

NEWS

After brief stay at Stage 5, Edwards Aquifer restrictions back to Stage 4

The water level in the Edwards Aquifer has risen rapidly this week thanks to much-needed rain dropped by several storm systems.



Despite rains this week, the water level on the north side of Canyon Lake in Comal County was little changed on Wednesday.

Marvin Pfeiffer/San Antonio Express-News

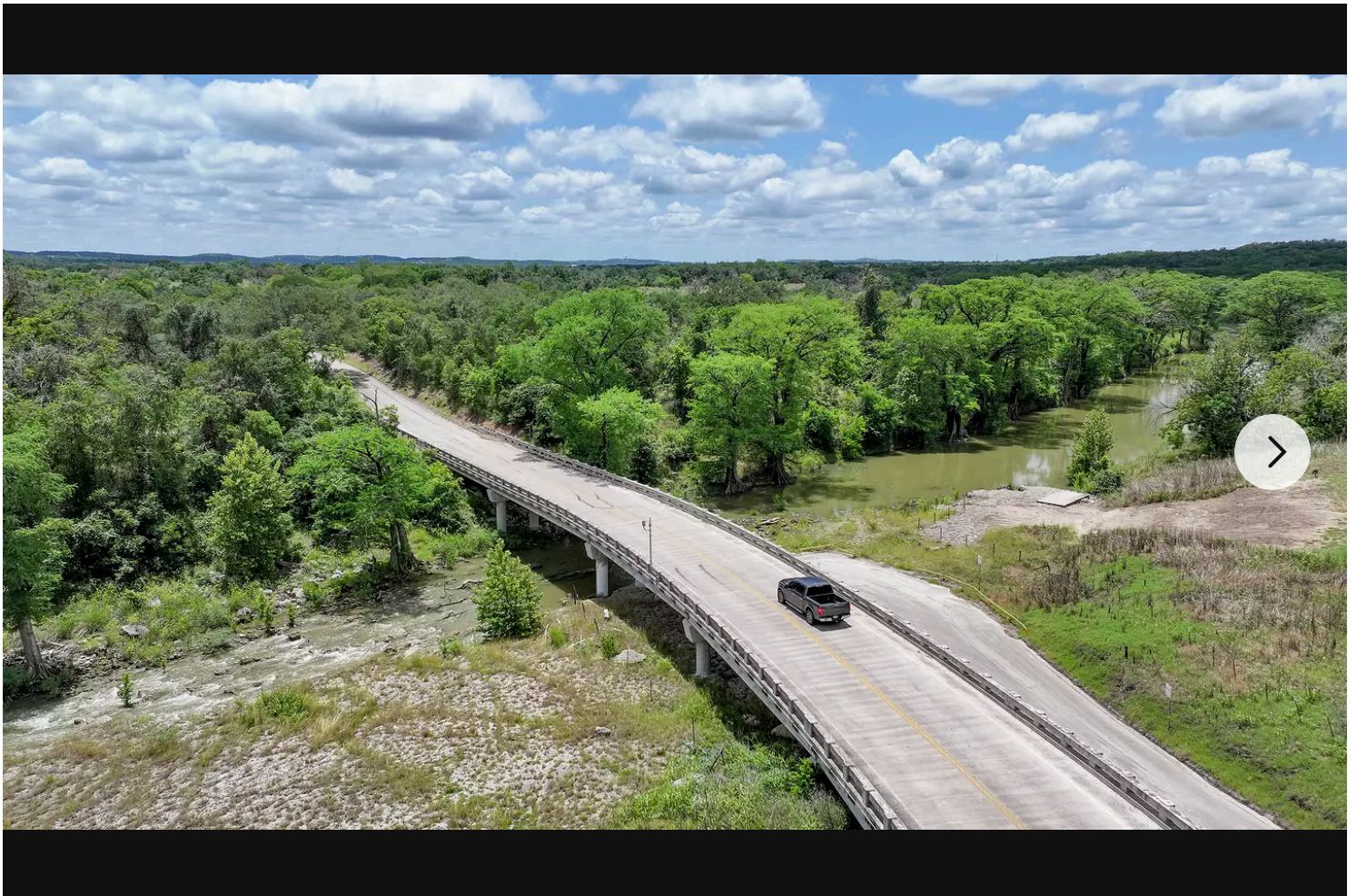
By **Liz Teitz**, Staff writer

May 29, 2025



Less than a week after pushing drought restrictions to Stage 5 for the first time ever, the Edwards Aquifer Authority has eased those back to Stage 4 as water levels rebounded thanks to this week's much-needed rain.

The aquifer authority manages the groundwater system that provides water for more than 2 million people, including about half the San Antonio Water System's supply.



The Guadalupe River was flowing again Wednesday under the Rebecca Creek Road bridge in Comal County. Several storm systems have dropped much-needed rain in the San Antonio area this week. Marvin Pfeiffer/San Antonio Express-News

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Last Friday, the authority announced its first-ever move to Stage 5, the highest level of drought restrictions on permit holders such as SAWS, who were required to cut their pumping by 44%.

Under Stage 4 rules, which resumed on Thursday, the cutbacks are reduced to 40%, allowing permit holders to take up to 60% of their allocated

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The 10-day average at the well was 625.2 feet above sea level on Thursday. Stage 5 starts when that average falls below 625.

The drought stages can fluctuate quickly, as they are tied to water levels, so the aquifer authority could return to Stage 5 if the well drops back below that threshold. Restrictions are cumulative, meaning permit holders don't have to

instantly cut pumping to comply, but must ensure their ultimate water use aligns with the cutbacks throughout the year.

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The water level in the J-17 index well in Bexar County increased by seven feet in the past week, from 623.09 feet on May 23, the lowest level since 1990, to 630.1 feet on Thursday. The aquifer level had only been below 625 feet previously during the summer of 1984 and during the drought of the 1950s, according to historical well data going back to 1932.

Spring flows have also improved in New Braunfels, where the Comal Springs increased from 53 cubic feet per second last Friday to 137 cfs Thursday, though that's still less than half the historical average. The San Marcos Springs have held fairly steady, at 89 cfs on Thursday, up slightly from 86 cfs last week.

Strong thunderstorms have swept through Central Texas this week, bringing flash flooding and hail in some areas, but also bringing some relief to the aquifer. The groundwater system is replenished when rainfall enters the aquifer through fractures in the surface in its recharge zone, which is to the north and west of San Antonio.

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Since Monday, San Antonio has recorded 4.06 inches of rain, more than half as much as the rest of the year combined. The 2.01 inches recorded Monday night and Tuesday morning was the first time the gauges at San Antonio International Airport have recorded at least two inches of rain in one day since January 2024, and slightly more fell early Wednesday morning, with another 2.05 inches recorded.

It will take much more precipitation to bring the aquifer back to normal levels: the J-17 well is still about 34.5 feet below the historical average, according to the aquifer authority.

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Liz Teitz


REPORTER





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Liz joined the Express-News in June 2023. She has been a reporter for eight years, covering housing, government, education and other topics for the Ouray County Plaindealer, Hearst Connecticut Media Group and the Beaumont Enterprise. Liz grew up in Rhode Island and graduated from Georgetown University.

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