

## San Marcos sells water rights to Kyle

### Hays County neighbor is struggling to meet demands

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San Marcos has agreed to sell some of its Edwards Aquifer water rights to Kyle, a move that will help the smaller Hays County city as it struggles to meet demand.

San Marcos City Council members unanimously approved the temporary sale, which will bring in \$347,500 if Kyle takes the full amount available under the water rights, which is 310 acre-feet. An acre-foot is the amount of water needed to cover 1 acre in 1 foot of water, or about 326,000 gallons. The total amount Kyle can take under the agreement is about 100 million gallons. The agreement expires on Dec. 31.

Although San Marcos is currently under Stage 4 water use restrictions, Utilities Director Tyler Hjorth said the city has “adequate capacity to meet their request without having a strain on our system.”

This is the second year in a row that Kyle has asked San Marcos for help. Last year, Kyle bought 125 acre-feet of water from San Marcos, Hjorth said.

Kyle, which is just north of San Marcos along Interstate 35, is among the fastest-growing cities in Texas. Its population jumped from 28,016 in 2010 to 57,470 in 2022, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

The city is in need of additional water because demand is expected to exceed its available supply, in part due to pumping restrictions from the Edwards Aquifer Authority, city officials said. The aquifer authority, which manages the cavern system that supplies water for more than 2 million people, has had Stage 4 restrictions in place since late July. Stage 4 restric-

tions require permit holders to reduce their pumping to 60% of their allocations.

The Edwards Aquifer Authority is not Kyle's only water source. The city also gets water

#### **Water continues on A4**

from Canyon Lake, by way of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, and from permits from the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District, which manages part of the Edwards Aquifer in Hays and Travis counties.

The Barton Springs district has been in Stage 3 restrictions since last year, but a potential move to Stage 4 would cut Kyle's water permits by half, also threatening the city's ability to meet demand, Assistant City Manager Amber Schmeits told the Kyle City Council in August.

The restrictions on both sets of Edwards Aquifer permits pushed the city to increase conservation and to seek more water from San Marcos, Schmeits said. As of Aug. 28, Kyle had used 89% of its annual allocation of Edwards Aquifer water, Schmeits said.

As San Marcos also gets water from Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, Council Member Saul Gonzales asked if the city could sell Kyle water from the river authority, lessening the impact on the Edwards Aquifer.

Tim Samford, Kyle's division manager for water treatment operations, said the way the city's water system is constructed prevents that from being an

option.

Water from the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority comes in on the east side of the city, he said, while the Edwards Aquifer wells primarily serve the west side. “We have limitations in our system” that prevent the city from using more river authority water to meet needs in areas that rely on water from the Edwards Aquifer, he said.

As a condition of the agreement, Kyle must put in place citywide drought restrictions that match or exceed the restrictions in San Marcos. Both cities currently are limiting outdoor irrigation to once every other week. Kyle also has banned installation of new landscaping, filling of pools, washing vehicles at home and washing sidewalks, parking areas and other impermeable surfaces, except to alleviate immediate health or safety hazards.

San Marcos and Kyle are both members of the Alliance Regional Water Authority, a \$350 million-plus initiative created to bring additional water supply to the growing I-35 corridor. The project soon will start bringing in water from the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer, which stretches from Webb County on the Mexican border to Louisiana, near Longview, passing south-east of San Antonio and east of I-35.

The water will flow into a treatment plant in Caldwell County. Plans ultimately call for about



35,000 acre-feet of water to move through Alliance's treatment plant and its 90 miles of pipeline per year. San Marcos is expected to receive its first water from Alliance in early 2024, while Kyle won't start receiving its allocation until 2025.

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*Tim Samford, division manager for water treatment*