

Water level at Ivie rises to rare territory

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Recent rains have helped bring water levels at O.

H. Ivie Reservoir to rare ground.

The most recent reports from the Colorado River Municipal Water District indicate Ivie has been more than 60 percent full for the last three weeks, a significant increase from early June and earlier in the year when reports put Ivie's level in the lower to mid-40s. One year ago, the water level at Ivie was just above 46 percent.

Ivie, Lake J.B. Thomas and E.V. Spence Reservoir are all water district sources. Ivie -- located near Ballinger -- is the largest of the three, holding more than three times the amount of water compared to Thomas and Spence combined.

John Grant of the CRMWD said the last time Ivie was up this high was 2005 or 2001.

"We like it because it gives us a comfort zone," Grant said.

Ivie's depth was not always such a concern. Before the drought that hit West Texas from 1998 to 2003, Grant said Ivie remained full. However, dry conditions plagued the area and levels at Ivie dipped into the 30th percentile. Levels at Thomas and Spence both remain in the teens, up from low points in the single digits.

Grant said recent rains have helped. Many areas in West Texas are near or at above average rainfall totals for an entire year. Ivie has benefited from its proximity to Central Texas. Grant said the rains that have soaked that part of the state formed in the drainage area of Ivie Reservoir.

The West Texas rains have not only filled district lakes and reservoirs, it has also replenished area stock tanks and soaked the ground to the point where it takes less rain to create runoff.

"(The level at Ivie) came up 7 feet because of (these conditions)," Grant said.

Also less water is being used by member cities and customers than previous summers.

Recent rains delayed the planting of cotton for some area farmers, but local extension agents are predicting a banner season should the area get average rain over the next couple months.

Ranchers also have benefited, as rangeland, which suffered during the drought, has started a comeback allowing for more opportunities to run livestock.

"We are in the best shape moisture-wise since I moved to Midland in 1998," Midland County Extension Agent Sam Field said.