NEWS

Yes, it rained. But did that ease San Antonio's long-running drought?

Recent rainfall hasn't broken the deep drought. San Antonio-area water sources, including the Edwards Aquifer and Canyon Lake, remain far lower than normal.

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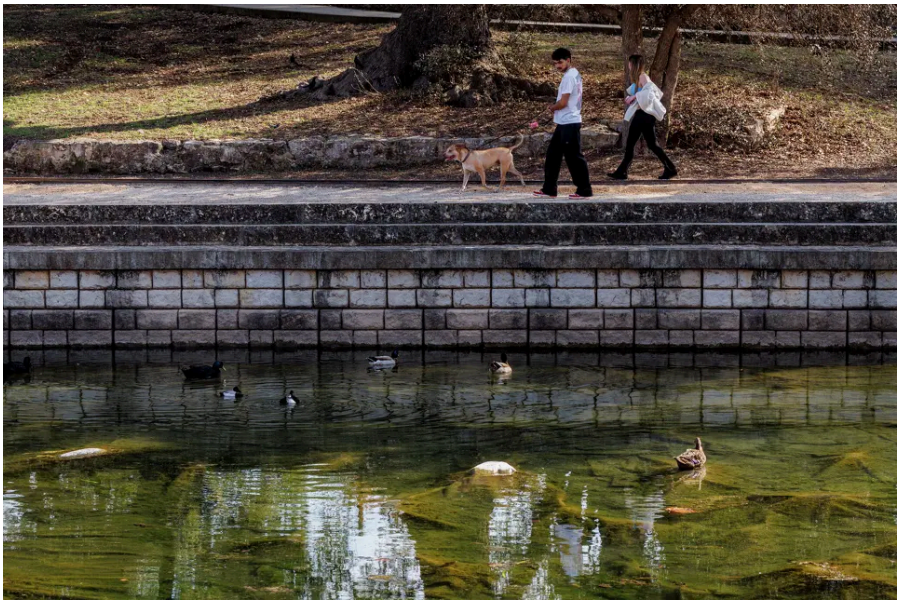

Despite recent rainfall, the San Antonio region remains locked in drought, with water levels far below normal.
Sam Owens/San Antonio Express-News

While the weekend saw scattered showers and thunderstorms, inconveniencing drivers and hampering outdoor plans, it had no substantial affect on the region's long-running drought.

The National Weather Service issued an alert Sunday afternoon that "life-threatening flooding" was possible along the Interstate 35 corridor, with the potential for slow-moving storms producing high rainfall rates that could flood rivers, creeks and low-lying areas.

But the San Antonio region was spared the worst of that weather. Gauges at San Antonio International Airport recorded just under a half-inch of rain on Sunday, bringing April's total rainfall to 1.29 inches.

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New Braunfels, which was included in the flood watch area, received less than a quarter inch of rain Sunday. In April, the city has tallied just under 1.4 inches, according to National Weather Service data.

While that rainfall is helpful for plants and vegetation, it does little to make a difference in helping the region recover from years of consecutive drought conditions that have strained water supplies.

The Edwards Aquifer, the groundwater system that provides more than half of the San Antonio Water System's water supply, remains 38 feet below normal for this time of year.

The water level in the J-17 well in Bexar County, which the Edwards Aquifer Authority uses to measure the aquifer in the San Antonio area, sat at 627.19 feet last Monday. It fell over the next few days to 626.48 feet on Thursday, and the weekend's rain brought it up to 627.7 feet on Monday, just about seven inches higher than one week ago.

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The 10-day average at the well is 627 feet — still firmly in the authority's Stage 4 conditions. In that stage, permit holders such as SAWS are limited to 40% of their permitted amounts.

The same is true for surface water supplies. Canyon Lake, the Comal County reservoir created by damming the Guadalupe River, is just 58.6% full — about 2 inches lower than one week ago.

West of San Antonio, Medina Lake has also dropped again slightly, from 3.9% full last week to 3.8% full Monday, according to data from the Texas Water Development Board.

It will take far more than sporadic rainfall to make a dent in those conditions. The past four years of below-average rainfall have created a deficit of more than 40 inches in the San Antonio region.

The Edwards Aquifer needs substantial precipitation in its contributing and recharge zones — to the north and west of San Antonio — to return anywhere close to average levels. The aquifer has been in some stage of drought conditions since early 2022.