Clearwater Source

Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District

2026 Annual Newsletter | October 2026 | Volume 22, Issue 1

Message from the Board President

Jody Williams is the Board President of Clearwater UWCD. Williams has served as Precinct 3 Director on the CUWCD Board of Directors since 2018.

Since opening the doors in 2002, the District has heavily invested in groundwater science needed to inform good policy. We believe that science is the foundation of effective groundwater management, ensuring protection of this vital resource.

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 $1,026,564 and adopted the no-new-revenue tax rate of $0.002216 per $100 of assessed valuation—about $6.09 annually for the average homeowner. Administratively, the Board also adopted amendments to our District rules and administrative fee schedule which include changes to Rule 1 regarding definitions, Rule 6 regarding exempt wells and permit applications, and Rule 9 regarding spacing and setback requirements.

FY27 begins October 1, with several new projects underway. District staff and consultants will begin work on a Texas Water Development Board grant, updates to the District's Aquifer Data Analysis Tool, and conducting additional groundwater sampling in target areas. This sampling work will help address data gaps and improve understanding of elevated fluoride levels, the freshwater-brackish water interface, long-term water quality trends, and any potential cross-formational flow within the Edwards (BFZ) and Trinity aquifers.

The District's dashboard management consultants will begin work to develop new user-based pumping summaries. Permitted users who are required to enter production amounts will now receive production summaries based on their permit limits, with alerts for amounts approaching or exceeding permitted levels. The District's current drought status for each aquifer will also be displayed through the Permit Summary Card.

District staff have a busy fall planned for District operations. If you have questions or concerns regarding groundwater, it's important that staff hear from you—landowners in Bell County. Please reach out to the office or the District's General Manager, Whitney Ingram, at 254-933-0120. Stop by the office to pick up testing bottles for an annual water quality screening, or set up a time with staff to discuss District rules and learn more about what resources are available to you. The District has data, tools, and models that can help you make informed decisions regarding groundwater.

Jody Williams, Board President
Clearwater UWCD

The Bell County Water Symposium Celebrates 25 Years

Whitney Ingram is the General Manager of Clearwater UWCD. Since joining the District in 2024, Ingram has led District staff in honoring the mission of Clearwater UWCD.

The Bell County Water Symposium began in 2001. The first event, held by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, aimed to inform Bell County residents of the creation of the District, Clearwater UWCD. The mission was to protect Bell County's underground water, promote conservation of underground water, and educate the public about water resources. Since then, the annual event has served as a cornerstone water education and networking event in Bell County, bringing together citizens, thought leaders, and policy makers in a familiar setting. The event is known to provide insight into local and regional water strategies, policies, and regulatory responsibilities. Event partners still include Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Bell County, Bell County Engineers Office, Bell County Commissioners Court, and numerous sponsors.

This year, Bell County celebrates 25 years of hosting the annual Bell County Water Symposium. The 25th year's event will be on Thursday, November 12, 2026, at the Huntington 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.

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.

Keynote Speaker

This year's keynote address will be delivered by Mr. Billy Howe, Associate Government Affairs Director for Texas Farm Bureau. Howe came to Texas Farm Bureau as an associate Legislative director in September 1999. Before coming to Texas Farm Bureau, he worked in the Texas House of Representatives from 1993 until 1999. Howe was promoted to state Legislative director for Texas Farm Bureau in May 2002 and associate director of Government Affairs in 2016.

During the 1995 legislative session, Howe was the legislative aide for Representative John Cook. Appropriations and government efficiency were the primary focus of the office.

(continued on page 2)

Board of Directors

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

Jody Williams - Precinct 3
2018-Present (President)

Dirk Aaron - Precinct 2
2026-Present (Director)

Scott Brooks - Precinct 4
2018-Present (Director)

Jim Brown - At Large
2023-Present (Secretary)

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.

The Bell County Water Symposium Celebrates 25 Years

In 1997, Howe was the lead staffer for House Sponsor, Representative Ron Lewis, on the major water policy legislation, SB 1. In addition, Billy served as the chief committee clerk for the House Committee on County Affairs. Howe served as the legislative aide to Representative Bob Turner during the 1999 legislative session. Agriculture and private property rights were the priority issues. Howe's main areas of focus since joining Texas Farm Bureau have been property rights and water.

Howe has served on multiple stakeholder groups regarding major water issues. He represented Texas Farm Bureau on the 2000 Groundwater Stakeholder Committee. This committee's recommendations became the basis for major revisions to groundwater regulation made by SB 2 in 2001. And, he has served on several Texas Water Conservation Association committees that have developed recommendations for the Texas Legislature. These committees provided recommendations on groundwater regulation, funding the state water plan, long-term permitting, aquifer storage and recovery and other issues.

Howe grew up in the North Central Texas farming community of Itasca, Texas. He graduated from Itasca High School in 1988, and then spent two years at Hill College in Hillsboro, Texas. Howe earned his bachelor's degree in Political Science from Louisiana State University in 1993.

Howe and his wife, Courtney, have two children–a daughter, Peyton, and a son, William.

Symposium Schedule Highlights

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

9:00 AM—Formal presentations begin. Morning sessions will examine the 2027 State Water Plan and legislative priorities in water for the upcoming 90th session, featuring a legislative panel with each of our state representatives.

10:45 AM—After a networking break, we'll receive updates on current projects including the Brazos River Authority's Lake Whitney Reallocation and the ASR study in East Bell County conducted by WCID 1.

12:00 Noon—Enjoy a catered lunch by Thorndale Meat Market courtesy of our sponsors. BBQ brisket and chicken, twice baked potatoes, corn, and coleslaw are on the menu, served with homemade rolls, and tea.

1:30 PM—Following the catered lunch and keynote address, the afternoon sessions will spotlight local groundwater management strategies and initiatives. We will also hear about Williamson County's groundwater data efforts from Honorable Judge Snell.

3:00 PM—The program will conclude with closing comments, evaluations, and door prizes.

We hope you join us for the 25th Annual Bell County Water Symposium on Thursday, November 12, 2026 at the Huntington 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.

This event is free, but requires RSVP by November 5, by calling 254-933-0120 or online at www.cuwcd.org.

CUWCD Receives Grant from the Texas Water Development Board

*This summer, CUWCD received exciting news! A Groundwater Data Collection grant of **$205,221.50** —equal to one-fifth of the District's FY27 budget—was awarded to the CUWCD project titled Integrated Production and Water Level Monitoring for Desired Future Condition Trend Analysis.*

Pursuant to Section 17.25 of Senate Bill 1, enacted by the 89th Texas Legislature during its Regular Session, the Legislature appropriated $3.75 million to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) for each fiscal year of the 2026–2027 biennium, for a total of $7.5 million. These funds are designated to provide grants to groundwater conservation districts for projects and programs involving groundwater research, science, and data collection that support local groundwater management and planning.

CUWCD has been approved to receive a TWDB grant to expand its groundwater monitoring program by pairing production data from selected high-production wells with continuous groundwater-level measurements. The resulting integrated dataset will enable the District to better evaluate aquifer responses to groundwater pumping, support analysis of Desired Future Condition (DFC) trends, and strengthen the technical foundation for long-term groundwater management decisions.

The project will expand continuous groundwater monitoring throughout Bell County through the installation of flow meters at selected production wells and the integration of pumping data with continuous groundwater-level monitoring. Data will be collected in real time and incorporated into the District's existing data management system. Analytical tools will then be used to evaluate groundwater-level trends and characterize aquifer responses to pumping.

By integrating groundwater production and water-level data, the project will improve the District's understanding of the relationship between withdrawals and aquifer conditions. The integrated datasets will also contribute to statewide groundwater data systems and support future updates to groundwater availability models.

Central Texas Water Alliance

Ricky Garrett is the General Manager of the Central Texas Water Alliance (CTWA). Formed in 2025, the CTWA is a regional partnership created to help communities work together to secure a reliable and sustainable water future.

If you've noticed all the new neighbors moving in lately, you already know Central Texas is booming! But with rapid growth comes a big question: where is all our future water going to come from?

To tackle this challenge together, the CTWA was officially signed into law by Governor Abbott. The alliance was built on a simple idea: securing new water supplies is too big of a job for any single town or county to handle alone, but working collaboratively allows everyone to share resources and effectively build for the future.

The alliance is led by a 13-member board. It includes initial sponsors like Bell County, McLennan County, the Clearwater UWCD, and Bell County WCID #1, alongside several local cities like Killeen, Belton, McGregor, Waco, Lampasas, and Copperas Cove.

The CTWA does not have taxing authority. Instead, funding comes from member dues, with future revenue expected from water sales. The board is busy setting up its bylaws and operations. Local engineers have also stepped up pro bono to run a major water supply and infrastructure assessment, which is already about 70% complete.

You can check out upcoming meeting schedules, minutes, and presentations at https://centraltexaswateralliance.org/.

Ricky Garrett
General Manager
Central Texas Water Alliance

25th Annual BELL COUNTY WATER SYMPOSIUM

Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District
Every drop counts!

Thursday, November 12, 2026

FEATURED TOPICS

2027 State Water Plan: Sounding the Alarm on State Funding
Ms. Sarah Kirkle, Director of Policy & Legislative Affairs, Texas Water Association
Mr. Tony Smith, Associate Vice President, Carollo Engineers
Ms. Heather Harward, Founder & Consultant, Heather Harward Consulting

Central Texas Water Alliance: Legislative Priorities for the 90th Session
Honorable Judge David Blackburn, Bell County
Recognition of CTWA Board and Leadership

Looking Ahead to Water in the 90th Session
Sen. Pete Flores, District 24
Rep. Brad Buckley, District 54
Rep. Hillary Hickland, District 55
Honorable Judge David Blackburn, Bell County

Lake Whitney Reallocation
Mr. Brad Burnett, Chief Operating Officer, Brazos River Authority

WCID 1 ASR Study in East Bell County
Dr. Neil Deeds, Vice President, INTERA
Mr. Allan Woelke, Vice President, CDM Smith

The District Groundwater Report
Ms. Whitney Ingram, General Manager, Clearwater UWCD
Mr. Mike Keester, Owner & Hydrogeologist, KT Groundwater

The Williamson County Resource Group
Honorable Judge Snell, Williamson County

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF ENGAGING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, REGIONAL STRATEGIES, & WATER POLICY IN BELL COUNTY

BOOTH EXHIBITS & NETWORKING

CATERED BBQ LUNCH PROVDIED BY SPONSORS

Keynote Address

Mr. Billy Howe
Associate Government Affairs Director
Texas Farm Bureau

25 Years of Groundwater Policy: Balancing Conservation & Private Property Rights

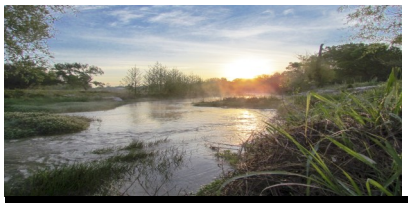
RSVP
254.933.0120

THIS EVENT IS FREE BUT REQUIRES RSVP BY NOVEMBER 5TH.

Doors Open: 8:00 AM
Program: 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Huntington Bank Center
301 W Loop 121
Belton, TX 76513

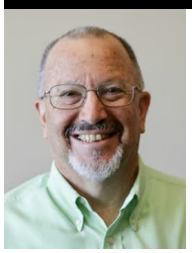
Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District
Every drop counts!
700 Kennedy Court
Belton, Texas 76513



New Information for Realtors: A New Water Notice

In the recent Special-Purpose Review by the Sunset Advisory Commission, Sunset directed the Commission to add language to contract forms to provide prospective buyers with relevant information on groundwater and surface water rights associated with a property. A new Water Notice: Seller's Disclosure About Groundwater and Surface Water Rights has been created. Clearwater UWCD has a webpage that features information and instructions for completing the new disclosure form. This form does not replace the Notice to Purchaser form, mandated by Section 49.452 of the Texas Water Code. The Notice to Purchaser is a required disclosure for ensuring that potential buyers are aware of the property's location within a special taxing district. See the CUWCD website at https://cuwcd.org/education/realtors/ for more information. If you have questions, District staff can readily assist you in completing these forms.

Remembering Dr. Joe C. Yelderman Jr.



CUWCD mourns the passing of Dr. Joe C. Yelderman Jr. For 43 years, Yelderman served as a professor of geology at Baylor, specializing in hydrogeology. He was a gifted educator and mentor who inspired generations of students through his passion for teaching, scientific excellence and environmental stewardship. He retired this year in May.

Dr. Joe C. Yelderman Jr. devoted more than four decades to the study, teaching, and responsible management of groundwater resources. As a professor of geology and hydrogeology at Baylor University, he helped develop a greater scientific understanding of the northern segment of the Edwards Aquifer and the interconnected groundwater and surface-water systems of Central Texas.

His work was especially important to Bell County. Through research, field investigations, technical reports, public presentations, student mentorship, and collaboration with Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District, Dr. Yelderman helped transform limited hydrogeologic information into knowledge that could be used for local groundwater management. His contributions included the study of aquifer hydraulic characteristics, water quality, groundwater flow, Salado Creek and Salado Springs, the Salado salamander habitat, and the relationship between the Edwards and Trinity aquifer systems.

Dr. Yelderman's influence also extended far beyond his individual research. During 43 years at Baylor University, he prepared and mentored generations of geoscientists, many of whom carried his commitment to scientific integrity and public service into their own careers. He brought the university, groundwater districts, consultants, public officials, landowners, and communities together around a shared need for reliable science.

The CUWCD board and staff extend our deepest condolences to his family, colleagues, students, and dear friends.

Aquifer Flow Dynamics Study with Baylor University

Wesmond Williams is currently working under the advisement of Dr. Steve Dworkin, Baylor University Professor. CUWCD has contributed funding and support to this study.

A Bahamian and a Texan water scientist taking a walk along Salado Creek sounds like the start of a bad bar joke. However, that was the reality for the research conducted by one of Baylor University's most seasoned professors, the late Dr. Joe C. Yelderman Jr. and his last graduate student. Before his retirement, they both investigated aquifer flow dynamics within the Northern Segment of the Edwards Balcones Fault Zone (BFZ) Aquifer in the Salado, Texas area to assist the Clearwater UWCD in further study.

To monitor the complexities of groundwater flow in this section of the aquifer, successive water samples were collected throughout this past year and analyzed using carbon age dating and water quality constituents testing (major ions and nitrate).

Sample locations for this study included the following: Mr. Gary Young's domestic well in the unconfined zone (Young well), Bloomer Trailers well in the BFZ (Bloomer well), and sample points in Downtown Salado, the Stagecoach Inn Cave Well (Cave well), Big Boiling Spring, Doc Benedict Spring, Anderson Spring, and Mr. Lowery's domestic well. Throughout the study, all samples met applicable drinking water standards.

Scientific research regarding the downtown Salado springs has historically stemmed from anecdotal stories of putting apples in the Cave well and observing how long it takes to arrive at Big Boiling Spring. This has evolved into Baylor graduate students conducting salamander-friendly dye tracer tests which have shown a strong hydraulic connection among the Cave Well, Big Boiling Spring, Doc Benedict Spring, and Anderson Spring. From the age dating results and another parameter, specific conductance, it appears that Doc Benedict Spring is being influenced by another distinct water source.

Age dating results from the Bloomer well samples exhibited large fluctuations in age dates throughout the study compared to other samples. These significant changes in ages in such a small amount of time proved Dr. Yelderman's past theory that the Bloomer well is located in a dynamic mixing zone of the aquifer.

One key observation involved the Young well water samples. Compared to 2020 data results, the Young well water quality concentrations (sodium, chloride, calcium, and sulfate) observed in this study have increased. Even though his well's water quality remains good, it's a clear example that groundwater beneath our feet is changing. In addition, it is important that we continue to monitor the water we use every day.

Baylor University and I have enjoyed learning alongside Bell County residents and hope to continue this work together.

Wesmond Williams
Master of Science Student
Baylor University