

# **Panola County Groundwater Conservation District**

## **Drought Contingency Plan**

**Adopted May 24th, 2016**

### **I. Purpose and Policy of the Drought Contingency Plan**

The Panola County Groundwater Conservation District (“District”) adopts this Drought Contingency Plan (“Plan”) to further its efforts of drought monitoring and public advisement, as well as, conserving, preserving, and managing the groundwater resources within the District’s boundaries. The purpose of this Plan is to minimize the effects of groundwater depletion in the District during times of drought, and in extended and/or extreme drought conditions, to cause a reduction in water use in order to preserve water availability. The District believes that the voluntary reductions in usage that are associated with each drought stage in this Plan can be achieved, and will minimize the effects of drought and over-pumping on the District’s groundwater resources. This Plan has been prepared in advance, with consideration given to the conditions that will initiate and terminate each drought stage as described herein. Recommended water conservation strategies that are listed in this Plan are considered to be necessary in order to avoid damage to the aquifer. Any water uses that deviate from the recommended strategies will be considered non-essential, and continuation of such water uses during times of drought will be deemed a waste of water which will adversely affect public health, welfare, and safety for the residents of Panola County. Nothing in this Plan prevents the District from exercising its authority under Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code, the District’s enabling legislation, the District’s Management Plan, or the District’s Rules.

### **II. Designation of Drought Stages**

The District Board of Directors (“Board”) or the District General Manager shall determine when conditions warrant initiation or termination of each drought stage in this Plan, and shall take appropriate action to declare the appropriate stage. In the event the General Manager declares a drought stage in accordance with this Plan, the Board shall be informed of the action taken to declare a drought stage at the next District Board meeting. The Board may confirm or revise the action taken to declare a drought stage if considered to be necessary by the Board.

### **III. Public Notification of Drought Stages**

Public notification of the initiation or termination of declared drought stages may be accomplished by using any one or more of the following methods:

- a. Notification on the District’s internet website(s);
- b. Publication in newspaper(s) of general circulation in the District;
- c. Written notification to public water supply entities in the District;

- d. Written bulletins issued to schools in the District;
- e. Radio announcement(s);
- f. District mailing, fax, or email to owners/operators of permitted wells; and/or
- g. Signs posted at the District office or in various locations in the District.

#### **IV. Criteria for Initiation and Termination of Drought Stages**

Initiation of a Drought Stage: The United States Drought Monitor for Texas (“USDM”) shall be monitored and presented to the District Board at each monthly Board meeting. The USDM is listed in the drought stages in this Plan as a verbal drought intensity rating (example: D2, Severe Drought). Drought stages shall be triggered when the USDM drought intensity rating in the majority of the District is raised to “D0, Abnormally Dry”, and also at each level beyond “D0, Abnormally Dry”. The USDM for Texas can be viewed at the following website:

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/Home/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?TX>

Drought stages in the District will also be determined in part by local precipitation deficits as shown by the District rain gauge data, as compared to historical precipitation data for the District territory. Precipitation deficits of ten inches or more (below the historical average) will be considered to indicate at least moderate drought. Also to be considered in drought stage declarations are water level changes in the District monthly monitor wells. Average water level decline of more than six inches in any one month will indicate new or worse drought conditions. Any three or more consecutive months of average water level decline will also indicate new or worse drought conditions.

Termination of a Drought Stage: The drought stage in effect shall be reduced or terminated when the USDM drought intensity rating in the majority of the District is lowered to a lesser drought level. Precipitation deficits of ten inches or less (below the historical average) will be considered as a factor in reducing the declared District drought stage. Also, the monthly monitor well water level changes will be considered in reducing the District drought stage. Any three or more consecutive months of average water level ascent, or any one month of average water level ascent exceeding six inches will indicate waning drought conditions.

#### **V. Public Water Suppliers**

The District recognizes that public water suppliers within the District have Drought Contingency Plans that provide drought stages and drought stage reduction measures that are intended to apply within their service areas. All public water suppliers within the District that have Drought Contingency Plans have the discretion as to how the desired usage reduction will be accomplished within their service areas, unless the water supply is not acquired through the supplier.

#### **VI. Drought Stage Conservation Measures**

The goals and usage reduction measures assigned to each drought stage below are voluntary and are recommended for the purpose of reducing the impact of drought conditions on the groundwater resources within the District's boundaries.

### **Stage 1 – Drought Advisory Status**

**Drought Stage Trigger:** *USDM Intensity = D0, Abnormally Dry*

#### **District Action:**

- Notify the public of developing drought conditions and encourage continued conservation.
- Continue to monitor local drought and groundwater conditions.

**Goal:** 10% reduction in water use

#### **Recommended Actions to Reduce Water Usage:**

- a. Check for and repair all water leaks.
- b. Install aerators on faucets.
- c. While waiting for hot water to reach faucet, catch cold water in a container to be reused.
- d. Limit landscape irrigation to no more than two days per week. Agriculture and horticulture operations are exempted from this measure but are encouraged to reduce tree, plant, and crop watering by 10%.
- e. Do not leave faucets running when not in use.
- f. Turn off master water shutoff when out of town or on vacation.
- g. Check automatic sprinkler heads regularly to prevent clogging and adjust to eliminate overspray
- h. Avoid watering on windy days.
- i. Use mulch to conserve soil moisture.
- j. Limit vehicle washing except when conducted with a bucket or hand-held hose with an automatic shutoff device during and, if possible, use a commercial car wash that recycles water.
- k. Limit swimming pool filter backwashing to only when necessary.
- l. Utilize water reuse or recirculation where possible.
- m. Limit landscape irrigation to occur only between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

## **Stage 2 – Drought Watch Status**

**Drought Stage Trigger:** *USDM Intensity = D1, Moderate Drought; also to be considered: precipitation deficit of 10 inches or more, monthly average water level decline of 6 inches or more, or at least 3 consecutive months of average water level decline*

### **District Action:**

- Continue to notify the public of developing drought conditions, using multiple avenues of communication.
- Encourage continued conservation.
- Continue to monitor local drought and groundwater conditions.

**Goal:** 20% reduction in water use

### **Recommended Actions to Reduce Water Usage:**

- a. Follow all actions under Stage 1 – Drought Advisory Status.
- b. Use water to wash down buildings or other structures only for the fire protection purposes or for public health and safety purposes.
- c. Limit landscape irrigation to no more than one day per week. Agriculture and horticulture operations are exempted from this measure but are urged to reduce tree, plant, and crop watering by 20%.
- d. Keep swimming pools, landscape or decorative ponds, and fountains covered where possible, re-circulate water, and refill only once per week.
- e. Water livestock in leak-proof troughs as much as practical.
- f. Limit the use of ornamental fountains or ponds for aesthetic or scenery purposes to only where absolutely necessary to support aquatic life or where equipped with a recirculating system.
- g. Use soaker hoses for foundation protection only on designated watering days.
- h. Water for dust control only where required by law.
- i. Wash down sidewalks, walkways, driveways, parking lots, tennis courts or other hard-surfaced areas only for public health and safety purposes.

## **Stage 3 – Drought Warning Status**

**Drought Stage Trigger:** *USDM Intensity = D2, Severe Drought; also to be considered: precipitation deficit of 10 inches or more, monthly average water level decline of 6 inches or more, or at least 3 consecutive months of average water level decline*

### **District Action:**

- Continue to notify the public of developing drought conditions, using multiple avenues of communication.
- Encourage continued conservation.

- Coordinate with local officials and water suppliers to offer assistance, where feasible.
- Encourage new groundwater use applicants to minimize their proposed withdrawals until the drought abates.
- Consider reducing permitted volumes on any new or renewing operating permits.
- Continue to monitor local drought and groundwater conditions.

**Goal:** 30% reduction in water use

**Recommended Actions to Reduce Water Usage:**

- a. Follow all actions under Stage 1 – Drought Advisory Status and Stage 2 – Drought Watch Status
- b. Limit all outdoor watering to the use of a hand-held hose with an automatic shutoff device or faucet-filled bucket or watering can.
- c. Do not refill swimming pools, landscape or decorative ponds and fountains.
- d. Limit all washing of vehicles, boats, or trailers to commercial carwashes that recycle water.

**Stage 4 – Emergency Drought Status**

**Drought Stage Trigger:** *USDM Intensity = D3 or D4, Extreme Drought; also to be considered: precipitation deficit of 10 inches or more, monthly average water level decline of 6 inches or more, or at least 3 consecutive months of average water level decline*

**District Action:**

- Continue to notify the public of developing drought conditions, using multiple avenues of communication.
- Encourage continued conservation.
- Coordinate with local officials and water suppliers to offer assistance, where feasible.
- Coordinate with the TCEQ on 180-day water lists.
- Encourage new groundwater use applicants to delay or minimize their proposed withdrawals until the drought abates.
- Consider reducing permitted volumes on any new or renewing operating permits.
- Prioritize new permit applications by urgency of need and by degree of necessity.
- Postpone or limit permit approvals as is reasonable based on local drought conditions and forecasts.
- Continue to monitor local drought and groundwater conditions.
- Increase enforcement efforts on violations of the District Rules, especially those that pertain to waste of groundwater and to illegal use of groundwater. Enforcement shall be conducted according to the District Civil Penalty Schedule.

**Goal:** 40% reduction in water use

**Recommended Actions to Reduce Water Usage:**

- a. Follow all actions under Stage 1 – Drought Advisory Status, Stage 2 – Drought Watch Status, and Stage 3 – Drought Warning Status.
- b. Limit all outdoor use of water and nonessential uses as much as possible.
- c. No landscape irrigation or outdoor watering. Agriculture and horticulture operations are exempted from this measure but are urged to reduce tree, plant, and crop watering by 40%.
- d. No washing of vehicles, boats, or trailers.

**Stage 5 – Disaster Drought Status**

**Drought Stage Trigger:** *USDM Intensity = D4, Exceptional Drought; also to be considered: precipitation deficit of 10 inches or more, monthly average water level decline of 6 inches or more, or at least 3 consecutive months of average water level decline, state of emergency or disaster declarations by the State*

**District Action:**

- Continue to monitor local drought and groundwater conditions.
- Work with the public and State agencies to

**Goal:** 50% reduction in water use

**Recommended Actions to Reduce Water Usage:**

- a. Follow all actions under Stage 1 – Drought Advisory Status, Stage 2 – Drought Watch Status, Stage 3 – Drought Warning Status, and Stage 4 – Emergency Drought Status.
- b. Limit all outdoor use of water and nonessential uses as much as possible.
- c. No landscape irrigation or outdoor watering. Agriculture and horticulture operations are exempted from this measure but are urged to reduce tree, plant, and crop watering by 50%.
- d. Limit indoor use of water and nonessential uses as much as possible.

**Table of Drought Stages in Drought Contingency Plan**

| <b>DROUGHT STAGE</b>               | <b>DROUGHT STAGE TRIGGER</b>   | <b>PERCENT OF VOLUNTARY REDUCTION IN WATER USE</b> |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Stage 1 – Drought Advisory</b>  | <i>USDM Intensity = D0, Abnormally Dry</i>   | <b>10%</b>   |
| <b>Stage 2 – Drought Watch</b>     | <i>USDM Intensity = D1, Moderate Drought; also to be considered: precipitation deficit of 10 inches or more, monthly average water level decline of 6 inches or more, or at least 3 consecutive months of average water level decline</i>  | <b>20%</b>   |
| <b>Stage 3 – Drought Warning</b>   | <i>USDM Intensity = D2, Severe Drought; also to be considered: precipitation deficit of 10 inches or more, monthly average water level decline of 6 inches or more, or at least 3 consecutive months of average water level decline</i>  | <b>30%</b>   |
| <b>Stage 4 – Emergency Drought</b> | <i>USDM Intensity = D3, Extreme Drought; also to be considered: precipitation deficit of 10 inches or more, monthly average water level decline of 6 inches or more, or at least 3 consecutive months of average water level decline</i>   | <b>40%</b>   |
| <b>Stage 5 – Disaster Drought</b>  | <i>USDM Intensity = D4, Exceptional Drought; also to be considered: precipitation deficit of 10 inches or more, monthly average water level decline of 6 inches or more, or at least 3 consecutive months of average water level decline, state of emergency or disaster declarations by the State</i> | <b>50%</b>   |

## **VII. Enforcement Procedures**

Violations of this Plan may be enforced under Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code and under the District's Rules, including Section 13 of the District Rules, which may result in civil penalties and/or revocation of permits.

## **VIII. Exemptions and Waivers**

- a. The District may, in writing, grant temporary variances for existing water uses otherwise prohibited under this Plan if it is determined that failure to grant such variances would cause a hardship or an emergency condition that adversely affects the health or sanitation of the public or the person requesting the variance, and if one or more of the following conditions are met:
  1. Compliance with this Plan cannot be technically accomplished during the duration of the water supply shortage or other condition for which the Plan is in effect.
  2. Alternative methods can be implemented which will achieve the same level of water use reduction.
  
- b. Persons requesting an exemption from the provisions of this Plan shall file a petition for variance with the District within five (5) days after the Plan or particular drought response stage has been invoked or after a condition justifying the variance first occurs. All petitions for variances shall be reviewed by the District and shall include the following:
  1. Name and address of the petitioner(s).
  2. Purpose of water use.
  3. Specific provision(s) of the Plan from which the petitioner is requesting relief.
  4. Detailed statement as to how the specific provision of the Plan adversely affects the petitioner, or what damage or harm will occur to the petitioner or others if the petitioner complies with this Plan.
  5. Description of the relief requested.
  6. Period of time for which the variance is sought.
  7. Alternative water use restrictions or other measures the petitioner is taking or proposes to take to meet the intent of this Plan and the compliance date.
  8. Other pertinent information, as requested by the District.
  
- c. No variance shall be retroactive or otherwise justify any violation of this Plan or the District Rules that occurred prior to the issuance of the variance.

## **IX. Severability**

If any provisions contained in this Plan are for any reason held to be invalid, illegal, or unenforceable in any respect, the invalidity, illegality, or unenforceability will not affect

any other rules or provisions of this Plan, and this Plan must be construed as if such invalid, illegal, or unenforceable rules or provisions had never been contained in this Plan.

**X. Implementation**

This District will review the procedures in this Plan every five (5) years, or more frequently if necessary. Modifications may be required to accommodate system growth, changes in groundwater demand, available water supplies, and/or other circumstances.