the board to grant or deny a request for rehearing before 91 days after the date the request is submitted is a denial of the request.
- (F) The Board shall consolidate requests for rehearing filed by multiple parties to the contested case hearing, but only one rehearing may be considered per matter.

**(18) Decision; When Final:**

- (A) A decision by the board on a permit or permit amendment application is final:
  - (a) if a request for rehearing is not filed on time, on the expiration of the period

for filing a request for rehearing; or

(b) if a request for rehearing is filed on time, on the date:

i. the board denies the request for rehearing; or

ii. the board renders a written decision after rehearing.

(B) Except as provided by Subsection (3), below, an applicant or a party to a contested hearing may file a suit against the District under Section 36.251 of the Texas Water Code to appeal a decision on a permit or permit amendment application no later than 60 days after the date on which the decision becomes final.

(C) An applicant or a party to a contested hearing may not file suit against the District under Section 36.251 if a request for rehearing was not filed on time.

**(19) Consolidated Hearing on Applications:**

(A) Except as provided by Subsection (2), below, the District shall process applications from a single applicant under consolidated notice and hearing procedures on written request by the applicant if the District requires a separate permit or permit amendment application for:

(a) drilling, equipping, operating, or completing a well or substantially altering the size of a well or well pump under Section 36.113, Texas Water Code;

(b) the spacing of water wells or the production of groundwater under Section 36.116, Texas Water Code; or

(c) transferring groundwater out of the District under Section 36.122, Texas Water Code.

(B) The District is not required to use consolidated notice and hearing procedures to process separate permit or permit amendment applications from a single applicant if the board cannot adequately evaluate one application until it has acted on another application.

**(20) Hearings Conducted by State Office of Administrative Hearings:**

If the District contracts with the State Office of Administrative Hearings to conduct a hearing, the hearing shall be conducted as provided by Subchapters C, D, and F, Chapter 2001, Government Code.

**(21) Alternative Dispute Resolution:**

The District uses alternative dispute resolution procedures in the manner provided for governmental bodies under Chapter 2009, Government Code.

## **13.6. Additional Contested Permit Hearings Procedures**

### **(1) Pre-hearing Conference:**

A pre-hearing conference may be held to consider any matter that may expedite the contested case hearing or otherwise facilitate the hearing process.

#### **(A) Matters Considered:**

Matters that may be considered at a pre-hearing conference include, but are not limited to:

- (a) the designation of parties;
- (b) the formulation and simplification of issues;
- (c) the necessity or desirability of amending applications or other pleadings;
- (d) the possibility of making admissions or stipulations;
- (e) the scheduling of discovery;
- (f) the identification of and specification of the number of witnesses;
- (g) the filing and exchange of prepared testimony and exhibits; and
- (h) the procedure at the hearing.

#### **(B) Notice:**

A pre-hearing conference may be held at a date, time, and place stated in a separate notice, and may be continued from time to time and place to place, at the discretion of the board or hearing examiner.

### **(2) Designation of Parties:**

Parties to a hearing will be designated on the first day of hearing or at such other time as the board or hearing examiner determines. The board of directors and any person specifically named in a matter are automatically designated parties. Persons other than the automatic parties must, in order to be admitted as a party, appear at the proceeding in person or by representative and seek to be designated. The board or hearing examiner may limit participation in a hearing on a contested application to persons who have a personal justiciable interest related to a legal right, duty, privilege, power, or economic interest that is within the District's regulatory authority and affected by a permit or permit amendment application, not including persons who have an interest common to members of the public. After parties are designated, no other person may be admitted as a party unless, in the judgment of the board or hearing examiner, there exists good cause and the hearing will not be unreasonably delayed.

### **(3) Rights of Designated Parties:**

Subject to the direction and orders of the board or hearing examiner, parties have the right to conduct discovery, present a direct case, cross-examine witnesses, make oral and written arguments, obtain copies of all documents filed in the proceeding, receive copies of all notices issued by the District concerning the proceeding, and otherwise fully participate in the proceeding.

**(4) Persons Not Designated Parties:**

At the discretion of the board or hearing examiner, persons not designated as parties to a proceeding may submit comments or statements, orally or in writing. Comments or statements submitted by non-parties may be included in the record, but may not be considered by the board or hearing examiner as evidence.

**(5) Furnishing Copies of Pleadings:**

After parties have been designated, a copy of every pleading, request, motion, or reply filed in the proceeding must be provided by the author to every other party or party's representative. A certification of this fact must accompany the original instrument when filed with the District. Failure to provide copies may be grounds for withholding consideration of the pleading or the matters set forth therein.

**(6) Interpreters for Deaf Parties and Witnesses:**

If a party or subpoenaed witness in a contested case is deaf, the District must provide an interpreter whose qualifications are approved by the State Commission for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired to interpret the proceedings for that person. "Deaf person" means a person who has a hearing impairment, whether or not the person also has a speech impairment that inhibits the person's comprehension of the proceedings or communication with others.

**(7) Agreements to be in Writing:**

No agreement between parties or their representatives affecting any pending matter will be considered by the board or hearing examiner unless it is in writing, signed, and filed as part of the record, or unless it is announced at the hearing and entered as in the record.

**(8) Discovery:**

Discovery will be conducted upon such terms and conditions, and at such times and places, as directed by the board or hearing examiner. Unless specifically modified by these rules or by order of the board or hearing examiner, discovery will be governed by, and subject to the limitations set forth in, the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure. In addition to the forms of discovery authorized under the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, the parties may exchange informal requests for information, either by agreement or by order of the board or hearing examiner.

**(9) Discovery Sanctions:**

If the board or hearing examiner finds a party is abusing the discovery process in seeking, responding to, or resisting discovery, the board or hearing examiner may:

- (A) suspend processing of the application for a permit if the applicant is the offending party;
- (B) disallow any further discovery of any kind or a particular kind by the offending party;
- (C) rule that particular facts be regarded as established against the offending party for the purposes of the proceeding, in accordance with the claim of the party obtaining the discovery ruling;
- (D) limit the offending party's participation in the proceeding;
- (E) disallow the offending party's presentation of evidence on issues that were the subject of the discovery request; and
- (F) recommend to the board that the hearing be dismissed with or without prejudice.

**(10) Ex Parte Communications:**

The board and hearing examiner, if appointed, may not communicate, directly or indirectly, in connection with any issue of fact or law with any agency, person, party, or representative, except with notice and opportunity for all parties to participate. This provision does not prevent communications with staff not directly involved in the hearing to utilize the special skills and knowledge of the agency in evaluating the evidence.

**(11) Compelling Testimony; Swearing Witnesses and Subpoena Power:**

The board or hearing examiner may compel the testimony of any person that is necessary, helpful, or appropriate to the hearing. The board or hearing examiner will administer the oath in a manner calculated to impress the witness with the importance and solemnity of the promise to adhere to the truth. The board or hearing examiner may issue subpoenas to compel the testimony of any person and the production of books, papers, documents, or tangible things, in the manner provided in the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure.

**(12) Evidence:**

Except as modified by these rules, the Texas Rules of Civil Evidence govern the admissibility and introduction of evidence; however, evidence not admissible under the Texas Rules of Civil Evidence may be admitted if it is of the type commonly relied upon by reasonably prudent persons in the conduct of their affairs. In addition, evidence may be stipulated by agreement of all parties.

**(13) Written Testimony:**

When a proceeding will be expedited and the interest of the parties will not be prejudiced

substantially, testimony may be received in written form. The written testimony of a witness, either in narrative or question and answer form, may be admitted into evidence upon the witness being sworn and identifying the testimony as a true and accurate record of what the testimony would be if given orally. The witness will be subject to clarifying questions and to cross-examination, and the prepared testimony will be subject to objection.

**(14) Requirements for Exhibits:**

Exhibits of a documentary character must be sized to not unduly encumber the files and records of the District. All exhibits must be numbered and, except for maps and drawings, may not exceed 8-1/2 by 11 inches in size.

**(15) Abstracts of Documents:**

When documents are numerous, the board or hearing examiner may receive in evidence only those that are representative, and may require the abstracting of relevant data from the documents and the presentation of the abstracts in the form of an exhibit. Parties have the right to examine the documents from which the abstracts are made.

**(16) Introduction and Copies of Exhibits:**

Each exhibit offered must be tendered for identification and placed in the record. Copies must be furnished to the board or hearing examiner and to each of the parties, unless the board or hearing examiner rules otherwise.

**(17) Excluding Exhibits:**

In the event an exhibit has been identified, objected to, and excluded it may be withdrawn by the offering party. If withdrawn, the exhibit will be returned and the offering party waives all objections to the exclusion of the exhibit. If not withdrawn, the exhibit will be included in the record for the purpose of preserving the objection to excluding the exhibit.

**(18) Official Notice:**

The board or hearing examiner may take official notice of all facts judicially cognizable. In addition, official notice may be taken of generally recognized facts within the area of the District's specialized knowledge.

**(19) Documents in District Files:**

Extrinsic evidence of authenticity is not required as a condition precedent to admissibility of documents maintained in the files and records of the District.

**(20) Oral Argument:**

At the discretion of the board or hearing examiner, oral arguments may be heard at the conclusion of the presentation of evidence. Reasonable time limits may be prescribed. The

board or hearing examiner may require or accept written briefs in lieu of, or in addition to, oral arguments. When the matter is presented to the board for final decision, further oral arguments may be heard by the board.

### **13.7 Rulemaking Hearing Procedures**

#### **(1) General Procedures for Amending District Rules.**

The board may, following notice and hearing, amend these rules or adopt new rules from time to time. The presiding officer will conduct the rulemaking hearing in the manner the presiding officer determines most appropriate to obtain all relevant information pertaining to the subject of the hearing as conveniently, inexpensively, and expeditiously as possible. The presiding officer may follow the guidelines of “Robert’s Rules of Order,” 10<sup>th</sup> Edition, General Henry M. Robert, 2000 Revised Edition, or as amended.

#### **(2) Notice of a Rulemaking Hearing.**

(A) Not later than 20 days before the date of a rulemaking hearing, the general manager or board shall:

- (a) post notice in a place readily accessible to the public at the District office;
- (b) provide notice to the county clerk of each county in the District;
- (c) publish notice in one or more newspapers of general circulation in the county or counties in which the District is located;
- (d) provide notice by mail, facsimile, or electronic mail to any person who has requested notice under Subsection (6), below; and
- (e) make available a copy of all proposed rules at a place accessible to the public during normal business hours and, if the District has a website, post an electronic copy on a generally accessible Internet site.

(B) The notice provided under Subsection (1), above, must include:

- (a) the time, date, and location of the rulemaking hearing;
- (b) a brief explanation of the subject of the rulemaking hearing; and
- (c) a location or Internet site at which a copy of the proposed rules may be reviewed or copied.

(C) The presiding officer shall conduct a rulemaking hearing in the manner the presiding officer determines to be most appropriate to obtain information and comments relating to the proposed rule as conveniently and expeditiously as possible. Comments may be submitted orally at the hearing or in writing. The presiding officer may hold the record open for a specified period after the conclusion of the hearing to receive additional written comments.

- (D) The District may require each person who participates in a rulemaking hearing to submit a hearing registration form stating:
  - (a) the person's name;
  - (b) the person's address; and
  - (c) whom the person represents, if the person is not at the hearing in the person's individual capacity.
- (E) The presiding officer shall prepare and keep a record of each rulemaking hearing in the form of an audio or video recording or a court reporter transcription
- (F) A person may submit to the District a written request for notice of a rulemaking hearing. A request is effective for the remainder of the calendar year in which the request is received by the District. To receive notice of a rulemaking hearing in a later year, a person must submit a new request. An affidavit of an officer or employee of the District establishing attempted service by first class mail, facsimile, or e-mail to the person in accordance with the information provided by the person is proof that notice was provided by the district.
- (G) The District may use an informal conference or consultation to obtain the opinions and advice of interested persons about contemplated rules and may appoint advisory committees of experts, interested persons, or public representatives to advise the District about contemplated rules.
- (H) Failure to provide notice under Subsection (b)(1)(D), above, does not invalidate an action taken by the District at a rulemaking hearing.

(3) Emergency Rules.

- (A) A board may adopt an emergency rule without prior notice or hearing, or with an abbreviated notice and hearing, if the board:
  - (a) finds that a substantial likelihood of imminent peril to the public health, safety, or welfare, or requirement of state or federal law, requires adoption of a rule on less than 20 days' notice; and
  - (b) prepares a written statement of the reasons for its finding under Subdivision (a), above.
- (B) Except as provided by Subsection (3), herein, a rule adopted under this section may not be effective for longer than 90 days.
- (C) If notice of a hearing on the final rule is given later than 90 days after the date the rule is adopted, the rule is effective for an additional 90 days.
- (D) A rule adopted under this section must be adopted at a meeting held as provided

by Chapter 551, Government Code.

(4) Submission of Documents.

Any interested person may submit written statements, protests or comments, briefs, affidavits, exhibits, technical reports, or other documents relating to the subject of the hearing. Such documents must be submitted no later than the time of the hearing, as stated in the notice of hearing; provided; however, that the presiding officer may grant additional time for the submission of documents.

(5) Oral Presentations.

Any person desiring to testify on the subject of the hearing must so indicate on the registration form provided at the hearing. The presiding officer establishes the order of testimony and may limit the number of times a person may speak, the time period for oral presentations, and the time period for raising questions. In addition, the presiding officer may limit or exclude cumulative, irrelevant, or unduly repetitious presentations.

(6) Conclusion of the Hearing; Closing the Record; Hearing Examiner's Report.

At the conclusion of the testimony, and after the receipt of all documents, the presiding officer may either close the record, or keep it open to allow the submission of additional information. If the presiding officer is a hearing examiner, the hearing examiner must, after the record is closed, prepare a report to the board. The report must include a summary of the subject of the hearing and the public comments received, together with the hearing examiner's recommendations for action. Upon completion and issuance of the hearing examiner's report, a copy must be submitted to the board. Any interested person who requests in writing will be notified when the report is completed and furnished a copy of the report.

(7) Exceptions to the Hearing Examiner's Report; Reopening the Record.

Any interested person may make exceptions to the hearing examiner's report, and the board may reopen the record, in the manner prescribed in Rule 13.6(b).

(8) Decision; Appeal regarding District Rules.

(A) Board Action.

After the record is closed and the matter is submitted to the board, the board may then take the matter under advisement, continue it from day to day, reopen or rest the matter, refuse the action sought or grant the same in whole or part, or take any other appropriate action. The board action takes effect at the conclusion of the meeting and is not affected by a motion for rehearing.

(B) Requests for Rehearing

Any decision of the board on a matter may be appealed by requesting a rehearing

before the board within 20 calendar days of the board's decision. Rehearing request must be filed at the District Office in writing, and must state clear and concise grounds for the request. Such a rehearing request is mandatory with respect to any decision or action of the board before any appeal may be brought. The board's decision is final if no request for rehearing is made within the specified time, or upon the board's denial of the request for rehearing, or upon rendering a decision after rehearing. If the rehearing request is granted by the board, the date of the rehearing will be within 45 calendar days thereafter, unless otherwise agreed to by the parties to the proceeding. The failure of the board to grant or deny the request for rehearing within 90 calendar days of submission will be deemed to be a denial of the request.

(9) Petition to Change Rules

- (A) A person with a real property interest in groundwater may petition the District where the property that gives rise to the real property interest is located to adopt a rule or modify a rule adopted under this chapter.
- (B) Petitions must be submitted in writing to the District office and must comply with the following requirements:
  - (a) each rule requested must be submitted by separate petition;
  - (b) each petition must be signed and state the name and address of each person signing the petition;
  - (c) each petition must include:
    - (1) a brief description of the petitioner's real property interest in groundwater in the District;
    - (2) a brief explanation of the proposed rule;
    - (3) the text of the proposed rule prepared in a manner to indicate the words to be added or deleted from the text of the current rule, if any; and
    - (4) an allegation of injury or inequity that could result from the failure to adopt the proposed rule.
- (C) The General Manager may reject any petition for failure to comply with the requirements of Subsection (B) of this section and shall provide notice to the petitioner of the reason for the rejection.
- (D) Not later than the 90th day after the date the District receives the petition, the District shall:
  - (a) deny the petition and provide an explanation for the denial; or
  - (b) engage in rulemaking consistent with the granted petition.
- (E) Nothing in this section may be construed to create a private cause of action for a decision to accept or deny a petition filed under this section.

## **RULE 14 -- INVESTIGATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT**

### **14.1 Notice and Access to Property**

Board members and district agents, engineers, attorneys, operators, and employees are entitled to access to all property within the District to carry out technical and other investigations necessary to the implementation of the District rules. Prior to entering upon property for the purpose of conducting an investigation, the person seeking access must give notice in writing or in person or by telephone to the owner, lessee, or operator, agent, or employee of the well owner or lessee, as determined by information contained in the application or other information on file with the District. Notice is not required if prior permission is granted to enter without notice. Inhibiting or prohibiting access to any board member or district agents, engineers, attorneys, operators, and employees who are attempting to conduct an investigation under the District rules constitutes a violation and subjects the person who is inhibiting or prohibiting access, as well as any other person who authorizes or allows such action, to the penalties set forth in the Texas Water Code Chapter 36.102.

### **14.2 Conduct of Investigation**

Investigations or inspections that require entrance upon property must be conducted at reasonable times, and must be consistent with the establishment's rules and regulations concerning safety, internal security, and fire protection. The persons conducting such investigations must identify themselves and present credentials upon request of the owner, lessee, operator, or person in charge of the well.

### **14.3 Rule Enforcement**

If it appears that a person has violated, is violating, or is threatening to violate any provision of the District Act, Water Code Chapter 36, District permit, or District rules the board of directors may assess a civil penalty or file for an injunction or other appropriate remedy in a court of competent jurisdiction, as authorized by Chapter 36.102 of the Texas Water Code. The general manager has the authority to require remediation of well construction that violates District and/or Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation rules within a designated time period, no more than six months, or require plugging or capping of the well, if the well construction is not appropriately remediated.

### **14.4 Abandoned or deteriorated well**

A well identified as an abandoned or deteriorated well, or a borehole, must be plugged, capped, or re-completed in accordance with the requirements of the District and of any statewide law, agency, or political subdivision having jurisdiction including, but not limited to, the Texas Water Well Drillers Act, and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

- (1) The District may require a well to be capped to prevent waste, pollution, or further deterioration of a well casing. The well must remain capped until such time as the conditions that led to the capping requirement are eliminated. If well pump equipment is removed from a well and the well will be re-equipped at a later date the well must be capped; provided the casing is not in a deteriorated condition that would permit comingling of water strata, in which case the well must be plugged. The cap must be capable of sustaining a weight of at least 400 pounds, and must be constructed with a water tight seal to prevent entrance of surface pollutants into the well itself, either through the well bore or well casing.

- (2) A deteriorated or abandoned well must be plugged in accordance with the Texas Department of License and Regulation, Water Well Drillers and Pump Installers Rules (16 TAC, Chapter 76). It is the responsibility of the landowner to plug a well to prevent pollution of the underground water, and to prevent injury to persons and animals. Registration of the well is required prior to or in conjunction with well plugging.
- (A) When an open or uncovered, deteriorated or abandoned well is found by district personnel or brought to the District's attention by a constituent, a letter will be sent to the owner of the property upon which well exists notifying the property owner of his responsibility to cap or plug the well. The property owner will also be provided with an information brochure on the proper closing of abandoned wells.
  - (B) The property owner will be notified in the letter that the District may contribute up to 50 percent of the cost for capping or plugging the open or uncovered, deteriorated or abandoned well, not to exceed \$300 contribution by the District per well, on a first come – first served basis, as long as money remains in the budget for that purpose. If the well owner plugs or caps his own well, he may be reimbursed up to 50 percent of his out of pocket expenses, not to exceed \$300 contribution by the District per well, on a first come – first served basis, as long as money remains in the budget for that purpose, and provided he can supply sufficient written evidence of payment of those expenses. District contributions and reimbursements do not apply to wells exempt under 9.1.(a)(2-3). **Lack of District funds does not preclude the landowner's responsibility, both under the State of Texas' Water Well Drillers and Pump Installers Rules and the District's rules, to cap or plug the open or uncovered, deteriorated, or abandoned well.** Water wells used for oil and gas operations are required to comply with District Rule 9.2.5.
  - (C) A driller who knows of an abandoned or deteriorated well shall notify the District and the landowner or person who possesses the well that the well must be plugged or capped to avoid injury or pollution.
  - (D) Not later than the 180th day after the date a landowner or other person who possesses an abandoned or deteriorated well learns of its condition, the landowner or other person shall have the well plugged or capped under standards and procedures adopted by the commission. The District may require the well to be plugged prior to 180 days if it presents a dangerous situation to the aquifer or to human safety.

#### 14.5 Sealing of Well

- (1) Following due-process, the District may, upon orders from the judge of the courts, seal wells that are prohibited from withdrawing groundwater within the District by the District rules to ensure that a well is not operated in violation of the District rules. A well may be sealed when:
- (A) No application has been granted for a permit to drill a new water well which is not excluded or exempted from obtaining a permit; or
  - (B) No application has been granted for a permit to withdraw groundwater from an existing well that is not exempted from the requirement that a permit be obtained

in order to lawfully withdraw groundwater; or

(C) The Board has denied, canceled, or revoked a drilling permit or a permit.

- (2) The well may be sealed by physical means, and tagged to indicate that the well has been sealed by the District. Other appropriate action may be taken as necessary to preclude operation of the well or to identify unauthorized operation of the well.
- (3) Tampering with, altering, damaging, or removing the seal of a sealed well, or in any other way violating the integrity of the seal, or pumping of groundwater from a well that has been sealed constitutes a violation of these rules and subjects the person performing that action, as well as any well owner or primary operator who authorizes or allows that action, to such penalties as provided by the District rules.

**14.6 Civil Penalties**

- (1) The District may enforce Chapter 36, Texas Water Code, and its rules by injunction, mandatory injunction, or other appropriate remedy in a court of competent jurisdiction.
- (2) The Board by rule may set reasonable civil penalties for breach of any Rule of the District not to exceed \$25,000 per day, per violation. Each day of a continuing violation constitutes a separate violation. All civil penalties recovered by the District shall be paid to the Gateway Groundwater Conservation District.
- (3) Initial Penalties:

The Board may assess the following initial minimum penalties for the listed Rule violations. The Board may set reasonable penalties for other Rule violations that are not listed. The District will work with the violator to ensure that compliance is reached. The penalty table is as below:

<b>Violation</b>	<b>Initial Minimum Penalty per day</b>
Failure to Register or Permit a Well under District Rules	\$50
Failure to comply with Spacing Requirements of Rule 6.1 for new wells drilled after December 16, 2021, without an exception granted by the Board	\$1
Failure to comply with registration or permit terms	\$1
Failure to file documentation or well log with the District within the required time period.	\$1
Falsification of records or permit applications	\$1
Use of groundwater that constitutes waste	\$1
Failure to properly plug or cover an abandoned well	\$1

Failure to install a meter on a permitted well when required by District Rules for an exception to Rule 6.1 or for transport permits	\$20
Failure to submit to the District a pumpage and/or transported production report when required by District Rules for an exception to Rule 6.1 or for transport permits	\$50

- (4) A penalty under this section is in addition to any other penalty provided by the law of this State. It may be enforced by complaints filed in the appropriate court of jurisdiction in the county in which the District's principal office or meeting place is located.
- (5) If the District prevails in any suit to enforce its rules, the District may seek and the court shall grant, in the same action, recovery for attorney's fees, costs for expert witnesses, and other costs incurred by the District before the court, pursuant to §36.066, Texas Water Code. The amount of the attorney's fees shall be fixed by the court.

**14.7 Failure to Report Pumpage and/or Transported Volumes**

The accurate reporting and timely submission of pumpage and/or transported volumes is necessary for the proper management of water resources. Failure of the permittee to submit complete, accurate, and timely pumpage and/or transport and water quality reports, as required by District Rule 9, may result in late payment fees, forfeiture of the permit, or payment of increased meter reading and inspection fees as a result of District inspections to obtain current and accurate pumpage and/or transported volumes and water quality reports. Any property required to report production due to exemption from the density rule who does not submit their production reports by March 1 for the previous year is subject to penalties in Rule 14.6 (3).

**14.8 Emergency Orders**

The District may develop Emergency Contingency Plans to deal with water quality or water quantity emergencies. Public hearings on Emergency Contingency Plans shall be conducted by the Board prior to adoption.

To implement Emergency Contingency Plans, the Board, or the General Manager if specifically authorized by an Emergency Contingency Plan, may adopt emergency orders of either a mandatory or prohibitory nature requiring remedial action by a permittee or other party responsible for the emergency condition.

**RULE 15 -- JOINT PLANNING IN MANAGEMENT AREA AND ENFORCEMENT OF DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS**

**15.1 Actions Based on Aquifer Response to Pumping**

- (1) The District shall use its well monitoring program to assess aquifer levels in the District, and the effects caused by groundwater production within the District. This data will be used to enforce the District's adopted DFCs of the aquifers, to conserve and preserve groundwater availability, and protect groundwater users and groundwater ownership and rights.

(2) The District shall adopt, as necessary in the future, threshold average aquifer drawdown amounts. These drawdown amounts will be used to initiate groundwater management responses that will be implemented to enforce the District's adopted DFCs of the aquifers, to conserve and preserve groundwater availability, and protect groundwater users and groundwater ownership and rights.

(3) Standard Actions to Enforce DFCs.

Prior to approaching the initial adopted DFCs threshold, the District shall follow the below listed actions to monitor aquifer levels; regulate, educate, and promote water conservation; and enforce the DFCs of the aquifers:

- (A) Permit and register wells according to District rules;
  - (B) Monitor groundwater production in adjoining groundwater conservation districts, and coordinate responses as needed;
  - (C) Promote and require conservation;
  - (D) Prepare an annual report on well drilling and aquifer water level trends, including long term trends and changes, as outlined in Goal 10 of the District's Management Plan;
- (4) The District Board shall annually review the DFC analysis report outlined in 15.1 (3) (d) to monitor the District's achievement of their DFC's. At the time of the report, the Board may take one of three actions on each DFC:
- (C) The Board may accept the DFC analysis report with no further action, if the report shows all aquifers or subdivision of the aquifers to be on track to meet their DFC.
  - (D) The Board may instruct the staff to increase monitoring in any aquifer or subdivision of an aquifer if it is showing increased risk of not meeting a DFC.
  - (E) The Board may amend these rules to require all wells to be metered, production limitations to be adopted, or any other reasonable rule to be enacted in order to meet a DFC in the District, an aquifer, or a subdivision of an aquifer if the Board decides a DFC is not being met.