

Stakeholder advisory forum for the Blaine Aquifer Brackish Groundwater Mapping Project

August 18, 2016 9:00 – 11:00 am

Meeting held at the Bura Handley Community Building, Wellington, TX.

List of Stakeholder Statements (S), questions (Q), and responses (R).

Note: This list is based on meeting notes. A video recording was not made.

1. Q: What is the goal of designating production areas/zones and for the water being withdrawn from these areas?

R: The goal of designating production areas/zones in an aquifer is to reduce the use of fresh groundwater by identifying areas of an aquifer that are not presently being used for municipal, domestic, agricultural, or wastewater injection purposes and which are capable of providing brackish water that could be used for a variety of purposes.

2. Q: Is there a plan for use of the water that will be withdrawn from the production areas in the Blaine project area?

R: HB 30 does not address plans to use the water for any particular purpose or by any specific community. The goal of the HB 30 projects is to identify potential areas in an aquifer that are capable of providing brackish water that could be used for a variety of purposes including drinking water (after desalination) or even agriculture.

3. Q: Would producing water from a production area in the south of the study area affect water levels in the northern part of the aquifer?

R: No. Groundwater modeling in the three potential production areas for 30- and 50-year time periods shows that the areas of influence would not affect the northern part of the aquifer.

4. Q: Since House Bill 30 mentions use of brackish groundwater in the context of drought, would not the Blaine Aquifer be one of the worst possible aquifers in the state for use during such conditions?

R: The Blaine Aquifer is an unconfined aquifer, and, because such aquifers are under the direct influence of climatic factors, is more likely to experience water level declines during drought than a confined aquifer. Nevertheless, in drought, water is a scarce commodity and water of any quality will likely be considered as a potential source of supply.

5. Q: What kind of help would the TWDB need to make the studies better?

R: Any water well data (for example, well location, well construction details, pumping tests, water quality, etc.) that may be available and which could be used in the public domain would be most helpful to staff working on the HB 30 projects.

6. Q: Phrases like “water to be used” were never discussed in the presentation. It is the 800-lb gorilla in the room and should be addressed.

R: While we appreciate the sentiments of stakeholders, the directive to TWDB from the legislature is identify and designate brackish groundwater production zones in areas of the state with moderate to high availability and productivity of brackish groundwater that can be used to reduce the use of fresh groundwater. The ultimate use of the brackish groundwater is not within the purview of the TWDB.

7. S: Stakeholders are asking that the entire Blaine Aquifer be removed from consideration as a brackish groundwater production zone.

R: We will certainly include the sentiments expressed by the stakeholders in our report to our Board members and to the legislature.

8. Q: Who is maintaining the stakeholder list? I had asked to have my name included on the list, but I did not receive notice of this meeting.

R: The stakeholder list is maintained by the TWDB. It is likely that you did not receive the stakeholder announcement because of a glitch in the email software. We were alerted of the glitch when groundwater conservation district staff did not receive the announcements. We have since rectified the glitch and implemented procedures to ensure that it does not happen again in the future.

9. S: It appears that the TWDB tried to sneak-in this meeting past stakeholders. An attempt should have been made to send notification to all the landowners in the area and advertise the meeting in the local newspapers.

R: TWDB did make reasonable efforts within the time constraints of the project to notify stakeholders of the meetings. Nonetheless, we recognize that more could be done.

10. Q: How can stakeholders ensure that potential production areas that were removed from further evaluation after additional data was provided to TWDB will not be re-introduced into the final report?

R: Unless TWDB is provided with compelling evidence or data to demonstrate that the potential production areas cannot or should not be excluded from consideration, the areas removed from further evaluation will not be re-introduced in the final report.

11. Q: In the three potential production areas that are presently being considered in the Blaine Aquifer, is there any provision for landowners in the production areas to be notified?

R: HB 30 does not require TWDB to notify landowners in potential production areas or in the brackish groundwater production zones when they are designated. Consequently, we do not have a process in place to notify landowners.

12. Q: Why was the Blaine Aquifer chosen for study?

R: The Blaine Aquifer was specifically named as one of the four aquifers in House Bill 30 for a study to be completed and reported by December 1, 2016.

13. Q: Can the legislature override the TWDB's recommendations?

R: The legislature can override any and all of TWDB's recommendations.

14. S: Stakeholders are concerned about a misconception that the Blaine Aquifer is a vast pool of brackish water. Instead, the aquifer is fragile and can be depleted quickly.

R: Thank you for the comment. We will make note of it.

15. S: We appreciate that our comments from the last stakeholder meeting in Quannah are being considered and have been included in the draft report.

R: Thank you for your complimentary comment. Stakeholders are an integral part of HB 30 and we are making every reasonable effort to include them in the process.