

NEWS

## Barton Springs aquifer declares 'exceptional drought' for second time in history. What it means for Austin area

By [Dante Motley](#), Staff Writer

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District staff measuring the Lovelady monitor well in July of 2025.  
Courtesy of The Barton Springs-Edwards Aquifer Conservation District

The aquifer that feeds [Barton Springs](#) and provides water to about 100,000 South Austin residents is looking a little dry.

The [Barton Springs-Edwards Aquifer Conservation District](#) declared an "Exceptional Drought" — the third level of severity on a four-level scale — on Thursday, which will go into effect effective Oct. 1. Starting that date, groundwater pumping at the aquifer will be reduced by 30 to 100% affecting individual well owners, water utility companies, and cities such as Buda and Kyle.



“Every gallon saved helps preserve our shared water supply, as well as the iconic springs, creeks, and rivers of the area,” said Shay Hlavaty, communications and outreach manager for the district. “We all have a role to play in protecting this precious resource as we face one of the region’s most intense droughts in recorded history.”

Barton Springs  
Discharge  
cubic feet/second (cfs)

## District Drought Chart

Lovelady Monitor Well  
Water Elevation  
feet-mean sea level (ft-msl)

	Water Conservation Period	
38 cfs		478.4 ft-msl
20 cfs	<b>Stage 1 Alarm Drought</b>	462.7 ft-msl
17 cfs → 10-day avg	<b>Stage 2 Critical Drought</b>	457.1 ft-msl
14 cfs	<b>Stage 3 Exceptional Drought</b>	453.4 ft-msl
10 cfs	<b>Stage 4 Emergency Response Period</b>	

← **457 msl**  
10-day avg

This is the official drought chart used by the Barton Springs-Edwards Aquifer Conservation District.

Last Updated: 9/11/25

The Barton Springs-Edwards Aquifer Conservation District drought classification chart.  
Courtesy of The Barton Springs-Edwards Aquifer Conservation District

## A historic three-year drought

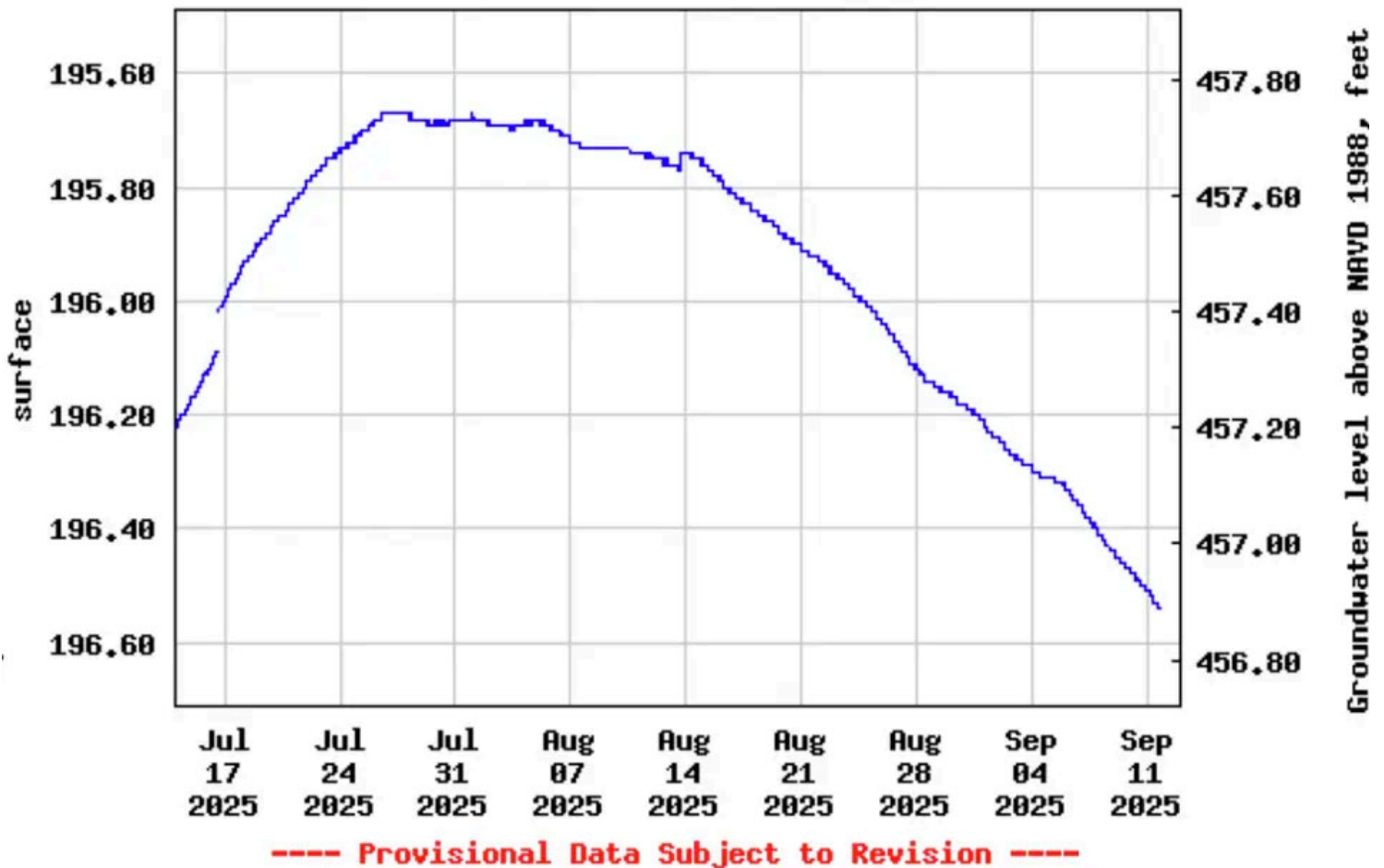
The aquifer has now been in a drought for 39 continuous months, according to the district, but this is only the second time in its 38-year history that it has declared an "exceptional" drought. The first was back in December 2023.

Officials declared the drought after a sharp drop at the Lovelady monitor well in South Austin, near South First Street and Stassney Lane. As of Sept. 11, the well's 10-day average stood at 457 feet above mean sea level, below the "exceptional" level trigger and more than 30 feet under the long-term average of 490.9 feet recorded since 1949. The Lovelady well is one of two key drought gauges, along with Barton Springs, and similar declines are showing up in Edwards and Trinity aquifer wells across the district.

# Lovelady Groundwater Level in feet above mean sea level (ft-msl)



USGS 301237097464801 YD-58-50-301 (Lovelady)



A graph showing Lovelady monitor well levels as of Sept. 12, 2025.  
Courtesy of The Barton Springs-Edwards Aquifer Conservation District

From March through September, the area typically gets about 22.2 inches of rain, the district said. This year it saw just 17.1, about five inches below normal. Since January 2022, the region has fallen behind by about 31.2 inches in cumulative rainfall. Officials say closing that gap and letting aquifers recover will take sustained, widespread soaking rains.

## Water conservation tips for Austin area

District officials are urging residents to conserve water by limiting water use to indoor needs only while avoiding outdoor watering. Here are some tips on conserving:

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- Water lawns smarter: Irrigate before 8 a.m., no more than once or twice a week, and only to 1 inch total. Skip watering within 48 hours of rain.
  - Fix the silent leaks: Test toilets with food coloring; replace flappers and worn fill valves. Watch your meter for unexplained overnight flow.
  - Mulch and native plants: Two–three inches of mulch and drought-tolerant landscaping can slash outdoor use.
  - Capture what falls: Install rain barrels or a cistern; route AC condensate to trees or beds.
  - Cover pools: A simple cover limits evaporation and saves on refills.
  - Sweep, don't spray: Use a broom for driveways and patios.
  - Shorter showers, efficient heads: Drop two minutes to save about 4 to 5 gallons per shower.
  - Full loads only: Run dishwashers and washers when full; choose eco cycles and cold water when possible.

Residents should check with their water utility to see how the restrictions apply in their area.

Sep 15, 2025

**Dante Motley**

**BREAKING NEWS REPORTER**



Dante Motley covers breaking news for the American-Statesman. He previously completed a fellowship with the Texas Tribune, worked as an intern for the Sacramento Bee, and interned for chef José Andrés's media company, helping with cookbooks, TV shows and podcasts. He graduated from Yale University in 2024, where he was managing editor of the Yale Daily News.

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