



A Refresher on SJRA's Joint Groundwater Reduction Plan

By: Jace A. Houston, General Manager

We periodically receive phone calls from people who are new to the Conroe area with questions about the history of the Groundwater Reduction Plan (GRP) program. Most of our articles in Dock Line Magazine over the past year or two have been about specific, recent activities in the GRP program, such as construction updates, pipeline routes, and descriptions of ongoing activities, so it's been a while since we've written any articles that cover the background of the GRP program and what led us to where we are today.

I was a little hesitant to write another article about the history of the GRP program, however, because long-time residents and Dock Line readers have probably read more than their fair share about groundwater reduction and pipelines and water plants. There's a fine line between repeating information enough times to reach everyone and just plain boring people to death. So instead of retelling the whole story, I've decided to write a high-level summary that provides the basic context and history of water issues in Montgomery County, and then I'll outline some resources on our website that fill in additional details for readers who want to dig a little deeper.

In a nutshell . . .

Montgomery County's rapid population growth has caused increases in water demand that cannot be met by the county's current groundwater supplies. SJRA is implementing a comprehensive water supply program to solve the problem of limited groundwater availability and ensure reliable, long-term water supplies for all of Montgomery County.

Quick Facts

- **Montgomery County has a water supply crisis** - At this time, Montgomery County is totally reliant on groundwater for its municipal water supplies, and demand has outpaced available supply for almost two decades leading to alarming declines in water levels in the county's aquifers.
- **Regulations have been adopted to force a solution** - The Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District, created by the state legislature in 2001 at the request of Montgomery County community leaders, has adopted regulations requiring all large water supply enti-

ties to reduce their use of groundwater and develop alternate water supplies.

- **SJRA has offered a solution to the groundwater crisis that is cost-effective and available to all** - Eighty percent of the large water users in Montgomery County have joined the SJRA GRP program, which brings together economies of scale and local water supply resources to create the most cost-effective and reliable solution for Montgomery County's long-term water future. By beginning to gradually utilize the surface water in Lake Conroe, Montgomery County can reduce the pressure on its groundwater supplies, stabilize water levels in its aquifers, and move away from the precarious position of total reliance on a single source of supply to a safer position of conjunctively using both surface water and groundwater.

- **As one of 10 major river authorities in Texas, SJRA is uniquely positioned to effectively implement a countywide GRP solution** - Like other river authorities in Texas, SJRA is specifically equipped to develop and implement large-scale, regional water solutions. For Montgomery County, this means bringing together SJRA's 75 years of water supply development and water planning experience to create the lowest cost, most timely, and most efficient solutions to the county's current and future water challenges.

- **SJRA is aggressively pursuing additional water supply strategies to reduce costs and lessen any impacts on lake level** - In addition to surface water from Lake Conroe, SJRA continues to work aggressively to develop additional water supply strategies for meeting Montgomery County's long-term water needs, including strategies such as research and development of the Catahoula aquifer, advanced water conservation practices, aggressive drought contingency plans, reuse of treated wastewater effluent, and importation of surface water from other basins.

Additional Resources

Since the beginning of the GRP program, SJRA staff have gone to extraordinary lengths to document the research and planning behind the program, prepare articles and presentations describing every aspect of the program, account for and present accurate financial information, and make all of this information available to the public in a user-friend-

ly way. We take our responsibility for public funds and our duty to be open and transparent very seriously, and we have attempted to create a website that organizes all of this data in a reasonably accessible fashion.

The following items describe some of the key additional resources that are available for those wishing to really dig into the details about the GRP program or track its progress on a routine basis:

GRP Division website - Almost every document, map, PowerPoint presentation, and other resource we've created on the GRP program is contained on the GRP website. The address is www.sjra.net/grp. The site includes a box where you can enter your email address to receive periodic updates electronically.



Frequently Asked Questions - This is the place to start if you're just beginning to research the background of the GRP and water supply issues in general. Additional FAQs are being developed to address new questions and issues as they arise.

GRP Monthly Report - This report is a detailed snapshot that describes and documents numerous metrics related to the GRP project, including recent meetings and communica-

tions, design and construction schedules, contract solicitations and awards, program budgets, financial reports, invoices and payment applications, contract amendments and change orders, cash flow reports, project photos, and many other items.

White Papers and Articles – From time to time, we will produce an article on a specific topic of interest, such as lake level or the Catahoula aquifer. Links to these articles



will typically be found in the Quick Links box on the GRP Division website or in the Information Library.

Multi-media – SJRA's GRP Division has taken hundreds of photographs to document various phases of construction. The website also includes a few videos, including a 3-D flyover of the water treatment plant with a narrated description of each process unit.

Construction and Water Line Maps – The website uses interactive Google maps to allow users to zoom in and see detailed information about water line locations, construction activity, and traffic alerts. This information will be updated frequently to capture changing construction activities and warn drivers of any traffic impacts such as lane closures.

GRP Review Committee Meeting Minutes – The 86 customer utilities that joined the SJRA GRP are represented by a six-member appointed review committee. SJRA staff meet with the review committee monthly and present each contract, proposal, resolution, or other item that will be presented to the SJRA board of directors. The GRP website contains all of the agenda packages and minutes for the review committee's meetings.

GRP Call Center – Throughout the construction process, SJRA will maintain a call center to field questions or concerns about the project. The phone number is included on all project signs, literature, and mail outs. The call center number is (936) 588-1662.

I hope you find this information useful. It's not difficult to create information; the challenge is organizing it and presenting it in a manner that is useful and easy to access. Be sure to visit the website periodically to catch updates and new information as it appears. ♦

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The Water Lines link leads to detailed information about each water line segment, including a “zoomable” Google map showing the location of all water lines, detailed project information for each segment, contractor information, construction schedule, etc.

The Traffic Updates link includes a Google map with real-time traffic and construction alerts. Icons on the map describe ongoing construction activities and lane closures.



The Information Library is a repository for detailed documents and data related to the GRP.

The Quick Links box includes links to frequently-requested articles and other important information.

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