

H-Zfeb24column: Lest We Forget: Precious Water is Vital!

How wondrous has been our recent drought-denting rainfall! With more winter in front of us, "it's fresh like Spring." The pastures and our yard where we live are finally green. May 2024 be notably wet.

My first Texas employment was in "Aggieland" located in Brazos County. Among many interesting folk was a young faculty person at Texas A&M who also served as a specialist with the Extension Service (now AgriLife). In a presentation to rural and small-town pastors the specialist spoke to us about "Aqua Amnesia." As a native of New Orleans and years growing up on the Gulf Coast, I found it curious to hear about how frustratingly dry things can be in Texas. The presenter convincingly described the 1950's of his adolescence when the A&M campus and much of Texas were scorched to a crisp with little vegetation surviving. He got a laughing response when he said, "our sacred Kyle Field where football rules was a standout exhibit of green amidst all the brown surroundings." He pointed out that in the late 1960's a vast hurricane had "greened up" just about everything. The concern he expressed was that measures that were undertaken during drought times and even legislation to address water deficits "evaporated" rapidly in a state of "aqua amnesia." Many rushed back to old consumption practices for irrigation, drilling, industrial, and household uses as if it was a time for "no worry" going forward.

We can hope that the recently dry riverbeds of our Texas Hill Country and dropping water tables will not be ignored going forward. I raise this, in part, in response to a number of our own Comal County readers and neighbors asking me if I'd say something about the wells going dry, the periodic interruption of well flows, dry or trickling in our assumed wonderfully vigorous springs and more. There commenced discussions about coaxing folks to utilize landscaping practices and household water consumption with greater measures of stewarding our water supplies. More general questions were initiated about how to use more prudent practices in the rapid development of Comal County and the neighboring Hill Country region. When a group of folks with well worries spoke of how long they would wait before a drilling service could extend the depth of their wells or drill a new well, discussions deepened. Might the licensing process be examined for greater cautionary measures? Would the drillers be willing to tell us anecdotally if not scientifically what they are seeing and encountering when they tell customers about their waiting lists? What discussions might be underway with policy making elected and staff officials that address our water precariousness? Might we begin acknowledging "right to capture" principles require some reiteration in light of the population swell and so many more "taking" from our finite water sources?

Let's begin with planting/sowing less thirsty choices. Let's look to newer measures for recycling much used water. Let's explore what some innovators describe and demonstrate as ONE WATER buildings. Consider pervious rather than impervious cover whenever possible in your own space as well as in our public and commercial spaces. The lists go on!

How my life circumstances have taken me on a water journey! As a youngster, I watched adults pound pipes into sandy soil to "find water." Now I wonder how deep some with mighty drills must reach. Let's talk together rather than allow our Springs and much more to go dry.