



City of San Marcos

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NEWS

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San Marcos Returns to Stage 1 Drought Measures

San Marcos residents returned to Stage 1 drought restrictions following a declaration by the Edwards Aquifer Authority on Dec. 23, 2011 lifting Stage 2 measures as the San Antonio pool of the Edwards Aquifer region reaches higher aquifer levels.

San Marcos has been under Stage 2 restrictions for seven months due to the worst drought conditions in decades that significantly reduced aquifer levels and springflow from the aquifer-fed San Marcos and Comal Springs. The City entered Stage 1 on April 19 and Stage 2 on June 3, 2011.

Tom Taggart, Director of Public Services, announced Tuesday that the City will lift Stage 2 in accordance with the EAA's action Friday.

"We may return to Stage 2 relatively quickly because the drought conditions are continuing," Taggart cautioned.

Under current San Marcos Stage 1 rules, residents may water lawns with sprinklers or sprinkler systems once a week on designated days. Hand watering and vehicle washing are allowed at any time.

The San Marcos City Council will consider amendments to the Drought Response Ordinance on Tuesday, Jan. 3 at its first meeting of 2012 that would change some of the local watering restrictions. The ordinance would take effect after passage on second reading on Jan. 17.

The City of San Marcos receives 75% of its water supply from surface water from Canyon Lake and 25% from the Edwards Aquifer.

The proposed rules will allow under Stage 1 lawn sprinkling twice a week on designated week days and a designated weekend day based on the property's address. Stage 2 would allow residents to use sprinklers once a week during specified hours, allow golf course and athletic field watering twice a week, and foundation watering at any time.

In Stage 3, the new rules would allow use of sprinklers or sprinkler systems once a week instead of every other week and provide other limits on hand watering, vegetable garden irrigation, golf course and athletic field watering.

Despite recent rains, the EAA had delayed declaring the San Antonio Pool back to Stage 1 as a cautionary measure to ensure aquifer levels had risen and stabilized sufficiently to avoid an immediate return back to Stage 2.

Officials continue to warn that aquifer levels remain below historical averages and a return to Stage 2 early in 2012 is possible, if drought conditions persist. In the meantime, the lifting of Stage 2 means a reprieve from mandatory 30 percent pumping reductions for Edwards groundwater permit holders and a return to the less severe cutback of 20 percent required under Stage 1.

According to the EAA, aquifer levels have generally stabilized this fall as a result of the seasonal diminished demand on the aquifer and, more recently, levels have risen due to moderate, but much-needed rainfall. Even so, the EAA notes that for the first time in its history, dating back to 1996, the region will enter a year under critical period restrictions. Pumping restrictions at the start of the year could particularly impact agriculture users who may need to begin irrigating their fields for the planting season in January, if warranted by low soil moisture.

As of Tuesday, Dec. 27, the aquifer index well in San Antonio stood at 653.3 feet above mean sea level. The San Marcos springs flowed at 102 cubic feet per second (cfs) and the Comal Springs at 222 cfs.

In contrast, a year ago on the same date the index well stood at 671.3 feet while springflow was 170 cfs at San Marcos and 316 cfs at Comal in New Braunfels.

For information about San Marcos measures, contact Jan Klein, Water Conservation Coordinator, at 512.393.8310 or check online at www.sanmarcostx.gov. Edwards Aquifer Authority information is available at 866.9931.3239 or at www.edwardsaquifer.org.

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