

After recent rains, drought restrictions are eased to Stage 2

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The agency that manages the Edwards Aquifer is easing drought-related restrictions on pumping water from the aquifer.

The Edwards Aquifer Authority this week said it has moved to Stage 2 restrictions, after being in Stage 3 since last June.

During Stage 3, cities and other entities must reduce the amount of water they pump from the aquifer by 35 percent. Under Stage 2 restrictions, that eases to a 30 percent reduction.

The lessening of restrictions on pumping from the aquifer can translate into fewer water-use restrictions for the average household. The aquifer provides the San Antonio Water System with only about 50 percent of its water supply, so SAWS users were already in Stage 2 restrictions. But other area water systems could

ease some of their water-use rules as a result of the Edwards Aquifer Authority's decision.

Over 2 million people depend on water from the Edwards Aquifer, a porous limestone cavern system spanning hundreds of feet underground and across 3,600 square miles. The aquifer's springs feed a number of local streams, including the Guadalupe River and the San Antonio ***Aquifer continues on A5*** River.

Recent rains have raised the water level in the Edwards Aquifer enough to trigger the change in water restrictions, the Edwards Aquifer Authority said. The 10-day rolling average for the aquifer was 641.3 feet, the authority said on Monday. Stage 3 drought restrictions are put in place when the level falls below 640 feet for 10 consecutive days.

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Much of Bexar County received 8 to 10 inches of rain over the past 60 days, which is above historical norms of 5 to 6 inches, said Monte Oaks, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service office in New Braunfels.

The rainfall hasn't ended the drought in Central Texas, but it has eased it in some areas. As of April 18, much of the southern and western Hill Country and about half of Bexar County were in exceptional drought, the most severe categorization. For most of Bexar County, that has eased to severe drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.



William Luther/Staff photographer

A person sits with a dog Monday at Nichol's Landing park on the Guadalupe River in Spring Branch. Despite recent rain, a number of area lakes and streams remain well below norms.





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The Guadalupe River flows Monday under Spring Branch Road near Nichol's Landing park.