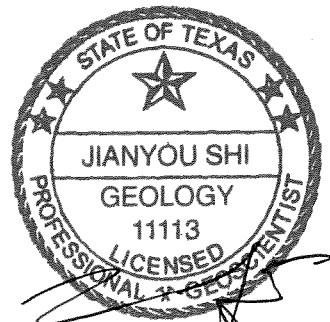


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# GAM RUN 16-008: RED SANDS GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Jerry Jianyou Shi, Ph.D., P.G.  
Texas Water Development Board  
Groundwater Division  
Groundwater Availability Modeling Section  
(512) 463-5076  
May 16, 2016



5/16/2016

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## *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:*

Texas State Water Code, Section 36.1071, Subsection (h) (Texas Water Code, 2015), states that, in developing its groundwater management plan, a groundwater conservation district shall use groundwater availability modeling information provided by the executive administrator of the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) in conjunction with any available site-specific information provided by the district for review and comment to the executive administrator. Information derived from groundwater availability models that shall be included in the groundwater management plan includes:

- the annual amount of recharge from precipitation, if any, to the groundwater resources within the district;
- for each aquifer within the district, the annual volume of water that discharges from the aquifer to springs and any surface-water bodies, including lakes, streams, and rivers; and
- the annual volume of flow into and out of the district within each aquifer and between aquifers in the district.

This report—Part 2 of a two-part package of information from the TWDB to the Red Sands Groundwater Conservation District—fulfills the requirements noted above. Part 1 of the two-part package is the Estimated Historical Water Use/State Water Plan data report. The district will receive this data report from the TWDB Groundwater Technical Assistance Section. Questions about the data report can be directed to Mr. Stephen Allen, [stephen.allen@twdb.texas.gov](mailto:stephen.allen@twdb.texas.gov), (512)463-7317.

The groundwater management plan for the Red Sands Groundwater Conservation District should be adopted by the district on or before May 15, 2017, and submitted to the Executive Administrator of the TWDB on or before June 14, 2017. The current management plan for the Red Sands Groundwater Conservation District expires on August 13, 2017.

This report discusses the methods, assumptions, and results from a model run using version 2.01 of the groundwater availability model for the southern portion of the Gulf Coast Aquifer System (Chowdhury and Mace, 2007). After GAM Run 11-002 was completed for the previous district groundwater management plan, the boundary of the Red Sands Groundwater Conservation District changed. GAM Run 16-008 used the new district boundary (Figure 1) and replaces GAM Run 11-002 (Hassan, 2011). Table 1 summarizes the groundwater availability model data required by statute. Figure 1 shows the area of the model from which the values in the table were extracted. If after review of the figure Red Sands Groundwater Conservation District determines that the district boundaries used in the assessment do not reflect current conditions, please notify the TWDB at your earliest convenience.

### ***METHODS:***

In accordance with the provisions of the Texas State Water Code, Section 36.1071, Subsection (h), the groundwater availability model for the southern portion of the Gulf Coast Aquifer System was used for this analysis. The water budget for the Red Sands Groundwater Conservation District was extracted for selected years of the historical model period (1981 to 2000) using ZONEBUDGET Version 3.01 (Harbaugh, 2009). The average annual water budget values for recharge, surface-water outflow, inflow to the district, and outflow from the district for the Gulf Coast Aquifer System within the district is summarized in this report. Since the Gulf Coast Aquifer System is the only hydrogeologic unit in the groundwater flow model within the Red Sands Groundwater Conservation District, the cross-formation flow between the Gulf Coast Aquifer System and other hydrogeologic units are not applicable in this analysis.

### ***PARAMETERS AND ASSUMPTIONS:***

#### ***Gulf Coast Aquifer System***

- We used version 2.01 of the groundwater availability model for the southern portion of the Gulf Coast Aquifer System. See Chowdhury and Mace (2007) for assumptions and limitations of the model.
- The groundwater availability model for the southern portion of the Gulf Coast Aquifer System contains four layers: Layer 1 (Chicot Aquifer), Layer 2

(Evangeline Aquifer), Layer 3 (Burkeville Confining Unit), and Layer 4 (Jasper Aquifer).

- The Rio Grande River was simulated using MODFLOW-96 river package. The Gulf of Mexico was simulated using MODFLOW-96 constant head boundary. However, neither of these surface features is present in the Red Sands Groundwater Conservation District. As a result, groundwater discharge to surface water is calculated as zero for this management plan analysis.
- The model was run with MODFLOW-96 (Harbaugh and McDonald, 1996).

## **RESULTS:**

A groundwater budget summarizes the amount of water entering and leaving the aquifer according to the groundwater availability model. Selected groundwater budget components listed below were extracted from the model results for the Gulf Coast Aquifer System located within the district and averaged over the duration of the calibration and verification portion of the model run in the district, as shown in Table 1.

- Precipitation recharge—The areally distributed recharge sourced from precipitation falling on the outcrop areas of the aquifers—where the aquifer is exposed at land surface—within the district.
- Surface-water outflow—The total water discharging from the aquifer (outflow) to surface-water features such as streams, reservoirs, and drains (springs).
- Flow into and out of district—The lateral flow within the aquifer between the district and adjacent counties.
- Flow between aquifers—The net vertical flow between aquifers or confining units. This flow is controlled by the relative water levels in each aquifer or confining unit and aquifer properties of each aquifer or confining unit that define the amount of leakage that occurs. Please note that the Gulf Coast Aquifer System is the only aquifer in the groundwater flow model within the Red Sands Groundwater Conservation District and the model assumes no cross-formational flow at the base of the Gulf Coast Aquifer System. Therefore, no cross-formational flow between the Gulf Coast Aquifer System and other hydrogeologic units was calculated by the model.

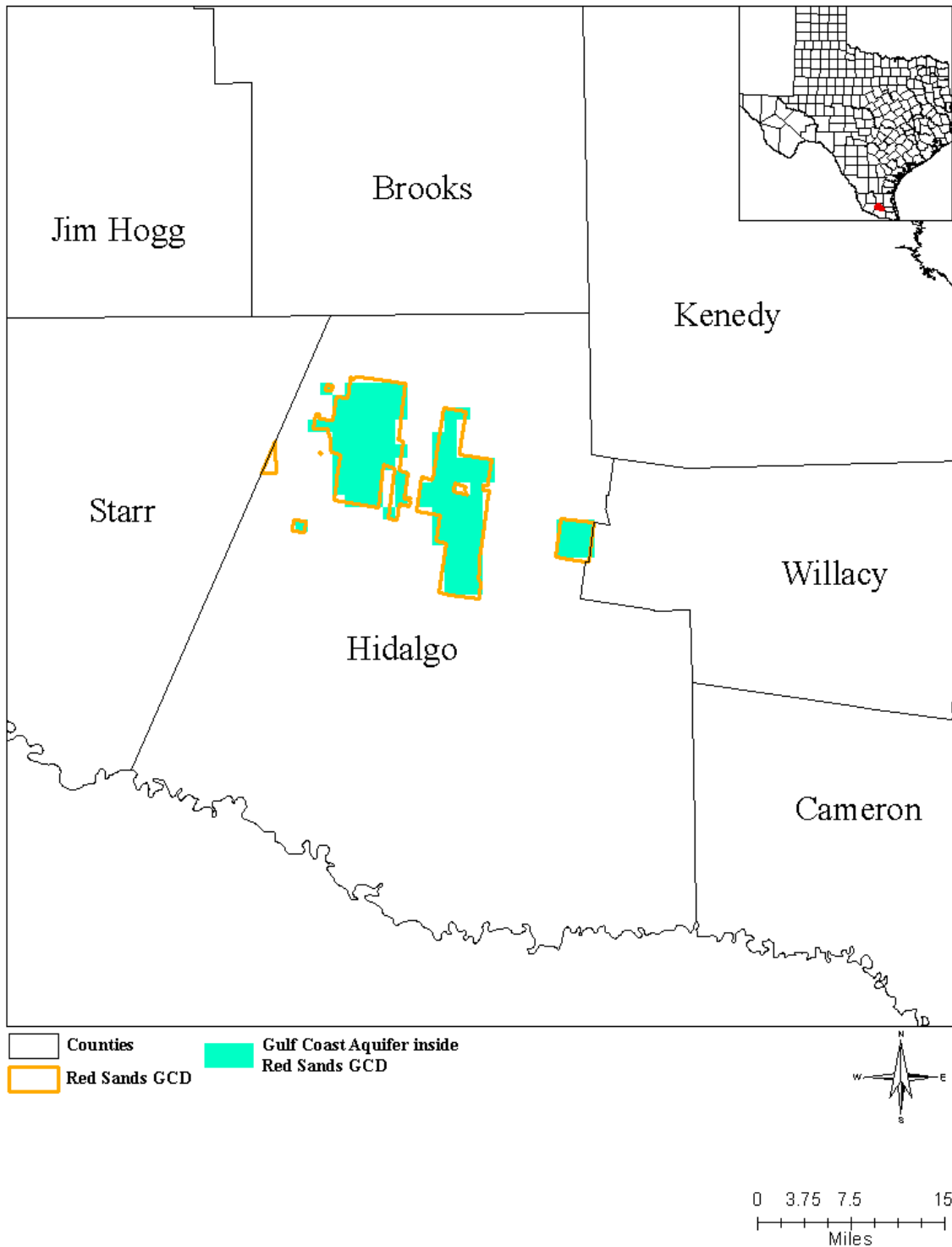
The information needed for the district's management plan is summarized in Table 1. It is important to note that sub-regional water budgets are not exact. This is due to

the size of the model cells and the approach used to extract data from the model. To avoid double accounting, a model cell that straddles a political boundary, such as a district or county boundary, is assigned to one side of the boundary based on the location of the centroid of the model cell. For example, if a cell contains two counties, the cell is assigned to the county where the centroid of the cell is located.

**TABLE 1: SUMMARIZED INFORMATION FOR GULF COAST AQUIFER SYSTEM THAT IS NEEDED FOR RED SANDS GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN. ALL VALUES ARE REPORTED IN ACRE-FEET PER YEAR AND ROUNDED TO THE NEAREST 1 ACRE-FOOT.**

Management Plan requirement	Aquifer or confining unit	Results
Estimated annual amount of recharge from precipitation to the district	Gulf Coast Aquifer System	675
Estimated annual volume of water that discharges from the aquifer to springs and any surface-water body including lakes, streams, rivers, springs, and flowing wells	Gulf Coast Aquifer System	0
Estimated annual volume of flow into the district within each aquifer in the district	Gulf Coast Aquifer System	6,324
Estimated annual volume of flow out of the district within each aquifer in the district	Gulf Coast Aquifer System	6,548
Estimated net annual volume of flow between each aquifer in the district	Not applicable*	Not applicable

\*The Gulf Coast Aquifer System is the only aquifer in the groundwater flow model within the Red Sands Groundwater Conservation District. The model assumes no cross-formational flow at the base of the Gulf Coast Aquifer System. Therefore, no cross-formational flow between the Gulf Coast Aquifer System and other hydrogeologic units was calculated by the model.



**FIGURE 1: AREA OF THE GROUNDWATER AVAILABILITY MODEL FOR THE GULF COAST AQUIFER SYSTEM FROM WHICH THE INFORMATION IN TABLE 1 WAS EXTRACTED FOR THE RED SANDS GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (GCD).**



## **LIMITATIONS:**

The groundwater models used in completing this analysis are the best available scientific tools that can be used to meet the stated objectives. To the extent that this analysis will be used for planning purposes and/or regulatory purposes related to pumping in the past and into the future, it is important to recognize the assumptions and limitations associated with the use of the results. In reviewing the use of models in environmental regulatory decision making, the National Research Council (2007) noted:

*“Models will always be constrained by computational limitations, assumptions, and knowledge gaps. They can best be viewed as tools to help inform decisions rather than as machines to generate truth or make decisions. Scientific advances will never make it possible to build a perfect model that accounts for every aspect of reality or to prove that a given model is correct in all respects for a particular regulatory application. These characteristics make evaluation of a regulatory model more complex than solely a comparison of measurement data with model results.”*

A key aspect of using the groundwater model to evaluate historic groundwater flow conditions includes the assumptions about the location in the aquifer where historic pumping was placed. Understanding the amount and location of historic pumping is as important as evaluating the volume of groundwater flow into and out of the district, between aquifers within the district (as applicable), interactions with surface water (as applicable), recharge to the aquifer system (as applicable), and other metrics that describe the impacts of that pumping. In addition, assumptions regarding precipitation, recharge, and interaction with streams are specific to particular historic time periods.

Because the application of the groundwater models was designed to address regional-scale questions, the results are most effective on a regional scale. The TWDB makes no warranties or representations related to the actual conditions of any aquifer at a particular location or at a particular time.

It is important for groundwater conservation districts to monitor groundwater pumping and overall conditions of the aquifer. Because of the limitations of the groundwater model and the assumptions in this analysis, it is important that the groundwater conservation districts work with the TWDB to refine this analysis in the future given the reality of how the aquifer responds to the actual amount and location of pumping now and in the future. Historic precipitation patterns also need to be placed in context as future climatic conditions, such as dry and wet year precipitation patterns, may differ and affect groundwater flow conditions.

## **REFERENCES:**

- Chowdhury, A. and Mace, R., 2007, Groundwater Resource Evaluation and Availability Model of the Gulf Coast Aquifer in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas: Texas Water Development Board Report 368 (June 2007), 129 p., [http://www.twdb.texas.gov/publications/reports/numbered\\_reports/doc/R368/R368\\_GulfCoastGAM.pdf](http://www.twdb.texas.gov/publications/reports/numbered_reports/doc/R368/R368_GulfCoastGAM.pdf).
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- National Research Council, 2007, Models in Environmental Regulatory Decision Making Committee on Models in the Regulatory Decision Process, National Academies Press, Washington D.C., 287 p., [http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=11972](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=11972).
- Texas Water Code, 2015, <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/docs/WA/pdf/WA.36.pdf>.