

Published: January 09, 2009 11:23 am

San Marcos Daily Record

Driest year since 1902

Central Texas sitting high and dry; outlook for 2009 not much better

By Anita Miller

News Editor

San Marcos — The year just passed will go down in the record books for San Marcos, and not in a positive way.

With a mere 17.01 inches of rainfall officially recorded for the city, 2008 goes down as the driest year on record since at least 1902 — which is as far back as record-keeping goes.

And more than a half-century has passed since the next-driest year. That was in 1939, when rainfall totaled 18.59 inches.

"We just kicked that right out of the ball park, by a whopping almost an inch and a half," said Steve Sands, former city employee who still maintains weather records on a monthly basis.

The third driest year on record is much more recent. In 1999, yearly rainfall totaled only 19.18 inches.

According to the National Weather Service, 37.19 inches is an "average" annual rainfall total for San Marcos; meaning last year's "deficit" was 20.18 inches.

Only in two months of the year did actual rainfall meet or surpass what is deemed average. In July 2.67 inches fell, compared to an average of 2.12 inches. And in August, the actual 2.86 inches exceeded the average of 2.65.

All other months fell below average, with the single biggest monthly deficit coming in June. Only .37 inches of rain fell in June, a month when the NWS average is 4.84 inches. Similarly, November's average rainfall is 3.17 inches — in reality, only .08 inches of rain fell in November.

As bad as things are in San Marcos they are worse elsewhere. The NWS says some locations in South Central Texas got less than 10 inches in all of 2008. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, Hays and most of the surrounding counties are still rated as "D4-Exceptional" drought, which is the highest level of intensity.

On Monday, the NWS issued a drought statement indicating temperatures should be normal or above normal, but rainfall is expected to be below normal.

"The main impacts of drought have been to agriculture," the statement said, "But the hydrological impacts are being felt as reservoirs, lakes and aquifers continue falling. The lack of rainfall along with gusty winds behind the cold fronts is causing increased evaporation levels over those normally seen during the winter.

The J-17 Index well of the Edwards Aquifer measured 669.7 feet above mean sea level today, which is 18 feet less than one year ago.

On Thursday, the San Marcos Springs were flowing at a rate of 98 cubic feet per second, compared to 215 cfs a year prior. Spring flow has averaged 98.2 cfs over the past 10 days.

FAIR USE NOTICE

This document contains copyrighted material whose use has not been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. The Texas Living Waters Project, which is a nonprofit undertaking, is making this article available in our efforts to promote comprehensive water planning in Texas. We believe that this constitutes a "fair use" of the copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. If you wish to use this copyrighted material for purposes of your own that go beyond "fair use", you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.