



**Barton Springs
Edwards Aquifer**
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Local Aquifer District Declares Stage II Drought

(Austin) At its April 28 Board meeting, the Board of Directors of the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District declared ‘Stage II Alarm Drought’ for the District, effective immediately. The drought declaration affects authorized water use by some 60,000 groundwater users primarily in northern Hays, southern Travis, and western Caldwell counties.

The Lovelady Drought Indicator Well, in the Edwards Aquifer and located in South Austin, dipped below its Alarm threshold of 175.0 feet depth-to-water on April 24. The 10-day average discharge at Barton Springs, the District’s other official drought indicator, also dipped below its Alarm threshold of a 10-day average of 38 cubic feet per second, based on BSEACD manual measurements, on about April 22. For the Board to officially declare drought, only one drought indicator has to cross below its trigger threshold. In this instance, water levels in the Lovelady Monitor Well and springflow at Barton Springs prompted the drought declaration.

Declaration of Stage II Alarm Drought requires all of the District’s permittees to implement measures specified in their User Drought Contingency Plans to meet monthly pumpage reduction requirements. All permittees must achieve a 20% reduction in pumpage. Permittees with certain conditional permits may have to reduce use even further. End-user customers served by water utilities on groundwater wells are required to comply with their utility’s water use restrictions for this drought stage. Generally, restricting outdoor water use, including landscape irrigation on a specified frequency, pool filling & refilling, and non-essential water use such as water fountains, is sufficient to reach monthly pumpage targets for Stage II Alarm Drought.

When compared to historic monthly rainfall totals for Austin, the District weather station indicates a 11.6 inch rainfall deficit since last October. The Stage II Alarm Drought declaration comes after one of the driest seven-month periods on record, near the beginning of the heavy outdoor water-use season, and also at a time when abnormally hot and dry conditions are forecast to continue. Without reductions in demand, deeper drought stages, with even greater required curtailments of pumping and water use, will be reached sooner. Since groundwater is a shared resource, water conservation has to be a coordinated effort.

BSEACD is a groundwater conservation district charged by the Texas Legislature to preserve, conserve, and protect the aquifers and groundwater resources within its jurisdiction, which includes parts of four Central Texas counties. It is governed by a Board of five elected directors and staffed with hydrogeologists, groundwater regulatory compliance specialists, environmental educators, geospatial systems specialists, and administrative support personnel.

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