



**Barton Springs  
Edwards Aquifer**  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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## **Aquifer District Declares Stage II Alarm Drought**

At its November 15 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 in northern Hays, southern Travis, and western Caldwell counties.

The Lovelady Monitor Well, in the Edwards Aquifer and located in South Austin, dipped below its Alarm threshold of 478.4 feet above mean sea level on November 7th. 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 a few days later. For the Board to officially declare drought, only one drought indicator has to cross below its trigger threshold. In this instance, both the water level in the Lovelady Monitor Well and springflow at Barton Springs were below their respective triggers prompting 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 at least a 20% reduction in monthly 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 limiting landscape irrigation, pool filling & refilling, and non-essential water use such as water fountains, is sufficient to reach monthly pumpage targets for Stage II Alarm Drought.

Since January 1, the Aquifer District has recorded approximately 35 inches of rainfall, which already exceeds the yearly average for the area (33.38 inches). However despite above average rainfall this year, it has not been enough to generate runoff to recharge the aquifer and to sustain non-drought water levels. This is probably due in part to the exceptional rainfall deficit and low water levels in the aquifer in 2011. Many area surface water and groundwater resources face similar drought conditions. Water conservation now will help slow water level declines and protect water availability for groundwater users.

*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 three 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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