

Grassroots Gathering of Water Advocates & GEAA Member Groups Meeting
Saturday, August 16th, 2025 - 11:00 am - 4:00 pm
Alamo College District Office in San Antonio

Meeting Notes

11:00 – 11:30: Lunch

11:30 – 12:00: Welcome, Introductions, & Drought Updates, Marisa and Annalisa

Marisa and Annalisa kicked off the meeting by conducting a moment of silence for the flood victims and remembrance of Ron Duke.

Kellie also mentioned GEAA's Gala and encouraged meeting attendees to join us!

Afterwards, we conducted a round of introductions to the group.

Attendees: Mike Clifford (Zoom), Liz James (Zoom), Gage Brown (Zoom), Milann Guckian (Zoom) Carol Pennington, Laura Sorrell, Priscilla Plumb, Veronia Hawk, Lea Anzalotta, Michelle Molina, Valerie Mendard, Susana Almanza, Amanda Griffin, John Griffin, Alan Montemayor, Victoria Rose, Deborah Youngblood, Stephen Grainger, Linda Fawcett, Carolyn Andrews, Rebecca Gibson, Levin Crawford, Patricia Seidenberger, Cindy Beamer, Mark Cuzanik, Ben Elldrege, Brian Zabcik, Mark Kusey, Annalisa Peace, Marisa Bruno, Kellie Fichter, Rachel Hanes, and Nathan Glavy

12: 00 – 1:00: Legislative Recap & Discussion, Annalisa & Rachel

Learn about the major bills impacting water from the 2025 legislative session. Discuss a response to a new legal context, and reflect on opportunities for the next session.

Rachel Hanes & Annalisa Peace from GEAA presented information on the legislative session.

Rachel gave an overview of the legislative 89th session.

-Came out of the session pleasantly surprised because everyone was very concern with water. They wanted to see drought fixes

- -10,000 bills were filed, 13% passed, 14.5% of bills we were advocating for passed
- -8% bills we were against passed. Appreciate the efforts of all of our member groups!

-SB 7 passed: Big Water Bill, 1 million every year for 20 years, 20 billion total; 50% goes towards water infrastructure issues (leaking pipes, flood infrastructure, etc.), 50% to NEW water supply project. Money will still be able to go to reservoir and pipelines

- These funds will ONLY be advocated if we vote for this proposition on November 4th: Prop 4 ("Vote FOR Prop 4 on November 4th" - Think the 444 ambulance chaser guy)
- Marisa chimed in, reminding others of the park bill that passed last session. HOWEVER, early polls are showing this *not* passing. NEED to do a huge push.
- Could be due to the language in this proposition is not as clear compared to the Park's proposition.
- Mentioned about doing Yard Signs, Bumper Stickers, etc. Make the message CLEAR.

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Rachel continued: Lots of good bills passed, especially with groundwater conservation districts (GWCD) regarding setting Desired Future Conditions and accounting for exempt wells. Two other good bills: higher penalties for over-pumping (think Aqua Texas situation), GWCD can use export fees to address/assess to better protect their groundwater supplies. Another good bill, large water utilities have to conduct more detailed water loss audits. HOAs cannot fine homes for brown lawns.

State Agency Focused Good Bills Passed: Devils River Pristine Stream Bill, clarification in the law related to flood infrastructure projects (recharge/flood dams that also serve as a public water reuse), clarifications on TCEQ wastewater discharge permit focus. Got a budgetary rider passed for TWDB to assess the feasibility of water related to quarries (Study has to be completed by 2027).

Will try to resurrect good bills that died along the process (lack of time) in the next session: PFAS studies, water conservation requirements.

- Bills vetoed by Governor: Hays Trinity GWCD Bills (increase notification requirements, and more authority to raise fees on production). Strong contingent push from the other side, not wanting Hays Trinity to get more power.

Bad Bills passed:

- HB49 (shields the produced water supply chain from liability): small benefit - requires TCEQ to conduct a rule-making process/rules for using produced water (seems to be similar to the TCEQ wastewater permitting process).
- HB2559: Limits City's ability to issue a water moratorium bill to deny the ability to allow development due to water constraints; these are tied to development permit.

Bills That Died to Take Note for Next Session:

- Bill that allowed third-party review of developments bill
- Bill to prohibit cities from prohibiting nonconforming land use
- Quite a few bills to prevent cities/counties from using public funds to mitigate environmental pollution/impacts.
- Ashe Juniper Bill: Exempt Ashe Junipers from the protection of tree ordinances
- 2 Other Group Bills: Death Star Bills, Restrict counties from requirements for safe, helpful development.

You can find more detailed information on these bills from [Rachel's Water Wonks presentation](#).

Rachel mentioned hearing of Carizzo-Wilcox Groundwater and the situation of a large landowner to develop test wells to map out the aquifer.

- Lots of good discussion occurred regarding the rule of capture; legislators seemingly like they want to take some action regarding this/water availability.
- All good bills proposed by Rep Harris related to this: HB215, 216, 217, 218, and 304.

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Going back to Big Water Bill, questions on who would be against funds going to recycling water/ASR: some issues- incentivize further Texas industry to come, and public perception of "recycle water".

Question about the old ETJ Bill and its status: SB 2038 overview occurred from the previous session. Saw lots of bills filed this new session that could have made things worse. Cities, Counties, Republican Senators in DFW showed up opposing it. Bills died this session due to really no party agreements.

1:00 – 1:15: Coffee Break

1:15 – 2:15: Discussion of Flood Fixes, Rachel Hanes & Annalisa Peace:

Rachel started the discussion, emphasizing that we are setting the stage, laying the framework for the 90th legislative session.

- Emphasized we are accepting of reactive measures (sirens, warnings, etc.), but we want to see proactive measures (build away from the river, floodplain area and buy-outs for threatened buildings).

Biggest barrier that we are facing: Counties do not have the authority, can only regulate to the state (outdated) standard; the 2006 International Residential Building Code has been the main regulation they are following.

- We have 3 bill versions: 1) Counties have the OPTION to adopt updated building codes, 2) have higher standards only related to flooding, or 3) adopt ALL codes to the latest building codes/standards.
- Rachel mentioned GEAA created a guidebook for local communities to better understand FEMA's Community Rating Standards (CRS)
 - Guidebook is focused solely on flood insurance (mentioned how it does not cover fire insurance but would be a good addition)

Mentioned how we are having discussions at the County Commissioner level on items above. Related to the bills for this special session, too little time to gather formal commissioner support on bills due to the short time fuse of the special session.

Other Bills we are pursuing related to flooding:

- Another bill we filed during the special session: Allow counties to regulate impervious cover to regulate flooding, promote nature-based solutions. Note: would be optional, would be up to the counties to fully adopt.
 - Idea: Give tax abatements to restrict impervious cover limits?

- 1- An additional bill we want to get filed: Give TWDB input (guidance) if the landowner wants to pull out of FEMA floodplain maps (maps are outdated)

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- 2- Counties over Edwards/Trinity, Hill County GWMA's to meet all requirements of stormwater discharge permits (fully utilize and use stormwater permits).
- 3- Sen Campbell bill potential refiling: Give counties the authority to manage land use management authority to protect hydrologically sensitive areas. (IC limits, restrict development around features, etc.). Potential push for 90th session.
 - a. TWDB Technical Guidance document coming out in October recommending Green Infrastructure that would be appropriate to mitigate flooding.

2:15 – 3:30 PM Open Meeting Time

Brief reports on what each GEAA member group is working on and opportunity to strategize with other groups. Grassroots and GEAA Member attendees who wish to share a problem they are facing in their community and solicit advice, or present a new opportunity or resource for other members, are invited to share during this time.

Note: SM 7/Prop 4 does not consider stormwater as a water source. Election is happening on November 4.

Data Center Discussion, Marisa Bruno

-San Marcos area is experiencing a huge growth, along with Medina County, in the number of new data centers that are in the works.

-Large demand for water and energy. Can these be done in an eco-friendly way?

-HCA is developing a guide for counties/cities related to data center developments.

-Bureau of Economic Geology has been tasked by TWDB to conduct a study to assess data centers; they are working with San Marcos and looking for other case studies.

-Discussion occurred on how to incentivize "green" data center development for counties; tax abatements seem to be the only tool so far.

- Most focused on energy lines/grids. LOTS of energy passing through central Texas.

Real, Edwards, Uvalde Counties Efforts: Howard Solstice Edwards Power Grid Project (765KV Lines)

-Open comment period to September 3

- A Help Sheet has been created by this group to help answer each question.

-Potential of: Moving renewable energy around the state, fixing limitations of the grid in the Permian Basin

-What is this energy grid going towards?

-Another KV Line from San Angelo/Temple looking to feed into the Permian Basin.

Desal Plant in Corpus

-Plant is being put there to benefit the industries

-What to do with the byproduct (Brine)? Discharging just back in the bay?

-Sierra Club is supporting SAWS' expansion of H2Oaks and solar panel expansion.

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HCA Resources when engaging with developers

- One water checklist to help with one water resolution
- Model HOA Language
- Rainwater Harvesting Issue Paper (Cost of rainwater vs water well).
- These resources are available on the HCA website.

Surface Water Discussion (Big discussion focus):

- What can be done to protect our flows (quality, quantity)
- Dam implications
- TCEQ regulates surface waters.
- Ongoing discussion at the legislative levels, GEAA will keep an eye out
- Bills were introduced: people could donate their water rights for "conservation purposes" (did not pass). Allowed groundwater to be placed in the Texas water trust, not a permit/own right (passed but vetoed).
- Lots of rights already exist! It can be attainable, but needs some expertise (kind of like a land conservation easement).
- Litigation would be a huge factor in GWCD getting involved to regulate pumping related to surface water flows (GEAA can look into this and will draft legislation to shield GWCD's from liability similar to produced water liability bill that passed this past session)
- Bass Hearing: Legislatures are realizing the impacts of the current GWCD system.
- Priority for GEAA to raise awareness on this issue.

Sierra Club and Plastics/PFAs

- Be active and speak up against using less plastic.
- PFAs exist and SAWS isn't being too forward with the levels.
- Priorities: climate change, coal in San Antonio, and plastics in the environment.

Logistics of Future Meetings:

- Preference for 4 times of year, both Zoom and hybrid options.
- Next meeting will be over Zoom, Wednesday evenings at 6:00 in October (before the November election).
- Meeting agenda focus will be on Prop 4.

Water Wonks 2026

- Annalisa pushed the idea of highlighting speakers for 2026.
- How to navigate your cities/counties to navigate your local water hub (Marisa, HCA)
- Flooding and downstream impacts
- Highlight a speaker for the State Water Plan?
- Encouraged the group to send us speaker ideas.
- Rain Water Collection (Stephen)
- Atmospheric Water Generators

Other Comments:

- Rain Bees in Comal County has a rainwater harvesting training program. Asking if there was interest in having more programming outside Comal and doing more of this programming. Offering a train-the-trainer approach (would be a great idea for Blanco County).

3:30 PM – 4:00 PM Wrap-up & What's next

4:00 – 5:00 PM Happy Hour at the Back Yard on Broadway