
Water restrictions likely to continue this summer

By Brad Witty

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After months of drought in Denton and Collin counties, the North Texas Municipal Water District (NTMWD) will be imposing mandatory outdoor watering restrictions this summer.

Water district officials have told member cities to expect Stage 3 water restrictions by June 1 largely because water levels are down at Lavon Lake from a normal elevation of 492 feet to 483.87 feet.

The lake supplies 98 percent of water for Little Elm and is a source of water for cities such as Frisco, Plano, McKinney, Garland, and Mesquite that also belong to the district.

In January, NTMWD initiated Stage 2 drought conditions, which are considered moderate, and called for voluntary conservation among consumers and businesses.

As a member of the water district and because its Drought Contingency Plan calls for such action, Little Elm initiated the voluntary restrictions which are still in place.

Ask most who are wise about water and weather and they say North Texas could be waiting awhile for drought conditions to end.

"No one has a prediction of what the extent of the drought will be," Little Elm Public Works Director Doug Peach said, adding that it could last another year, three years, or five years or beyond.

Stage 3 would ban outdoor watering between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. and limit landscape watering to an inch per week.

"Most of these restrictions make sense with or without a drought," said Jim Parks, executive director of the NTMWD. "Watering once a week makes for a healthier lawn and root system, and not watering during the heat of the day prevents evaporation and scorching your lawn."

Once imposed, outdoor watering would be limited to businesses on Mondays, residences with even-numbered addresses on Tuesdays, residences with odd-numbered addresses on Wednesdays, and parks and other open spaces on Thursdays. Fridays through Sundays would be used as a recovery period for water supply.

Little Elm's new code enforcement officer Chip Matthews will be responsible for enforcing water restrictions, Peach said.

NTMWD offers some other basic tips to prepare homeowners for the use of less water:

- * Slowly cut back to watering lawns to about 1 inch every week;
- * Refrain from hosing surfaces like driveways and sidewalks, and repair broken sprinkler

heads to prevent waste; and,

* Prepare flowerbeds with plenty of mulch. Experts from the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association recommend 4 inches to 6 inches. Mulch prevents evaporation and keeps soil moist.

Researchers from the Texas Water Development Board indicate that nearly three out of four Texans don't know the natural source of their water. In response, NTMWD is initiating a water awareness education campaign called: "Water IQ: Know Your Water."

The Water IQ campaign aims to help North Texans learn more about their water and how to conserve it.

Later this month, television public service announcements will air and the "Water IQ Tour" will travel to various North Texas communities with experts on hand to help people learn more about saving water through trivia, demonstrations, and games.

The North Texas Municipal Water District is the first in Texas to implement the "Water IQ: Know Your Water" campaign, which was developed for the Texas Water Development Board.

Visit www.WaterIQ.org to learn more.