



## **“Currents”** April 2022

### **As Drought Conditions Intensify, So Does the Need for Conservation**

It has only been 11 years since our most recent severe drought. Throughout Texas, 2011 became the driest year ever recorded – even worse than any one year during the infamous drought of record which occurred in the 1950s. In Kerr County, the devastating drought of 2011 resulted in only 13.1 inches of rain. Far less than our area’s normal yearly amount of 28-30 inches. Year to date rainfall in Kerr County through mid-April 2022 is less than two inches. That means this year has started off even drier than 2011 and long-term predictions are for drought to persist through the end of summer. Are we in the midst of another severe drought? Time will tell, but current conditions suggest we are. Water conservation should always be a priority for drought prone regions like central Texas, but even more so during years like this.

The US Drought Monitor compiles numerous drought indicators like streamflow, precipitation, and soil moisture to issue a weekly map that describes current drought conditions across the United States. Since January, the intensity of the drought in Kerr County has quickly escalated from moderate to extreme. Half of Texas is currently classified as being in extreme drought and 14% of the state has reached the highest drought category of exceptional. These conditions are not uncommon in late summer, but very concerning in April.

Amid drought conditions, it is extremely important to be mindful of water usage. The water we use at the individual or household levels can greatly impact water availability within the community. Not only will conscious water use help your fellow residents, but it will also help conserve surface water and groundwater resources which are essential to maintaining a healthy Guadalupe River ecosystem.

As individuals, we can make small changes in our water use that result in big savings over time. In an average Texas home, about 75 percent of water use occurs in the bathroom. Reducing the stream of water while washing your hands, turning the water off while brushing your teeth, and cutting one minute off showering time can save thousands of gallons over the course of the year. Installing low water use fixtures and fixing leaks promptly can bump up the savings even more. Although it is easy to postpone fixing a dripping faucet until it is convenient, that drip could be wasting up to 15 gallons of water a day.

Being conscious of outdoor water use can result in even more conservation benefits. Residential landscapes traditionally use up to 50 percent of the household water budget, therefore, reducing irrigated turf and planting native or drought tolerant plants that thrive in our climate will reduce irrigation needs. Incorporating water-wise practices like drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting can reduce your use of potable water and be healthier for your plants. Remember, if you purchase rainwater harvesting equipment and install it in Kerr County, you may be eligible for up to \$200 from UGRA’s Rainwater Catchment System Rebate Program – contact us for more information.

Responsible use of our water resources is an essential part of preserving a healthy, flowing Guadalupe River. If each household in Kerr County makes the decision to save 5 gallons of water every day, we can conserve over 38 million gallons in a year – together we can make a difference!

### **Let’s Keep Our River Clean**

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