

What is a Groundwater Conservation District (GCD) ?

Local GCDs (also known as “districts”) are the state’s preferred method of groundwater management. GCDs are charged with managing groundwater by providing for the conservation, preservation, protection, recharge, and prevention of waste of groundwater resources within their jurisdictions.

GCDs are authorized with powers and duties that enable them to manage groundwater resources. The three primary GCD legislatively-mandated duties include:

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

The principal power that a GCD has to prevent waste of groundwater is to require that all water wells, with certain exceptions, be registered and permitted. Water wells for which permits are required are subject to GCD rules governing spacing, production, drilling, equipping, and completion or alteration. Even exempt registered water wells are subject to GCD rules governing spacing, tract size, and well construction standards to prevent the unnecessary discharge or pollution of groundwater.

Permits may be required by a GCD 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 providing water for livestock or poultry purposes on a tract of land greater than 10 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); and,
 - The drilling of a water well authorized by the RRC for mining activities.

As of September 2017, a total of 102 GCDs have been created in the state. The total includes 100 established (confirmed) districts and two unconfirmed districts. The 100 established districts cover all or part of 180 of the state’s 254 counties.

For maps, publications, and additional information, go to:

- The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality’s GCD webpage at http://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/water_supply/groundwater/districts.html;
- The Texas Water Development Board’s GCD webpage at http://www.twdb.texas.gov/groundwater/conservation_districts/index.asp;
- The RRC at <http://www.rrc.texas.gov/>;
- The Texas AgriLife Extension Service’s *Questions about Groundwater Conservation Districts in Texas* (publication B-6120) at <http://www.agrilifebookstore.org/Default.asp>; and,
- The Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts at <http://www.texasgroundwater.org/>.

For additional Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) related to groundwater quantity, groundwater quality, septic systems, water wells, administrative entities, and publications, visit the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee's FAQ webpage at <http://tgpc.state.tx.us/frequently-asked-questions-faqs/>.