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Texas Sunset Commission
1501 North Congress Ave.
6th Floor
Robert E. Johnson Building
Austin, Texas 78701

Subject: Comments on Staff Report regarding abolishment of Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists and licensing program

Chairman Birdwell, Vice Chairman Paddie, and members of the Commission,
My name is Peter Winegeart, and I am the Deputy General Manager for the Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District. The District covers seven counties from Amarillo to the Oklahoma border. In addition to the major agricultural economic engine, the District is also home to the largest municipal well field in Texas, a water project providing water to 11 cities across the High Plains of Texas.

I am appearing before you today to register the District's strong opposition to the Staff's Report recommending abolishing the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists and the licensing program for professional geoscientists. The District opposes this recommendation for the following reasons:

1. The District has and continues to engage, on a contract basis, with professional geoscientists (PG's) to conduct a wide variety of technical analysis related to our core mission of conserving, managing, and protecting the groundwater resources within our jurisdictional boundaries. We rely exclusively on the licensing requirements for PG's to ensure that the individuals and firms we are hiring are adequately trained and systematically staying up-to-date with technological advances through the Board's continuing education requirements. Without the licensing program for PG's administered by the Board, we have strong concerns with regards to the professional qualifications and standards of individuals and firms that may propose to work for the District in the future.

2. The District also believes that the recognition of qualifications and continuing education demonstrated by a PG in good standing with the Board is critical in legal proceedings, whether it be during a contested permit hearing or other legal matters involving the District. In our experience, having our representatives credentialed as a PG in Texas is a very important element demonstrating to our citizens that we are doing our due diligence during these legal matters.
3. Finally, many of the technical work products produced by the District have very real, short and long-term financial consequences on our citizens. These technical work products need to be produced with the highest level of competency and accuracy possible. The District relies on PG's not only to produce many of these technical work products, but also to serve as technical reviewers for rule amendments, technical educational materials and annual District mapping efforts.

The Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District believes the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists and PG licensing program serves an important and valuable purpose in Texas, and strongly opposes the Staff's Report recommendation to abolish.

Thank you for your time, and I sincerely hope you have found my comments valuable.

Respectfully,

Peter Winegeart,
Deputy General Manager,
Panhandle Groundwater
Conservation District