

# 'Conservation is 365 days a year'

End to recent drought prompts officials to urge residents to continue keeping water use under control

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**A**fter years of cracked dirt and clear skies, North Texas is finally getting a break from Mother Nature's dry spell.

The unusually wet winter extended into storms and rain that have brought local reservoirs up to capacity. And, finally, the news many residents had been waiting for came from the U.S. Drought Monitor last month: Collin County is drought free.

That claim comes thanks to the end of hydroponic drought — which is related to measures of soil moisture. That means, though other metrics may read differently, by most markers, the worst of the drought is in the rearview mirror. All six of the district's reservoirs are full: Lavon Lake, Jim Chapman Lake, Lake Texoma, Lake Tawakoni and Lake Bonham.

But though the lakes may be full and the grass may be green, experts urge residents to practice restraint before turning on the hose.

The North Texas Municipal Water District, which provides water to Plano, Murphy and Wylie, ended their drought plan on May 1 but still recommends residents follow their conservation plan, which recommends that residents water up to twice per week if needed — and only if needed.

"What we want them to do is continue the knowledge we learned during the drought," said Denise Hickey, water conservation manager with the NTMWD. "Many times of the year, you don't have to water your landscape."

Hickey said that the conservation plan stays in place rain or shine, but the NTMWD isn't afraid of dusting off the drought plan again in case the rain stops, or another emergency — like a broken pipeline — emerges.

The drought plan is written to be activated when supplies at district reservoirs dip below 55 percent capacity.

"The thing to remember is conservation is 365 days a year," Hickey said.

She also said residents in NTMWD member cities can sign up at [watermyyard.org](http://watermyyard.org) for weekly updates, including watering recommendations.

The recent rains have had a tremendous impact on

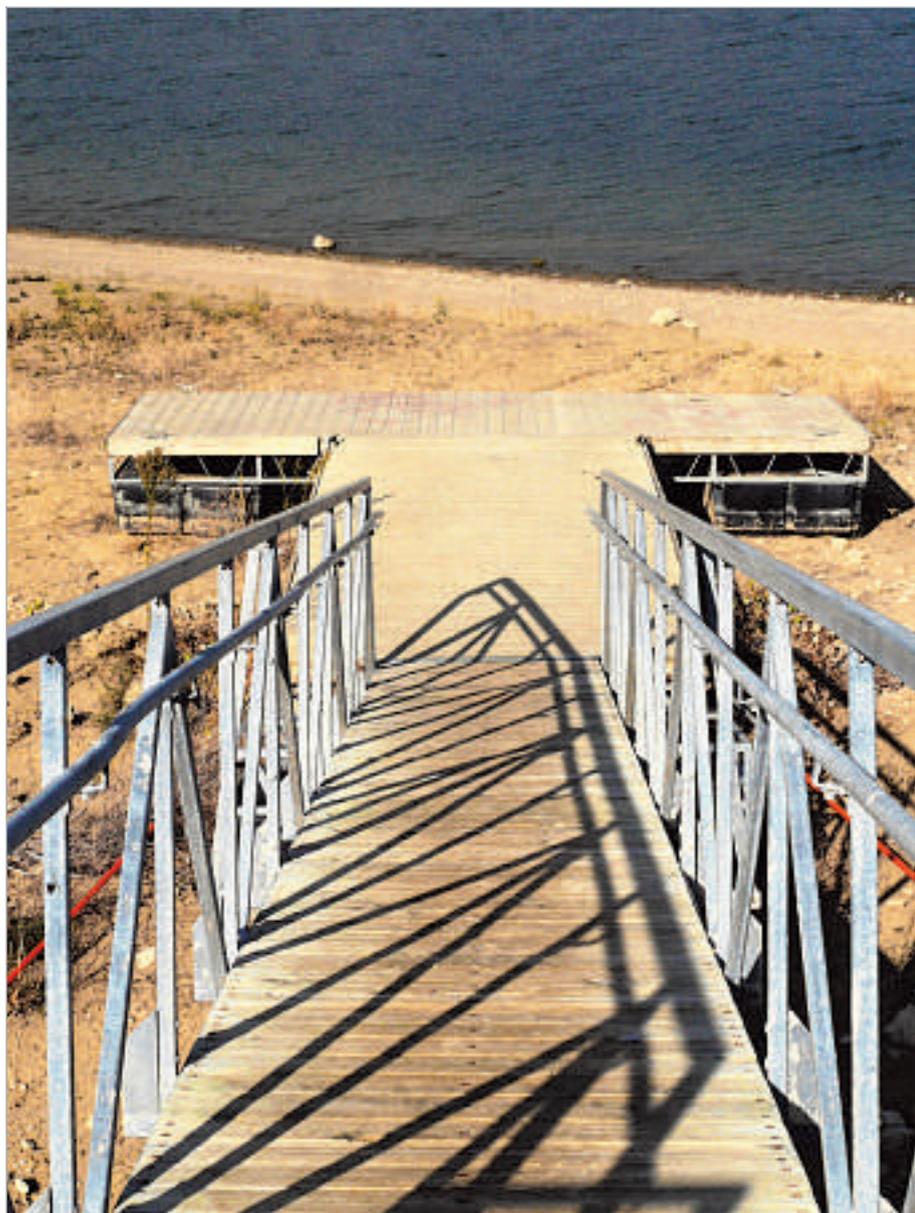


Staff photo by RON BASELICE/DMN

**Above:** Steps lead to an exposed shoreline where Matt Ritter of Plano gets in some fishing at East Fork Park at Lavon Lake in Wylie. Below: The same shoreline in April. All six of the North Texas Municipal Water District's reservoirs are full, including Lavon Lake.



Staff photo by VERNON BRYANT/DMN



Staff photo by RON BASELICE/DMN

One of the courtesy docks at East Fork Park at Lavon Lake sits on dry land in October in Wylie.



Staff photo by VERNON BRYANT/DMN

In April, Lavon Lake at East Fork Park was more than 80 percent full.

Continued from Page 24

the ground saturation in Wylie, Public Services Director Michael B. Sferra said.

“This ensures the residents, encouraged to continue practicing sensible water-conservation measures, will have an ample supply of water for years to come,” he said. “Moreso, the conservation efforts practiced by Wylie and other area residents over the recent drought years demonstrate to the business sector, regulatory agencies, other municipalities and water districts that positive results can be achieved when sensible, comprehensive water-conservation measures are adopted and practiced by local citizenry.”

Sferra advises residents to learn from conservation efforts, especially as warmer summer months approach. As the recent drought has shown, it’s “not necessary to water every day of the week to maintain healthy and aesthetically-

pleasing lawns and landscapes.”

“Residents should continually look for ways to conserve water both inside and outside the home,” Sferra said. “The results achieved by adopting a few simple strategies go a long way when multiplied by thousands upon thousands of households.”

Despite recent rains, water conservation also remains high on the agenda for local ranchers, who are cautiously optimistic about leaving the drought behind.

The rain is good news, of course, but native grasses still need to grow back before ranchers feel comfortable growing their herds to 2010 levels, said Pete Bonds, president of the Texas and Southwest Cattle Raisers Association.

Bonds said he hopes for two straight years of above-normal rain before he’s convinced.

“We need to make it better than what it was,” Bonds said. “I’m not sure it’s over

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with.”

He said this fall will be tough for allergy sufferers, as ragweed will likely spread to take the place of grasses.

The rain does mean he has enough surface water to fill stock tanks at his ranch near Saginaw.

“It is so much better now than it has been,” Bonds said. “God, I’d forgotten the last time it was muddy enough to wear mud boots.”

He still hopes people will be cautious before watering their lawns this summer. After all, a green neighborhood

lawn may mean less water for his cattle if skies dry up again.

“With the population growth we’re seeing in the metroplex, I would really suggest people go to native plants that need less water,” Bonds said. “Texas is a continuous drought with intermittent floods.”

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