



**Barton Springs
Edwards Aquifer**
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Stage III Critical Groundwater Drought Declared

(Austin) The Board of Directors of the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District declared Stage III Critical Drought at its Board meeting this evening, effective immediately. With hot temperatures, no rain, and no replenishing creek flow, water levels in the area aquifers continue to decline. Both of the District's drought triggers have now crossed their respective Stage III Critical Drought thresholds. The Lovelady Monitor Well depth-to-water fell below 190.7 feet and, based on manual measurements, the Barton Springs 10-day average discharge is less than 20 cubic feet per second.

Under Stage III restrictions, permittees are required to reduce monthly pumping by at least 30% for historical permits and over 75% for conditional permits. Water utilities supplied by groundwater in the District will be implementing additional restrictions on their end-user customers to reach the drought curtailments. These restrictions effectively protect groundwater supplies by slowing water level declines.

This year has become the driest one-year period on record. The NOAA Climate Prediction Center shows drier than normal conditions for the area extending through this winter.. In 2009 during the last Stage III Critical Drought, the District received many 'dry well' reports. Water conservation can help prolong water supplies and delay well issues.

"Groundwater is a shared resource. Regardless of where you get your water—whether you use your own well, a neighborhood water system, or a city system with multiple water sources—reducing water use is essential. We've got to be water wise as a community. We are all in this together," commented Mary Stone, District Board President.

The 60,000+ existing groundwater users in the District are now required to cut back their monthly water use another 10% and heed more stringent restrictions. Their water suppliers (and/or the District) will inform end-users as to what obligations they must follow under Stage III Critical Drought. Generally, all outdoor irrigation of lawns and landscaping is now prohibited. Groundwater uses are restricted to water for essential indoor demands needed to preserve health and safety with a very minor allocation provided for some non-essential outdoor water uses such as maintaining small lawn areas for fire protection and foundation damage prevention. The District's staff is committed to ensuring that such restrictions are as equitable as possible and will be taking steps during drought to promote that:

- New water withdrawal permits in the Edwards Aquifer will not be authorized during this drought;
- The restrictions included in the User Drought Contingency Plans that are part of every groundwater use permit will be aggressively enforced; and
- Rules that prohibit wasteful groundwater use will be enforced.

The District asks all of its constituents to continue their water conservation measures and be even better stewards of an increasingly scarce resource. Water conservation information and updated aquifer conditions are available on the District's website at www.bseacd.org. With continued lack of significant rainfall and high rates of pumping, water levels could drop to the extent that some wells could go dry and flow from Barton Springs could eventually decrease to the point where ecological, recreational, and aesthetic uses of Barton Springs would be damaged. The aquifer can no longer afford anything other than minimal use, and that may be the situation for many more months.

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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