



Legislation Text

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Receive report from EAA staff on 2016 groundwater use reporting and on other well metering programs.

STAFF RECOMMENDED MOTION:

None. This item is for informational purposes only.

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this agenda item is for the Permits/Enforcement Committee to receive a report from EAA staff on the status of 2016 groundwater use reporting, and on current activities regarding the Automated Meter Reading (AMR) program, the fielding of electronic meters, and the recent launch of a smartphone application used to submit meter readings to the EAA.

Annual Groundwater Use Reporting

As outlined in EAA rules, owners of permitted wells and limited production wells are required to submit meter readings at the end of the year to report their annual groundwater withdrawals. On December 16, 2016, EAA meter team staff mailed 1,097 annual groundwater use reporting forms to all permitted (municipal, industrial, and irrigation users) and limited production well owners for them to file their annual use with the EAA. These reporting forms were due to the EAA by January 31, 2017. The meter team reviews these reporting forms for accuracy and completeness, and enters the meter readings in the EAA database to allow the permitting team to review for compliance with the authorized amounts.

As of February 3, (to allow for receipt of mailed-in forms), EAA received 74% of reports that were sent out. Staff continues to work with owners to clarify meter readings, and to call non-reporting entities to solicit their reports. Generally, EAA meter staff works with delinquent well owners to obtain missing reports through the end of February, without penalty. If a report is not received after this period, the meter team seeks to obtain meter readings from the field in order to calculate a year-end meter reading. The goal is to have all meters assigned a year-end meter reading by April 1. Well owners who fail to file an annual use report, thereby requiring EAA staff to obtain a meter reading to calculate their annual use, are handed over to the EAA Compliance Team for settlement consistent with EAA Compliance Settlement Guidelines.

Automated Meter Reading (AMR) Program

EAA staff continues to support a voluntary AMR program for irrigation permit holders who have agreed to allow the EAA to install automated logging equipment on their wells at EAA expense. Automated meters provide for improved data consistency and quality, and permit holders

participating in the AMR program are not required to report monthly, annual, or critical period groundwater withdrawals. Meter staff currently maintains a focused study group of approximately 59 wells to refine system components, programming and communications.

AMR participants were not mailed annual use reporting forms in the December 16 mail-out mentioned earlier, but instead were sent completed annual use reporting forms with meter data obtained from the automated meter system after the year ended. On January 3, 2017, EAA meter staff mailed 24 completed reports to the well owners participating in the AMR program to inform them of their 2016 withdrawals, and to solicit their 2016 aquifer management fees. The EAA has received all of these reports back. None of the meter readings listed on the reports were disputed by the well owners.

Electronic Meter Update

EAA meter staff is also maintaining 15 electronic meters (also known as magnetic or "mag" meters) at irrigation wells as part of an agricultural metering grant from the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) awarded in August 2015. The TWDB provided the EAA with \$22,050 for cost sharing in the purchase of these electronic water flow meters. EAA has integrated these meters in a small pilot study to see how these meters perform over time with the intent of advancing the EAA's remote metering program. Neither EAA staff nor the well owners with these meters have seen any problems in consistency or performance to date.

EAA Meter Matters Smartphone Application

In mid-2016, the EAA selected Quacito, Inc., an MWBE vendor, to develop and host the Meter Matters application for both Android and iPhones to be ready for the 2017 reporting year. Well owners can download the free application, register their meter(s), and input a meter reading and photograph of the meter register to report a meter reading. EAA staff receives the submission and validates the reading with the photograph, and can "approve" the submission. With an approved submission, EAA provides back to the user the "Amount Pumped Year-to-Date" which is recorded in a History Page on the application, which can further assist the well owner in managing their water use.

As of this report, the EAA has registered 34 application users and processed 12 submissions to date. EAA staff will continue to encourage use of the Meter Matters application. Benefits to the well owner and to the EAA include improved data quality (date-stamped photo of the meter register), and convenient monthly meter reading submittal. Finally, EAA staff has identified application improvements to roll out later this year.

At the February 28 meeting, staff will present updates on all these meter-related topics.