

**Edwards Aquifer Authority
2014 Voluntary Irrigation Suspension Program Option Work Plan**

HCP Measure 5.1.2 - Voluntary Irrigation Suspension Program Option

There is a direct relationship between the amount of groundwater withdrawals from the Edwards Aquifer during severe drought and the flow at Comal and San Marcos springs. Consequently, a Voluntary Irrigation Suspension Program Option (VISPO) has been included as one of the Flow Protection Measures in the approved Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP) to reduce aquifer pumping demands during specified critical periods in order to improve aquifer levels and provide additional springflow for the protected species, and their habitats.

The cost of the VISPO is estimated to be \$4,172,000 annually for the life of the EAHCP. The annual estimate is based on a combination of factors, including an implementation probability analysis and an enrollment estimate of the percentage of permittees that would enroll in the five-year versus the ten-year program (this estimate is based on a ratio resulting from a 2011 informal survey that showed 65% of permittees would opt for the five-year program and 35% would opt for the ten-year program). It should be noted that early enrollment results (February 2013) appear to be opposite of estimated results with 67% of enrollees favoring the ten-year option and 33% of enrollees favoring the five-year option.

Long-term Objective:

The enrollment volume goal for the VISPO program is 40,000 acre-feet of groundwater withdrawal rights.

Activities in 2012 and 2013:

Development of a VISPO participation contract (Forbearance Agreement) was initiated in 2012. Also, two significant decisions regarding implementation of VISPO were made in 2012. First, the economic study scheduled for 2012 was postponed, pending better agricultural information that would be obtained from enrollment. Second, because aquifer conditions did not decline to the VISPO trigger condition, enrollment was scheduled to begin in 2013. Two newsletters were sent to irrigators in 2012. In the first, irrigators were notified that enrollment would begin in 2013. In the second, irrigators were notified of three public meeting that had been scheduled in order to begin enrollment.

2013 has focused on reaching the program goal of 40,000 acre-feet. Enrollment activity in 2013 will be guided by aquifer levels. If it appears that aquifer levels as measured at the J-17 index well will be above 635' on October 1, enrollment will be placed on a temporary hiatus and resume in January 2014 to avoid paying unnecessary stand-by fees. On the other hand, if it appears that J-17 may be at or below 635' on October 1, enrollment will continue in an attempt to capture as much enrollment in 2013 as possible.

2013 Work Schedule

ACTIVITY	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Hold public meetings	X		X									
Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	?	?			
Contract award			X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
File contract summary				X	X	X	X	X	X	X		

