

TWDB Response to Stakeholder Comments and Questions
Groundwater Availability Model for the Southern Part of the Ogallala Aquifer
TWDB Contract No. 2001-483-379

1. Stakeholder Comment: Given the scope and nature of the model, too little time was allowed to achieve the very best result.

TWDB Response: Our goal was to develop the best possible model within the available time and budget. We believe this goal was achieved. As our understanding of the aquifer improves and additional data is collected, the models will be updated.

2. Stakeholder Comment: Some areas of the model suffer from a scarcity of quality data input and the distribution of this quality data is not equal.

TWDB Response: One aspect of the modeling effort is a recognition of data gaps as the project progresses which allows the TWDB to identify those areas needing to be addressed via future data collection and best use of local resources.

3. Stakeholder Comment: Under the predictions component of the transient model the report points out a 43% difference between the ac-ft/yr estimate produced by the experts at Texas A&M (248,450 ac-ft/yr) on page 106, attachment B4 for Gaines County versus the 355,323 ac-ft/yr agricultural use for year 2000 as seen on line 16, Table C-1 in attachment C.

TWDB Response: The larger of the two numbers was supplied to the Texas Water Development Board by the Regional Water Planning Group of Region O. This is a projected number instead of an actual value. The last non-projected value used in the model was for the year 1997. The number generated by the Texas A&M group is a long term average irrigation value for Gaines County.

4. Stakeholder Comment: “The veiled threat of reducing pumping by 55%, according to the predictive simulation, that “showed significant saturated thickness remaining throughout much of this region as of 2050” would be disastrous for the local economy.”

TWDB Response: The contractor, Daniel B. Stephens & Associates (DBS&A), used Regional Water Planning Group projected pumpage values for all of the future scenarios required by the Texas Water Development Board contract. The one exception was a seventh scenario not required by TWDB but added by DBS&A in which pumpage was reduced by 45-55 percent. This run was designed to produce a simulation with a small number of dry cells. The regulation of pumping is controlled by groundwater conservation districts. Sustainability may be chosen as the appropriate management philosophy for some aquifers, but in all likelihood it will not

be selected for areas such as El Paso and the High Plains where management at sustainable levels would have enormous economic dislocations.