



**Barton Springs
Edwards Aquifer**
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Aquifer District Eases Out of Drought

At its meeting on March 22, the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District's Board of Directors declared a No-Drought condition for the aquifers within the District, effective immediately. The second of the area's two groundwater drought indicators – the water level in the Lovelady monitor well – has been rising steadily because of the extraordinarily wet winter and spring. The other indicator, sustained flow rate at Barton Springs, moved above its threshold in late January, but both indicators need to be above designated thresholds to emerge from drought. The District declared a groundwater drought on April 28, 2011, with mandatory water-use restrictions being enforced since then. In No-Drought status, groundwater users are encouraged to maintain conservation practices, but water use restrictions are lifted.

“With good reason, meteorologists were predicting a dry winter and spring. I'm glad they were wrong. We received record rainfall just above the recharge zone—just where we needed it. The Edwards Aquifer has been replenished, but it's far from an aquifer-full state. Now that we've got water in the bank, we've all got to use it wisely. These droughts reinforce how valuable water really is. We know the next drought is coming, we just don't know when, or how long it will last,” noted Kirk Holland, the District's General Manager.

Dr. Brian Smith, a principal hydrogeologist at the District, explained, “Onion Creek above the recharge zone has been flowing since mid-February. The rains in December and January eventually saturated the soil zone, which was in a severely parched state from last year's record dryness and heat, and finally produced run-off to streams. Water makes its way through fractures and caves in creek beds into the aquifer. Four months of above average rainfall have contributed major amounts of recharge to the aquifer.”

Holland commented, “Water conservation needs to be integrated into all aspects of our daily lives here in Central Texas. Prolonged dry periods are part of our natural climate cycle. I hope as our groundwater users plan for the coming year, the vulnerability of their water supplies is kept in mind, and our end-users commit to reducing their water-use footprint and thereby conserve and protect their groundwater resources.”

Typically, water use peaks from May through September because of a sharp increase in outdoor irrigation. Even in No-Drought status during these months, end users are asked to

comply with a voluntary 10% reduction in water use to help extend water resources through the summer. Conserving water can prolong the time spent in no-drought conditions, preserve water levels, and keep springflow at Barton Springs above the drought thresholds.

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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