

Drought Restrictions Kicked to Curb by Recent Rains

Per city ordinance, the San Antonio city manager, in consultation with SAWS, announced the end to water restrictions effective June 10.

Recent deluges have sent the Edwards Aquifer level skyrocketing. Since the 10-day average of the aquifer has remained well above 660 feet, SAWS advised the city manager it would be appropriate to end drought restrictions.

San Antonio had been in some type of water restrictions since 2011, and

had stayed in Stage Two restrictions since 2012.

“San Antonio and the region have experienced a tremendous level of rain resulting in some of the highest aquifer levels we have seen in recent years,” said Robert R. Puente, SAWS president/CEO. “We are hoping that citizens will continue their water-saving ways and continue to be restrained about outdoor water use.

“While the once-a-week restrictions have been lifted, no one should need



to do any outdoor watering for the near future.”

Complete rules can be found at saws.org/drought.

New SAWS Rate Structure Being Vetted

About every five years, San Antonio Water System seeks out public input in evaluating how water and sewer services are charged. Representatives from throughout the community are asked to deliberate on how to best fund the needs of the city’s water utility. City Council appoints some members, who

are joined by neighborhood leaders, stakeholders and business owners.

The Rate Advisory Committee’s hard work and commitment during the last year and a half has yielded important recommendations for SAWS’ water and wastewater rate structure.

It’s important to note that the citizens’ review focused on how to charge, not what to charge.

The committee worked hard to build a rate structure that would ensure fairness among customer categories (residential, commercial, irrigation, etc.) with each group paying its own expenses, while also allowing SAWS to fully recover costs — or break even. Late last month, the committee unanimously agreed upon recommendations.

The new proposed rate structure for residential water use creates eight billing blocks, compared to the existing four. It includes a “lifeline” block in which customers would pay \$0.1379 per 100 gallons for their first 2,992 gallons. The weighted average for the lowest four blocks, which represents 59 percent of SAWS bills, is \$0.2069 per 100 gallons — a rate that is less than the current charge for a comparable volume of water.

Description	Existing Structure			Proposed Structure		
	Block Threshold	Percent Usage	Customer Bills	Block Threshold	Percent Usage	Customer Bills
Block 1	5,985	64.0%	58.7%	2,992	38.2%	26.5%
Block 2	12,717	22.7%	30.4%	4,489	14.7%	17.3%
Block 3	17,205	4.9%	5.6%	5,985	11.1%	14.9%
Block 4	Above	8.4%	5.3%	7,481	7.6%	11.2%
Block 5				10,473	10.8%	13.7%
Block 6				14,962	7.6%	8.9%
Block 7				20,199	4.1%	4.0%
Block 8				Above	5.9%	3.5%
		100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%

Residential rate blocks and charges per hundred gallons of water under the existing and proposed rate structures. Note that the proposed structure would eliminate seasonal rates.

Join the **MySAWS** conversation:





► Shorebird Saturday

Learn about shorebirds without going all the way to the coast! Get on out to Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, 10750 Pleasanton Road, to see all the feathered friends that frequent the wetlands of Mitchell Lake. The event is Aug. 29 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Call 210-628-1639 for details.

Your Weeds Are Talking to You...

The types of weeds popping up in your garden will tell you the overall condition of the soil. They can signal compacted soils, pH imbalance and, in some cases, balanced soil.

Let's take a look at some of the most common weeds found in our area and what they indicate.

Crabgrass means your soil is low in calcium. The good news

is it's an easy fix. Add egg shells or ground-up raspberry leaves.

The presence of chickweed indicates a lack of potassium and manganese in your soil. Both of these are released into the soil as the weed decomposes, and that's a good thing. This weed also boosts your compost pile with manganese and potassium.

Henbit or lamb's quarter indicates rich soil, while reindeer dandelions and stinging nettle mean soil pH is below 7.0. Mugwort and wild carrot (this year in particular) signify worn-out soils. You do have several choices to remedy worn out-soil. Opt for salvias, coreopsis, or santolina asclepias.

Convenience Fees for Credit/Debit Card Users Begin in August

In a move that will save \$1 million-plus annually, customers who pay their bills using a debit or credit card now will be responsible for paying the associated convenience fee starting in August. However, several no-fee options remain for customers to pay their bills.

No-fee payment options include:

- **SAWS Easy-Pay (auto draft)**
- **SAWS eBill website (check or savings)**
- **Pay by phone (check or savings)**
- **In person (check or cash)**
- **Postal mail (check)**
- **Your bank's bill pay service**

The change comes after SAWS recently selected a third-party vendor to process debit/credit card payments only. In the past SAWS had absorbed the fees paid to credit card associations, meaning all customers shared in the \$1 million-plus yearly cost of these transactions.

The convenience fee will now only affect customers using debit or credit cards. The practice is similar to what other utilities do.

Another benefit of using an outside vendor to process debit/credit card payments is customers will now be able to use American Express or Discover to make payments. (Previously, only Visa and MasterCard were accepted.)

The fee for residential customers will be \$1.75 for a debit card and \$2.25 for a credit card per \$500 payment. For commercial customers, the fee will be \$3.89 for debit and \$4.95 for credit up to a \$1,000 payment.

To sign up for SAWS Easy Pay, visit: saws.org/EasyPay; for eBill, visit: saws.org/eBill.

Beginning August 2015
Customers paying by debit or credit card will be charged the following convenience fees:

	Debit Card	Credit Card
Residential (per \$500 payment)	\$1.75	\$2.25
Commercial (per \$1,000 payment)	\$3.89	\$4.95

Community Garden Orientation Session

Green Spaces Alliance of South Texas is hosting an information session for groups interested in starting new community gardens in San Antonio.

Learn how to get your community garden in the ground, from planning to funding to sustaining it long term. The session will be held Tuesday, July 28,

from 6-8 p.m. at Green Spaces Alliance offices, 4901 Broadway, Suite 211.

For more information, visit greensatx.org.

Local Calendar

Ford Canoe Challenge

August 1
River Walk extension
thesanantonioriverwalk.com

Dog Days

August 1-2
San Antonio Botanical Garden
555 Funston
sabot.org

Essentials of Gardening Class

August 17
San Antonio Garden Center
3310 N. New Braunfels
gardeningvolunteers.org

Herpetology Day

August 22
Mitchell Lake Audubon Center
10750 Pleasanton Rd.
mitchelllake.audubon.org