

WATCH WHEN IT RAINS, THEN ACT

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My early boyhood included long observational pauses as coastal showers frequented many days. From our city porch in New Orleans, I studied the rapid flows for better, faster navigation for little ships I prepared when drainage ditches filled. From our grandfather's porch on his farmstead, I watched the flows toward a shallow drain providing fresh water for a perimeter pond. As I grew stronger and more able, I was assigned "to not dig deep but keep channel clear" for good flow. Now, seven decades later I patiently await any break in drought across our Texas Hill Country's far more arid circumstances. Again, it causes me to wonder, observe, and act.

Both on the acres that provide us with a setting for our homesite and across our Comal terrain, including our village of New Braunfels and neighboring settlements where folks love to dwell, I wonder, observe positive and impeding drainage patterns, and hope to see some action or take it where appropriate. In a community that has experienced debilitating floods locally or nearby and with considerable watershed issues in terrain graced with rivers, springs, and aquifers there is sustained cause for vigilance. What have you noticed or pondered? What constructive measures have you taken or would consider taking?

Our libraries and on-line resources from a multitude of sources abound with information. You can get a start at comalconservation.org. Look first around your own home and the drainage that prevails. Do you have patterns that can be enhanced with a little attention? Are there or might there be swales in particular circumstances? Could a little enhanced channeling help with flows toward a needed area? Whether your source for water is a water system or onsite well, measures for reduced water consumption abound with modified household practices and landscape irrigation. In fact, more folks are finding xeriscaping advantageously responsible.

For larger areas there are riparian practices to filter runoff in the watersheds and before drainage heads into our region's karsts. You can find some responsible practices at the Headwaters of the Comal as well as on several demonstration areas open for discovery and learning. The region's libraries and some other public spaces are exhibiting smart rainwater capture, use, and channeling. Take time and take note for some valuable lessons to replicate. An excursion out and about can inspire actions on your part. More extended regional adventures might include the Lady Bird Wildflower Center, Bamberger ranch, and numerous other such efforts. The list for such excursions is impressive and considerable. Many report that a few of these exposures lead to personal action and voluntary efforts among neighbors and like-minded colleagues.

The misfortune for our area has been the harmful region-wide drought. Hasn't it been scary to see our very locale the center of deepest red for drought monitoring maps? It brings to mind some years ago when a rancher came out of a service of worship I had led during a pastoral interim and said, "that deluge that made many of us homebound last week maybe meant we had prayed a little too hard for the rains to come, Reverend!" We had a good laugh but then talked awhile about the damages done by the extended dry and the sudden torrential downpours. Indeed, preparation is required and must be ongoing.

It is a season for us in this region to consider the shifts and changes in dry periods and rainfall interruptions. Do join the conversation! Let's ponder and discern together: wondering, observing, and acting individually and together.