



## HEADWATERS DOWNGRADES TO DROUGHT STAGE 3

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October 11, 2023

Effective immediately, Headwaters GCD is downgrading all of Kerr County from Drought Stage 4: Extreme Drought to Drought Stage 3: Severe Drought. This change in Drought Stage is based on several factors that have seen improvement, to include: a slight recovery in the Lower Trinity Aquifer water levels, the Palmer Drought Index rating decreasing from extreme (level 4) to severe (level 3), and the recent increase in the discharge rate of the Guadalupe River at Kerrville.

A Drought Stage notification is being sent to every Permitted Well owner in Kerr County, to include all public water system owners and operators. Headwaters GCD is reminding all public water system customers to continue to follow the conservation guidelines that have been communicated to them by their public water system, to include any directives regarding lawn and landscape watering, which constitutes approximately 40% of all household water usage. Some public water systems may voluntarily elect to remain in Stage 4 water restrictions in order to maintain safe operation of the water system until the associated groundwater wells experience adequate water level recovery.

The most recent forecast for the current El Niño weather pattern has predicted that this cycle would start out weak during the summer months, continue to strengthen through the fall, and then ultimately peak this winter with moderate-to-strong intensity. While it has been strengthening, it has already brought a few healthy showers to western Kerr County and some small showers to eastern Kerr County, accompanied by the much cooler and more pleasant temperatures associated with fall weather. The current Seasonal Precipitation Outlook for November, December, and January is a 40-50% chance for above average precipitation. So, it would seem that Kerr County is experiencing, and should continue to experience, precipitation from this developing El Niño weather pattern.

With rain in our forecast for the next several months, now would be an ideal time to consider installing a rain barrel or water catchment system. A water catchment system is an excellent way to store natural, non-chlorinated water for plants. These barrels can act as an immediate reserve for landscaping needs, even when public water system restrictions may be in effect. Small water barrels can be put in place very easily, with minimal effort and expense, and many are decorative and stylish in design. These small barrels can be connected directly to rain gutter downspouts. Alternately, they can be connected to the drain line from an air conditioning unit, to capture and store the condensation created by the air

conditioning unit. Capturing and storing condensation from your air conditioning unit is a perpetually renewable source of water catchment during the summer and during a drought, when plants need it the most. If you have a private water well, using water catchment barrels for your plants instead of well water will provide some relief for your well and help to maintain a higher water level during times of drought. Furthermore, there are rebate programs available for water catchment systems that may provide a full reimbursement of your costs. More information about these programs can be found online.

As a reminder, within Kerr County, all landscape enhancement ponds (also known as vanity ponds) are required to be permitted and regulated by Headwaters Groundwater Conservation District. HGCD's Drought Stage 3 restrictions also prohibit the pumping of groundwater from permitted wells into ponds, lakes or reservoirs for the purpose of enhancing the appearance of the landscape. Therefore, at this time, pumping groundwater into any pond for the sole purpose of appearance or landscape enhancement is still a prohibited use for all groundwater wells in Kerr County. Pumping into a pond for livestock use, such as cattle, horses, mules, hogs, sheep and goats, is not prohibited. However, we encourage all livestock owners to use more water conserving options such as self-regulating stock tanks or troughs. These options prevent waste due to the fact that they prevent surface re-absorption.

In summary, Kerr County and the Texas Hill Country are expected to receive some healthy precipitation over the next several months. Hopefully, we are seeing the end of what has been an almost three-year drought. However, after the drought comes the recovery. The drought did not happen overnight, and neither will the recovery process in our aquifers. Therefore, continued water conservation efforts should still be a priority for all Kerr County residents as we continue through these next several months.

Information about the Drought Stage 3 Notice and HGCD Monitor Wells can be found on our website at [www.hgcd.org](http://www.hgcd.org).

Weekly Texas Drought Monitoring: <https://www.drought.gov/states/texas>