

# The Waterline

The Newsletter of the Travis County Water Control & Improvement District 17

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Winter 2012

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## Preparing your Irrigation System for the Winter

Most residents in Central Texas irrigate their landscapes at least every few weeks through the winter months, and with the anticipated dry weather, this winter will be no exception. Normal Texas weather conditions will not cause the need for irrigation systems to be drained or turned off at the backflow device, however, **YOU SHOULD TURN OFF YOUR SYSTEM AT THE CONTROLLER WHEN FREEZING TEMPERATURES ARE FORECAST** to make sure the system will not try to run during a freeze. If the system runs, it could cause layers of ice to form on your plants and damage them.

Residents who have systems equipped with above ground backflow prevention (Reduced Pressure Zone devices [RPZ]) must make sure equipment is protected from freezing. Most people know that the side pipes need to be wrapped with insulation, however, the valve itself is located in the center, and is susceptible to freezing also. Because these devices drain water from the bottom of the valve and therefore cannot be fully wrapped, the best way to protect them is with an open bottom RPZ insulated pouch which simply slips

over the top of the entire device and attaches to the ground with some small stakes. Adding a layer of mulch around the base of the pouch will help seal off wind.

For additional protection, an insulated box can be placed over the pouched device with another layer of mulch at the base. These pouches and artificial backflow enclosures can be made or purchased locally.

Insulating boxes may also be purchased in the form of various decorative faux rocks which can be left in place year round. With this system in place, your RPZ valve is protected from freezing weather and can operate normally whenever you run your irrigation system.

If you don't have an insulated pouch or box and freezing weather is predicted, turn off your irrigation system and lightly wrap your RPZ in an old towel or blanket. (Tightly wrapping the blanket eliminates the air gap between the blanket/towel and the device and leaves the device vulnerable to cold wind.) Use tape or string to tie the towels or blanket in place. When the weather warms up and you are ready to irrigate again, remove the blanket. It is important to remember not to block the drain port at the bottom of the device when you are irrigating.

BACKFLOW, PIPE INSULATION

**INSULATION ACCESSORIES**

- Insulated Pouches
- Vents
- Heating Cables

**NEW! PRO-R™ Thermal Wall Construction Insulated Rock Enclosures**

**NEW INSULATES**

**High Quality Backflow Insulation Protection Bags Offer Unbeatable Value!**  
**Perfect For Backflow Valves, Water Well Heads, Irrigation Valves Etc**



### Mandatory Watering Restrictions MUST CONTINUE

Stage 2 drought restrictions remain in affect and District 17 must continue the mandatory One-Day Watering Schedule in accordance with its Water Conservation and Drought Contingency Plan until further notice. Should there be a change to this schedule, customers will be notified by mail in their water bills and on the WCID 17 website as well as on the HOA websites. All customers need to be extremely aware of all outdoor water use and limit it to their one assigned watering day. Your conservation efforts will also help keep water tank levels higher for optimal fire flow if needed. For more information on water conservation visit [www.wcid17.org](http://www.wcid17.org).

**Current Watering Calendar**

**Residential**

Odd Numbered Address – Saturday  
Even Numbered Address – Thursday

**Mandatory Stage 2**

**Commercial, Multifamily & HOAs**

Tuesday

Adjust your automatic irrigation system to water on your day before 10 am or after 7 pm

**NO ONE** should water between the hours of 10 am and 7 pm

# Travis County WCID 17

## Drought Update Record Drought Continues

2011 brought the Hill Country and Lake Travis area unprecedented heat and a drought which ranks among the most severe in Texas history. April temperatures were the warmest ever recorded for this area followed by the 2nd hottest June, hottest July and August with a continuous 90 days of over 100° temperature recorded. While the area did get some rain in December, the lakes remain at the same levels they were last summer.

Some good news is that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has signed an emergency order approving LCRA's request to cut back or cut off Highland Lakes water to downstream rice farmers in 2012 if the drought does not improve significantly, allowing deviation from its 2010 state-approved Water Management Plan to:

- Cut off Highland Lakes water to farmers in the Gulf Coast and Lakeside irrigation divisions if the lakes continue less than 850,000 acre-feet of water on March 1, 2012 (there is currently about 741,000 acre-feet combined storage); or
- Allow a reduced amount of Highland Lakes water to be pumped from the Colorado River to the four downstream irrigation operations served by LCRA if the lakes contain between 850,000 and 920,000 acre-feet of water on March 1, 2012.

If a reduced amount of water is made available for rice farmers:

- It would only be available for the first crop of the season (a second crop would be subject to LCRA Board approval), and
- Pumping would not begin before April 1 and would last no longer than 145 days or until 125,000 acre-feet is pumped.

Should the lakes contain more than 920,000 acre-feet of water (an acre foot is the amount of water which would cover 1 acre of land to 1 foot in depth) or 325,850 gallons on March 1, LCRA would manage the water according to the procedures in its Water Management Plan approved by TCEQ in 2010.

The current lake level in the two water storage lakes, Travis & Buchanan, is about 741,000 acre-feet of water and is the third lowest level in history. The level of Lake Travis still remains in the 626 foot range (the lake is full at 681 feet), but with continued dry weather it could start its downward trend again dropping to the lowest level in history by spring 2012 unless there are significant rains. If Lake Travis drops to 600,000 acre-feet of storage, LCRA will order additional usage cutbacks to try to maintain lake levels.

## Preventing Sewer Backups

Most sewer lines back up now and then, usually because of soap, grease, and other materials that get washed or poured down the drains. You can prevent backups with a few simple safety measures:

- Know where your sewer cleanouts are located so you can find them quickly in an emergency.
- Make sure cleanouts are capped so dirt and debris do not get in the pipes.
- Don't plant trees near the sewer line.

If you live in an area prone to backups, you may want to get a pop-off valve installed. A pop-off valve opens automatically to relieve pressure in the line outdoors if there is a backup to minimize damage inside the house.

## WCID 17 Board Actions

### October 20, 2011

- Authorized the issuance of the Steiner Ranch Defined Area Unlimited Tax Bonds, Series 2011 in the amount of \$2,350,000.
- Approved Taylor Morrison's contract award to Ross Construction Co., Inc. for the Steiner Ranch River Dance Phase 7B-2 water, wastewater and drainage improvements.
- Approved an Order regarding amendments to the Personnel Policy of WCID 17 in accordance with recent legislative changes and employment law.
- Approved waiver of one-half living unit equivalent fee for homes destroyed in the Steiner Ranch fire of September 4, 2011.
- Authorized a Resolution for Travis County Central Appraisal District to reappraise homes declared by the Texas Governor to be in a natural disaster area.
- Authorized an Interim Agreement with Hurst Creek Municipal Utility District to transport, treat and dispose of municipal sludge at the Flintrock plant.
- Authorized the General Manager to write a letter to the City of Austin and if necessary to the Public Utility Commission protesting the potential electric rate increases by Austin Energy and/or to sign a joint letter with other utilities or residential customers. (Follow this story online at [www.wcid17.org](http://www.wcid17.org))
- Authorized preparation of an application for financing the Flintrock Wastewater Treatment Plant expansion and Water Treatment Plant.

### November 17, 2011

- Heard from Jeffrey Lane, Larry Whitaker and Jeff Kantoff regarding their opposition to fluoridation of drinking water.
- Held a Public Hearing regarding taxation of Goods-in-Transit.
- Called for a workshop to be held in January, 2012 regarding Fluoride in the drinking water to hear from experts of both sides; for and against.

### December 15, 2011

- Approved Policy Committee's recommendations for amendments to WCID 17 policies concerning metering, rates and impact fees to multi-family housing developments and privately owned lift station(s) and/or grinder station(s).
- Awarded the contract for the Flintrock Trace waterline improvements to Nelson Lewis.
- Authorized execution of a First Amendment to Structure Lease Agreement between WCID 17 and AT&T for an existing antenna location in Steiner Ranch.

For complete minutes visit [www.wcid17.org](http://www.wcid17.org), Agenda and Minutes 

## Permit and Inspection Reminder

With spring home improvement time coming up, please remember that plumbing permits and inspections are not only required for new construction, they are also required for alterations to plumbing, and for the installation of pools, water heaters, and irrigation systems. These inspections are performed by WCID 17 for all properties in the district (even those in the City of Austin limited purpose ETJ.) Call the WCID 17 plumbing inspection coordinator, Virginia, at 512 266 1111, extension 10 for more information.



# Travis County WCID 17

## Board of Directors Election

Travis County WCID 17 is now accepting applications for positions on the ballot for the May 12, 2012 general election. There are two open at large positions on the Board of Directors. Elected Directors serve a four year term and are responsible for adopting and evaluating policies, establishing tax rates as well as other rates and fees, facility planning, and communication with the community, regulatory authorities and other state agencies. Board members meet a minimum of once per month and are required to serve on at least two special purpose committees.

An applicant must be at least 18 years of age, a resident of the state of Texas, and own land in the District subject to taxation. Interested applicants should contact the General Manager, Deborah Gernes, at (512) 266-1111, extension 13 or [dgermes@wcid17.org](mailto:dgermes@wcid17.org). Application forms and Texas ethics commission campaign forms are available at the District office at 3812 Eck Lane, Austin TX 78734. Deadline to submit application to the District office is March 5, 2012.

## Meet The Staff 2011 Top Employees

Three WCID 17 employees were recently recognized as the top performers of 2011 and presented with awards in December.



### EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Abron Mack, Maintenance Electrician. Mack's expertise, attention to detail and high level of commitment to quality won him the Employee of the Year honors. Mack consistently performed beyond expectations and set the bar high for his fellow employees. In his time off, Mack is happiest when working with his church.

### CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARD

Juan Sanchez, Utility Technician. Juan is known as a jack of all trades, completing work orders, setting meters, helping the distribution team, performing bacteriological and line tests and inspecting construction work. As Juan works independently, interacting with all types of customers including residents, contractors, builders and plumbers, who say he is quick, thorough and courteous even though he often has to enforce construction standards. Juan is the proud father of a seven year old son and a new-born baby girl.



### SUPERVISOR OF THE YEAR

Bradley J. Schwab, Water Quality and Compliance. Brad is involved in all aspects of water operations, always thorough, never failing to follow up. Brad works well with customers, handling all inquiries quickly and completely. When he's not working, Brad can be found fishing.



## Does my tap water need additional treatment?

For most people, the answer is no. Safe Drinking Water Act Standards are set to ensure your water is safe and WCID 17 water meets or exceeds all these standards. Be sure to get the real facts from your water provider before purchasing a system to remove things that are not in the water. You can read the WCID 17 Annual Water Quality Report at [www.wcid17.org](http://www.wcid17.org) using tab: Water Quality.

### Water Quality Facts

**Pharmaceuticals** – WCID 17 pumps water from Lake Travis. Because of the Highland Lakes Ordinance, no one is allowed to discharge treated wastewater effluent into the lakes and as a result, these compounds have not been found in Lake Travis.

**Pesticides** – WCID 17 routinely tests for over 100 volatile organic compounds including pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. Tests consistently show non-detectable levels.

**Radioactive Isotopes** – Tests for radioactive isotopes Gross Alpha, Beta and radium are performed routinely and are always under the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) levels.

**Heavy Metals** – WCID 17 tests for 20 metals from Antimony to Zinc. None of these are found in significant levels. Lead and copper levels are consistently significantly below required levels and metals like mercury test extremely low also.

**Hardness** – Hard water is water that has a high mineral content; the hardness level is determined by measuring the amount of calcium and magnesium in the water. These minerals enter the water by leaching out of the rock formations.

Lake Travis water is considered hard to very hard and can show ranges of 179-250 parts per million or 10.5 – 14.6 grains per gallon. While hard water is not a health hazard, over time it may cause scaling in pipes and reduce the efficiency of detergents. A water softening device can reduce or eliminate hardness.

**Giardia/Cryptosporidium (single celled parasites)** – State and Federal water regulations require that source water be tested for and treatment processes be used to remove these contaminants to a 99.99 percent surety. WCID 17 uses a membrane microfiltration system and chlorine disinfection to eliminate these contaminants. Lake Travis water has also been tested for these contaminants and results have shown extremely low levels.

**Chlorine / Chloramines** – WCID 17 uses chlorine and chloramines to disinfect the water. If for any reason these chemicals pose a problem, a relatively inexpensive faucet mounted filter will remove most of these compounds.



**Fluoride** – WCID 17 adds fluoride to the drinking water at 0.7 mg/p (parts per million,) the recommended optimum level for helping to prevent dental disease. Because fluid intake is in proportion to body weight, infants consistently consuming formula mixed with tap water may ingest fluoride at levels above the amount recommended. WCID 17 recommends use of distilled water for infant formula preparation and encourages parents to speak with their pediatrician about the type of water appropriate for the formula they are using.

# Travis County WCID 17

WCID 17 Improvement & Upgrade Projects	
<b>Hudson Bend Area Waterline Improvements</b>	Eck Lane – 8,300 feet of 8” waterline – Plans for February 2012 start
<b>Hudson Bend Elevated Water Tank</b>	300,000 gallon elevated pedosphere tank south of La Hacienda RV Park: Online – Complete
<b>Apache Shores Projects</b>	Running Deer – 75% complete.
<b>RM 620 Waterline Improvements</b>	380 LF 8” waterline – RM 620 between Storm & Stroup: Complete
<b>Lakeway Interconnect</b>	Upgrade to 16” waterline interconnect: Complete
<b>Delsie Drive &amp; Joseph Drive</b>	Connect waterline in back of Chase Bank across from Lakeway Blvd.: Working on easement(s)
<b>Flintrock Area</b>	Flintrock Trace – Relocate 12” waterline Add Parallel 16” waterline: Work to begin February 2012.
<b>Mountain View Elevated Water Tank</b>	1 million gallon elevated composite tank: Foundation complete and shaft being formed.
<b>Cloudy Ridge Control Valve Upgrades</b>	Upgrade of valves & controls at Cloudy Ridge & RM 620: Complete and in-service – Revegetation to be done
<b>Low Water Crossing, Lake Austin</b>	Replace and upgrade 6” waterline with a 12” waterline plus two valves: Complete
<b>Steiner Ranch Effluent Irrigation Improvements</b>	Irrigation Repairs and Improvements in Steiner Ranch: Complete
<b>River Ridge Waterline Projects</b>	Terjo Lane – 2,450 feet of 8” waterline from Quinlan Park to River Bend: Waiting for County approvals
<b>City of Austin Emergency Interconnect</b>	16” waterline along RM 620 from Comanche Trail to Bullick Hollow for provision of emergency water: Permit received.



**THANK YOU for your continued patience and for SLOWING DOWN in Construction Areas!**



**Conserving Water for Today and Tomorrow**  
[www.wcid17.org](http://www.wcid17.org)

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