



detention center located here.

Believe you me, nobody wants to get back to “normal” as much as I do. I would prefer to have my businesses back up to full speed, rather than working around numerous restrictions. I would prefer to focus my mayoral efforts on rural revitalization, not pandemic prevention and response. I would like to see Stamford’s Grand Theater operational, our restaurant dining rooms open, and our closed businesses back in operation. As summer and fall draw nearer, I would like to see a capacity crowd at the Texas Cowboy Reunion and the Stamford Bulldogs playing football under the lights of Bill Anderson Stadium.

But good leadership requires us to make the BEST decisions, not the decisions we WANT to make. Our local communities do not operate in a vacuum and they are subject to the decisions of our state and federal leaders. I pray that our Governor and his advisers are making decisions purely with the best interests of Texas in mind. The COVID-19 pandemic requires a careful balancing of public health concerns with economic concerns. It would be easy to completely shut down our state and provide maximum protection of public health. That would be an economic disaster. It would be easy to protect our economic well-being, but that would be a public health disaster.

There’s a reason that good

leadership is not easy. Good leadership (during emergencies and otherwise) requires the balancing of difficult factors with no real way of knowing the “correct” answer until you gain the benefit of hindsight. So why do I have mixed feelings about the current decisions being made? Simply put, I’ve paid too much attention to state and federal politics. Too many other factors enter the decision-making mix. Elected officials are influenced by their own re-election desires and by the donors and primary voters who weigh heavily on those outcomes. Political parties and partisan politics serve only to make decision-making worse.

I am thankful that local elections are nonpartisan, because I’ve long subscribed to George Washington’s skepticism

about political parties. In President Washington’s farewell address in 1796, he warned that joining political parties leads to a spirit that “serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another; foments occasionally riot and insurrection.”

Leaders who focus too much on re-election are often viewed poorly by history, because they were unwilling to make the best decisions, regardless of their popularity. Leaders who focused on making the best decisions - names like Theodore Roosevelt and Harry Truman come to mind - often angered their peers but today are viewed favorably

by history. Today, I pray that our leaders - in our local communities, in our states, and at the federal level—will focus on making the best decisions. I pray that they heed the spirit of George Washington to ignore partisan impacts on sound public administration. I pray that they balance the difficult factors with an eye on the greater good of our society.

Here in Stamford, Texas, we’re ready for “normal,” but above all, we’re focused on making the best decisions we can make in service of our people.

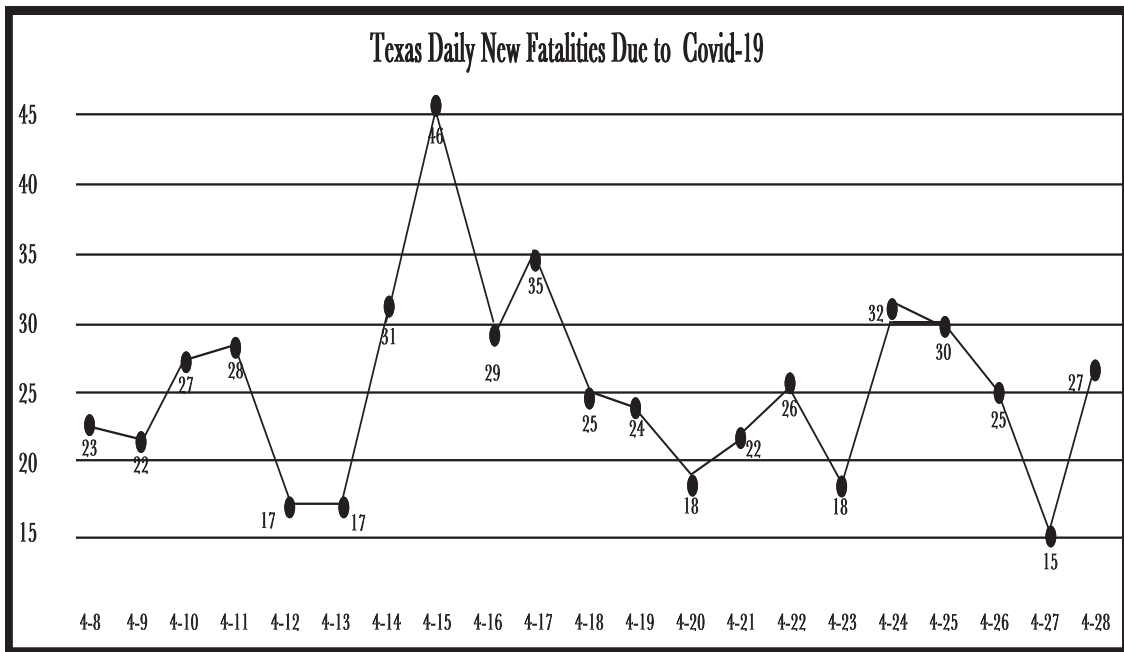
James Decker is a lawyer, farmer, and mayor in Stamford, and the creator of the forthcoming “West of 98” podcast and website. He may be contacted through Facebook at facebook.com/james.decker.

**In Service of the People**

by James M. Decker

As I’m writing this essay, we’re receiving word from Texas Governor Greg Abbott about the plan to “reopen Texas.” We’ve all endured weeks of stay-at-home orders and statewide shutdowns of schools and numerous businesses large and small - from theaters and gyms to salons, barbers, and tattoo parlors. We’ve learned new ways to worship together and to support our local restaurants. As I’m reviewing the Governor’s announcement, I have mixed feelings.

As I wrote to our Stamford community last week, I am concerned that COVID-19 cases in rural Texas have not yet reached their peak. There are signs that new cases have recently peaked statewide in Texas, but COVID-19 most likely appeared in rural areas a bit later than urban areas, so just like new cases were a little behind, it’s likely that our peak would be a little behind as well. In fact, we have recently seen a small spike in cases in Jones County as a result of the private



**Water Weekly**

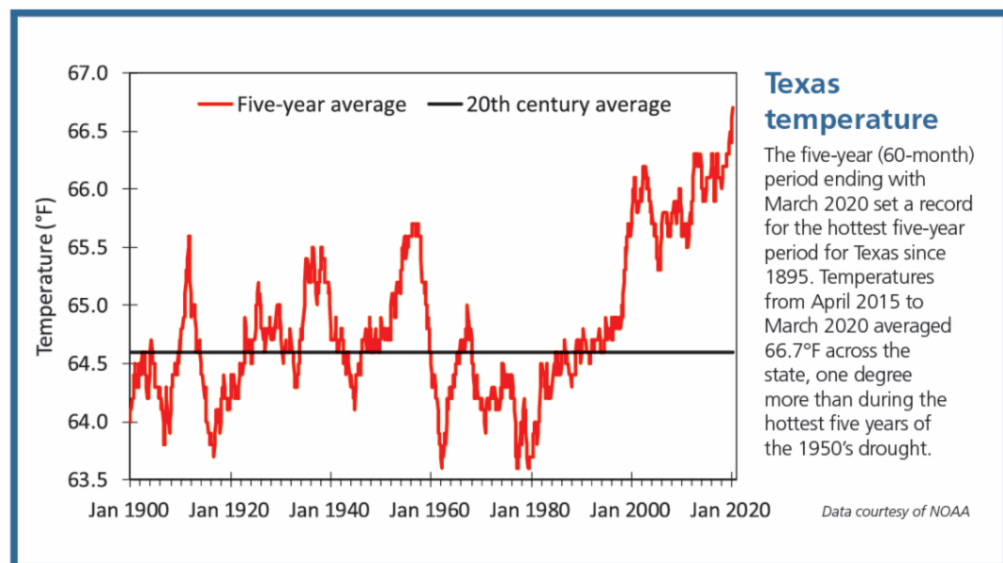
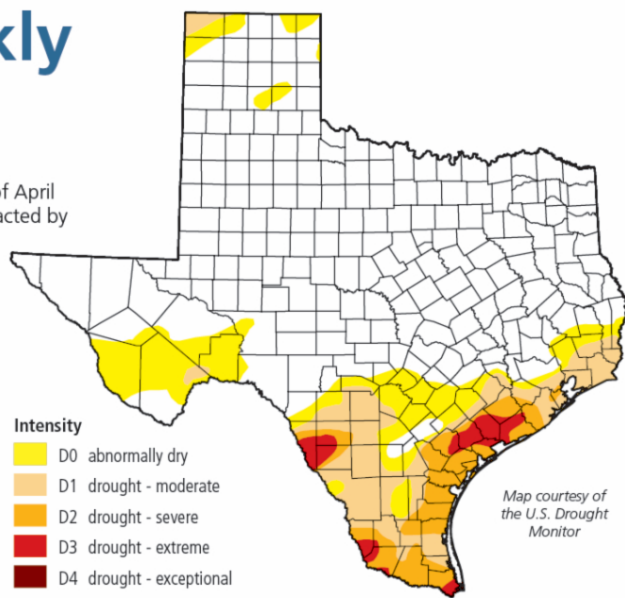
For the week of 04/27/20

**Water conditions**

The latest drought map for conditions as of April 21 shows no change in the total area impacted by drought. However, exceptional drought was eliminated from the state, and the area impacted by severe or worse drought dropped one percentage point and now covers 7 percent of the state.

**Drought conditions**

- ◆ 16% now
- ◆ 16% a week ago
- ◆ 35% three months ago
- ◆ 1% a year ago



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

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**Deadline to submit information to The Observer/Enterprise is Monday at 5 pm.**

**HIGH FIRE DANGER**  
**BURN BAN IN EFFECT**

**SHOP LOCAL**  
*Please Support Your Hometown Businesses!*