GAM Run 13-006: Panola County Groundwater Conservation District Management Plan

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February 11, 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Texas State Water Code, Section 36.1071, Subsection (h), 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 to the groundwater resources within the district, if any;
- 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.

The purpose of this report is to provide Part 2 of a two-part package of information from the TWDB to Panola County Groundwater Conservation District management plan to fulfill the requirements noted above. The groundwater management plan for the Panola County Groundwater Conservation District should be adopted by the district on or before December 9, 2013 and submitted to the executive administrator of the TWDB on or before January 8, 2014. The current management plan for the Panola County Groundwater Conservation District expires on March 9, 2014.

This report discusses the methods, assumptions, and results from a model run using the groundwater availability model for the northern part of the Carrizo-Wilcox, Queen City, and Sparta aquifers. Table 1 summarizes the groundwater availability model data required by the statute, and Figure 1 shows the area of the model from which the values in the table were extracted. This model run replaces the results of GAM Run 08-50. GAM Run 13-006 meets current standards set after the release of GAM Run 08-50. If after review of the figures, Panola County Groundwater Conservation District determines that the district boundaries used in the assessment do not reflect current conditions, please notify the Texas Water Development Board immediately.

METHODS:

In accordance with the provisions of the Texas State Water Code, Section 36.1071, Subsection (h), the groundwater availability model for the northern part of the Carrizo-Wilcox, Queen City, and Sparta aquifers was run for this analysis. Panola County Groundwater Conservation District Water budgets for 1980 through 1999 were extracted using ZONEBUDGET Version 3.01 (Harbaugh, 2009). The average annual water budget values for recharge, surface water outflow, inflow to the district, outflow from the district, net inter-aquifer flow (upper), and net inter-aquifer flow (lower) for the portions of the aquifers located within the district are summarized in this report.

PARAMETERS AND ASSUMPTIONS:

- We used Version 2.01 of the groundwater availability model for the northern part of the Carrizo-Wilcox, Queen City, and Sparta aquifers. See Fryar and others (2003) and Kelley and others (2004) for assumptions and limitations of the groundwater availability model for the northern part of the Carrizo-Wilcox, Queen City, and Sparta aquifers.

- The groundwater availability model includes eight layers, that roughly correspond to:

    - the Sparta Aquifer (Layer 1),
    - the Weches Confining Unit (Layer 2),
    - the Queen City Aquifer (Layer 3),
    - the Reklaw Confining Unit (Layer 4),
    - the Carrizo Aquifer (Layer 5),

- the Upper Wilcox Aquifer (Layer 6),
- the Middle Wilcox Aquifer (Layer 7), and
- the Lower Wilcox Aquifer (Layer 8).

- The Sparta and Queen City aquifers and associated confining units (layers 1 to 4) are not substantively present in the district. The reported water budget values for these layers, therefore, are very small or zero. Accordingly, these values are not presented in Table 1.

- In the Sabine Uplift area, the Simsboro Formation (Middle Wilcox Aquifer) is not distinguishable and the Wilcox Group is informally divided into the Upper Wilcox and the Lower Wilcox aquifers (Fryar and others, 2003). In the current version of the groundwater availability model, layers 6 and 7 represent the Upper Wilcox and Lower Wilcox aquifers in this area. Layer 8 is included in the model in this area, but it is of nominal thickness and is not intended to represent the Lower Wilcox aquifer.

- 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 aquifers 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. “Inflow” to an aquifer from an overlying or underlying aquifer will always equal the “Outflow” from the other aquifer.

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 (Figure 1).

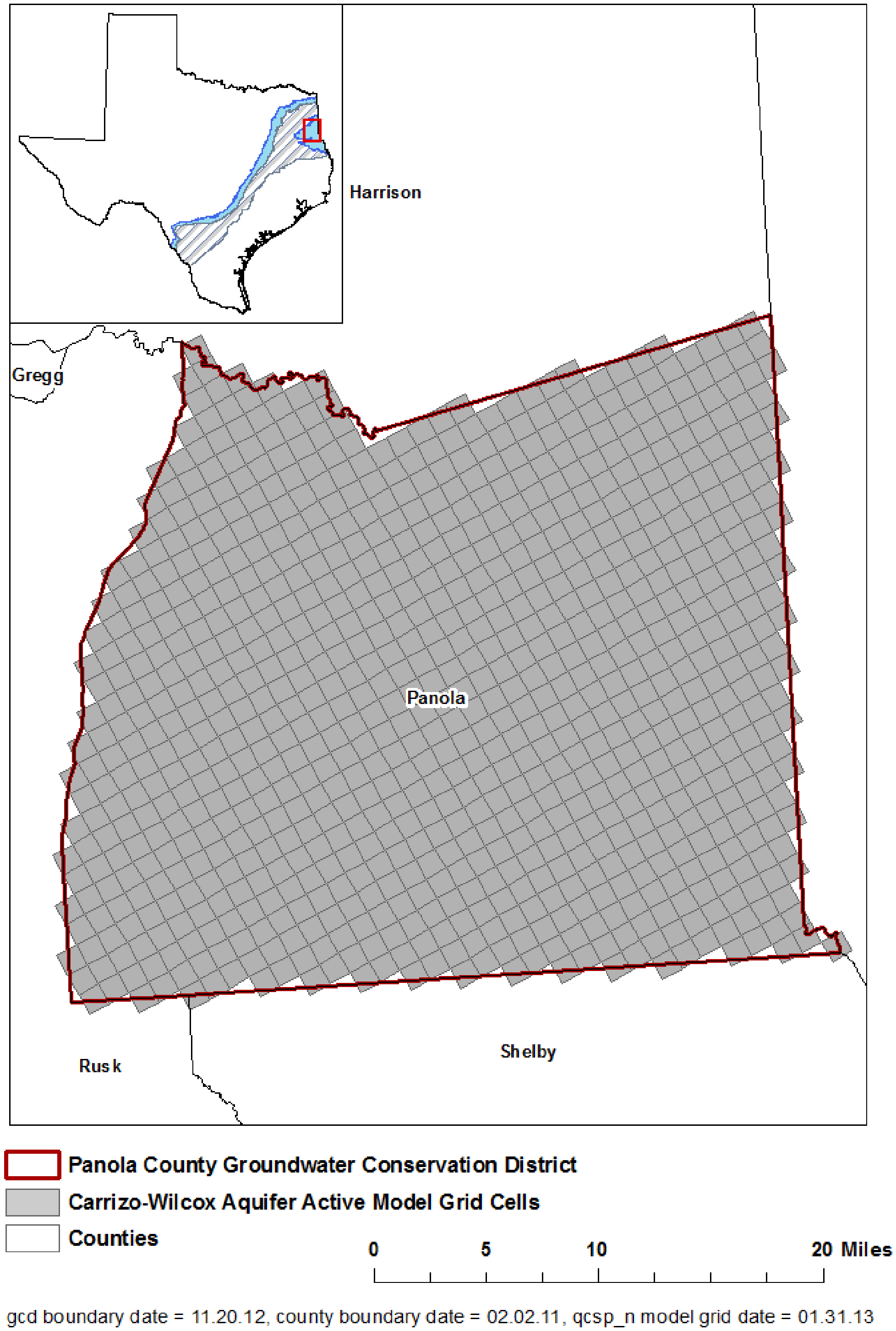

FIGURE 1: AREA OF THE GROUNDWATER AVAILABILITY MODEL FOR THE CARRIZO-WILCOX, QUEEN CITY, AND SPARTA AQUIFERS FROM WHICH THE INFORMATION IN TABLE 1 WAS EXTRACTED (THE CARRIZO-WILCOX AQUIFER EXTENT WITHIN THE DISTRICT BOUNDARY).

TABLE 1: SUMMARIZED INFORMATION FOR THE CARRIZO-WILCOX AQUIFER THAT IS NEEDED FOR THE PANOLA COUNTY GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN. ALL VALUES ARE REPORTED IN ACRE-FEET PER YEAR AND ROUNDED TO THE NEAREST 1 ACRE-FOOT. THESE FLOWS MAY INCLUDE BRACKISH WATERS.

Management Plan requirement	*Aquifer or confining unit*	*Results*
Estimated annual amount of recharge from precipitation to the district	Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer	38,085
Estimated annual volume of water that discharges from the aquifer to springs and any surface water body including lakes, streams, and rivers	Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer	30,580
Estimated annual volume of flow into the district within each aquifer in the district	Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer	5,816
Estimated annual volume of flow out of the district within each aquifer in the district	Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer	3,122
Estimated net annual volume of flow between each aquifer in the district	From overlying confining units into the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer	16

LIMITATIONS

The groundwater model(s) used in completing this analysis is the best available scientific tool that can be used to meet the stated objective(s). 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.

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