Hueco Bolson Aquifer – A Shared Transboundary Resource

By JOHN ASHWORTH, P.G., WSP, USA, Inc.

In today’s media coverage of border issues, it is refreshing to observe a cooperative process between two nations in the sharing of common water resources. A case in point is the shared use of the Hueco Bolson Aquifer between Ciudad Juarez, State of Chihuahua, Mexico (population 1.5 million) and the City of El Paso, Texas, USA (metro population 850,000). For both cities and surrounding neighbors, the Hueco Bolson is the largest and most exploited groundwater source in the upper Rio Grande region of the Chihuahuan Desert.

The Hueco Bolson, an asymmetric graben bounded by the San Andres, Organ (NM) and Franklin Mountains (TX) on the west and the Sacramento (NM) and Hueco Mountains (TX) on the east, extends from New Mexico’s Tularosa Basin southward into Texas and across the international border (Rio Grande) into Mexico (Figure 1). In Texas, maximum thickness (9,000 feet) of bolson deposits occurs along the faulted east side of the Franklin Mountains (Figure 2). River alluvium along the Rio Grande corridor is hydrologically connected to the bolson deposits.

New Water Certificate Program Available at Texas Tech University

In response to a growing need for training students in the latest irrigation technologies to enhance the efficiency of water use, Texas Tech University’s College of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources (CASNR) will offer an undergraduate agricultural water management certificate to provide courses on efficient and profitable management of water for agricultural purposes, with emphasis on irrigation technologies.

The certificate program was conceived by the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation (TAWC), a water-management outreach project housed within CASNR to bolster education of the agricultural workforce. Starting spring of 2019, the certificate program will consist of a series of courses, totaling 15 hours, that cover aspects of water management.
From the top of the rig

Passion is Purpose

It is hard to believe that we are breezing through 2019 when it seems like just yesterday, we were at TGWA’s annual convention in San Marcos, reflecting on the year that had just closed and the opportunities that existed for 2019. The first half of the year has certainly provided its share of wet weather, late cold fronts, and recent severe weather systems that have hindered our collective businesses. I hope that it has not had a direct impact on you and your loved ones. As many have heard me speak during continuing education courses, there is one rule that I have; there is no job more important than all of us being able to go home at the end of the day and be with our family and friends. This brings me to the topic of this quarter’s president letter.

I recently had the opportunity to listen to a keynote speaker talk about the principles and beliefs that helped him be successful. There were many wonderful points, insights, and ideas, but one jumped out at me and gave me a moment of pause. Not because I did not see the value and benefit to the words, but rather to wonder if everything could be broken down so simply. The belief was: Love It, Leave It, Change It! There are many different perspectives that can be applied to this statement, but at

Moving Right Along

Greetings, everyone! Hope each of you are doing well and are having a productive year so far. Here in the Houston area we have been hammered with rain really since October of 2018, which has caused a slow down for a few down here. Hopefully, the weather will turn soon as the summer months come and will turn out to be a prosperous year for everyone. Everything is moving towards getting ready for the 2020 convention in Frisco. There has been much discussion about the events we will have, and I’m really excited. We are going to have something for everyone that I think you’ll enjoy. So please make every effort to attend. Our C.E. classes are in full swing, and I’ve been able to visit two or three so far and have some others that I’m going to attend. So just a reminder don’t forget your four hours of C.E. credit.

This year is on pace to fly by, as it’s hard to believe it’s already almost midyear. As the summer months get to us and the summer heat invades us, I just want to stress to everyone how important it is not to push yourself. Be sure to stay hydrated, and take time for yourself. Don’t get so busy making a living and forget to make a life. Take that vacation you’ve been putting off and relax a little and enjoy the fruits of your hard work. You’ll be glad you did. As I’m writing this

Rained Out

Here in eastern Blanco County, my rain gauge indicates that we’ve had 11.40 inches of rain in just 21 days of May. In the words of our distinguished life member Joe Vickers, “Do you think it will ever rain again?” The National Integrated Drought Information System states that only 0.4 percent of Texas is under abnormally dry conditions. Have we returned to a “normal cycle of drought and flood?” One thing we all know is… the next severe drought is just around the corner.

Priorities set by the 86th Texas Legislature also appear to reflect drought & flood cycles. With the regular session ending on May 27th, most water-related bills have concentrated on flood issues. Groundwater legislation has become a much lower priority this session.

Some of the groundwater bills that have made much headway this session are HB 722 (Larson & Perry) and HB 1066 (Ashby & Creighton). The former bill requires groundwater conservation districts (GCDs) to implement special permitting rules regarding the completion and operation of brackish wells within zones designated by the Texas Water Development Board. This bill also requires districts to grant or deny extensions consistent with the district rules at the time of the

Moving Right Along Passion is Purpose Rained Out
Unexpected Gifts from an Uninvited Guest

Greetings from the Pyburn family. Many of our friends in TGWA know our house and our business flooded during Harvey, and due to several factors beyond our control (mainly rainy weather and multiple permitting issues) we have been frozen in Harvey limbo for almost two years at our residence. We have lived upstairs and walked on cement floors through silent stud walls below. It became our new normal. We would forget, but friends looked at us with such pity when they dropped by; they couldn’t believe how long we lived with our downstairs completely gutted.

Harvey is a dirty word to most people in our neck of the woods, but I’ve come to think of him differently these days, even while living in disarray. Looking back, Harvey was definitely an uninvited guest, but one who also brought unexpected gifts. I have learned much from this 52-inch “friend” God allowed to enter, stay, and carry so much away three days after he slowly slithered into our home. The irony is not lost on me that Harvey easily took away possessions I believed I owned. Funny how tightly I held to things that won’t even make it to the other side - proving even muddy water can bring proper perspective. Water also washes away belongings I thought I couldn’t possibly live without and taught me quite clearly what I truly need. When walls are stripped, furniture ruined and removed, not a single appliance left humming or a big screen tv channel to be surfed, nor a single surviving laptop or Apple computer to be found - when everything is silenced under water’s mighty will - it’s at that very moment of sheer, thunderous silence you realize how very thirsty you’ve actually been. Parched, in fact, and you find Him waiting to give you what He already knew you needed. Himself. Just more of Himself. Living Water.

Perhaps God had clued Harvey in on the fact that, by the looks of what Mike and I were throwing out, maybe our stuff had started to own us! We can’t physically live without water, but allow your possession to linger beneath H2O for seventy-four hours and everything it touches - even most things labeled waterproof - will ruin. Ask me how I know. Harvey certainly pulled our fingers off our stuff, laid our palms open, and helped us remember the Lord gives and takes away, but is always a good, good Father. Just a few days ago, as timing would have it, the very day Mike and I moved into our new “barndo” (where we will live while our house is being renovated) we received a monumental blessing: our son, Luke, started working with Mike – becoming the fourth generation of Pyburn men in the water well business.

I recently overheard a man at church asking Mike if he ever wearied of digging water wells considering what a raw deal the waters of Harvey had
A zone of fresh groundwater sits above an expansive thickness of brackish water predominantly along the western portion of the aquifer. Municipal wells are situated over this fresh-water zone with sufficient spacing to avoid concentrated pumping, which would result in rapid water-level declines and brackish water encroachment.

Recharge to the Hueco Bolson is primarily by precipitation along the Franklin mountain front and to a lesser extent by crossformational flow from the Rio Grande alluvium. While loose surface sands easily allow for the infiltration of any form of moisture, recharge is limited due to only eight inches of average annual rainfall and a high evaporation rate.

El Paso Water (EPW), the City of El Paso’s water supply utility, is the largest producer from the Hueco Bolson Aquifer, providing water to city residents, local industries including El Paso Electric, a portion of Fort Bliss, and wholesaling supplies to several surrounding communities. Management of water supplies in Ciudad Juarez is by the Junta Municipal de Agua y Saneamiento (JMAS) and nationally by the Comision Nacional Del Agua (CAN). Both cities have over 100 Hueco Bolson Aquifer production wells in operation at any time. Prolific population and industrial growth on both sides of the border have taxed local water supplies, thus requiring both cities to think long term, cooperatively, and sustainably about water supply management solutions.

The Rio Grande plays a critical conjunctive role in how the Hueco Bolson Aquifer is managed. River flow is highly variable and its access is governed by international treaties, compacts, and agreements. Water derived from snowmelt in the mountains of southern Colorado and northern New Mexico is captured in Elephant Butte Reservoir in New Mexico and is released downstream to two prominent water-right permit holders; the Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID) in New Mexico and the El Paso County Water Improvement District #1 (EPCWID#1). Water used by these two entities is diverted for irrigation use and therefore is only released to the streambed for delivery during summer months.

In addition, the 1906 International Treaty provides 60,000 acre-feet per year to Mexico at no cost. Most of this 60,000 acre-feet of Rio Grande water is used for irrigation as there is currently very little water-treatment infrastructure in place to convert the raw water to a potable supply. Thus, Ciudad Juarez is highly dependent on its groundwater source, the Hueco Bolson Aquifer. EPW is actively pursuing ways to support the Mexican city in finding financial backing to construct the much-needed water treatment facilities to take the emphasis off the groundwater supply.

The City of El Paso holds no water rights to the Rio Grande, but its utility (EPW) does work cooperatively with EPCWID#1 to receive an average annual allotment of 10,000 acre-feet of untreated water when available. EPW annually manages its water supply by conjunctively utilizing the maximum amount of available Rio Grande water and making up the difference with groundwater. In addition to the Hueco Bolson Aquifer, EPW also produces groundwater from its Canutillo wellfield (Mesilla Bolson Aquifer) west of the Franklin Mountains. To sustainably maintain supply availability from the Hueco and Mesilla Bolson Aquifers, EPW has found it prudent to limit production from the two aquifers to no more than 115,000 acre-feet per year.

The surface-water supply combined with the two groundwater sources, however, are often not adequate to meet the water-supply needs of the region, particularly during drought periods. And without conservation, innovative technologies, and desalination these supplies are inadequate to meet future growth needs.

Conservation is an important component of any water supply management plan. Ciudad Juarez per capita water use is minimal compared to use anywhere on the
US side of the border. However, EPW is setting the state standard for water conservation. Currently at approximately 128 gpcd, EPW expects to lower the use by another 10 gpcd over the next 30 years. Reuse of 6,000 acre-feet treated non-potable water per year also conserves potable water for more beneficial use. EPW is also heavily invested in advanced purified water treatment facilities. Once-used water is now retreated and added back to the potable distribution system.

Probably the most relevant water-supply management technology applied to the Hueco Bolson Aquifer is the operation of the Kay Bailey Hutchison Desalination Facility, the largest inland facility in the world. A joint project of EPW and Fort Bliss, the plant filters brackish Hueco Bolson groundwater to produce up to 27.5 million gallons of fresh water daily. The concentrate is injected deep underground 22 miles northeast of the desal plant on Fort Bliss property. The desalination supply wells are strategically located to intercept brackish groundwater that would otherwise encroach into freshwater zones.

Water supply in any desert community, let alone a rapidly expanding international community, requires long-range vision. Ciudad Juarez knows that it will be difficult to meet all its future needs by relying on a single non-replenishing groundwater source and, even though there are financial hurdles to navigate, there is a willingness to work with its neighbor to manage a shared resource.

Through the state’s regional water planning process, El Paso is exploring water management strategies that will span the next 50 years. Continued sustainable management of the Hueco Bolson Aquifer will be supported with conservation, advanced purification reuse, expanded brackish groundwater desalination, and eventually importation of groundwater from beyond the local area. Thus, the conjunctive use of multiple supply sources is expected to meet the region’s projected future water needs.

JOHN ASHWORTH is a Senior Consultant with WSP-USA (Formerly LBG-Guyton Associates) in Austin, Texas and is a licensed Geoscientist in the State of Texas. He currently directs the firm’s water management planning activities and is the project manager for two of the State’s 16 water-planning regions. John is experienced in West Texas water issues and was significantly involved in the development of the Kay Bailey Hutchison desalination facility in El Paso. john.ashworth@wsp.com

What’s next?

Upcoming Events

Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts Groundwater Summit
August 20-22, 2019
San Antonio, Texas
www.texasgroundwater.org
management and conservation. “Since 2005, the TAWC has striven to educate producers on how to conserve and use water more efficiently,” said Charles West, professor of the Tech Department of Plant and Soil Science and administrator of the TAWC. “The TAWC wants to expand its teachings to students through this certificate program.”

The certificate curriculum will provide students with information related to managing water for growing crops and other plants for horticultural and turf uses. The irrigation course will provide technical background on soil and plant sciences; the mechanics of irrigation equipment; use of programs to control and schedule irrigation; and exposure to economic and regulatory aspects that guide irrigation use.

A new course called the Irrigation Management Seminar will be offered every fall semester and is designed to meet the workforce needs of key stakeholders in agriculture such as producers, equipment providers, consultants, and government agencies.

“This course is designed to educate students on water management technology and give them an understanding of the key issues growers are facing,” said Rudy Ritz. “This preparation will give them an advantage in the workforce and valuable real-world experience.”

Faculty from different CASNR departments will lecture on various topics covering water management for forage crops and animal systems; resource economics and legal aspects; and review of soil water properties. The course will also arrange outside practitioners as guest lecturers.

“Irrigation is an extremely important component to the economy of West Texas,” West said. “We must have it to grow high yields, making it a precious resource. This is something that the TAWC has been teaching for over 15 years now and hopes to enhance upon through this certificate program.”

The TAWC project is a cooperation of area producers, data collection technologies, and partners that include industries, universities, and government agencies. The project uses on-farm demonstrations of cropping and livestock systems to compare the production practices, technologies, and operations that can maintain individual farm profitability while improving water use efficiency with a goal of extending the life of the Ogallala Aquifer and maintaining the viability of local farms and communities. This initiative is funded by a grant from the Texas Water Development Board. For more information about the TAWC, including its educational outreach activities, please visit www.tawc.us.

“Certificate, continued from cover”

“This course is designed to educate students on water management technology and give them an understanding of the key issues growers are facing.”

- Rudy Ritz, Associate Professor, Agricultural Education and Communications, Texas Tech University

SAMANTHA BORGSTEDT is the Communications Director for the TAWC. She was raised on a farm and ranch in Tarzan, Texas, where she lives today with her husband and three daughters. Samantha can be reached by email at samantha.borgstedt@ttu.edu
application. HB 1066 is related to extensions of expired export permits from GCDs. The bill further requires districts to approve or deny export permit extension renewals based on the rules in effect at the time of the application. An automatic extension of an export permit would be allowed to correlate with the existing operating permit term.

Many proposed bills that did not gain traction this session dealt with aquifer storage and recovery and brackish groundwater. No doubt that these issues will return to the legislative forefront in the next drought cycle. But for this session, significant groundwater issues at the Capitol have been rained out.

Hill, continued from page 2

the heart of it there is value in his belief. I have determined there is a part of this phrase that bothers me - the overall combination. If I love something why would I leave it, If I love something why would I change it? This is a macro view, but in this statement, there is still a lot that rings true. If I replace the word love with passion, it gives me another perspective, as when I have passion for something, I discover the desire, will, and determination to influence change to make it better. This is what as parents, business owners, and professionals we do; we are continuously trying to make our part of the world better than what we started with. I share these words as I think of our organization and the many people that I have spoken to, those that are members and those that are not. For the members, I commend your involvement and efforts to influence the changes necessary for our future. For the non-members who want change, I encourage you to get involved. There are opportunities to let your voice be heard and a means to implement changes that will support your love and passion for the groundwater industry.

Tarver, continued from page 2

dealt him. Mike looked him in the eye, and to my surprise, responded, “Yes, sir, I sure do.” After a brief pause, Mike continued, “Digging water wells is way too hard. I prefer drilling them, and I’ll keep drilling them as long as the good Lord lets me.” We all laughed as we parted ways in the parking lot. Our friend was still chuckling as he hollered back to us over his shoulder, “Everybody loves water!”

Indeed...even those who once had a house guest named Harvey.

Many well-wishes,

Pyburn, continued from page 3

TGWA Scholarship Foundation’s Application is Now Closed.
Stay tuned for recipient announcements in August.
Visit the www.tgwa.org scholarship page to get the latest news.

The TGWA Scholarship Foundation was officially created in January 2019. The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) entity, now separate from TGWA. Its creation intends to prevent conflicts of interest as members of the scholarship foundation board cannot have any ties to applicants.
C.E. Class Overview 2019

By ADELINE FOX, TGWA

The year is flying by as we approach the summer months. TGWA staff and representatives have been busy attending continuing education classes across the state. As of this writing, TGWA has partnered with chapters, manufacturers and suppliers, and groundwater districts to host 14 of 17 total C.E. classes. About 858 water well drillers, apprentices, and/or pump installers have attended the on-site classes in person so far this year.

Classes in Tyler and Midland were coordinated by the local TGWA chapter with sponsorships from partners. Conroe will also be hosted by the Gulf Coast Chapter. TGWA would like to thank the sponsors in Table 1 and the partners in Figure 1 who supported the TGWA Chapter classes.

TGWA staff has also been handing out short surveys to C.E. class attendees to collect more information about what industry professionals hope to learn during classes. Feedback indicates interest in drilling mud techniques, drilling mechanics, drilling safety, and an assortment of other topics. Please contact afox@twca.org if you have any recommendations for a C.E. class topics.

Table 1

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>GICON Pumps</td>
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<td>Preferred Pump</td>
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<td>Preferred Pump</td>
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<td>Houston</td>
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<td>Preferred Pump</td>
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<tr>
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<td>June 11</td>
<td>Jasper</td>
<td>Southeast Texas GCD</td>
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Upcoming C.E. Classes

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<td>August 8</td>
<td>Ozona</td>
<td>Crockett County GCD</td>
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Figure 1: C.E. Class Sponsor Partners

**Midland:** Sponsors and some of the speakers for the Midland C.E. class pose for a photo. Representatives from Franklin Electric, GICON Pumps, Goulds, Midland Winpump, and Permian Basin UWCD attended the event.

**Tyler:** The East Texas Chapter hosts its class at the American Legion Hall in Tyler. Thank you Pumps of Houston, Preferred Pump (Tyler branch), and Wholesale Pump & Supply (Tyler branch).

Photos from Other C.E. Classes Around the State:

**San Angelo:** Attendees at Preferred Pump’s C.E. class in San Angelo listen to Bob Hill, with Grundfos, as he speaks about solar pumps.

**San Antonio:** The San Antonio Preferred Pump branch poses for a photo.

**San Marcos:** The Austin branch of Austin Pump & Supply pose for a photo during the C.E. class.
Legislative Wrap Up

by DEAN ROBBINS & STACEY ALLISON STEINBACH, TGWA

After a fast and furious 140 days, the 86th Legislature has adjourned sine die. In 2019, legislators filed 7,324 bills, the most in a decade. And 1,429 of those bills passed both chambers by sine die, providing for a 19.5 percent bill passage rate. Governor Abbott then vetoed 56 bills, the most vetoes by a governor in more than a decade.

Legislators spent the bulk of their time on school finance, tax and lobby reform, and flood response. As in past sessions, TWCA/TGWA closely followed bills of possible interest to its members. Staff tracked 522 bills in 2019, up by nearly 15 percent from 2017, and designated 169 of those bills as high-priority. Nearly 23 percent of our tracked bills made it to the finish line, and summaries for the most significant bills that may be of interest to TGWA members are provided below.

I. Licensing

Unless you've been accused or convicted of a criminal offense, well driller and pump installer licensing saw very few changes of impact this session. Of particular interest this session though was the sunset review process for the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners (an independent state agency that oversees plumber licensing). That process requires the legislature to review the agency, determine whether it should still exist, and amend the law as necessary. If the legislature fails to pass a bill reauthorizing the existence of an agency going through sunset, the agency is abolished. In the last days of session, the plumbing sunset bill died, meaning that the agency would be no more, and plumbing licenses could no longer be required. Amid calls from plumbers, regulators, and the public for a special session to remedy the problem, the Governor issued an executive order that will allow the board to continue its operations through May 31, 2021. The legislature will need to pass a new bill during the 87th session. Another agency going through sunset, the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists, did see the successful passage of its sunset bill – HB 1311 (Thompson/Watson), and continues in existence until September 1, 2025.

Other bills related to licensing are as follows:
- **HB 1342 (Leach/Hinojosa):** prescribes how the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) must reinstate a license that was revoked solely on failure to pay an administrative penalty and limits TDLR’s authority related to licensing and unrelated criminal offenses.
- **HB 2452 (Goldman/Zaffirini):** authorizes TDLR to contract with a qualified individual to assist with reviewing or investigating complaints.
- **SB 237 (Nelson/Goldman):** requires any sunset review of TDLR to determine whether the agency adequately makes certain information available on a website.
- **SB 1217 (Alvarado/Morales):** prohibits TDLR, in determining a person’s fitness to perform the duties of a licensed occupation, from considering merely arrests without conviction or deferred adjudication.
- **SB 1995 (Birdwell/Paddie):** establishes a division in the Governor’s office to provide oversight of licensing state agencies that governed by persons regulated by that agency (this would not include TDLR).

II. TWCA Flood Response Committee

In advance of this session, TWCA convened a Flood Response Committee to work toward educating lawmakers on flood-related policy issues and developing a set of guiding principles related to flood legislation. The educational paper and guiding principles can be found on TWCA’s website. Though Legislators filed dozens of bills related to flood during the 86th session, four bills made up the largest funding opportunities for flood response in the state: SB 7 (Creighton/Phelan), SB 8 (Perry/Larson), House Joint Resolution (HJR) 4 (Phelan/Creighton), and SB 500 (Nelson/Zerwas).

Together, these bills provide for and direct the spending of more than $1.7 Billion in flood-related dollars, including $1.5 billion for funding (through grants and loans) drainage, flood mitigation, and flood control projects for governmental entities. A portion of the funds are dependent on the passage of HJR 4, which voters will be asked to approve in November. Senate Bill 8 calls for a new State Flood Plan, which borrows from the state’s regional water planning groups model and requires the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to prepare and adopt the plan in conjunction with regional flood planning groups. The legislature also provided $200 million to the Texas General Land Office for matching funds for United States Army Corps of Engineers studies and projects and $150 million to the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board for dam repair and maintenance.

III. TWCA Groundwater Committee

TWCA's longstanding Groundwater Committee again worked during the interim to develop consensus-based legislative proposals in advance of the 86th Legislature. TWCA supported HB 722 (Larson/Perry), which aims to provide greater access to brackish groundwater by simplifying procedures, avoiding delays, reducing expenses, and providing flexibility related to brackish groundwater projects. The bill authorizes (or requires, in the case of a petition from a groundwater owner) a groundwater conservation district (GCD) to adopt and implement special permitting rules for electric or municipal projects in brackish groundwater production zones designated by TWDB.

TWCA also supported HB 2378 (Ashby/Perry), which aims to resolve an issue that remained after the passage of SB 854 during the 84th Legislature. That bill allowed for automatic renewals of certain groundwater operating permits when conditions have not changed. However, many GCDs
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Tell me a little bit about yourself.

My name is Lacee Nivens. I was born in 1987 and raised in Lubbock Texas. I attended Frenship High School and later went to radiology school. I quickly realized that radiology was not my true passion. My grandfather Rex McFadden passed away in late 2012 and in April 2013, I knew that my calling was to be in the office he built. I wanted to continue his legacy. My mom, Dawn, and I made it our goal to carry on Rex McFadden Co. I have seven-year old twins, Ace and Brooklyn. Family is number one! Seeing my kiddos having fun and enjoying new hobbies has been very interesting these days! Brooklyn is my dancer and Ace is my left-handed baseball player. Hot rods and our new love for dirt bikes have been fun this summer.

How did you first get involved in the groundwater industry?

My Papaw Rex was the person who introduced me to the groundwater industry. Starting around six or so is when he started taking me out of town to see different parts of the water world. Little did I know, that he was teaching me and preparing me for my job now.

What is your favorite part about working in this industry?

Having one “favorite” part about working in the water industry is a very hard question to answer! Talking to and meeting new people around the world is interesting to me. There is not one day that is the same - most are either conserving water or of course drilling to get water. It is really intriguing to see the different levels in the water table and how each company has their own way of doing things.

Why is it important to get involved with groups like TGWA?

TGWA is not only a great way to learn about the water industry in Texas, but you find quickly that it is more of a family of individuals that have a deep passion for water. “They get it!” Hearing others’ stories and history of either drilling or supplying/contracting opens a whole new outlook on water.

How would you encourage other people to get involved?

Many people might think “where do I fit in?” Conventions are where I learned that you can get helpful information and talk with current and past members of the TGWA - Don’t be afraid to ask questions. Many thanks to all that have welcomed me onto the TGWA team - I am truly thankful!

Anything else you’d like to add?

One of the most interesting things that I have noticed in being a part of the board (which is an honor and I am very thankful to Judy Herndon for helping me get to know more about the manufacturing and suppliers side of TGWA), is the businesses that have been run by family and how the next generations continue to lead the way to carry on for many years to come.
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also require “export permits” when groundwater will be exported out of the GCD. This TWCA-initiated bill simply clarifies that export permits must be renewed consistent with the corresponding operating permit.

IV. TWCA Surface Water Committee
TWCA’s “Surface Water Committee,” chaired by Lyn Clancy of the Lower Colorado River Authority and Bob Brandes was not active in advance of the 86th session but continued to support updated funding for water availability models at TCEQ. SB 726 (Perry / Larson) requires TCEQ to obtain or develop updated water availability models for the Brazos River, Neches River, Red River, and Rio Grande river basins.

V. Other Bills of Interest
HB 720 (Larson/Perry) authorizes the appropriation of water for aquifer recharge. It also authorizes the holder of a water right authorizing storage that has not been constructed or that has lost storage to sedimentation to amend the right to include ASR, taking into account evaporation credits. The bill prescribes procedures for consideration of an application for an aquifer recharge project and requires the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to adopt rules to implement the legislation.

HB 807 (Larson/Buckingham) requires TWDB to create an Interregional Planning Council consisting of a member of each regional water planning group to improve coordination, facilitate dialogue, and share best practices among regions. The bill also requires plans to identify drought response strategies, assess ASR opportunities, and set goals for water use per capita in certain instances.

VI. Looking Ahead
Due to the focus on flooding, popular policy topics like groundwater took a back seat this session, even though numerous groundwater bills were filed and discussed. We expect a renewed focus on these issues in 2021, especially with respect to GCDs over the same aquifer adopting similar rules, attorneys’ fees, permit moratoriums, consideration of a water provider’s service area in groundwater permitting, and the standard of review for an appeal of GCD’s decision on a groundwater permit. We also hope to continue working with stakeholders and policymakers on funding and policies related to abandoned wells.
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