




# Thank you

for voting us Best Spa in San Antonio!



Schedule a consultation

VISIT




Next Up: Will Texas Senate support the ‘constitutional... >

MOST POPULAR

1. Will Texas Senate support the ‘constitutional carry’ bill?
2. Settlement in case against dealership over wrecked Ferrari
3. Would Prop B hold San Antonio police accountable or defund
4. Watering hours tighten as San Antonio enters Stage 2 rules

NEWS // LOCAL

# Stage 2 water conservation rules implemented as drought tightens grip on South Texas



Scott Huddleston, Staff writer

Updated: April 20, 2021 11:56 a.m.







Docks are seen on land at Medina Lake, Monday, April 5, 2021. The lake is down to 37 percent capacity. The Edwards Aquifer Authority declared stage one pumping reductions last Wednesday after discovering the main well in Bexar County dropped below the 660-foot threshold to 659.7 feet above the mean sea level. This means people from Bexar, Atascosa, Caldwell, Comal, Guadalupe, Hays and Medina counties using the aquifer's groundwater need to reduce their water consumption by about 20 percent in order to stabilize water levels. As of noon Thursday, the well's level was even lower at 656.4 feet, according to Edwards Aquifer Authority data.

Jerry Lara / San Antonio Express-News

Water usage in San Antonio is now further restricted as drought conditions worsen in the area and across the state.

The San Antonio Water System moved to Stage 2 of its drought management plan Monday, and the Edwards Aquifer Authority predicted the area could be in Stage 3 by midsummer.

Stage 2 restrictions are triggered when the 10-day rolling average level of the Bexar County aquifer index well falls below 650 feet above sea level. Monday, it measured 649.9 feet. Paul Bertetti, the Edwards Aquifer Authority's director of aquifer science, said a lack of rainfall that has plagued the area for more than two years leaves a "bottom 10 percentile forecast" likely in store this summer.

#### ADVERTISEMENT

Article continues below this ad



MAGNOLIA MEDICAL & Aesthetics

**Thank you**  
for voting us Best Spa  
in San Antonio!

2021 YOUR SA WINNER

Schedule a complimentary  
consultation today

**VISIT US**

In an average year, San Antonio's rainfall total is about 32 inches. But the city recorded about 22 inches in 2019 and 20.7 inches last year. Near the end of the first four months of 2021, the city has seen just 3.15 inches.

"We're not at absolutely no rain, but it looks like it's at the bottom 10 percent in terms of water levels for this summer, and that's what we should anticipate," Bertetti said. "Obviously, that could change if we just got some modest amounts of rainfall or even a couple of unexpected storm

change if we just got some modest amounts of rainfall or even a couple of unexpected storm events. But without those, it looks like we're in for an extended Stage 2 or Stage 3 period this summer."

---

## More for you

---

**NEWS**

### Watering limits in place before summer even begins as...

By Scott Huddleston

**NEWS**

### After a rough couple of days, weather could bring relief...

Teresa Velasco

## On ExpressNews.com: Watering limits implemented even before summer begins

Bertetti said it is unlikely, based on statistics dating to the 1930s, that the index well would dip below 630 feet, triggering Stage 4 restrictions, before temperatures begin to moderate in September.

Record lows for the San Antonio index well are 612.5 feet in August 1956 and 622.7 feet in June 1990.

---

**ADVERTISEMENT**

Article continues below this ad



"The numbers that we have suggest that it probably won't get as low as Stage 4, but it could be as



low as we've had in the last four or five years," Bertetti said. "Right now, according to our forecasts, which are based on historical data, the uncertainty of rainfall suggests that we might have an extended period in the summer where we might be below 635 feet. So we would be in Stage 3, but still above Stage 4."

Under a local ordinance, City Manager Erik Walsh, in consultation with SAWS President and CEO Robert Puente, declared Stage 2 on Monday. Since June, the city has received less than 40 percent of its normal rainfall, according to the utility.

SAWS and other permitted users are required to reduce pumping by 20 percent under Stage 1 of the Edwards Aquifer Authority's rules, 30 percent under Stage 2 and 35 percent under Stage 3.

To help carry the region through droughts, SAWS has sought to develop alternative water supply sources.

"Although SAWS has plenty of water to meet customer demand coming from water projects such as the Vista Ridge pipeline project, our desalination plant and various others, city ordinance requires SAWS to enter Stage 2 watering rules when the Edwards Aquifer level is triggered," Puente said. "We have worked hard to diversify our water sources to ensure that San Antonio is water secure for generations. As a reminder, Stage 2 watering rules are primarily focused on moderating business and residential landscape watering."

Watering days stay the same in SAWS Stage 2 as in Stage 1. However, the hours during which watering is allowed are shortened. Watering with a sprinkler, irrigation system or soaker hose is allowed only between 7 and 11 a.m. and 7 and 11 p.m. on a designated weekday, based on street address. Watering with a hand-held hose is still allowed anytime on any day.

Stage 3 watering rules, if implemented this summer by the city, would limit SAWS customers to wetting their lawns with sprinklers, irrigation systems or soaker hoses no more than once every two weeks.

**On ExpressNews.com:** [SAWS denies claims Vista Ridge water was wasted](https://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/Stage-2-water-conservation-rules-implemented-16113152.php)

The next hope for rain is a couple of days away. The National Weather Service has predicted a chance of showers later in the week that could elevate the aquifer level. A 30 percent chance of rain Thursday increases to 40 percent Thursday night and 60 percent Friday.

The Edwards Aquifer Authority's forecast is based on historical well data and doesn't consider other trends affecting water use, such as urban growth and supply projects. The Vista Ridge pipeline came online about a year ago, carrying water more than 140 miles from the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer in Central Texas. Bertetti said it could provide a "buffer" for the environmentally sensitive Edwards Aquifer, which provides for endangered species at Comal and San Marcos springs.

"We don't know how that's going to affect water levels currently," Bertetti said. "It may be that as SAWS is able to bring more of that online and put alternative water sources in play, they're able to stem the water level ... because they're pumping less and less (from the Edwards). And so that way, we stay in Stage 2 for a longer period of time and really don't enter into Stage 3. But we don't have enough data."

*shuddleston@express-news.net*

---

## Sign up for Breaking News alerts

Get fast and accurate information from a source you can trust

Email

**SIGN UP**

By signing up, you agree to our Terms of use and acknowledge that your information will be used as described in our Privacy Policy.



Written By  
**Scott Huddleston**

Reach Scott on   

Scott Huddleston is a veteran staff writer at the San Antonio Express-News covering Bexar County Commissioners Court and county government.

He has been a reporter at the Express-News since 1985, covering a variety of issues, including public safety, flooding, transportation, military and veterans affairs, history and local government.

Huddleston covered the final construction phase of the SBC Center -- now AT&T Center, where the Spurs play -- in 2002, and wrote "Then&Now," a weekly historical feature, for the Sunday Metro section from 2001-2006.

---

**VIEW COMMENTS**

## LOCAL

### **Podcast: Dazed and confused about the governor's race**

We don't know much about McConaughey's politics, but it'd be a lot cooler if we did.

BY GILBERT GARCIA

---

### **Bexar County judge to present plan to start in-person trials**

BY SCOTT HUDDLESTON

---

### **President Biden calls Floyd family as Chauvin jury deliberates**

BY BENJAMIN WERMUND

---

### **Far North Bexar County standoff was sparked by alleged assault**

BY JACOB BELTRAN

---

### **Watering hours tighten as San Antonio enters Stage 2 rules**

BY SCOTT HUDDLESTON

## San Antonio Express-News

[TOP ^](#)

### ABOUT

<a href="#">Our Company</a>	<a href="#">Terms of Use</a>
<a href="#">Newspaper Delivery Safety Procedures</a>	<a href="#">Advertising</a>
<a href="#">Privacy Notice</a>	<a href="#">Careers</a>
<a href="#">Your California Privacy Rights</a>	<a href="#">e-edition</a>
<a href="#">Interest Based Ads</a>	

### CONTACT

<a href="#">Archives</a>	<a href="#">Frequently Asked Questions</a>
<a href="#">Customer Service</a>	<a href="#">Newsroom Contacts</a>

---

**HEARST** *newspapers*

©2021 Hearst