

From: Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District <news@bseacd.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 29, 2024 2:52 PM
To: City of Hays
Subject: Drought Update: District Transitioning to Stage II Alarm Drought



Transition to Stage II Alarm Drought

Ongoing Impact of 2024 Rainfall

In January the District received an average of 6 inches of rain. This increased flow in the Blanco River and creeks throughout the area, and District monitor wells and spring flow gauges recorded increases in water levels for both the Edwards and Trinity aquifers. During the February 8 Board Meeting, the District transitioned from Stage IV Exceptional Drought (declared on December 14, 2023) to Stage III Critical Drought. The area received another 1.5 inches of rain in February, which augmented aquifer recharge and further increased both groundwater levels and spring flow.

Moving Up to Stage II Alarm Drought

The District will declare Stage II Alarm Drought on Friday, March 1, 2024, which will be effective immediately. This will be the first time the District will be above the Stage III drought level since October 2022.

This transition is a result of the Lovelady monitor well, one of two drought trigger determinants, reaching a 10-day average **above 462.7 feet-mean sea level** (ft-msl). Lovelady groundwater levels continue to increase as a result of the early 2024 rains. All permittees will be contacted directly by the District with additional information. Find out more on the District's Drought Information and Resources page.

Learn More

Rainfall

Typically, February is the driest month of the year in the Austin area. This month, the District has received an average of 1.5 inches, which is 0.4 inches below average (figure 1). The near-average rainfall in December, coupled with the fifth wettest January on record, has significantly improved our drought status.

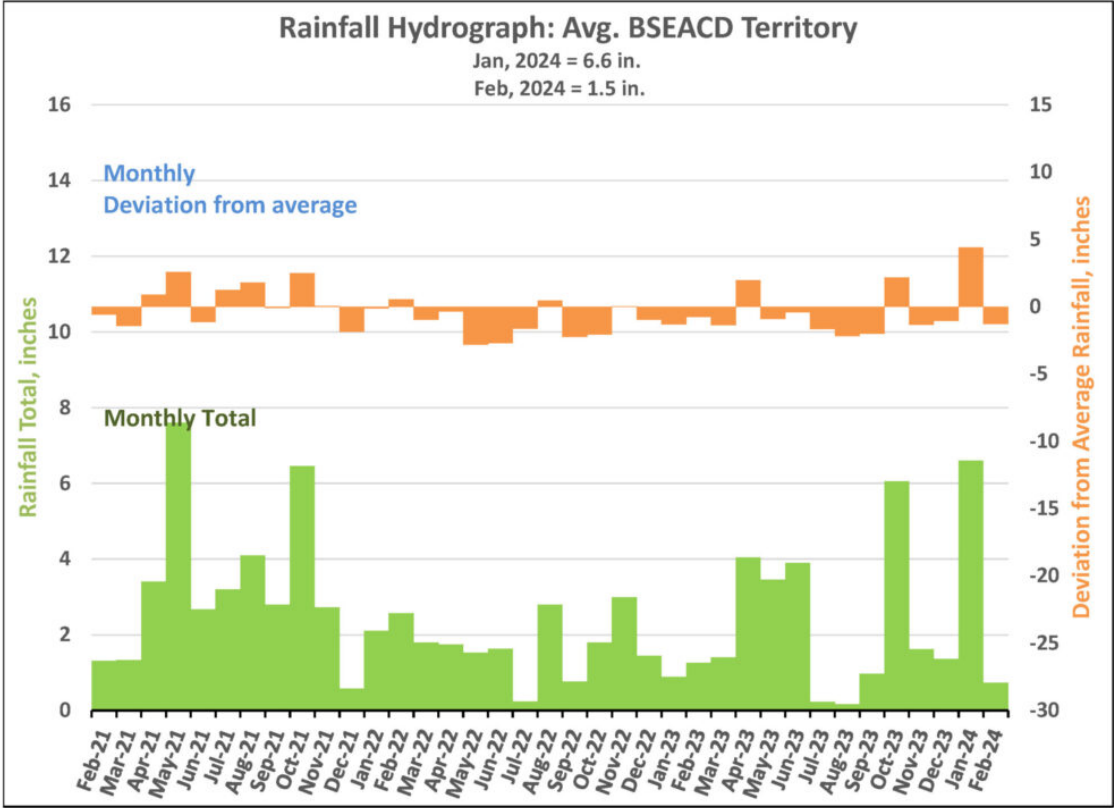


Figure 1. Monthly deviation from average and monthly total rainfall in BSEACD territory.

Groundwater Levels and Spring Flow

Barton Springs

Extensive rainfall in January and additional rain in February had an immediate effect on spring flow. Barton Springs discharge increased from 23 cubic feet per second (cfs) on January 22 to a peak of 73 cfs on January 26 (figure 2). As of

February 26, the 10-day average spring flow was 62 cfs. Although this exceeds the spring flow threshold indicated of Stage II Alarm Drought, the water levels in the Lovelady monitor well still fall within Stage II. This is why the District will remain in drought.

Starting on February 24, the pool will be closed for its [annual spring clean from February 24 to March 8](#). During this time the [USGS real-time gauge](#) will also undergo maintenance and may not report data.

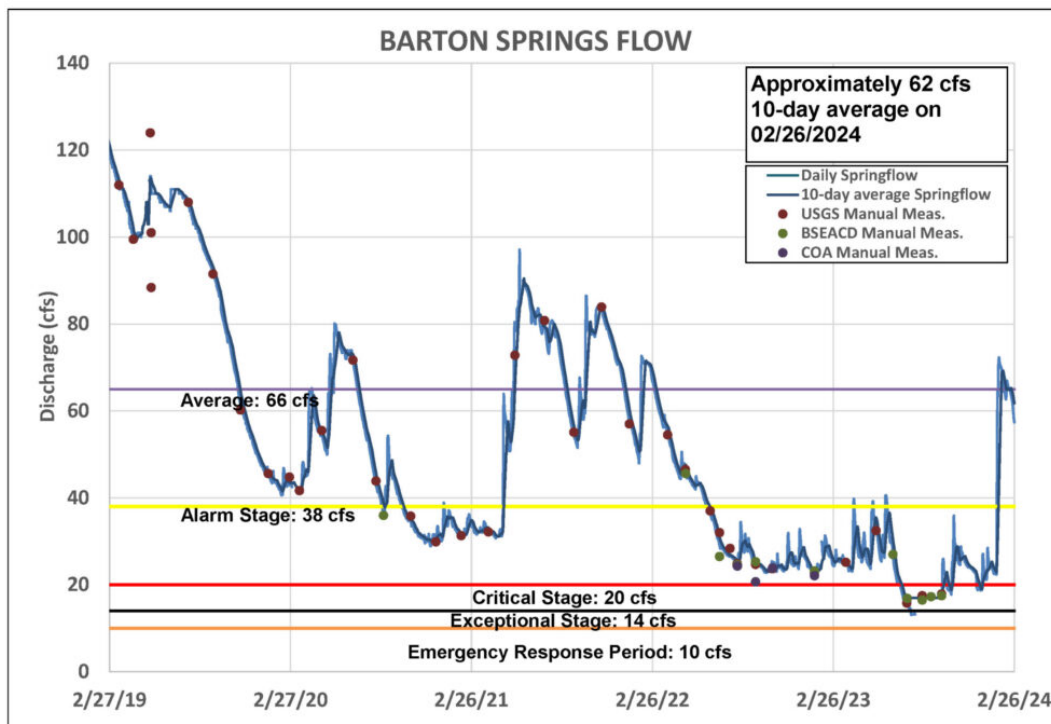


Figure 2. Recorded flow at Barton Springs.

Lovelady Monitor Well

The groundwater levels of the [Lovelady monitor well](#) have continued to increase as a result of the early 2024 rainfall. Since January 20 groundwater levels, which were as low as 456.8 feet-mean sea level (ft-msl), have climbed to 470.0 as of February 26 (figure 3). The ongoing elevation in groundwater levels is attributed to the continued flow in creeks, which allows water to enter recharge features like fractures, sinkholes, and caves. Since groundwater levels at Lovelady have surpassed the 462.7 ft-msl threshold, the District will move to Stage II Drought effective March 1.

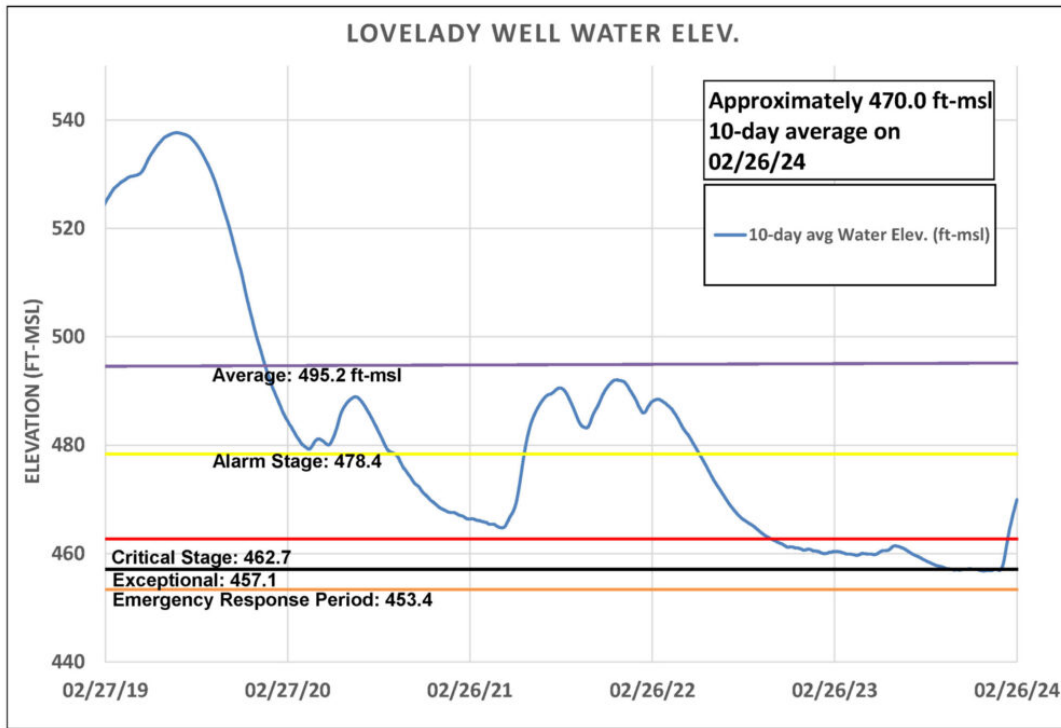


Figure 3. Lovelady monitor well water-level elevation.

Upper and Middle Trinity

Water levels in the Upper Trinity (green) showed a strong response to the January rains, witnessing a significant increase of 20 feet (figure 4). However, levels are currently receding from that peak. In contrast, the Middle Trinity (purple) has displayed a more subdued yet positive response to the rains, maintaining a relative holding pattern.

The flow at Jacob's Well is consistently reporting around 2 cfs, while the Blanco River at Wimberley maintains a steady flow in the high teens.

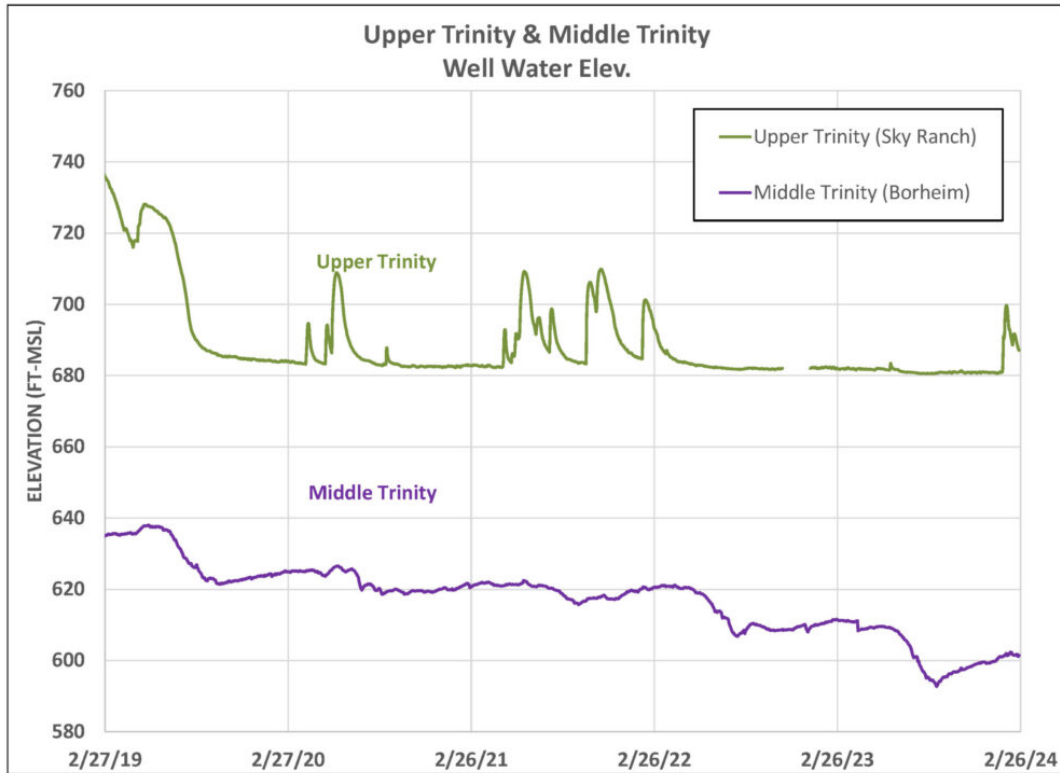


Figure 4. Water levels in an Upper Trinity well (green) and Middle Trinity well (purple).

Forecast and Conservation

Climate Prediction Center's three-month outlook shows above average temperatures with near normal rainfall for March/April/May. The latest [Drought Outlook](#) from the Climate Prediction Center and the U.S. Drought Monitor point toward some improvement of drought severity for parts of the area, but not a complete transition out of drought from February through April.

A transition from El Niño to ENSO-neutral is likely by April-June 2024, with increasing odds of La Niña developing in June-August 2024. Drought development is also likely for western and southern Texas, where antecedent conditions are already dry and the seasonal precipitation outlook favors below-average precipitation.

The District urges community members in and outside of our territory to continue to conserve water resources since the Edwards and Trinity aquifers are still recovering from the last two years of drought. For water conservation tips and resources, please visit our [Water Conservation](#) page below.

[Learn More](#)

Groundwater Symposium



Join us for this free immersive event. You'll engage with water organizations and learn from groundwater managers about the hydrogeology, management, and conservation of local aquifers

Thursday, April 2 | 6-9pm
LBJ Student Center | San Marcos, TX

[Learn More](#)

Summer Camp Scholarship



The District is offering scholarships for kids ages 9-14 to attend [Aquatic Science Adventure Camp](#)- a 5-day overnight experience in San Marcos offered by Texas State University.

Application deadline is March 22.
Winners will be announced March 29.

[View Application](#)

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Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District (BSEACD) is a groundwater conservation district charged by the Texas Legislature to work with well owners to conserve and protect the Edwards and Trinity aquifers and groundwater resources within its territory. BSEACD covers

430 square miles in parts of Travis, Hays, and Caldwell counties; home to about 400,000 people.



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