

City files lawsuit over water rights in Hickory District 1

By WILLIAM TAYLOR
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The city of San Angelo is returning to court against the Hickory Underground Water Conservation District No. 1 in another battle over rights to water in the city's well field in McCulloch, Menard and Concho counties.

In a lawsuit filed Wednesday, the city claims that the water district is violating a 1991 court order against placing unreasonable restrictions on the use of the city's well field.

San Angelo City Manager Stephen Brown said Thursday the city is seeking permits to develop its wells, but has been unable to negotiate reasonable conditions from the water district.

Lorna Moore, assistant manager at the district's headquarters in Brady, de-

clined to comment on the lawsuit Thursday.

According to Brown and the lawsuit, the district wants to place the following restrictions on the city's well permits:

- The city could not draw the well water unless the water level of the O.H. Ivie Reservoir dropped below a certain level.
- The city could not sell its water.
- The city's permits would have a term of only three years.

Brown called those restrictions unreasonable and a clear violation of the April 20, 1991, court order.

In that 1991 order, 119th State District Judge Curt F. Steib ruled the district could not make the city's use of the wells contingent on other available water sources.

The order also restricted the dis-

trict's authority to deny the city "alienation" or sale of its water.

The new lawsuit asks the court to enforce the former order and force timely processing of the city's water well permit applications.

The well field in question was acquired by the city 1971 and 1972. The city already has drilled nine wells, but has not installed pumps.

Development of the field was delayed, while the city pursued the Ivie Pipeline project, but now that that project is complete, the city wants to develop the wells so they will be ready whenever they might be needed, Brown said.

The city plans to eventually drill 25 wells and construct a pipeline to connect them with the Ivie Pipeline about 25 to 30 miles to the north of the field.

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