

From The Manager's Desk

Meeting Notes from the Brewster County Ground Water Conservation District Meeting held last Thursday, Aug 18th, 2016 in Alpine Texas.

I and two other board members attended the ground water meeting last week. There were many concerned citizens at the meeting. There were several water board members there, I believe all were in attendance for the meeting.

The Ground Water Conservation Board was founded in Brewster County back in 2001. The current board met to discuss the implementation of a new fee schedule for Permits in Brewster County. The proposed fee schedule affects business providing water across Brewster County, although Alpine Municipal Water does not fall under the new fee schedule according to the Board of Directors, and is exempt under Chapter 36 of Texas Water Laws. The Board would like to charge a fee for business providing water, which would register the well in their data base, keep track of static levels, and usage. The proposed fee is \$2500.00 for each business and the permit last ten years. This fee can be changed by the Water Board. It also will require a usage fee using a foot acre of water for its bench mark. The production or usage fees will be incurred quarterly. There are agriculture production fees and non-agricultural production fees, but are unclear in the definition of each. There is a separate fee of \$5000.00 for water exporters per business. The fee schedule is for both potable and non-potable water.

This will affect several entities in South Brewster County, including Terlingua Ranch, Study Butte Water Company, Lajitas Resort, the mines selling water, RV Parks and I would assume the National Park, but the Board could not say if the National Park would fall under their jurisdiction or not. The Board sites that it needs the money to support scientific research needed to evaluate the water of Brewster County and to keep exportation from crippling the water systems. The monies collected from this fee schedule would be used to hire a scientist to collect data from registered wells around the county, according to Summer Webb, the District Manager.

This was the reason for the Boards formation in the first place. The Water Board was elected by the County Commissioner. It is to my knowledge that South Brewster County is not represented with a position on the board. Summer Webb, the Manager, was hired by the Water Board.

There were several citizens at the meeting that spoke out against the fees. It was also stated at the meeting that this information could be obtained from the State and Well Driller Logs in Brewster County by several citizens and the Board.

This will affect the Property Owners Association of Terlingua Ranch and possibly its members. During the meeting the Board also tried to clarify that Household Wells or Domestic Wells are exempt from the fees, although they would like every well registered in Brewster

County. As the Ground Water Board defines a Domestic Well or Household Well is a well that is pumping less than 17.34 gallons per minute or 25,000 gallons per day on 10+ acres. This includes Wildlife, Domestic livestock, and poultry. It wasn't specified what rules apply to wells on less than ten acres. They also stated that the "fee" structure is a Fee and is not based on property tax or not connected to property in any way. Domestic and Household Wells can be registered for free up until 2018. After that time well registration will be \$15.00 per well.

This report is just scratching the surface, and there are many unanswered questions with regards to Brewster County Ground Water Conservation District definitions, and fee schedules.

I would like to merely bring this issue to the forefront, and for our members to be informed and included in the water discussions currently going on in South Brewster County. The Board of Directors at POATRI as requested a public meeting for South Brewster County. Summer Webb, the General Manager will be contacting other business in South Brewster to set up a forum for the residents of South Brewster County. We will post the meeting time and place as it is relayed to us.

– Thank You, Anita Goss

Ranch Manager

For more information, you may reach out to the Water Conservation District

Brewster County Groundwater Conservation District

PO Box 465

Alpine TX 79831

Summer Webb, General Manager

432-386-3437

bcgwcd@gmail.com