

# Water

**N E W S**

## Restrictions Important to City's Future

By David E. Chardavoyne, SAWS President/CEO



*The following commentary appeared in the San Antonio Express-News on Nov. 19, 2006.*

As we are enjoying the cooler fall weather and more frequent rain, it is hard to believe San Antonio has endured 18 months of extreme drought.

Yet even as lawns return to deeper shades of green, San Antonio is still under Stage I drought restrictions.

Why?

The Edwards Aquifer level at San Antonio's J-17 monitoring well is just one of three indicators used by the Edwards Aquifer Authority to determine pumping limits for the region during periods of drought. Two of the three indicators — the J-17 well and Comal Springs in New Braunfels — are well above their Stage I trigger points. But the flow at San Marcos Springs has remained too low.

Because of this, the EAA declared Stage II pumping restrictions on Sept. 11. This means SAWS and other area water utilities must reduce Edwards pumping by 10 percent or face hefty fines. Even if the EAA moved to Stage I pumping restrictions, we would still be faced with fines if we failed to reduce pumping by 5 percent.

The good news is SAWS now has other, non-Edwards water sources available to help soften the blow of the harsher pumping limits. On the down side, we still must reduce demand to comply with the law. That's why we find ourselves in Stage I demand restrictions much longer than any of us expected.

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## SAWS Purchasing Northwest Water Systems from BexarMet

SAWS will soon serve an additional 1,800 residents after finalizing negotiations with BexarMet for the sale of water systems serving the far northwest area of San Antonio.



SAWS will pay BexarMet \$1.01 million for water systems serving The Woods of Fair Oaks, Village Green, Mobile City Estates, Leon Springs Mobile Villa and Hidden Springs subdivisions.

SAWS CEO David Chardavoyne noted, "These systems are adjacent to areas we already serve, and we have the water available to serve them. We see this proposal as a win-win for everyone involved."

The utilities anticipate no interruption of service during this transition, and as the final transfer of ownership draws near, both BexarMet and SAWS will provide information regarding changes in billing and service options.

## Stage One Continues in December

*Despite cooler weather, San Antonio still facing drought conditions*

Though December has brought milder temperatures to South Texas, the region still has not yet experienced significant, widespread rains. As a result, San Antonio remains in Stage One drought restrictions.

"It may seem like the drought has ended because it's not hot anymore," noted Karen Guz, SAWS conservation director. "But the lack of rain still has our region in a prolonged drought. While we are all hoping for and expecting a change in the rainfall patterns, in the meantime we need everyone's help to keep pumping levels within Stage One limits."

EAA's Stage One limits require SAWS and other water purveyors to reduce pumping or face significant fines. By asking customers to continue observing Stage One landscape watering rules, SAWS hopes to avoid these fines while helping the aquifer recover from the extended drought.

### Stage One Watering Schedule

Last Number of Street Address	Day for Watering
0 or 1	Monday
2 or 3	Tuesday
4 or 5	Wednesday
6 or 7	Thursday
8 or 9	Friday
No watering on weekends. Water before 10 a.m. or after 8 p.m. Metered accounts without an address water on Wednesdays.	

## Restrictions Important... (cont. from pg. 1)

So why isn't the spring flow in San Marcos responding to the higher aquifer level in San Antonio? Could it be the two sources are not as closely linked as we once believed? And if that's the case, do current pumping rules still make sense?

To answer these questions, the EAA is studying more closely the aquifer's structure and its impact on the flow of groundwater around San Marcos Springs. We applaud their leadership.

We have also received a commitment from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department to help determine — objectively and scientifically — the actual flows needed to sustain threatened wildlife species in the springs. This study will have significant long-term implications for drought restrictions in the area.

What can we do in the meantime?

First, let's remember that watering once a week — or even once a month — during the cooler months should be plenty to keep our landscapes healthy. In fact, watering too much this time of year can actually encourage lawn diseases like fungus.

Remember, too, that SAWS conducts winter averaging between November and March. This is when your water use determines your wastewater bills for the rest of the year. So saving water now saves you money later, too.

Legislative changes could also help. A more flexible approach to the management of drought-related pumping limits would give the EAA and those it regulates more leeway to address unusual circumstances, without compromising their responsibilities to protect and preserve this precious resource.

San Antonio has a well-deserved national reputation for its conservation efforts. While water restrictions may be inconvenient, they don't challenge our quality of life. In fact, they actually help us preserve it by ensuring our children and grandchildren will have plentiful, quality, affordable water.

I ask all San Antonians for their continued support. Please continue to follow Stage I rules for landscape watering. Only by working together can we effectively manage the complex water issues that face us all, now and for many years to come.

## Paying Your Water Bill

*Five quick, easy, and convenient ways to pay*

Looking for options on how to pay your bill? SAWS has several great ways to offer, all to make it easier for you!



**Pay Online** - Use our eBill service to view, receive, and pay your bill online. Now any SAWS customer can view current and past bills online. You can make a one-time payment via bank draft or credit card (VISA or MasterCard) with no commitment or obligation to continue using the service. eBill Pay directly credits your SAWS account so say goodbye to transaction fees and late charges.

**Automatic Bill Pay** - SAWS Easy-Pay is an electronic payment plan designed to make payment of your SAWS bill an automatic process. The SAWS Easy Pay Plan works by electronically transferring funds from your bank each month. This convenience is absolutely free!

**Pay in Person** - Stop by one of our three service centers to pay your bill directly.

- **Headquarters:** 2800 US Hwy 281 North
- **Westside:** Las Palmas Shopping Center  
803 Castroville Rd. Suite 406
- **Lone Oak:** 915 South W.W. White Road

SAWS Service Centers accept cash, check payments, credit cards or debit cards with a Visa or MasterCard logo. SAWS has also teamed up with select local businesses to collect payments on SAWS' behalf.

**Pay by Phone** - Payment can be made via bank draft, a credit card or debit card, through one of our Call Center Customer Service Agents. Agents are available from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Just call 704-SAWS (7297).

**Pay by Mail** - Payments can be placed in the return envelope received with your bill and placed in the mail. Payment may be in the form of personal check, traveler's check, or money order. Please do not send cash.

### Affordability Programs

To determine if you qualify for one of our programs assisting customers with financial hardship, please call San Antonio's Community Action Division at 207-7830.

## Drinking, bathing, cleaning, cooking....



Many people take water for granted. But every day, families risk losing water service because they can't afford to pay their water bill. If you'd like to help keep water flowing to our neighbors in need, you can contribute to Project Agua, a non-profit program from SAWS helping customers pay their water bill. It's simple and no contribution is too small to help. Just look for the donation box on the return portion of your SAWS bill.

Water News is published for customers of San Antonio Water System.

### Numbers to Know

Customer Service	704-SAWS
T.D.D.	233-3153
CleanStream Hotline	212-5326

### 24-Hour Emergency

Customer Service/ Water Waste Reporting	704-SAWS
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Visit our Web site at [www.saws.org](http://www.saws.org)