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GEAA ¹³⁴ passes anti-pipeline resolution

The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, on Wednesday, became the latest in a growing number of municipalities, counties, school districts and water management organizations to adopt a resolution opposing the exportation of groundwater via a pipeline out of Uvalde County.

“GEAA specifically opposes the exportation of large quantities of groundwater from the Uvalde Pool of the Edwards Aquifer for use in metropolitan centers, the construction of pipelines to facilitate such exportations and any amendments of the Edwards Aquifer statute that would facilitate such exportations...,” a section of the resolutions reads.

The alliance’s opposition to the transportation of the county’s groundwater comes in response to legislation filed early this year by Rep. Roland Gutierrez, D-San Antonio, which seeks to amend

language in the Edwards Aquifer Act prohibiting the construction of a pipeline for just such a purpose.

If passed, Gutierrez’s bill would allow for the construction of a 70-mile pipeline being proposed by South Texas Water Resources that would transport up to 40,000 acre-feet of water from Uvalde to San Antonio annually.

According to the resolution, GEAA requests that any amendments to the Edwards Aquifer Authority statute be postponed “until such time as the water balance of the Uvalde Pool is better defined” and the Edwards Aquifer Authority’s hydrological modeling system is improved.

The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance is a non-profit organization consisting of 46 membership organizations whose goal is to preserve and protect the Edwards Aquifer, its springs and watersheds.



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Lack of rain hurting water wells

LOGAN GARNETT
STAFF WRITER

As the region continues to endure week after week of moderate to high temperatures and virtually zero precipitation, area irrigators are beginning to see their pumping capaci-

ties wane.

"We're pretty much pumping air right now," said J Allen Carnes with Winter Garden Produce in Uvalde. "That just basically means that our pumping capabilities are scaled way back and we're having to choke [wells]

down ... setting them at half valve to increase the pressure."

Carnes said his operation has over 30 wells to the south in Zavala County that receive their water from the Carrizo Sands Aquifer, which he explained is not being recharged as it usually is by the Edwards Aquifer. As levels in the Edwards drop, so too do the recharge levels at the minor aquifers that depend on the Edwards.

"We're already seeing well levels drop," Carnes said, adding that due to

high commodity prices, growers had previously planted large cotton and corn crops but were now having to make plans to deal with what may very well be an extended period of drought.

"Once one aquifer goes, the next one goes, since they're basically all sort of connected," Carnes said of the domino-like effect of retreating groundwater levels. "The Edwards is always the last one to go, but by that time it'll be too late."

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WELLS: Lack of precipitation causes water well levels to decrease in secondary aquifers

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Vic Hilderbran, Uvalde County Underground Water Conservation District general manager, said secondary aquifer well levels “are dropping pretty fast right now” and water pump installers are working to lower pumps to reach lowering elevations.

He also cited a recent well-digging operation in Knippa, wherein the township was required by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to construct an alternate municipal well, and a Leona Gravel and Buda formation were drilled through and found to be dry.



Vic Hilderbran

“They thought it was going to be expensive, to dig through and seal off those formations, but they drilled through them and they were all dry,” Hilderbran said.

“Everything’s down right now,” said Cary Spurgeon, owner and operator of Spurgeon Water Well Drilling Co. “We’ve even got problems with shallow Edwards wells.”

Spurgeon said the current Edwards level of 860.4 feet has direct effects on secondary aquifers due to a drop in pressure needed to push water to the them.

According to Edwards Aquifer Authority records, levels at the J-27 index well in Uvalde have only dropped below 860 three

times in the past – during the drought of record from 1951 to 1958, during the summer of 1967 and again during the summer of 1996.

However, Spurgeon said the critical tipping point is when the J-27 well reaches 850, at which point levels “drop like a rock,” and secondary wells begin to dry up.

“At 850 the Austin Chalk is not recharging the Nueces at Soldier Springs,” he said, citing a hydrologi-

cal study done by Ronald Green of Southwest Research Institute. “And by 842 there is absolutely no flow in the Nueces.”

Lower Edwards levels also mean trouble for wells that lie east of the Knippa Gap, he said, since the pressure needed to force water through the gap is not high enough.

“Some of those wells have gone from pumping 40 gallons a minute to only one or two gallons a minute. There’s been

about a 90-foot drop in levels east of the Knippa Gap,” he said, adding that it will most likely take a good amount of rain toward the end of this summer to recharge the Edwards adequately.

“The gravel wells seem to be holding, but we’re right there,” he said of an impending critical period. “We need something soon.”

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