

Holly Creek Chronicle

Holly Creek Property Owners Association -- Copyright 2013

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HCEPOA Board

- Bob Beeley, President
- Pete DeLeeuw, VP, Road Maintenance Chair
- Steve Yon, Architectural Review Chair
- Jerry Hamaker, Treasurer
- Doug Beckmann, Landscaping Chair
- James Bartlett, Secretary, Communications Chair
- Gene Mattox, Deed Restrictions Chair



Letter from the President - Bob Beeley

Hi Neighbors. After years of dedicated service as president of the HCEPOA, **Jerry Hamaker** has changed roles and is now our treasurer. We owe Jerry a great debt of gratitude for his leadership and time spent focusing on the issues that continue to make Holly Creek Estates one of the most desirable places to live in Northwest Harris County. Thank you, Jerry, for a job so well done.

The issue of greatest concern to most homeowners has been security after a rash of events late last year. In answer to those concerns, your Board of Directors proposed and members approved installation of a state-of-the-art camera security system at the front entrance. Installed and fully operational, the system is recording the license plate of every vehicle entering or leaving the neighborhood, and stamping the date and time taken on each photo.

If you should have a reportable criminal event, immediately call the Harris County Sheriff's Office at 911, and then call our camera system provider, **Joel Bucheim at Integrity Security**. His number is 281-413-9196. Joel will respond along with the sheriffs and make the photos available to them. Only Joel and the sheriff have access to the photos. Experts tell us that just the presence of the four cameras at the entrance will be a serious deterrent to any future criminals. They're not anxious to be recorded on our not-so-candid cameras.

When calling 911 on your cell phone, it's important that you ask for the **Harris County** sheriff's department. Occasionally your phone will connect to the Montgomery County cell tower just across Spring Creek, and the operator may think you are in Montgomery County, delaying the response to your call.

A neighborhood watch program has been established under the leadership of **Phiney Kays**. The program meets the guidelines of the Sheriff's Department, including block captains appointed to report any unusual activity. If you want to participate, please contact Phiney at phiney@verizon.net.

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Bob Beeley, President

Holly Creek Trail is a public road maintained by Harris County. All other roads in HCE are privately owned, and are maintained by the HCE Property Owners Association. **Pete Deleeuw**, chairman of our roads committee, keeps close watch on our roads and wisely spends the money set aside for road maintenance. If you notice a problem, please contact Pete. His email address is petedeleeuw@hotmail.com.

An important reason why HCE is attractive is that everyone generally does a great job of keeping their properties well maintained. Occasionally something gets overlooked, like dead trees or un-kept yards. **Gene Mattox** is chairman of our deed restriction enforcement committee, and he is available to answer questions and address concerns regarding deed restriction violations at gmattox1@comcast.net.

A beautiful new home is under construction on Country Hills. **Steve Yon**, chairman of our architectural review committee, has reviewed the plans and is impressed with what will be a great addition to HCE. Another reminder: If you want to do any construction on your property, other than inside your home, you must contact Steve before you start construction to make sure that your plan meets all the requirements spelled out in the deed restrictions. His email is yonsteve@gmail.com.

To all our neighbors, a big thank you for your cooperation in making this the place to live. I can't think of a better place to be! - by **Bob Beeley, President**

Members Invited to Board of Directors Meeting June 5

A meeting of the Holly Creek Estates Property Owners Association Board of Directors will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 5 at Dixie Foods, 15555 FM 2920. In accordance with the Texas Property Code, all property owners may attend and observe the meeting.

"We welcome all property owners who wish to attend," said Bob Beeley, HCEPOA president. "The state laws governing homeowners associations have changed in an effort to expand communications between associations and their members. So we will comply willingly and fully."

Under state law (as specified in Texas Property Code Statute 209 Sec. 209.0051), regular and special board meetings must be open to property owners, with the exception that the board may adjourn the meeting and reconvene in a closed executive session if it becomes necessary to discuss matters that should remain confidential. "We don't anticipate that any unusual items will be considered at the June meeting," said Beeley.

On the agenda for the meeting are status reports from the president, treasurer, and chairs of the Architectural Review, Deed Restrictions, Landscaping, Communications and Road Maintenance committees. Among issues to be discussed are approval of residents' planned fence construction, and maintenance expectations for fences.

2013 Annual Meeting Addresses Security, Other Topics



Only part of the crowd present

With a standing-room-only crowd, the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Holly Creek Estates Property Owners Association on Feb. 20 approved key security measures, discussed a variety of topics and reelected four POA board members. Roughly 75 people attended (a record), and of HCE's 78 total properties, 55 were represented in person or via proxy.

"Speaking on behalf of the entire board, we were pleased to see such active involvement on the part of property owners, and hope it continues," said Jerry Hamaker, outgoing president.

Much of the meeting was spent on security - the result of a quick rash of five home burglaries in November and December of 2012. Three motions were made and passed:

- That the association immediately install an entrance surveillance camera system that would record license plates and images of cars entering and leaving.
- That a Neighborhood Watch program be organized based on guidelines established by the Harris County Sheriff's Office.
- That the board would encourage use of HCE identification stickers on vehicles owned by residents only.

In board elections, Steve Yon was reelected to Position 3, Bob Beeley was reelected to Position 5, James Bartlett was reelected to Position 6, and Gene Mattox was reelected to Position 7.

Among committee reports, Road Maintenance chair Peter DeLeeuw recommended repaving of: 1) Country Hills at the top of the hill during 2014 at \$22,000 estimated cost; 2) Water Oak Trail beyond the curve during 2015 at \$32,000 estimated cost; and 3) Holly Hollow near its intersection with Holly Creek Trail, no date cited, at \$22,000 estimated cost. He explained that Harris County would not take over maintenance of HCE's 3.5 miles of private roads because they are on a 45-foot right of way, while the county requires 60 feet; and would have to be brought up to county standards first, which would be highly expensive. Over the last eight years, maintaining the private roads cost an average \$16,000 annually, ranging from \$5,000 to \$35,000 in individual years.

Architectural Review Committee chair Steve Yon reported performing routine compliance reviews, checking setback lines on new construction, and ensuring that contractors sign forms holding them responsible for any damage to roads, mailboxes and sprinklers from trucks and heavy equipment. Approval of proposed fences and gates is a major current focus. He added that ARC reviews are far more diligent now than 10 years ago, when the board at that time found it necessary to strengthen the process.

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Deed Restrictions Committee chair Gene Mattox reported ongoing issues with dead trees, and a few absent members who abandon properties or dump trash in the yards. Several problem properties have since been addressed.

Communications Committee chair James Bartlett reported that Laura Urrutia has recruited volunteers for the Holly Creek Chronicle, and that she plans publication quarterly. He added that updating of the website was planned.

Treasurer Bob Beeley reviewed the association's 2012 Financial Report and 2013 Budget, reporting that 2013 expenditures would exceed income by \$16,000, attributable to the cost of the camera system. The board had previously voted to raise the \$600 annual maintenance fee by 10 percent for 2014, and would probably raise it 10 percent again for 2015; the increases would recoup the cost of the camera system. In response to a question on raising the fee by a larger amount, Hamaker said that 75 percent of members would have to approve a change in the deed restrictions -- a difficult task.

Among other security measures debated was whether a guard service could be retained. Hamaker said that HCEPOA's attorney cautioned that doing so poses significant new risk and liability by creating an expectation of an ongoing guard service - impractical given HCEPOA's low annual dues and small number of properties.

Neither could Holly Creek Trail be gated, since it is maintained by Harris County as a public road. Additionally the road serves two residences that are not part of the neighborhood, and it would be very expensive to build and maintain a gate.

Board member Beeley reported that the Sheriff's Office said that when a residential burglar alarm is triggered, if there is no audio or video backup available, they will not respond immediately. However, if the security system incorporates a microphone or camera that enables deputies to remotely verify that a burglary is occurring, a priority response results. - **by James Bartlett**



Real Estate Update Shows Home Market Strengthening

It's been quite a while since we've seen headlines like "No Slowdown in Sight for the Houston Housing Market" or "The Houston Real Estate Market Charges into 2013 at Full-Throttle." But those were in fact the headlines for reports from the Houston Association of Realtors in February and March 2013. In addition, many homes on the market are generating multiple offers as well as offers above list price. Quite an encouraging outlook and realtors are working hard to keep up the pace.

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But it is important to know that these kinds of reports are taking into consideration the overall Houston market, with its average sales price in the mid-\$200s. Although sub-markets such as acreage properties, high-end price points, inner-Loop 610 or master-planned communities are all doing well, the rate of price increases in them will vary.

Currently, Holly Creek Estates has five homes on the market ranging in price from \$400,000 to \$1,190,000. Following three sales in the fourth quarter of 2012, no home sales have been reported for 2013 yet. However, a 6-acre home site on Holly Creek Trail closed in March to a young family looking forward to building a home in your neighborhood.

When looking at the overall upper-end Tomball market (excluding The Woodlands), there are nine homes priced at \$750,000 - \$2,750,000 with four sales in this price range during the past 12 months.

Below is an interesting market recap provided by the Houston Association of Realtors.

CATEGORIES	MARCH 2012	MARCH 2013	PERCENT CHANGE
Total property sales	5,866	7,006	19.4%
Total dollar volume	\$1,276,756,997	\$1,578,481,653	23.6%
Total active listings	41,997	32,704	-22.1%
Total pending sales	4,162	4,433	6.5%
Single-family home sales	4,941	5,779	17.0%
Single-family average sales price	\$225,809	\$236,195	4.6%
Single-family median sales price	\$161,500	\$172,000	6.5%
Months inventory*	5.6	3.5	-37.7%

Representatives from Coldwell Banker United, Realtors recently visited the large Exxon Mobil office in Fairfax, Virginia to give employees transferring to the new Exxon Mobil Campus on I-45 an overview of Tomball and the surrounding areas. Also, Noble Energy has purchased a 16-story building at Louetta and Highway 249, and Houston's favorable business climate is being noted throughout the country. All these factors could increase demand for Tomball-area homes.

In summary, we are fortunate to live and work in the Greater Houston area, due to its economics. But more importantly, as I travel, I sure appreciate the southern hospitality we enjoy here on a daily basis. - by Elizabeth Mandola

Leaf Cutter Ants! Are they Colonizing under your Home?



Leaf Cutter Ants, as interesting and hardworking as they are, can be quite destructive. I have witnessed these determined and vigilant creatures at work on our property, as well as others within our neighborhood. Have you ever noticed a very narrow, light trail curving through your yard, or a line of ants crossing your driveway in single file with large (proportionately speaking) pieces of leaves on their backs? If so, you may be unknowingly sharing a large part of your property with these ants. These fast and diligent workers can defoliate a small tree in one night!

I invite you to check out the links below to learn more about these interesting creatures. The second web site provides good information on how to rid your property of these determined yet destructive ants.

http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/science_nation/leafcutterants.jsp

<http://citybugs.tamu.edu/factsheets/landscape/ants/ENT-1002/>

Leaf cutter ants are quite active right now, allowing you the opportunity to locate and quickly treat before more damage is done. A neighbor reported that pouring liquid carpenter ant killer directly into the nesting hole and along the trail convinced the ants in her yard to look elsewhere, and even worked well to eliminate a portion of the active colony. - **by Vonda Tackett**

Restaurant Review - The Kitchen Door Diner and Emporium



Looking for a gourmet meal close to home? There's a new and really great venue for you to try! The Kitchen Diner and Emporium is located on the corner of Cypress-Rosehill and FM 2920 at the Conoco gas station. (Yes, gas station!!) Owners Paul Bullard and Craig Brewer are enjoying rave reviews. Chef Paul provides a new twist on barbecue with his version of brisket, chicken, turkey and ribs. Dishes include locally grown organic veggie and hot plate specials of the day, fried catfish on Fridays, along with fresh baked breads and scrumptious desserts such as Cajun cake, buttermilk and pecan pies, and more.

In addition to the Emporium, which features gift and home decor items, the owners have plenty of ideas for expansion; gift baskets, catering, and an outdoor patio area. Hours of operation are 7:30 to 10 a.m. breakfast, 11 a.m. hot buffet bar for lunch, then dinner until closing at 6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday. Drop by or call 281-516-9292. Eat in the quaint dining room or if you're in a hurry, pick up a family pack to go. The Kitchen Diner and Emporium is a great neighborhood "secret" with delicious food and friendly service! - **by Carole Benedict**

Not Tonight, Deer



One of my favorite things about living in Holly Creek Estates is the natural wildlife. However, nothing is more disappointing for a gardener than waiting for garden flowers to bloom, only to find the next morning that the neighborhood deer have eaten every blossom. You can still have a blooming flower garden if you select plants deer find unappetizing. No plant is completely deer-proof, but there are many plants that deer bypass because the flower tastes bad or the scent is offensive to them.

A fun solution to the deer problem is to grow plants that deer do not like to eat. Deer prefer a bland diet. Unless they are in starvation conditions, they will pass by most aromatic plants and plants containing poisonous or irritating chemicals. However, this means hostas, roses and lilies are NOT necessarily resistant to deer browsing! And while deer do not prefer to eat daffodils, I have personal knowledge that deer find them to be quite comfortable at naptime!

Below are a few of the many plants that are naturally resistant to deer and can be easily incorporated into an existing flower garden or natural landscape.



Annuals

Many deer-resistant flowering annuals will grow in your garden and reseed themselves when you allow the flower head to remain on the plant, letting your deer-resistant garden return year after year. Commonly planted flowers that deer generally will not eat are African daisies, borage, cockscomb, cornflowers, cosmos, foxglove, marigold, nasturtium, salvia, Sunflowers, and

zinnias. These annuals are available in an array of colors, from cool blues to hot red, and many can grow in less-than-ideal conditions.

Perennials

Deer-resistant flowering perennial plants will return to your garden from one year to the next, and are ideal for planting next to plants that deer might be tempted to eat. Lavender planted around or in among your roses will help keep deer from invading your rose garden. Other deer-resistant perennial plants are astilbe, agapanthus, asters, bee balm, black-eyed Susan, liatris, calla lilies, coneflowers, crocosmia, delphinium, yarrow, bleeding heart, peonies, and rose of Sharon.



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Bulbs

Daffodils have long been a favorite of gardeners plagued by hungry deer in the spring. But many other flowering bulbs are suited for gardens infiltrated by deer. Many flowering bulbs deer dislike will bloom during the summer, like amaryllis, bluebells, camassia, fritilia, summer snowflake and tiger lilies. Along with spring-blooming daffodils, plant hyacinths, crocus, early stardrift, iris, lily of the valley,

snowdrops, and scilla, also called star of Holland.

While planting deer resistant gardens is the best solution, what about protecting those non-resistant plants you can't live without? Kenan, of the **Arbor Gate** nursery in Tomball, recommends a product called *Plant Saver*, a 2-step process that is quick and easy to apply. Step one is a spray that is applied directly to your plants, making them very unappealing. Step two is actually applied to the soil, then is absorbed into the plant system making the plant objectionable. This product is all natural, organic and can safely be used around children and pets.

So rather than giving up gardening or suffering with a sparse landscape, remember to select deer resistant plants that add a natural beauty to our surroundings and compliment Holly Creek's most beautiful "residents." – **by Laura Branson**

Family Spotlight

by Laura Urrutia



The spotlight for this edition of the Holly Creek Chronicle is focused on the Tackett family. Steve, Vonda and their two daughters moved to HCE in October 2010, and wasted no time getting to know their neighbors and making a positive impact on our community. They both participate in our new neighborhood watch program, and Vonda is active in Bunco.

Steve and Vonda are business owners in the telecommunications industry. When Steve is not working and finds time to relax, he enjoys all types of activities on the water (frozen or unfrozen). Vonda's favorite hobby is photography. Their two daughters, Emily (14) and Audra (11), attend Salem Lutheran School. Emily likes basketball and technology while Audra enjoys reading and archery.

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The Tackett Family

The Tackett family has numerous cats and one Maltipoo named Scooby. They all love the outdoors and playing games together. Before moving to HCE, they lived inside the loop in Timbergrove, adjacent to the Heights.

"It is so wonderful living in a small town after living in the busy bustling city for so long! We have made so many friendships here and really enjoy our neighbors," says Vonda.

So what attracted the Tacketts to Holly Creek? Vonda says it was, "the peaceful environment, acreage, beautiful trees, and winding roads."



Cook's Corner

Pavlova

IT'S FRESH BERRY SEASON, so make a beautiful, healthy dessert!!

In this elegant dessert, a crisp white meringue layer is filled with whipped cream and fresh fruit. To keep your meringue from being flat and grainy, try beating egg whites until stiff but not dry. Overbeaten egg whites lose volume and deflate when folded into other ingredients. Also, when beating in sugar, beat in about 1 tablespoon at a time, beating well between each addition. Then beat until meringue is thick, white and glossy. Be absolutely sure not a particle of grease or egg yolk gets into the whites.

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 egg whites
- 1 1/4 cups white sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 pint heavy cream
- Fresh berries, your choice, sliced

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees F (150 degrees C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Draw a 9-inch circle on the parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, beat egg whites until stiff but not dry. Gradually add the sugar, about 1 tablespoon at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat until thick and glossy. Gently fold in vanilla extract, lemon juice, and cornstarch.
3. Spoon mixture inside the circle drawn on the parchment paper. Working from the center, spread mixture toward the outside edge, building edge slightly. This should leave a slight depression in the center.
4. Bake for 1 hour. Cool on a wire rack.
5. In a small bowl, beat heavy cream with 3 tablespoons sugar until stiff peaks form; set aside. Remove the paper, and place meringue on a flat serving plate. Fill the center of the meringue with whipped cream, and top with fruit slices and juice.

SERVINGS: 8

(Recipe from resident Carole Benedict. To share your favorite recipe in the HCE Chronicle, please contact Carole at txwnabe@gmail.com.)





Newsbriefs

Holly Creek Estates "Nextdoor" website formed

You may remember an email a few months ago with the subject: **Nextdoor**. This private social network is the easiest way for neighbors in our community to talk online. And it's free. Thousands of neighborhoods are using Nextdoor to build happier, safer places to call home. To date, 44 HCE neighbors have joined the website. People are using Nextdoor to:

- Quickly get the word out about a break-in
- Organize a Neighborhood Watch Group
- Track down a trustworthy babysitter
- Find out who does the best paint job in town
- Ask for help with locating a lost dog
- Find a new home for an outgrown bike
- Finally call that nice man down the street by his first name

Nextdoor's mission is bringing back a sense of community to neighborhoods, one of the most important communities in each of our lives. Its interior pages are private, unlike those of some other neighborhood-themed websites. In a Nextdoor neighborhood, everything, including the directory of members, is visible only to fellow members. Marketers can't vacuum up names and addresses, nor does the information appear on search engine results. If you want to join the website, check out Nextdoor Holly Creek Estates on the web

at <https://hollycreekestates.nextdoor.com>. – by **Carole Benedict**

"Editor's Note: The Nextdoor listing is voluntary, and is not sponsored by the HCE Property Owners Association."

Fun and games: Social opportunities in HCE

Resident Winona Dutton has created **Game Day** for neighbors interested in getting together in a casual social setting. The first game day on Tuesday, May 14 at her home was a huge success. Contract Rummy was the game of choice and in attendance were Carole Benedict, Shirley Goza, Julia Morrison, Kathy Rush, Vonda Tackett, Jayne Woody, and Janet Drake. Please contact Winona Dutton if you want to participate in Game Day and/or if you have other suggestions for fun social activities in HCE. Her email address is wduyton001@comcast.net. Thanks, Winona!

Board elects 2013 officers

The Holly Creek Estates Board of Directors has elected officers for 2013. Bob Beeley was elected president, after serving as treasurer for multiple years. Peter DeLeeuw was reelected as vice president. Jerry Hamaker, after completing his term as president, was elected treasurer, and will oversee the Entrance Surveillance Project. James Bartlett continues as secretary and chair of the Communications Committee. Steve Yon continues as chair of the Architectural Review Committee. Gene Mattox continues as chair of the Deed Restrictions Committee. And Doug Beckmann continues as chair of the Landscaping Committee.

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Several loose dog incidents reported

There have been several incidents of loose dogs roaming Holly Creek Trail, posing questions of safety for residents and violating Harris County law and HCE deed restrictions. A county ordinance states "all dogs and cats must be kept under restraint while in the unincorporated areas of Harris County," meaning within a fenced area, or on a leash or other restraint. They must also be licensed and vaccinated. Deed restriction [1] 12 states, "No animals, livestock, poultry, dogs, cats, and such may be kept or permitted on the premises, except as pets or for domestic use. Nothing herein contained shall ever be construed so as to permit the keeping of animals and pets to become a nuisance or obnoxious to the occupants of neighboring properties, or to become a hazard to the health, welfare and well being of the community. Keeping of more than four dogs shall constitute the operation of a kennel which is expressly prohibited." Bob Beeley, HCEPOA president, suggests that if anyone sees roaming pets that present a safety hazard, to call Harris County Animal Control at (713) 439-6000. More information is on their website at <http://www.hcphes.org/vph/>.

Aquifers - The Water Below Holly Creek Estates

Homes in Holly Creek Estates have something in common - their own wells tapping groundwater from the unseen resource beneath our feet - the vast Gulf Coast Aquifer system that extends from Texas to Mississippi and miles inland.

"The Gulf Coast Aquifer system is a reliable source of potable water" said Mark Kasmarek, hydrologist with the U.S. Geological Survey's Woodlands office.

With the 2011 drought in mind and reports that a half-dozen HCE property owners have since deepened their wells, the Chronicle interviewed Kasmarek, author and co-author of numerous scientific studies on regional groundwater resources, as well as Tommy Bussell, founder of Bussell and Sons water well company. Bussell has drilled thousands of local wells since 1952, including more than two dozen in HCE. Both offered insights into our aquifer system.



First, an aquifer is not an underground lake. Coastal aquifers are more like a layer cake, with multiple zones of porous and permeable water-bearing sand separated by zones of impermeable clay and silt through which water will pass only slowly, if at all. Locally, the Gulf Coast system includes the Chicot aquifer that extends from the land surface in the updip areas (in our area, from roughly Hempstead to Lake Conroe) to a depth of about 1,200 feet downdip at the coast. It includes the separate Lissie, Willis, Bentley, Montgomery, and Beaumont sands. Most wells in HCE probably tap one of these sands.

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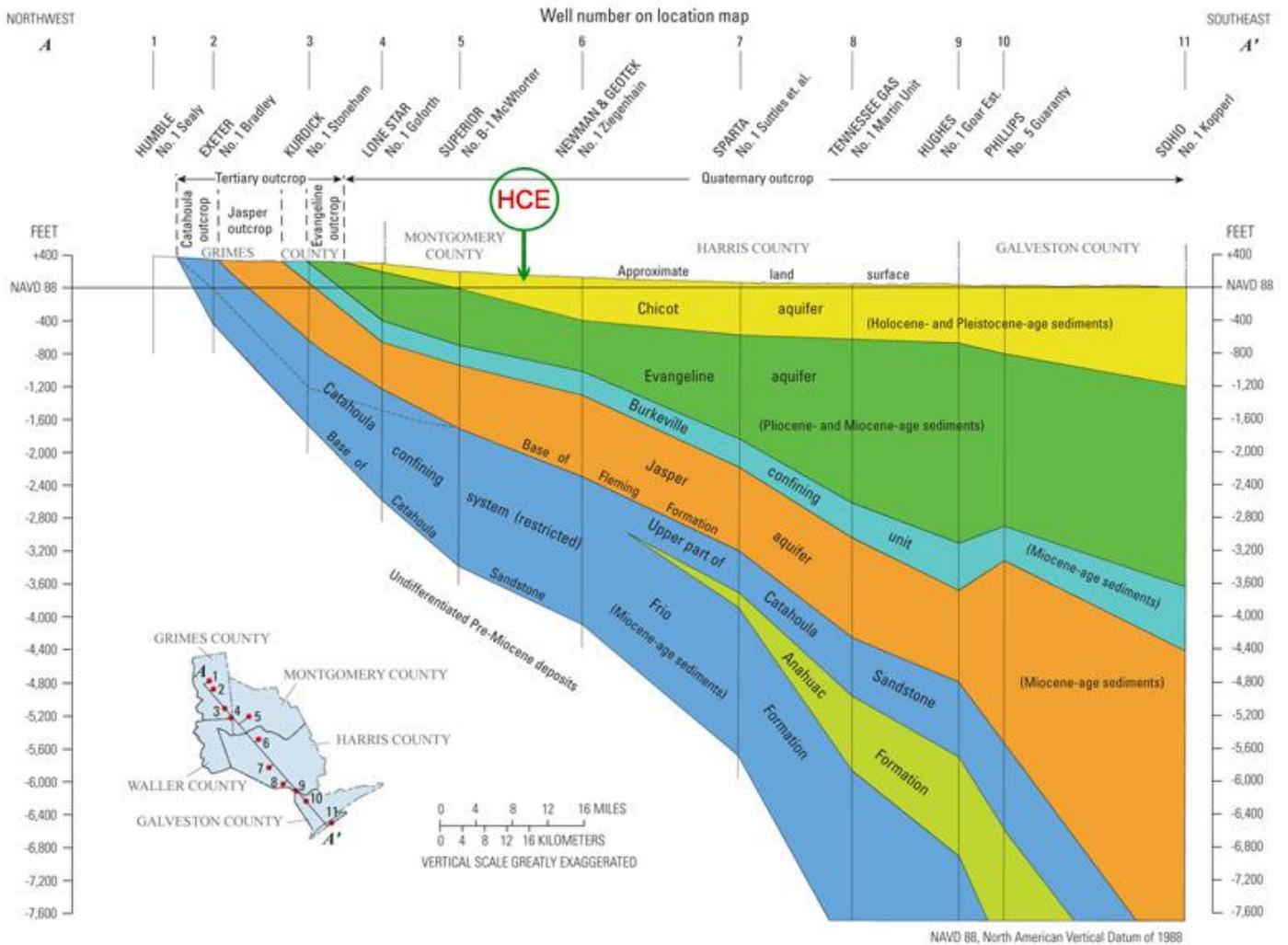


Figure 2. Hydrogeologic section of the Gulf Coast aquifer system in Harris County and adjacent counties, Texas (modified from Baker, 1979, fig. 4).

[Click here for a larger view of the chart](#)

Deeper wells may extend into the Evangeline aquifer that ranges from the land surface in the updip recharge areas to about 3,600 feet deep in its downdip areas at the coast. It includes the Fleming and Goliad sands. There is also a deeper water source, the Jasper aquifer, but not many residential wells go down that far.

"In the HCE area, the Chicot extends down to about 400 feet, and the Evangeline to about 800 feet," said Bussell. "In such cases we drill a 4-inch test bore to about 350 feet to determine what's there. We then drill a 6¾-inch final well, set casing and install a downhole pump with 20-foot screen in a good water-bearing sand between 250 and 350 feet. It varies depending on which sands are present. Pump capacity is 50 gallons per minute, plenty for most homes. The pumps last 11 years on average barring power surges from lightning, with some lasting longer. We emphasize good well construction to prevent intrusion of surface water and pollutants from agriculture, livestock, and septic systems."

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"There is actually potable water beginning around 100 feet. But shallow water can contain ferric iron as well as an iron bacteria," Bussell added. "Also, shallow wells are vulnerable if aquifer water levels drop, like during the 2011 drought. There may be a few air-lift shallow wells left in the neighborhood, but that's an obsolete approach now."

The aquifers contain "fossil water" ranging from decades old in shallow wells to hundreds or even thousands of years old in deeper wells. "All I know is we have good water," said one resident. "I like it." And while aquifers can contain an immense amount of water, they are not infinite. Thousands of wells have been drilled in our area in recent years by homeowners, utility districts, businesses and cities. In fact, two new Tomball city wells at Telge Road and FM 2920 are visible near a large blue storage tank.

"The USGS monitors aquifer levels by measuring the depth to water in more than 700 wells in an 11-county area," said Kasmarek. "During the 1970s, it was realized that declines of hundreds of feet had occurred in the Chicot and Evangeline aquifers, caused by groundwater withdrawals that began in the 1890s."

The greatest declines were near the Houston Ship Channel area. Long-term withdrawals by 1979 caused as much as 10 feet of land-surface subsidence, and over one-quarter of an 11,000-square-mile area had subsided more than 1 foot. When subsidence caused by groundwater withdrawals was finally accepted as a scientific fact, the Harris-Galveston Subsidence District was created, and groundwater withdrawals were curtailed through greater use of surface water. The Chicot and Evangeline aquifers started to recover, and by 2012 had gained as much as 200 and 260 feet respectively from their levels in 1977. This is detailed in an annual report available at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/sim/3230/>; the 2013 edition will be available later this year.

None of the monitored wells are in HCE, but several are nearby. USGS water-level-altitude maps show that in our area, from 1977 to 2012 the Chicot aquifer declined 35 feet, including an 8-foot drop the final year, while the deeper Evangeline aquifer declined 100 feet. "But there is good news," said Kasmarek. "We've seen some recovery in many areas since the drought, and are working on a new report documenting these findings."

During droughts, increased groundwater withdrawals cause aquifers to decline, creating and then enlarging the size of cones of depression in the water level surfaces. In wetter years, withdrawals decrease and water levels typically rise. In areas solely dependent on groundwater, continued declines are likely, particularly in growing areas as more residents move in and development increases. Where surface water is used to augment groundwater, slow rises in aquifer levels can be anticipated if the amount of water going into the aquifer from recharge exceeds withdrawals.

Aquifers do recharge from precipitation, but slowly - from 2 to 7 inches annually in the monitored wells for the Chicot aquifer, and 1 to 2 inches for the Evangeline aquifer. This water enters primarily in the updip areas (recharge zones) where the sediments are sandier. Precipitation falling downdip (coastward) outside the recharge zones encounters more clay-bearing sediments that causes run-off into streams, effectively restricting recharge.

No immediate water issues loom on the horizon for HCE residents with up-to-date wells. But given Greater Houston's growth and rising water demand, as well as 30 legislative bills introduced in Austin this year concerning groundwater use, concerns about future water supplies will likely become familiar topics. - **by James Bartlett**

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