# Clearwater Source

Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District

2025 Annual Newsletter | October 2025 | Volume 21, Issue 1

## Proactive Stewardship Through New Studies & Initiatives

*Whitney Ingram was promoted to General Manager, September 1, 2025. Ingram was hired as the Assistant General Manager to retiring General Manager, Dirk Aaron, in March of the previous year.*

This year's studies and initiatives will continue to build upon Clearwater's dedicated investments in science. During the FY26 budget process, the CUWCD Board of Directors approved the funding for a number of projects which will enhance the District's analytical tools and database. The approved work will build upon years of local studies and continuous improvements in aquifer monitoring and modeling. Through technical innovation, local research partnerships, and regional collaboration, CUWCD is strengthening its capacity to manage groundwater resources under changing climate and growth pressures. CUWCD staff are excited to put these studies underway, guiding and assisting our consulting teams and partners in this important work. A brief summary of each is outlined below.

### Enhancing Drought Management Framework

KT Groundwater will support the District in advancing several major efforts to refine its drought management framework for the Edwards (BFZ) and Trinity Aquifers by updating methodologies and integrating system-wide alerts into the Aquifer Status Tool (discussed by Mike Keester on page 2).

In 2017, the District established the drought trigger framework for the Edwards (BFZ) Aquifer. The new study will refine thresholds tied to estimated spring discharge—providing a stronger basis for drought stage decisions. CUWCD also uses a Precipitation Deficit Index (PDI) to track drought conditions, which measures precipitation relative to the long-term average of 33 inches per year. While useful, the PDI can mask extended dry periods if preceded by unusually wet conditions (e.g., heavy rainfall followed by many months of no rain). Work in the Trinity Aquifer will establish more defensible drought thresholds and identify key index wells to guide future drought determinations.

### Clearwater Groundwater Management Model (CGMM) Integration

In 2023, CUWCD developed the Clearwater Groundwater Management Model (CGMM) as a local decision-support tool for permitting and management evaluations. Built in MODFLOW 6, CGMM is a stand-alone sub-model of the 2014 regional groundwater availability model currently being updated by Groundwater Management Area 8 (GMA 8). This integration will enhance regional coordination and ensure that local-scale management decisions remain consistent with regional planning efforts.

*(continued on page 4)*

## Message from the Board President

*Jody Williams was elected to Board President in January 2025. Williams has served as Precinct 3 Director on the CUWCD Board of Directors since 2018 and previously Vice President of the Board.*

At the core of our mission, the District is committed to using the best available science to guide sound decisions. We believe that science is the foundation of effective groundwater management, ensuring protection of this vital resource for future generations.

As a taxing entity, CUWCD remains committed to our fiscal responsibility by carefully balancing operational needs and taxpayer costs. In August, the CUWCD Board of Directors set an annual budget of $983,594.00 and reaffirmed a property tax rate of $0.002230 per $100 of assessed valuation—about $6.40 annually for the average homeowner. Administratively, the Board also adopted amendments to our District rules and administrative fee schedule which incorporate changes made to Chapter 36, Texas Water Code, by the 89th Texas Legislature and include changes to Rule 13.2 regarding export of groundwater out of the District.

The District has also pledged funding to support the Central Texas Water Alliance (CTWA), a political subdivision of Texas created under Section 59 of the Constitution and SB1194, during the 89th legislative session. The CTWA promotes regional collaboration on water supply, wastewater, ASR reuse, conservation, and infrastructure needs— its mission ultimately relieving local water supply and capacity strains projected in coming years. The CTWA looks to plan, finance, and implement projects supporting Central Texas sponsors. The newly formed Board—Judge Scott Felton, Judge David Blackburn, Ricky Garrett, and Dirk Aaron—have hired consultants to prepare initial governance documents. The next CTWA public meeting is set for October 29, 2025 from 2:00-4:00 PM in the Clearwater Boardroom, 640 Kennedy Court in Belton.

In September, Whitney Ingram became the District's General Manager. If you don't know Whitney, please meet with her and get to know her. Engagement with Bell County residents will always be a top priority for CUWCD, and we continue to honor the trust placed in us by the community.

Finally, we hope you join us for our 24th Annual Bell County Water Symposium on Wednesday, November 19, 2025 at the Cadence Bank Center in Belton. We are proud to once again highlight the importance of both surface water and groundwater in the long-term sustainability of Bell County's economy and way of life. If you have any questions, please reach out to our staff or Board members.

**Jody Williams**, Board President
Clearwater UWCD

## Board of Directors

**Leland Gersbach** - Precinct 1
2013-Present (Vice President)

**Jody Williams** - Precinct 3
2018-Present (President)

**Gary Young** - Precinct 2
2014-Present (Secretary)

**Scott Brooks** - Precinct 4
2018-Present (Director)

**James Brown** - At large
2023-Present (Director)

## Mission Statement

*Our mission is to implement an efficient, economical, and environmentally sound groundwater management program to protect and enhance the water resources of the District.*

## Water Quality Screening

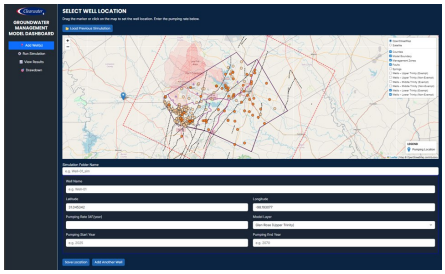
*The District's in-house lab offers registered well owners free screening for common constituents and bacteria. Annual screening is recommended.*

## Looking Back at the Development of CUWCD Data Analysis Tools

*Over the past year, the CUWCD Board invested in two advanced technology tools, the Aquifer Data Analysis Tool and the Clearwater Groundwater Management Model Dashboard, to assist with local groundwater management.*

CUWCD's Board of Directors prioritizes scientific research to develop the information needed to guide their management of Bell County's groundwater resources. In addition to reports providing insights into the aquifers under our feet, our research has also resulted in data analysis tools and a local groundwater flow model.

### Aquifer Status Tool




KT Groundwater created the Aquifer Data Analysis Tool, which compiles water-level measurements collected from 1,350 wells in Bell County to calculate and display long-term trends in aquifer water levels. Each time new measurements are added to the database, the tool updates so the information stays current. It also displays the adopted Desired Future Conditions metrics, making it easy to compare those management goals with actual water-level trends for each aquifer. Users can view individual wells, where available data and statistics are displayed, including well construction details, geological formations, and graphs of water levels and trends over time.

The tool also generates and displays annual contour maps of water levels for each aquifer. These maps can provide a snapshot of the depth to water in wells interpolated to locations throughout the county. In addition, any available water quality data for each well can be accessed through the tool.

### Clearwater Groundwater Management Model Dashboard

Over the past year, KT Groundwater has been working to make groundwater modeling easier to use and understand. The result is the new Clearwater Groundwater Management Model (CGMM) Dashboard — an interactive tool where users can explore how pumping wells may affect aquifer water levels in the future using CUWCD's own Groundwater Management Model. Traditionally, running groundwater models requires technical expertise and time-consuming processes. The CGMM Dashboard changes that by putting the model into a user-friendly, interactive website. With just a few clicks, users can place wells on a map, set pumping rates, and run scenarios to see how simulated water levels respond over time.

The dashboard bridges the gap between the District and its technical groundwater model by translating complex hydrogeologic science into clear water levels and drawdown maps, hydrograph plots at well locations, and simulated drawdown reports. With the dashboard we can explore "what if" questions about groundwater in an accessible, data-driven, and reproducible way.

### Summary

These groundbreaking investments made by CUWCD ensure increased accessibility, transparency, and informed decision-making by the Board making CUWCD a leader in groundwater resource management in Texas. As we move into 2026, CUWCD will continue its dedication to building our understanding of the aquifers beneath Bell County. The tools developed will continue to be refined and improved as we build this understanding, and they will be applied to continually improve transparency of data-driven aquifer management decisions.

**Mike Keester, P.G.**
Principal KT Groundwater

## Water in The 89th Texas Legislative Session

*Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts (TAGD) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit membership organization that was created in 1988 to provide a centralized means for GCDs to engage and stay current on the quickly evolving world of groundwater science, policy and management. TAGD currently has 90 GCD members and 45 associate members.*

The 89th Texas Legislature adjourned *sine die* on June 2, 2025, concluding one of the most consequential water-focused sessions in decades. This session, Texas legislators filed a record-breaking 9,014 bills and joint resolutions—the highest number ever filed. Of those, 1,221 ultimately passed both chambers by sine die. Notably, over 300 of the bills filed addressed water-related issues. Governor Greg Abbott vetoed 26 bills, including four that related to water.

A significant change in House leadership this session was the appointment of Representative Cody Harris as chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources. While Chairman Harris had served on the committee in previous sessions, his elevation to chair came amid uncertainty following the departure of longtime water champions Tracy King, Kyle Kacal, Four Price, and others. Many in the water community were concerned that the committee might shift away from its strong focus on water issues that had become the norm over the past several sessions. However, Chairman Harris quickly put those concerns to rest. In the committee's first hearing, he invited representatives from water associations and entities across the state to testify on the state's most pressing water challenges. This early outreach set the tone for a productive session, marked by strong engagement on water policy throughout the legislative process.

*Image provided by Texas Water Foundation.*

On the Senate side, leadership remained steady with Senator Charles Perry returning as chair of the Senate Committee on Water, Agriculture, and Rural Affairs, continuing his well-established leadership and advocacy on water and rural groundwater issues.

Much of the water community's attention was justifiably focused on the passage of HJR 7 (Harris/Perry; Tex. H.J.R. 7, 89th Leg., R.S., 2025 ), the constitutional amendment proposing to dedicate $1 billion per year to the Texas Water Fund, and SB 7 (Perry/Harris; Tex. S.B. 7, 89th Leg., R.S., 2025 ), which significantly expands the authorized uses of the Texas Water Fund. But important progress was also made on groundwater policy and management.

### What's Next for Groundwater in Texas?

With the 89th legislative session behind us, attention now turns to the interim, an important period for shaping the state's future groundwater policy. Shortly after the conclusion of the session, Chairman Harris called a hearing of the House Committee on Natural Resources to hear testimony on a specific permit application to the Neches and Trinity Valleys GCD—a rare move and, to the authors' knowledge, the first time the committee has held a hearing on an individual permit application. Topics of discussion included, but were not limited to, the utility of groundwater availability models, export permit caps, the rule of capture, and how MAG values are interpreted and applied by districts. Additionally, Governor Abbott has called two special sessions to address several vetoed bills and flooding-related issues following the devastating July 4th floods in Central Texas.

Later this year, Speaker Dustin Burrows and Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick are expected to release interim charges that will guide legislative work over the next year and half. *(continued on page 4)*

# 24TH ANNUAL BELL COUNTY WATER SYMPOSIUM

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025**

Since 2001, this symposium has served as a cornerstone event in Bell County, providing insight into local and regional water strategies, policies, and regulatory responsibilities. Legacy partners include Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Bell County, Bell County Engineers Office, and Bell County Commissioners Court, and numerous sponsors.

Join us for the 24th Annual Bell County Water Symposium on Wednesday, November 19, 2025, at the Cadence Bank Center, 301 W Loop 121 in Belton. The symposium continues to serve as a vital forum for stakeholders to address the shared responsibility of meeting the water needs of communities and industries across Central Texas.

## Water Resiliency in Focus

As Bell County navigates growth and climate variability, the need for water supply resiliency is more urgent than ever. Since its inception, CUWCD has invested in science-based research and education, helping citizens, leaders, and policymakers better understand water resources and the benefits of emerging technologies. Local leaders are working together to ensure the long-term viability of precious water supplies for future generations.

## Keynote Speaker

This year's keynote will be delivered by Sarah Kirkle, Director of Policy & Legislative Affairs for the Texas Water Association. Since 2020, Kirkle has worked with TWA members to develop policy positions and advance initiatives at the Texas Legislature. Her career also includes service as Director of Policy and Planning at Texas 2036 and 13 years with the Sunset Advisory Commission. She holds a B.S. in Agricultural Services and Development from Tarleton State University and an M.P.A. from the University of North Texas.

**This event is free, but requires RSVP by November 10, by calling 254-933-0120 or online at www.cuwcd.org.**

## Schedule Highlights

**8:00 AM** – Registration opens in the Assembly Hall. Attendees are invited to enjoy coffee, light refreshments, and educational exhibits.

**9:00 AM** – Formal presentations begin.

Morning sessions will examine Texas water planning and infrastructure challenges, including:

**The 100-Year-Old Elephant in the Room of Texas Water Planning**
Mr. Michael Irlbeck
Director of Business Development, EPCOR

**Brazos G Regional Water Planning: Preparing for Growth, Drought, & Future Demands**
Mr. Tony Smith
Associate Vice President, Carollo Engineers

**Building Water Resiliency: ASR Project Updates from the City of Temple & Fort Hood**
Dr. David Smith, Principal, INTERA
Dr. Neil Deeds, Vice President, Principal Engineer at INTERA

After a networking break, the spotlight will shift to the District's groundwater management strategies and initiatives:

**The District Groundwater Report**
Ms. Whitney Ingram
General Manager, Clearwater UWCD

**Tools and Insights: Data-Driven Groundwater Resource Management**
Mr. Mike Keester
Principal, KT Groundwater

**12:00 Noon** — Enjoy a catered lunch courtesy of our sponsors.

Following a catered lunch and keynote address, the afternoon sessions will tackle pressing policy and regulatory issues:

**Shaping Texas Wate Policy: Legislative Outcomes from the 89th Session**
Ms. Sarah Kirkle
Director of Policy & Legislative Affairs, Texas Water Association

**PFAS Challenges in Focus: Biosolids and Drinking Water**
Ms. Meg Pierce-Walsh
Water Quality/Permitting Practice Leader, Plummer Associates, Inc

**Rural Water in Central Texas: Balancing Expansion and Public Trust**
Mr. Jason Knobloch
Deputy Executive Director, Texas Rural Water Association

## CONTACT US

Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District
Every drop counts!

www.cuwcd.org

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Belton, TX 76513

**Contact the District office if you would like to be added to our e-mail list for more frequent updates.**

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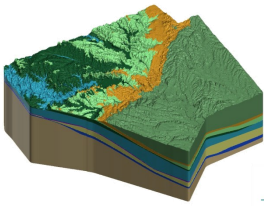
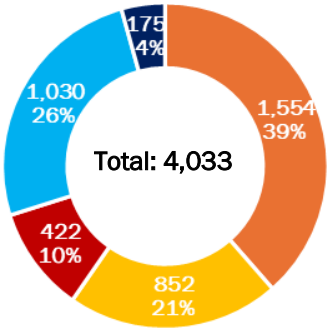
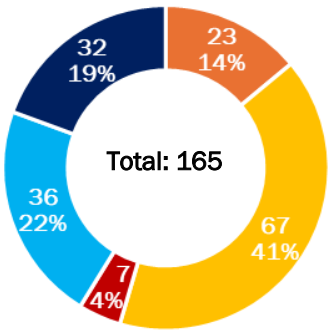
Belton, TX 76513

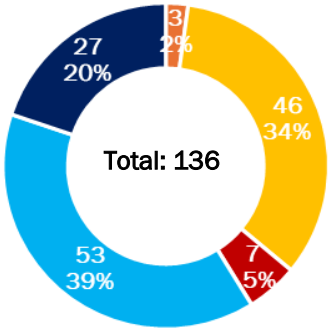
## 2025 Well Registration Totals



- Minor Aquifers & Alluvium
- Edwards BFZ Aquifer
- Glen Rose (Upper Trinity Aquifer)
- Hensell (Middle Trinity Aquifer)
- Hosston (Lower Trinity Aquifer)




## Continued Reports

(continued from page 2)

### Edwards BFZ Management Zone Development

In 2022, CUWCD adopted its first management zones, initially focusing on the Trinity Aquifer. The next step is to define management zones for the Edwards BFZ Aquifer in Bell County. The objective is to build upon previous evaluations within the portion of the Edwards BFZ Aquifer managed by CUWCD to delineate the spatial extents of distinct hydrogeologic conditions that can form the basis for management zones.

### Database Management System Enhancements

The District is making improvements to the database through new tools to more efficiently generate data and reports. District staff will more efficiently filter existing well data, access a new radius search query tool to easily send out notifications, and offer more direct links from our public maps

### Partnership with Baylor University Department of Geosciences

The District continues its longstanding collaboration with Baylor as current research looks at drought sensitivity in the Edwards Aquifer, particularly how groundwater responds to rainfall events—an issue central to refining drought management strategies.

### New Desired Future Conditions (DFCs) for GMA 8

CUWCD is actively participating in GMA 8 efforts to support the development and adoption of new DFCs by May 1, 2026, including the feasibility of adopting DFCs for each established management zone and assessing the impacts of groundwater use in Williamson County on aquifer conditions in Bell County.

**Whitney Ingram**, General Manager
Clearwater UWCD

(continued from page 1)

These charges often shape the water policy landscape leading into the next regular session. There has already been early discussion among stakeholders and legislators suggesting that the 90th legislative session may be particularly active on groundwater policy, with anticipated focus areas including export permits, brackish groundwater permitting, and district legal liability.

**Adam Foster**, Executive Director
Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts

## Proposition 4 on the November Ballot

This fall, Texas voters will consider Proposition 4, a constitutional amendment placed on the ballot by House Joint Resolution 7, passed during the legislative session. Proposition 4 would dedicate a portion of future state sales tax revenue to the Texas Water Fund (TWF), created by the Legislature in 2023 to support water supply, conservation, and infrastructure projects across the state.

The TWF provides grants and financial assistance for a wide range of efforts, including repairing aging water systems, developing new water supply projects, addressing water loss, and supporting conservation and drought resilience initiatives.

If approved, beginning in 2027, when annual state sales tax revenue exceeds $46.5 billion, the first $1 billion above that threshold would be transferred each year into the TWF for 20 years. A vote for Proposition 4 would constitutionally require these transfers to the fund. A vote against Proposition 4 would leave it to the Legislature to decide whether and how to provide additional funding for the TWF in future sessions.