

What is a Groundwater Conservation District (GCD)?

Local groundwater conservation districts (GCDs, or districts) are the state's preferred method of groundwater management. GCDs manage groundwater by supporting the conservation, preservation, protection, recharge, and prevention of waste of groundwater resources within their district boundaries.

The powers and duties GCDs have allow them to manage groundwater resources. The three main duties given to GCDs by the Texas Legislature are:

1. Permitting non-exempt water wells.
2. Developing a comprehensive management plan.
3. Adopting the necessary rules to implement the management plan.

GCDs have the power to prevent waste of groundwater by registering and permitting wells. GCD rules govern spacing, production, drilling, equipping, and completion or alteration of water wells.

GCDs may require permits for all water wells except for:

- Wells specifically exempted by a GCD, and
- Statutorily exempt wells:
 - Water wells used solely for domestic use or for supplying water for livestock or poultry purposes on a tract of land greater than ten acres and constructed, equipped, or drilled in such a manner that they are incapable of producing more than 25,000 gallons of groundwater per day.
 - The drilling of a water well used solely to supply water for a rig actively engaged in drilling or exploration operations for an oil or gas well permitted by the Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC).
 - The drilling of a water well authorized by RRC for mining activities.

Exempt registered water wells are subject to GCD rules governing spacing, tract size, and well construction standards to prevent discharge or pollution of groundwater.

As of June 5, 2024, there were 101 GCDs in the state, including two subsidence districts and the Edwards Aquifer Authority, covering all or part of 181 of the state's 254 counties.

Resources and Useful Links

- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's *Groundwater Conservation Districts* webpage: <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/groundwater/groundwater-planning-assessment/districts.html>

- Texas Water Development Board's *Groundwater Conservation Districts* webpage, https://www.twdb.texas.gov/groundwater/conservation_districts/index.asp
- RRC's *Groundwater Management* webpage, <https://www.rrc.texas.gov/oil-and-gas/environmental-cleanup-programs/guidance-documents-and-helpful-links/groundwater-management/>
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's publication, *Questions about Groundwater Conservation Districts in Texas (publication B-6120)*, <https://twon.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/06/question-about-gcdfs.pdf>
- Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts website, <https://texasgroundwater.org/>

Other Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

To find additional FAQs visit the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee's FAQ webpage at <https://tgpc.texas.gov/frequently-asked-questions-faqs>.