



Prolonged, Intensifying Drought Prompts Groundwater District to Consider Extreme Drought Declaration

For Immediate Release: Friday, February 6, 2026

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The Board of Directors of the Southwestern Travis County Groundwater Conservation District (SWTCGCD) will consider declaring D-3 Extreme Drought Stage at its February 19, 2026 meeting, based on current drought conditions and forecasts. Much of south-central Texas is experiencing a prolonged and intensifying drought marked by months of below-average rainfall, raising growing concern among the Board about continued stress on groundwater resources and aquifer conditions across the District.

The District's drought stage is determined by the highest level of drought intensity affecting at least 50% of the District for a minimum of two consecutive weeks, as reported by the U.S. Drought Monitor. The Board may also consider additional factors, including drought conditions in neighboring counties, 12-month rainfall deficits, consecutive months of below-average rainfall, Barton Creek flows, and aquifer conditions.

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor released February 5, 2026 (map date February 3, 2026), 53% of the District is classified as Extreme Drought (D-3) and 47% as Severe Drought (D-2). This marks the third consecutive week in which more than half of the District has been classified as D-3. A map showing the most recent U.S. Drought Monitor conditions is included on the final page of this release.

If the Board declares D-3 Extreme Drought Stage, the following groundwater-use reductions and restrictions would take effect:

Groundwater Use Reductions

- **Exempt Wells, Limited Production General Permits, Non-exempt Domestic Use General Permits:**
30% voluntary reduction in groundwater use
- **Test Well General Permits:**
No use without a Board-approved variance
- **Operating Permits:**
30% mandatory reduction of the quarterly permitted-use amount

Water Conservation Measures

- Increase voluntary water conservation and repair plumbing leaks.
- Water lawns, trees, and shrubs no more than once every 5–7 days.

- Water only between 8:00 PM and midnight using a hand-held hose with an automatic shut-off nozzle or timer.
- Hose-end and automated sprinkler systems are prohibited.
- No swimming pool refills (topping off only).
- Wash vehicles at a car wash only when necessary.
- Do not wash buildings, driveways, streets, patios, or other outdoor surfaces unless required for health, safety, or fire prevention.
- Use water for dust control only when legally required.
- Use leak-proof troughs for livestock watering (strongly recommended).
- Avoid pumping groundwater into livestock stock tanks.
- Do not use groundwater to fill ponds, lakes, tanks, reservoirs, or other surface impoundments.

Additional D-3 Restrictions

- No new non-exempt wells may be drilled, except to replace existing permitted wells. This restriction does not apply to exempt wells. The Board may consider approval of a new non-exempt well only if necessary to mitigate an imminent threat to public health, safety, or welfare.
- The District will not accept applications for new operating permits or for amendments increasing production under existing permits, except under the same limited public-health and safety criteria.

End-user customers served by water utilities using groundwater wells must comply with their utility's water-use restrictions. District permittees should refer to the monthly drought allocations in their User Drought Conservation Plan (UDCP).

Helpful Resources

- District Drought Management: <https://swtcgcd.com/drought-management>
- District Interactive Map: [SWTCGCD Map](#)
- Texas Water Development Board Drought Dashboard:
<https://www.waterdatafortexas.org/drought>
- LCRA Municipal Water Use Restrictions: <https://www.lcra.org/water/permits-contracts/water-supply-contracts/water-use-restrictions/>

The Southwestern Travis County Groundwater Conservation District (SWTCGCD) is a groundwater conservation district established by the Texas Legislature to preserve, conserve, and protect the aquifers and groundwater resources within its jurisdiction. The District is governed by a seven-member elected Board of Directors and operates with a small, dedicated team of hydrogeologists, regulatory compliance professionals, and administrative staff.

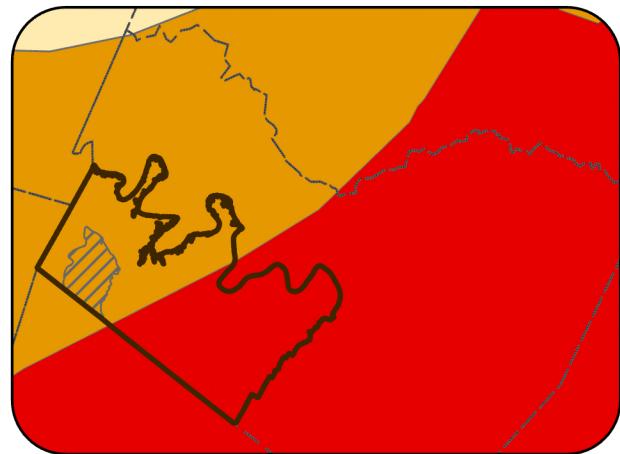


Drought Update – February 3, 2026

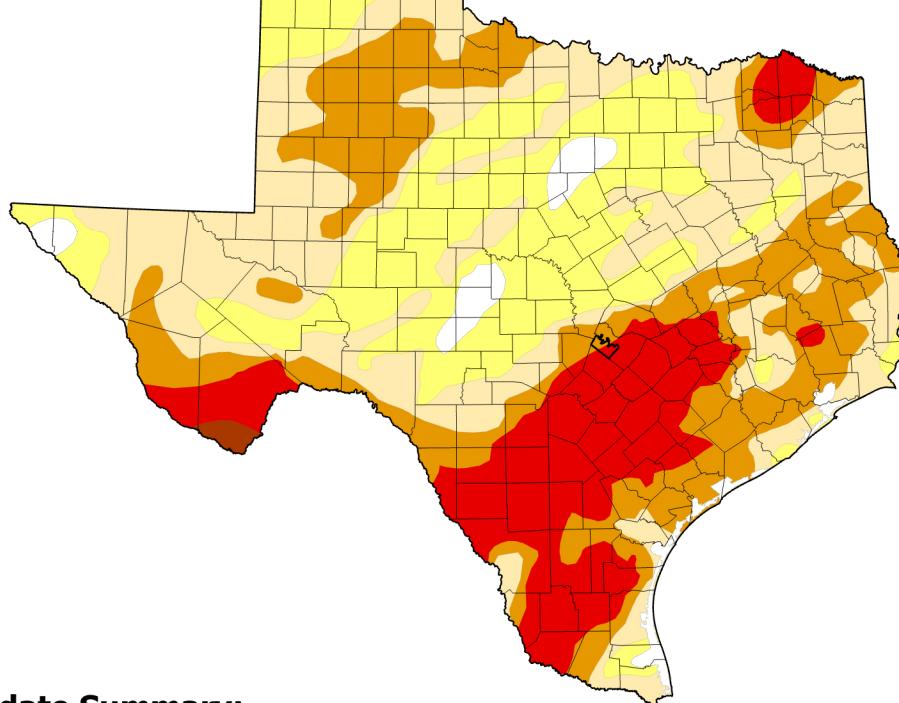
Current Declared Stage: D-2 Moderate Drought

SWTCGCD % at or above each drought stage.

-  **Hamilton Pool Management Zone**
-  **D0+ Abnormally Dry: 100%**
-  **D1+ Moderate Drought: 100%**
-  **D2+ Severe Drought: 100%**
-  **D3+ Extreme Drought: 53%**
-  **D4 Exceptional Drought 0%**
-  **None: 0%**



**Southwestern
Travis County GCD**



Drought Update Summary:

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor map released February 5, 2026 (map date: February 3, 2026), 53% of the District is classified as extreme drought (D3), with the remaining 47% classified as severe drought (D2). This is the third consecutive week in which more than 50% of the District has been classified as D3. As the minimum threshold for declaring a higher stage has been met (see below), the District Board will consider declaring D3 Extreme Drought Stage at its February 19, 2026 meeting.

Drought Thresholds:

Under District Rule 5.2, at least 50% of the District must be at a higher drought intensity for two consecutive weeks to declare a higher stage. To lower the stage, the reduced intensity must cover at least 50% of the District for four consecutive weeks. The Board may also consider other relevant factors when declaring drought stages.