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## **North Texas lake evaporation high, but conservation measures helping**

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On Monday, when the temperature hit 105 degrees, 139.3 million gallons of water at Eagle Mountain Lake and Lake Benbrook evaporated into thin air.

In terms that Olympian Michael Phelps might understand, that's enough water to fill 211 of the competition-size pools in which he plans to win additional gold medals in Beijing next month.

Don't panic, though.

Officials at the Tarrant Regional Water District say conservation efforts adopted by many area cities over the past two years are saving about 90 million gallons a day (at 660,253 gallons of water each, that would be about 136 Olympic-size pools, by the way), leaving lakes and reservoirs at 94 percent of capacity.

"Our demands are high, but not at record levels," said Dave Marshall, engineering services director at the water district. "The program is working far better than I anticipated."

The water district owns four reservoirs - Cedar Creek, Eagle Mountain, Bridgeport and Richland Chambers - and pumps water into and out of Lake Worth, Benbrook Lake and Lake Arlington.

Increased demand for water - 530 million gallons on Monday - and the lack of rainfall since May have caused lake levels to drop. By Tuesday afternoon, Eagle Mountain was down about 2 1/2 feet, Lake Arlington 5 feet.

"The tap was turned off in May. That was our last good rainfall," Marshall said. Add in the 10 days of triple-digit temperatures in the last 11 days, and things dry out pretty quickly, he added. "I mean, my place is crispy."

But it could be worse.

Starting in 2006, the water district began to aggressively push water conservation, convincing many of the 75 cities it serves in 10 counties to adopt measures such as restricting the use of sprinklers between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., when the evaporation rate is highest.

"That saves about 30 percent through evaporation. The use of water is not as high as you would imagine," Marshall said.

Things also look good for the future. While North Texas is in a moderate drought, the forecast is for potential improvement because the area is coming out of a La Niña cycle into a neutral cycle, he said.

During a La Niña sea surface temperatures off the Pacific Coast of South America are colder than normal. La Niña tends to bring drier-than-normal winters to the southern United States.

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How dry is it? **8.38 inches**

of rainfall is what the area usually gets in May and June.

**3.05 inches**

is how much rain we got those two months.

**.45 inches**

is the rainfall total for July so far.

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