



**Barton Springs
Edwards Aquifer**
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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AQUIFER DISTRICT EASES OUT OF DROUGHT

At its meeting on December 17, 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 – water levels in the Lovelady monitor well – has been rising steadily, and District staff is now confident the threshold from Alarm Stage Drought to No Drought will be crossed within a very few days. The other indicator, sustained flow rate at Barton Springs, moved above its threshold in early November, but both indicators need to be above designated thresholds to emerge from drought. The District declared a groundwater drought on June 23, 2008, 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.

"We're encouraged that we're officially out of this drought, but we're far from an aquifer-full status. We know the next drought is coming, we just don't know when," noted Kirk Holland, the District's General Manager.

Since the majority of the aquifer's recharge infiltrates through fractures and caves in creekbeds, stream flow across the recharge zone is one indicator of the amount of recharge to the aquifer. Dr. Brian Smith, a senior hydrogeologist at the District, explained, "We're currently seeing moderate recharge. While Barton Creek has sustained flow across the recharge zone, Onion Creek still doesn't. This is significant because we see the greatest amount of recharge to the aquifer from features in Onion Creek. Without above average rainfall over the next few months, the aquifer could be back in drought by next summer."

The Edwards Aquifer is a prolific source of high-quality water in our area but it is heavily used as a water supply and that use further lowers the water levels caused by natural droughts. Holland commented, "Looking back at the past two years, we experienced one of our toughest droughts. Working together, we as a

community survived this drought, but we all should have also developed a healthy respect for the importance and vulnerability of our groundwater resources. 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.”

The Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District provides scientific, educational, and regulatory programs involved in managing the groundwater resources that serve more than 50,000 people, schools, businesses, industries, and organizations in southern Travis, northern Hays, and western Caldwell and Bastrop Counties.

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