

Spring Creek

UTILITY DISTRICT

December 2024

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



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Example Message



FIRST A WORD FROM THE BOARD

In this last issue of 2024, our featured article deals with the agreement signed, after lengthy negotiations, between the SJRA and the Montgomery County MUDs 88, 89 and Spring Creek Utility District to extend the existing surface water pipeline to one of our joint water plant facilities and start receiving surface water upon completion of that pipeline and necessary adaptation to the existing infrastructure. This article also retraces the history of the regulations that led to the construction of the SJRA surface water treatment plant and the changes to these rules that took place since then.

Next, we are again talking about water conservation. Even though we recently noticed some minor improvements in our water wells level (at least, the levels have not dropped in the last month), we are still in the Phase 2 (Mandatory Water Reduction) of our Drought Contingency Plan and may remain in that phase for a while. This time, we are offering some conservation tips that are more specific to the season.

As, during the holiday season, families and friends are gathering, we thought it might be useful to remind everyone about some potential issues that could cause strain to our infrastructure and potentially affect our residents, in their homes, as well. We recently had a posting on our website regarding F.O.G (Fat, oil and grease) and, in this newsletter, we are talking about these “flushable” wipes and other products that are causing problems!

Finally, we are offering some seasonal tips (winterization and safety), giving you a small peak into our future building and reminding you that the Precinct 3 Constables are there to protect you and your property and that they are offering, free of charge to you, vacation watches. The district board has approved the payment of overtime to increase patrols over the Holidays.

On behalf of the Spring Creek Utility District Board of Directors, I wish you all Happy and Safe Holidays!

Claude Humbert

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD



Claude Humbert
PRESIDENT



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VICE PRESIDENT



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ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Paul Sterling
DIRECTOR

THE SAN JACINTO RIVER AUTHORITY (SJRA) AND SURFACE WATER

Montgomery County Municipal Utility District 89, 88 and Spring Creek Utility District Sign Agreement with San Jacinto River Authority – Groundwater Reduction Plan (SJRA-GRP) for New Surface Water Pipeline Connection.

Montgomery County Municipal Utility District 89, 88 and Spring Creek Utility District (MCMUD 89, 88 and SCUD) are pleased to enter into a landmark agreement with the San Jacinto River Authority – Groundwater Reduction Plan (SJRA-GRP) to build a 1.4-mile pipeline delivering surface water to our joint facilities serving approximately 4,057 equivalent single-family connections (ESFCs). This critical infrastructure project aims to provide residents with an additional potable water source.

The MCMUD 89, 88, and SCUD shared a mutual commitment to securing an alternative potable water source to help alleviate demand on the District’s Evangeline Aquifer water wells, and this project marks a significant step forward in those efforts. By investing in this surface water pipeline project, we will reduce dependence on groundwater.

The surface water pipeline will connect SJRA-GRP’s

surface water treatment plant, which distributes water within Montgomery County, ensuring a consistent, high-quality water supply for residential, commercial, and industrial users.

“This agreement underscores the importance of local collaboration and proactive infrastructure planning to secure water resources for future generations,” said MCMUD89 Paul Cote, President. “We are excited to partner with SJRA – GRP to deliver surface water to our communities.”

“With the recent 2023 drought still in mind, and with the risk of future dry weather that can negatively impact our groundwater resources, this project with the SJRA will secure long-term access to quality drinking water for our residents and local businesses,” said Ryan Tsamouris, MCMUD88 President. “We must approach our groundwater usage in a conservative, sustainable manner, and this partnership will enable us to do just that.”

Quiddity, the MCMUD 89 engineering consultant, is in charge of the joint project and has begun the surface water pipeline’s land acquisition and design phase, with an anticipated completion of 2 to 3 years. In addition to the pipeline project, the districts previously approved the 325,000 gallons water ground storage tank to enhance water production from the Jasper Aquifer. The estimated cost of these projects is \$9.3 million; the cost will be divided equally or an estimated \$3.1 million for each district.





This partnership with SJRA-GRP and the additional improvements reinforces a commitment to water sustainability and represents a positive economic impact on our communities.

How did we get here?

In 2009, the Lonestar Groundwater Conservation District (LSGCD) adopted rules and a regulatory plan, as mandated by the Texas Legislature. The adopted District Regulatory Plan calls for the reduction of groundwater withdrawal throughout Montgomery County to volumes that do not exceed the recharge capabilities of aquifers in the County to prevent the long-term depletion of the aquifers. The initial plan called for a 30% reduction of groundwater use by January 1, 2016.

In response to these requirements, the San Jacinto River Authority ("SJRA") expressed a willingness to assume responsibility to construct and operate a surface water treatment plant on Lake Conroe and a water transmission system to major populated areas of Montgomery County, thus enabling the entire county to comply with the LSGCD requirements. SJRA offered to enter into a contract for groundwater reduction planning, alternative water supply, and related goods and services (the "GRP Contract") with all large water users in Montgomery County to achieve the groundwater pumpage reduction goals.

Approximately 130 larger volume water users in Montgomery County (the "Participants"), including Spring Creek Utility District, accepted the offer to participate and entered the GRP Contract.

The construction of the surface water treatment plant and water transmission system referred to above (the Project) would be constructed in phases. Phase 1 of the Project, which included the construction of the

treatment plant and pipelines to the City of Conroe and the Southern part of Montgomery County, was completed in 2015. Subsequent phases, which would consist of extending the delivery pipelines to additional users and possibly additional treatment plant capacity, have not been scheduled yet.

Certain large volume Participants were "over-converted" to treated surface water while other users were allowed to continue using groundwater. All Participants in the GRP contract, whether they receive treated water or use groundwater only, pay a monthly fee based on water usage. Pumpage fees and surface water rates are set so that Participants are neither benefitting nor penalized for utilizing groundwater, and allowances have been made for Participant's costs of operating and maintaining their wells. The pumpage fees and water service fees received from the Project are comparable, so that all Participants are paying equivalent charges without preference for customers within or outside the areas converted to surface water. This approach minimized the overall cost of the Project.

SJRA has issued bonds to finance the capital costs of the Project. Groundwater pumpage fees and water service fees are used to cover costs of debt service on the bonds as SJRA is not a taxing entity. These fees are reviewed every fiscal year by the GRP Review



Committee (which represents the Participants), based on the annual budget and then submitted to the SJRA Board of Directors for approval.

Spring Creek Utility District currently uses only groundwater and, according to the original contract with SJRA, there were no immediate plans for the District to receive treated surface water from Lake Conroe until at least 2025.

In 2017, the Texas Legislature amended the LSGCD's enabling legislation, changing it from an appointed nine-person board of directors to a seven-member elected board. The newly elected board was supported by entities who fought against the rules set by the former board. In 2019, a District Court invalidated the reduction rules and, once the final judgment was entered, the LSGCD eliminated the requirements for new districts or new developments, to be part of a Groundwater Reduction Plan (GRP) such as the SJRA-GRP contract the SCUD participates in.

In the meantime, multiple users/participants had filed lawsuits against the SJRA and refused to pay the entire fees approved by the Authority. As mentioned earlier, the SJRA has no taxing authority, and all costs must be covered by the fees charged to the participants in the GRP contract. In 2019, the SJRA/GRP decided to reduce the surface water production in order to balance the budget by reducing expenses until legal costs return to a more normal level and payment of past due amounts are realized. The surface water treatment plant has a

design capacity of 30.0 million gallons per day (MGD) and, in 2017, had an average production of 19.7MGD. Production was reduced initially to 12.0 MGD and, through operational improvements, increased to 13.0 MGD in 2021, and has stayed at that level since then.

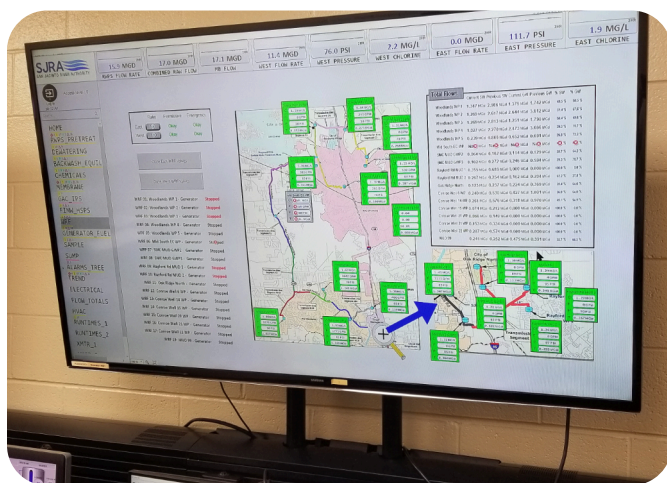
Initially, it was anticipated that surface water would be delivered to other GRP participants in 2025 and that the surface water treatment plant capacity would be expanded in multiple phases; however, as there are no longer any mandatory requirements to reduce groundwater usage, for potential users to connect to existing surface water network, the 3 districts had to negotiate a separate agreement with SJRA under the existing SJRA GRP Contract as a "Non-Mandatory Connection".

Per the agreement between SJRA and the 3 districts (MCMUD 88 & 89 and SCUD), the SJRA will allocate 200,000 gallons of surface water per day (gpd) to the districts. This represents a relatively small percentage of the total needs of our area, and we are hoping to obtain a larger quantity when the SJRA is able to increase the surface water plant production. These 200,000 gpd became available when one recipient could no longer receive surface water to their plant due to a fire and decided to release their allocation to other users.

The pipeline to the district joint facilities will be designed to accept a much larger quantity of water, not only to allow for increased surface water allocation to the 3 districts, but also to extend delivery of surface water to other neighboring districts in the future. The demand for alternative sources of water is there and it is not a matter of whether we will need to use surface water or not, but when we will have to do it!

MCMUD 88, MCMUD 89 and SCUD, together, are taking the steps to ensure that future generations have access to reliable sources of water in sufficient quantities and are using multiple strategies to do so: water conservation programs, water re-use projects, deeper wells in different aquifers, surface water, interconnect with other districts.

Claude Humbert
President of Spring Creek Utility District





WINTER WATER CONSERVATION TIPS

We often think of the holidays as a time of abundance; however, we usually never consider the implications of the weather and the impact on the water supply. In Spring Creek Utility District (SCUD), we are still in the Drought Contingency Plan Stage 2. This is because the water wells are still seeing lower numbers. This is why as a District SCUD is still focusing on water conservation even in the winter months.

In the Home

- Don't ignore leaks, especially in the winter months. Leaks can be caused by broken pipes or valves. A slow drip can waste as much as 170 gallons of water each day and add to the resident's water bill. By using their [Smart Meters](#), Residents can set up leak alerts and monitor their water usage trends to see any problems that may arise.
- While doing laundry, use cold water as often as possible to save energy and conserve hot water for uses that cold water cannot serve. Conventional washing machines can use up to twice as many gallons of water per load compared to high-efficiency machines. Always wash full loads of laundry.
- Dry scrape dishes and do a light rinse instead of rinsing all scraps down the disposal. Run the dishwasher only when full. This practice will not only save residents water, but will also save energy usage, detergent, and money!

Outdoors

- Taller grass holds moisture more efficiently. In the winter months, hold off on mowing for longer to allow the lawn to retain more moisture.
- Mulching in the winter months to retain moisture and insulate roots of trees and shrubs can benefit plants in many ways. This method also assists in weed control and reduces run-off.
- Adjust sprinklers for the winter months to decrease watering times. During the winter, hand watering may be appropriate for some plants rather than using the automatic sprinkler system.
- Don't use water to clean patios and sidewalks, especially since this has a risk of creating ice in the winter. Instead, use a broom.

NO WIPES IN THE PIPES

Many toilet paper alternatives such as “flushable wipes”, wet wipes, sanitary napkins, and even paper towels cannot safely be flushed down the toilet. Wet wipes flushed down toilets contribute to many sewer blockages in sanitary sewer lines, and even your home.

Wet wipes or flushable wipes, that claim they are “safe for flushing” can still cause serious damage to your home’s plumbing. Flushing wipes down the toilet might cause an immediate issue, however, the problem can arise later as the wipes move through the sewer system. These wipes don’t dissolve, and ultimately clump together causing pipe clogs. If these sewage backups and overflows lead to overflows inside homes, it can lead to health risks for residents and their families.

When the wipes make it to the sewage treatment plant, the facilities become overworked trying to process the solid waste that doesn’t breakdown. The result of flushing these products could mean major wastewater treatment issues for your individual home and for your District’s wastewater treatment facilities. By flushing any products other than toilet paper, we create not only inconveniences in services but also incur very costly repairs.



Examples of things you should not flush are:

- Baby products
- Cotton products
- Feminine hygiene products
- Contraceptives
- Diapers
- Dental floss
- Paper towels & tissues
- Hair
- Gum
- Medications
- Cat litter
- Cigarette butts

The items listed are considered “non-biodegradable”, meaning they can’t be broken down organically. The ability for materials to be broken down organically is important as wastewater treatment plants use micro-organisms to break down, feed on, and remove contaminants and pollutants from the waste. Micro-organisms cannot break down the items mentioned above, and therefore they damage the equipment in the plants leading to costly repairs to clean and replace this equipment.



Remember, just because the package says “Flushable”, doesn’t mean “Biodegradable”

HOME WINTERIZATION TIPS

Being in Texas, we don't often think about winterizing our homes or ourselves in time for the holidays. It's important to remember a few things when preparing for the winter months:

People

During cold snaps it's important to remember to cover your head and extremities and they are the most likely to suffer from the cold. Keep your home warm and comfortable, and if you have two floors you may need to move downstairs to keep warm. Avoid going outside when possible, keep appropriate extra clothing with you. Consider keeping extra sweaters or blankets in your vehicle in case of an emergency.

Pets

Bring pets indoors! If it's too cold for you, it's too cold for your pet! Pets are smaller than us and have less overall body heat, therefore more likely to succumb to hypothermia despite their fur. Bundle your dog or cat in sweaters and add extra blankets to their bed. Insulate the outdoor pet areas and create warm areas for your dog or cat. Remember, Pets have no business outside if it's too cold for you.

Pipes

When water freezes, it expands and sometimes leaves behind broken pipes and costly bills regarding the lost water. Open kitchen cabinets and bathroom sinks to allow warm air to reach the pipes. This can help prevent pipes from freezing over and causing damage that leads to costly repairs. If lines are found

frozen, residents can slowly reheat them over time with a small space heater. Disconnect drain hoses from outdoor spigots. Home improvement stores usually offer protective coverings for outdoor pipes. If you have an irrigation system, make sure your lines are cleared of water. Most irrigation specialists offer a blowout service to clear the line of standing water to ensure the prevention of costly damage.

Irrigation shut off valves and backflow devices often cause the most common issues during a hard freeze.

Residents can:

Turn off the shut-off valve. Most residential devices have two shut-off valves. These are typically covered in blue on the valve handles and located before and after the back flow device.

Release the water pressure, with a screwdriver release the water from the bleeder valves (circled in black on the image). The bleeder valves are usually located under the top of the backflow device. If the water does not stop flowing you may have not shut the valves off completely.

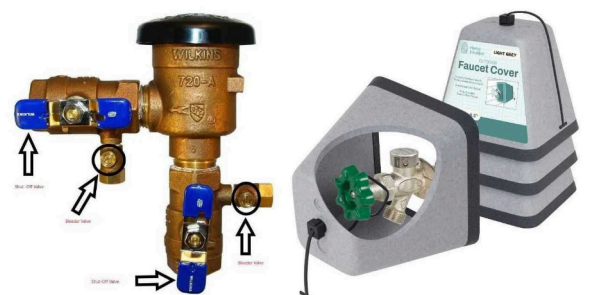
Leave the smaller bleeder valve open, this will let the any remaining water in the line expand without breaking the device.

Plants

Insulating, fertilizing, and watering are the best ways to prepare your plants for winter cold snaps. Cover large plants with sheets to protect and insulate them from the cold and insulate the roots with fallen leaves or bark. Use fertilizer designed for cold weather to nourish your plants, and water plants a couple time a week to prepare them for cold season. Cold plants don't always need as much water as they do in the summer, so keep an eye on soil moisture levels during the winter just as you would the summer.

Pool

Running the pumps 24/7 is an important step in keeping the water circulating and preventing freezing. Frequently clean debris from the skimmer and talk with your pool specialist about winterizing and any chemical alterations that may be required for your pool.



A PEAK AT THE INSIDE OF THE FUTURE BUILDING

The design of our future district building is nearly completed, and our contractor has submitted the required documents to the various permitting entities. At this time, the contractor is finalizing pricing with the various subcontractors who will be working on this project.

Below is a rendering of the meeting room (about 1890 sqft) which will have a maximum capacity of approximately 80 people.



CONSTABLE UPDATE

The Spring Creek Utility District (SCUD) Board of Directors voted to increase the budget for the constables over the Holidays (December and January) to accommodate for vacation watches and increased patrols for porch pirates.

The Board of Directors is encouraging residents to take advantage of the additional presence in their community by utilizing the vacation watches when applicable.

To learn more about free vacation watches [click here](#).

What is a Porch Pirate?

Porch Pirates are people who steal packages from other people's homes. This is a crime of theft like any other. Why do people do this? Often Porch Pirates are hoping there is valuable merchandise in the packages they are stealing. There is an increase in package thefts during the holiday season as more people are ordering online and having items delivered to their homes.

What can I do?

Have packages held at your local post office

Have your packages held at USPS during the holidays if possible or at a secure delivery location if through another service to protect your items.

Install security cameras

Installing home security is a great way to deter package theft. Equip your home with a sign stating your house is under surveillance. Even if the package is stolen, the

video evidence can be beneficial to law enforcement to track down thieves and repeat offenders.

Don't leave packages left unattended for long periods of time

If you are expecting a delivery, consider being home during the delivery window or setting the delivery window for a time someone will be in the home to receive the item.

Ship the item to the store

Retailers can hold items and require proof of purchase or identification before pickup. This is a sure way to protect your items from porch pirates.

Require a signature

Many delivery companies will offer the option to require a signature upon delivery of a parcel. This option may be beneficial to those who are looking to deter thieves from package theft.

If you fear your package has been stolen, file a report with your local police department and the delivery company. Depending on your delivery service, they may offer to reimburse you for your losses.



Reminder: Don't forget to request a free Vacation Watch service for your home while you're away! Simply [fill out the form](#) and provide detailed information about your home to ensure its safety.

HOLIDAY GREETINGS



Extra Safety Tips:

- Always keep your gas tanks full.
- Check tire pressures and ensure they are at the right pressure during freezes.
- Always keep blankets, jumper cables, and a phone charger in the car in case of an emergency.
- Check local road conditions at www.houstontranstar.org. State highway information is also available at www.drivetexas.org.
- Never leave a space heater unattended.
- Don't overload outlets or breakers.
- Do not power space heaters with extension cords or power strips.
- Do not leave candles or the fireplace burning unattended.
- Always turn off space heaters when unattended or going to sleep.
- Never use an oven or stove to keep your home warm.
- Practice safety when handling fireworks
- Always check your smoke detector batteries
- Add water to live trees in the home so they do not become a fire hazard

Just Say **NO** to
FAT, OIL, &
GREASE
Down
The **Sink**

Did you know? F.O.G. (Fat, Oil, and Grease) causes a buildup that clogs your pipes and can cost the district hundreds of thousands of dollars in costly removal and repairs. Avoid putting F.O.G. down the drains! You can bag, toss, or can small amounts of oil. Take large amounts to a hazardous waste disposal sites in your area!

Can it. Bag it. Toss it.