



## Support the Sustainable Groundwater Development Act:

*Sustainable, regional partnerships are the key*

Texas faces periodic drought, continuing population growth, and the need to remain economically competitive. Water supply is critical to facing these challenges and every effort must be made to develop sufficient and cost-effective water supplies on a sustainable basis. The majority of Texans today rely on surface water projects that were developed in response to the prolonged drought of the 1950s. This drought of record has been exceeded in parts of the state, while the population continues to grow at a dramatic rate. While traditional sources of municipal water supply are in many cases inadequate to meet future demand, the need for additional resources must be balanced against the needs of future generations and the protection of the state's limited water resources.

Groundwater is a mainstay of rural and agricultural communities and its value to the state economy and the security of nation's food supply cannot be overstated. The last decade however has seen a surge in private efforts to market groundwater across vast distances to municipal end users with little regard for rural and agricultural communities. A handful of Austin based lawyers and lobbyists have hijacked the State Water Plan. These men have employed litigation and lobbying to impose their own *de facto* Water Plan on the people of Texas.

The Austin lobby's Water Plan is predicated on: (1) moving high quality freshwater from rural and agricultural communities to distant municipalities; (2) bullying groundwater conservation districts into permitting well-fields without regard for either sustainability, or need; (3) lobbying public officials to ignore conjunctive or other alternate projects in the State Water Plan; and (4) suborning regional projects so that as much groundwater as possible will be mined as quickly as possible.

The profit from this *de facto* State Water Plan will inure to the to the Austin lobby and their clients, while the ongoing costs will be paid for by the citizen of municipalities and local governments, who will in turn shift the burden to local tax and ratepayers. Despite the misinformation surrounding San Antonio's Vista Ridge project, the reality is that there is no private sector market for groundwater, and despite intense lobbying, the public sector has for the most part kept the Austin lobby at bay.

The Sustainable Groundwater Development Act will foster cost-effective projects based on sustainability, regional partnerships, and conjunctive uses. Groundwater is a finite asset that is recharged slowly and the risk of overdraft is significant. It makes for sound public policy to develop groundwater on a regional basis, concurrently with other water planning solutions, to help this state meet its current and future water needs while avoiding wasteful and duplicative projects.

### **What the Sustainable Groundwater Development Act Does**

- Adds a chapter to the water code promoting groundwater development on a sustainable basis.
- Restores a reasonable definition of need to prevent speculation in groundwater.
- Requires political subdivision to consider regional alternatives before undertaking groundwater projects.
- Enhances the economic value of state property rights in the bed and banks of Texas rivers.
- Ensures that groundwater projects do not diminish existing surface water rights or environmental flows
- Requires river authorities to monitor and collect data on the surface groundwater exchange.
- Creates an Office of Public Interest Counsel to participate in public hearings on major permit applications.

### **Advantages of the Sustainable Groundwater Development Act**

- Foster cost-effective groundwater projects based on principles sustainability.
- Prevent wasteful, duplicative projects by promoting cost effective regional partnerships.
- Promote projects based on multiple sources of supply, conservation and storage.
- Provides meaningful public participation in groundwater conservation district permit hearings.

The Sustainable Groundwater Development Act is supported by the League of Independent Voters, the Simsboro Aquifer Defense Fund, the America First Committee, the San Antonio Cross Partisan Coalition. Organizations are being added on a daily basis and this list will be updated accordingly.

*For more information, contact James Lee Murphy, America First Committee,  
[jamesleemurphy@att.net](mailto:jamesleemurphy@att.net), 210-859-2189 (c)*