# GREEN DEWITT DRAINAGE DISTRICT

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**REGULAR MEETING — August 24, 2026 – 11:00 a.m.** held in the conference room of the Green DeWitt Drainage District at 107 N. Gonzales Street, Cuero, Texas

## 1. OPENING PRAYER

The meeting opened with prayer.

## 2. ANNOUNCE QUORUM & CALL TO ORDER

A quorum was announced. The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by President Doug Sethness at 11:00 a.m.

**PRESENT:**

Doug Sethness -President

Larry Coppedge – Vice President

John Varela – Secretary - ABSENT

David Guajardo – General Manager

Pat Trevino – Office Manager

Ignacio Granado – Foreman

## 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Pedro Gonzales – Engineer with Southwest Engineer

## 4. MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MONTH TABLED

Motion by Director Doug Sethness, to table the minutes of the meeting held in July 28, 2026. Seconded by Director Larry Coppedge. Motion carried.

5. **Facilities Report – Bullet-Point Summary**

- The Board agreed to **table the minutes** to allow additional time for review.
- Foreman noted the report is **handwritten** due to being out last week and unable to prepare the typed version.

## System Maintenance & Operations

- Completed another round through the system from the July 28, 2026, report.
- Progress has been steady despite multiple equipment breakdowns this year.
- Only one mower is currently operational; crew are doing their best to maintain productivity.
- Vegetation growth is slower due to heat and dry conditions, keeping grass more dormant.
- Herbicides were purchased to treat problem areas showing regrowth.

## Equipment Updates

- Updated several pieces of small equipment:
  - New weed eaters
  - New blower
- Work truck needs minor repairs:
  - Driver's side window issue
  - Monitoring system has been signaling alerts
- Additional equipment checks and repairs will be needed.

## Flood Monitoring

- Jesse and Daniel continue weekly testing of the flood gauge monitor at Broadway and Aransas.
- Ensuring proper operation in case of high-water events.

## Channel & Grounds Maintenance

- Shared before-and-after photos of heavily overgrown areas caused by rain and machinery downtime.
- Once dry spots appeared, crew accessed and cleared the inner portions of the channel.
- Area required several days of work but is now cleaned, dry, and fully maintained.
- Some sections continue to hold water and remain difficult to access; will be addressed when conditions improve.

6. General Manager Report: **Flood Monitoring System & Press Release – Bullet-Point Summary**

## Project Completion & Operational Status

- The DM Log Flood Monitoring System is now **100% complete** and fully operational.
- The pilot installation at **Site #2 (Broadway – main channel)** has been finished and is functioning as intended.
- The district purchased components for **two systems**; one is installed, and the second will be placed at **Valley Channel at Morgan** once mowing operations catch up.

## System Capabilities

- System includes:
  - Cellular camera monitoring
  - Water-level float switches
  - Warning lights
  - Independent battery power source
- Designed to allow district personnel to observe site conditions remotely during rainfall and rising water events.
- Clarification was discussed regarding the term "remotely" — meaning personnel can view conditions from their phones rather than physically being at the site.

## Purpose & Function

- When water reaches predetermined levels, the float switch activates the warning components.
- Cellular monitoring provides additional situational awareness for operational decision-making during severe weather.
- Broadway installation will serve as a pilot site to evaluate performance during real high-water events.

## Project Development & Collaboration

- System was designed in house, not an off-the-shelf installation.
- General Manager coordinated concept, design, procurement, and implementation.
- Input and review provided by Dewitt County Emergency Management Coordinator and Floodplain Administrator Billy Jordan.
- District employees Ignacio Granado, Jesse Rodriguez, and Daniel "Chico" Rodriguez contributed to fabrication, installation, and field work.

## Next Steps & Ongoing Evaluation

- With construction and testing complete, the project has transitioned into routine monitoring and maintenance.
- District will continue evaluating reliability and effectiveness as weather conditions allow real-world testing.
- Board will review the **press release** drafted for public distribution.

## Press & Publication Discussion

- Discussion on how news articles are submitted today: typically, by contacting outlets and emailing information.

7. **Proposed Tax Rate – Bullet-Point Summary**

## Tax Rate Presentation

- Proposed **voter-approved tax rate**: **$0.8957 per $100** of taxable valuation.
- Certified taxable value: **$627,322,219**.
- Gross levy at proposed rate (O&M revenue): **$561,868.71**.
- Proposed rate represents approximately a **5% increase** over last year's tax rate.

## Public Hearing Requirement

- By law, the district must hold a **public hearing** before adopting the tax rate.
- Hearing will be scheduled for **September 21, 2026, at 11:00 a.m.**
- Required notice will be published in the newspaper by the DeWitt County Appraisal District once the board's recorded vote is provided.
- Historically, no members of the public have attended prior tax rate hearings, but the hearing must still be posted and conducted.

## Board Discussion

- Clarification provided that the public may comment at the hearing but cannot alter the voter-approved rate.
- Board acknowledged that public hearings are typically held during regular meetings and may not be noticeable unless someone attends.

## Motion on Proposed Tax Rate

- Motion made to adopt the proposed **2026 ad valorem tax rate of $0.8957 per $100** of taxable valuation.
- Motion made by Director Larry Coppedge and seconded by Doug Sethness to:
    - Prepare and publish the required notice of public hearing
    - Complete all administrative actions necessary to conduct the hearing
- Motion seconded and approved unanimously.8. BUDGET REVIEW/ ADOPTION FY

8. **Fiscal Year 2026–2027 Budget Review & Adoption – Bullet-Point Summary**

## Budget Overview

- Proposed FY27 total **revenues**: **$564,368.71**.
- Proposed FY27 total **expenditure**: **$634,100.00**.
- Planned use of available **fund balance**: **$69,731.29**.
- Budget reflects:
    - Increased personnel funding

    - A one-year capital allocation for operational assets
    - Reduced engineering and surveying appropriations

## Property Tax Assumptions

- Ad valorem revenue budgeted at **$561,868.71**, based on:
    - Certified taxable value: **$627,322,219**
    - Adopted tax rate: **$0.8957 per $100**
- Truth-in-Taxation calculations align with the adopted rate.

## Year-Over-Year Changes

- FY26 expenditures: **$559,950**.
- FY27 expenditures increase due to personnel additions and equipment funding requests.
- District is projected to finish FY26 **$70,000–$80,000 under budget**, consistent with historical patterns.
- Board noted the district typically spends **$50,000–$75,000 less** than budgeted each year.

## Contingency & Capital Notes

- The $85,000 equipment allocation is not guaranteed spending; all purchases require board approval.
- Budget includes contingency capacity that historically remains unused.

## Board Discussion

- Clarification that although expenditures exceed revenues on paper, the district's historical underspending offsets the planned fund balance use.
- Board acknowledged the long-standing pattern of ending each fiscal year with significant unspent appropriations.

## Budget Adoption Motion

- Director Larry Coppedge made a motion to adopt the **Green DeWitt Drainage District FY26–27 Budget**, Doug Sethness seconded the motion providing:
    - Estimated revenues of **$564,368.71**
    - Appropriations of **$634,100.00**
    - As represented in **Exhibit A**, subject to board-approved amendments
- Motion included adoption of **Order No. 26-3**, the formal Budget Adoption Resolution.
- No further discussion.
- Motion passed unanimously.

## Outcome

- **Fiscal Year 2026–2027 Budget officially adopted.**

9. **Engineering Update – Bullet-Point Summary**

## Southwest Engineers – Watershed Mapping & Phase Two Modeling

- Meeting with Southwest Engineers held **July 29 at 10:00 a.m.**
- Discussion covered:
  - Updates and revisions to current watershed mapping
  - Refinement of watershed boundaries
  - Coordination of Phase Two modeling with district flood-planning efforts
- Southwest Engineers continues development of **Phase Two watershed models**.
- Updated **Gohlke Creek modeling** is being incorporated into a larger **Cuero Levee Study** performed by Edge Engineering.
- Integration provides more detailed information for identifying and evaluating potential flood problem areas within the City of Cuero.
- Phase Two remains **in progress**.
- PowerPoint presentation is being updated to incorporate board comments and revised mapping.
- Mapping revisions will include identification of **man-made structures**, which comprise approximately **98%** of the system.

**Texas Water Development Board – Flood Management Evaluation (Cuero Levee Study)**

**Monthly Progress Meeting**

- Virtual meeting held **August 11, 2026, 1:00–2:00 p.m.**
- Participants included Edge Engineering, district representatives, and Texas Water Development Board staff.

**Study Progress**

- Edge Engineering presented:
  - Draft flood problem area identification
  - Two preliminary levee alignment concepts
  - Draft roadway crossing flood-mitigation evaluations
- Discussion focused on methodology for prioritizing problem areas.
- Engineers developed an initial prioritization matrix and ranking criteria to evaluate potential benefits of addressing identified issues.

## Upcoming Milestones

- Edge Engineering is working toward completion of the 50% project report, due September 5, 2026.
- Edge Engineering scheduled an on-site visit August 25 at 8:00 a.m. to inspect low-water crossing areas.

## Attendance & Coordination

- Edge Engineering will attend the site visit; Texas Water Development Board attendance uncertain.
- County and city representatives were invited but have not participated in recent meetings.
- Emergency Management Coordinator **Billy Jordan** remains included on all email communications.
- City has been contacted for information but has not engaged directly.

## Background & Funding

- Study originated from the **State Flood Planning Program (Region 11)**.
- District proposed a levee along the Guadalupe River as a high-impact flood-mitigation opportunity.
- Region 11 (GBRA region) selected the project as a high-benefit candidate.
- Study is fully funded by GBRA/state, with no cost to the district.
- Edge Engineering was selected by the state's contractor (Ducks More Company).
- District noted limited control over engineering selection and project management, similar to other state-managed grants.

### Purpose of the Study

- Evaluate whether a levee extending east from Highway 72 could prevent repeat flooding similar to the **1998 event**.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: The board went into Executive Session at 12:08 and returned from Executive Session: Board Member Doug Sethness is stepping down as President but will remain on the board. Larry Coppedge will resume the responsibilities of Board President.

**10. GLO GRANT UPDATES; GLO Mitigation Grant – Bullet-Point Summary**

The GLO mitigation grant project has entered a critical phase as the district moves into property acquisition.

Contractual Deadline & Funding

- The Texas General Land Office informally advised that the grant contract expires January 31, 2027.
- No extensions will be permitted for mitigation and completion contracts.
- GLO Senior Grant Manager Zena Trevino reported that $135,000 in grant funds have been expended to date.

## Timeline Concerns

- After appraisal and acquisition, the project must still complete:
  - Required bidding and advertisement period
  - Construction phase
  - Final draws

    - Full grant closeout documentation
- Construction is estimated at **approximately three months** under favorable conditions.
- If acquisition is not completed until September or October, construction may not begin until October or November, leaving a very limited window before the January 31, deadline.

## Risks Identified

- **Bidding risks:**
    - Bids may exceed available funding
    - Required bids may not be received
    - Project may need to be rebid, causing delays
- **Weather risks:**
    - Construction during late fall/winter may be negatively affected
- **Financial exposure:**
    - Failure to complete the project and closeout by the deadline could expose the district to repayment of previously expended grant funds.

### Contract Termination Option

- GLO advised the district may request termination of the contract.
- District may also request a waiver of reimbursement for funds spent in good faith.
- Approval of such a waiver is not guaranteed.

### General Manager's Assessment

- The project has reached a critical decision point.
- Priority is determining whether a realistic path exists to complete acquisition, bidding, construction, and closeout before the deadline.
- GM recommends board discussion on:
    - Contractual deadlines
    - Acquisition schedule
    - Construction timeline
    - Financial exposure
    - Risks of proceeding vs. terminating the contract
- GLO expects a timely response from the district regarding its intended course.

## Board Discussion

- Board members expressed concern that the project cannot realistically be completed within the remaining timeframe.
- Consensus among board members leaned toward **closing/terminating the project** and requesting a waiver.
- Concern noted that the district may still be responsible for the $135,000 already spent.
- Discussion included the existence of another grant opportunity, with interest in consulting project manager Aaron for details.

## Reflection on Project Management

- Board members questioned why the project could not be completed in five years.
- Concerns raised about:
    - District not being closely involved in managing or advocating for the project
    - Time lost due to environmental studies required by GLO
    - Redundant environmental work (e.g., mussel studies) that had already been completed by GBRA
- GM noted that required processes (environmental studies) consumed significant time and were mandated by GLO.

## Environmental Requirements & Delays

- GLO required a high-water mark study for the creek as part of environmental clearance.
- This study eliminated a significant portion of the originally proposed work.
- Aaron stated that neither the district nor the engineer could have accelerated the environmental process; delays were inherent to GLO's required procedures.
- Environmental clearance took approximately four years, which significantly compressed the remaining timeline.

## Termination Option & Next Steps

- GLO is offering the district the option to terminate the grant without penalty.
- Aaron will draft a memo for the district to review before notifying GLO Senior Grant Manager Zena Trevino.
- District may also request assistance from a state representative to advocate for additional time, though extension approval is unlikely.
- Board consensus indicates the district will likely pursue termination, pending consultation with Representative AJ.

## Alternative Funding Opportunity

- GLO has opened the Mitigation Reallocation Program, consisting of leftover funds from prior mitigation grants.
- District would be in a strong position to apply because:
    - Environmental clearance is already complete
    - Project design is already complete
- If funded, the district could move directly into construction, avoiding previous delays.
- Aaron offered to provide application templates if the district chooses to pursue this opportunity.

## Clarification on District Performance

- Aaron confirmed no wrongdoing by the district; delays were due to required environmental and archaeological processes.
- Board discussion noted:

    - Some required studies duplicated work already completed by other agencies (e.g., GBRA mussel studies).
    - Conflicts existed between GLO requirements and existing Corps of Engineers permits.
    - Personnel turnover and COVID-era disruptions contributed to lost time.
- GM emphasized that the district followed all required processes but ultimately ran out of time due to external delays.

## Input from GLO Project Manager (Aaron)

- Aaron stated the environmental phase took significantly longer than expected.
- Additional delays occurred due to requirements such as establishing a high-water mark for the creek.

## Board Direction

- Board member Doug Sethness intends to consult Representative AJ Louderbach regarding the possibility of influencing GLO's position on extensions.
- If no extension is possible, the board's position is to terminate the project and request a waiver of reimbursement.
- Motion to terminate will be considered after consultation with AJ.

**Texas Water Development Board – Stream Gauge System Grant**

## Current Status

- No significant movement since the previous update.
- Project remains in the preliminary coordination stage.

### Local Match & Funding Strategy

- Required local match is approximately $86,500.
- District is evaluating partnerships to reduce financial burden, including:
    - Dewitt County Emergency Management
    - Dewitt County Commissioners Court
    - City of Cuero
- Collaboration could create a regional flood monitoring network benefiting multiple agencies.

## Inter-Agency Coordination

- GM remains in communication with the Emergency Management Coordinator regarding coordinated presentation to Commissioners Court.

- Discussions underway about potential City of Cuero participation, given the cross-jurisdictional benefits of stream gauge data.

## Project Value & Approach

- GM believes the project should be approached as a **regional initiative**, not solely a district project.
- Stream gauge data supports:
    - Drainage operations
    - Floodplain management
    - Emergency response
    - Roadway monitoring
    - Public safety decisions

## Next Steps

- Coordinate meetings with county and city representatives.
- Define benefits, responsibilities, and feasibility of cooperative funding.
- Develop a proposed cost-sharing structure for presentation to participating entities.
- Continue administrative coordination while awaiting movement on the grant.

12. Financial report. – Director Larry Coppedge made a motion to approve the financial reports and Director Doug Sethness seconded the motion. We have a motion to approve the financial report. Any further discussion? Hearing none, all in favor say aye. Motion passed.

13. Meeting was scheduled for September 21, 2026.

14. Motion made to adjourn