



**Barton Springs
Edwards Aquifer**
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Aquifer District Declares Stage III Critical Groundwater Drought

(Austin) The Board of Directors of the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District authorized a Stage III Critical Drought declaration at its Board meeting last week, once the water level in Lovelady Monitor Well was below its drought threshold for two consecutive days. Only one drought trigger below its threshold is required to enter into drought. Today marks two consecutive days where the Lovelady Monitor Well water level elevation was confirmed to be below its drought trigger threshold of 462.7 feet above mean sea level (ft msl). Stage III Critical Drought is now officially declared for the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District.

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.

The NOAA Seasonal Drought Outlook predicts that the current drought in the District is likely to persist or intensify. In 2011 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.

“This is the third Critical Stage drought declaration in five years. Homeowners have started making their landscapes drought-hardy so they require less water. Still, this drought declaration is particularly difficult; it comes at the start of the growing period where we usually have seen a marked increase in outdoor water use. Those drought tolerant landscapes will pay off this year. 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, outdoor irrigation of lawns and landscaping is now prohibited or severely restricted. Groundwater uses should be limited to water for essential indoor demands needed to preserve health and safety with a very minor allocation provided for non-essential outdoor water use.

The District is committed to ensuring that water restrictions are as equitable as possible. Restrictions included in the User Drought Contingency Plans that are part of every groundwater use permit and rules that prohibit wasteful groundwater use will be strictly 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. To protect our groundwater supply, reducing water use is now critical.

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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