

# Toeing the Line

by W.F. Strong

You can never underestimate the value of a good friendship forged early in life. If not for one such friendship, Texas would be more than 900 square miles smaller.

Before I get to the friendship, come with me up to the northwest corner of the Panhandle, where Texas meets Oklahoma and New Mexico. If you look closely at a map, you see that the border between Oklahoma and New Mexico doesn't meet up exactly with the border between Texas and New Mexico. The northern Texas

border continues 2.3 miles west before heading straight south, essentially notching into New Mexico. That jog is the result of a mistake some have called the worst survey error in U.S. history.

In truth, that land should have gone to New Mexico. The border between Texas and the New Mexico Territory was to be exactly along the 103rd meridian, same as the border between Oklahoma and New Mexico.

John H. Clark was hired to do the Texas survey in 1859. He started from the south and

surveyed northward until he ran out of access to water. He figured:

No problem, I'll just go up to the north end of Texas and work my way down and connect to this spot.

Clark started again northwest of present-day Dalhart, at a spot that was a couple of miles to the west of where he should have been. He headed south, marking his way, until Native Americans ran him off. He was just 70 miles from connecting the line to where he left off in the south, so he connected the dots on the map and turned in his work. Sadly, he never would have connected with his earlier starting point. He would have missed it by more than a mile to the west. His northern starting

point was 2.3 miles west of where it should have been, and his southern corner was nearly 3.8 miles west of the correct point. The error amounted to an extra 603,348 acres, or 942 square miles, for Texas.

By the time New Mexico was set to achieve statehood, state leaders knew about the error and slipped a clause into the statehood legislation that said that the eastern boundary would be the true 103rd meridian. Thus, New Mexico would get its land back. Nobody seemed to be paying attention to the state's intentions except John Farwell, an original investor in the XIT Ranch in Texas. He realized that the XIT would lose hundreds of thousands of acres—and mineral rights—if

the New Mexico plan went through.

Farwell had been good friends with President William Howard Taft during college at Yale University. He went to see his old buddy and explained the predicament. Taft summoned powerful men to his office and told them the Clark border would be the legal border when New Mexico became a state, or it would remain a territory.

And that is how a survey error, along with an old friendship, made Texas almost a thousand square miles bigger than it was supposed to be. Once again, it's about who you know.

*W.F. Strong is a professor at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and first wrote this story for Texas Standard.*

## ...NRCS funding

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## Getting to the root of the wild pig problem

by Gary Joiner  
Publisher,

Texas Farm Bureau

Wild pigs are not just a Texas problem. Thirty-five states are battling the feral swine.

But Texas has the most, and the problem keeps growing.

Recent research points to well over 2.5 million wild pigs in our state. Only one county out of 254 in Texas has been spared from the invasive species.

The pigs are prolific, too. In one year, a female can produce 50 to 100 hogs.

Texas farmers and ranchers see the impact firsthand. Some growers lose at least 30 percent of their crops to wild pigs each year.

Crops such as corn, wheat, oats and rice are hit hard. The wild pigs also prey on young cattle, sheep and goats.

Controlling the growing population is not easy. There is no one silver bullet, and that includes hunting. It will take a multi-faceted approach to manage the pig problem, from both public and private sources. More control tools are needed, and research is underway to determine which methods are effective and environmentally safe.

Texas farmers and ranchers are hopeful new strategies will get to root of the wild pig problem, and soon.

# Water Weekly

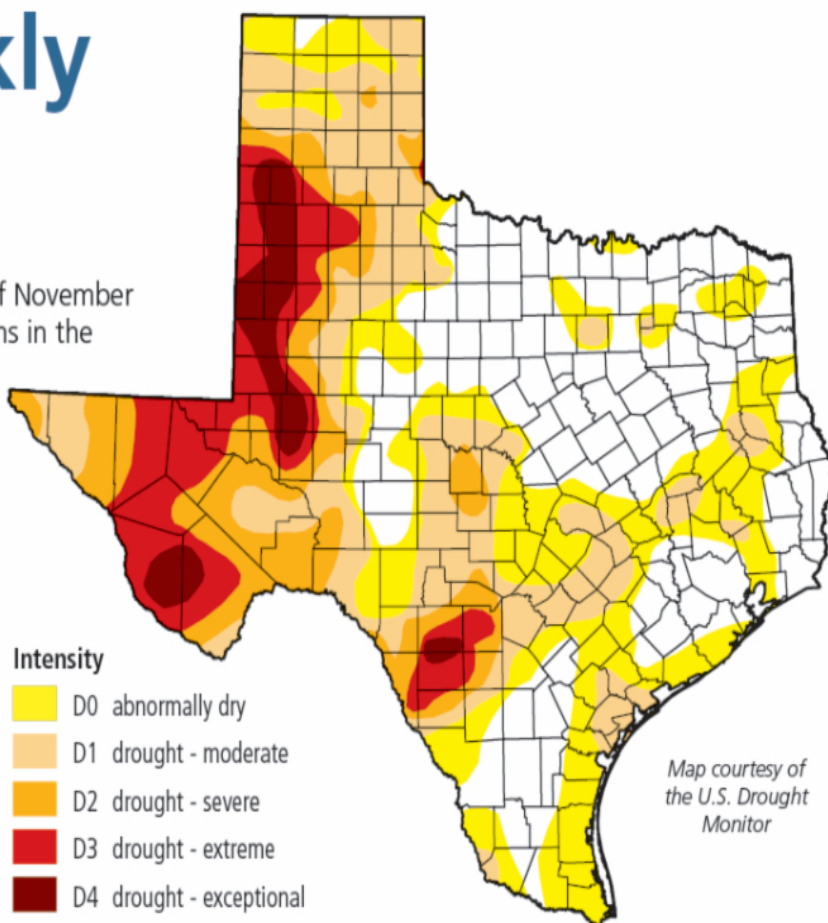
For the week of 11/09/20

## Water conditions

The latest drought map for conditions as of November 3 shows improvement of drought conditions in the Panhandle but continued expansion of drought across Central and East Texas. About one-fifth of the state is abnormally dry and considered vulnerable to drought expansion in coming weeks.

## Drought conditions

- ◆ 46% now
- ◆ 43% a week ago
- ◆ 33% three months ago
- ◆ 41% a year ago

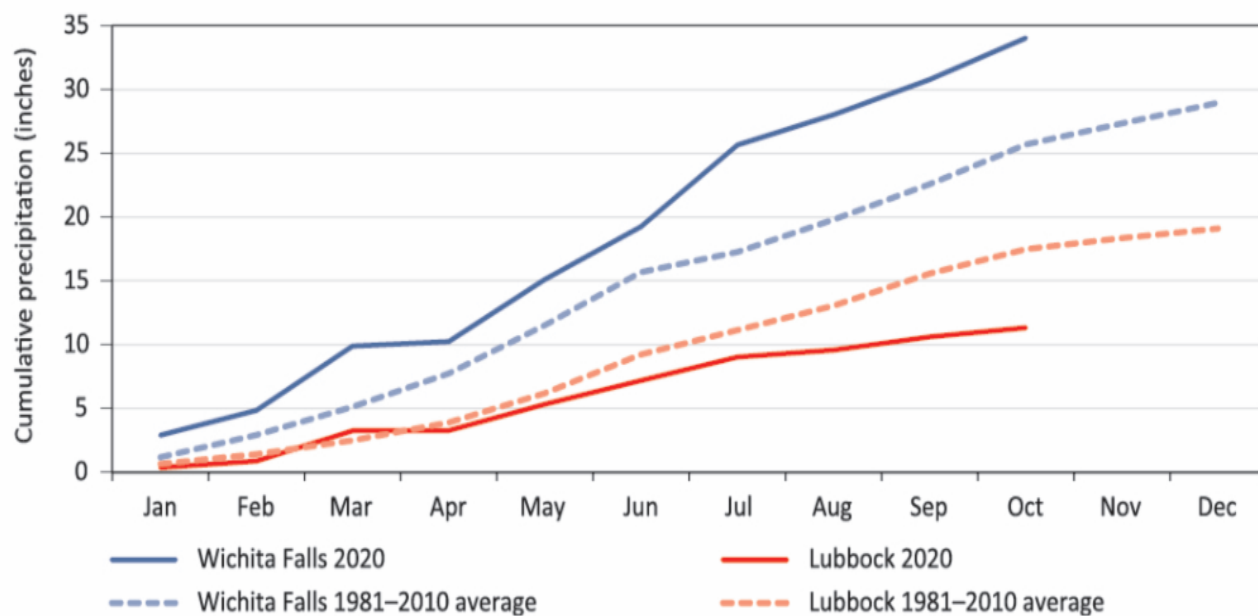


Map courtesy of the U.S. Drought Monitor

## Wichita Falls and Lubbock precipitation

Data courtesy of NOAA

Rainfall in Texas is highly variable, and 2020 has been no exception. In the first 10 months of this year, Wichita Falls received 8 inches more precipitation than average. Meanwhile, 200 miles to the west, Lubbock received 6 inches less than average for the same time period.



Written by Dr. Mark Wentzel — Dr. Mark Wentzel is a hydrologist in the TWDB's Office of Water Science and Conservation.

Bryan McMath, Governmental Relations | [bryan.mcmath@twdb.texas.gov](mailto:bryan.mcmath@twdb.texas.gov) | 512-463-7850

Sarah Haney, Media Relations | [sarah.haney@twdb.texas.gov](mailto:sarah.haney@twdb.texas.gov) | 512-463-5129

[www.twdb.texas.gov](http://www.twdb.texas.gov)

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