



## Solutions, But What Solutions?

by James M. Decker

*(Editor's note: This is the third part in a series on drugs and addiction in our communities.)*

Our communities are decaying from drug addiction and the accompanying crime, death, despair, and other adverse impacts. It is incumbent on community leaders to create and enact solutions, rather than wait on someone else to solve the problem. In discussion at the recent West Texas Rural Summit, one sheriff said something striking - he wanted to put drug dealers behind bars, but drug use is less law enforcement problem and more healthcare problem. Half of his jail is filled with drug charges and over half of those drug-related inmates are dealing with some form of mental illness. To make matters worse, 80% of drug-related inmates are repeat drug offenders. Simply locking up drug users does not solve a problem, it only keeps jail beds filled.

I can only conclude that we are fighting the wrong fight. By locking up drug users, we're fighting the symptoms of the problem, not the problem itself. Instead, we need to look at why the symptoms exist in the first place.

USDA research finds that rural drug use is a symptom of several problems. Most important, in my mind, is that drug use has become a primary form of self-medication. Drug users are medicating for a number of reasons, including depression and despair, as well as lacking economic opportunity (which, in itself, only further fuels depression and despair). The solution is not to lock up folks who don't want to be in the throes of addiction to begin with. The solution is to help addicted folks to get clean and to prevent addiction from happening in the first place.

It is easy to wish for answers through stronger law enforcement and the criminal justice system. Law enforcement is a necessary piece of the puzzle to enforce laws and arrest drug dealers, but law enforcement cannot solve the problem of addiction. By design, law enforcement is a reactive approach - it attacks a problem after the problem already exists. A farmer doesn't control weeds in his field solely by letting the weeds grow and then removing them. Removing growing weeds is only part of the solution. The farmer strives to use good management practices that prevent the weeds from ever growing at all.

So it goes with addiction. Relying on law enforcement alone might control some of the

problems, but law enforcement alone will never wholly prevent the problems from popping up. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. For too long we have expected to control the decay of drugs and addiction in our towns with law enforcement solutions alone. Then, we're dejected and dismayed when the problems seem to continue. It's time for a new model. It's time to strike at the reasons that addiction exists.

And coming next week, I'll explain why that answer lies in this phrase: shine a light into the darkness.

*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*

### ...Bronte City Council meeting minutes

*(Continued from previous page)*

The Council discussed that they acquired the special warranty deed and it was approved by the City Attorney.

Stormy Vaughn asked the question, whoever wins the bid, will they have to build what we want, present drawings or plans? The Council agreed that plans would have to be approved by the City Council. The seal bid dates will be changed when it is advertised in the newspaper.

A motion was made by Stormy Vaughn to approve the bid packet sale of 1.3 acres of tract one, block 59 1/2, section one, Railroad Addition, and was seconded by Santiago Rodriguez. The motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

A motion was made by Santiago Rodriguez to approve Laura Richmond as Resident Commissioner to the Bronte Housing Authority Board for a two year term ending May 31, 2020. The motion, seconded by Lee Wommack, carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

It was discussed to consider an ordinance amending Ordinance #392 prohibiting commercial vehicles having a gross motor vehicle weight in excess of 10,000 pounds to travel along specified city streets; authorizing public works director to post

appropriate signage; declaring the penalty for violation of the ordinance; and containing a severability clause adding Parkwood and Driftwood to the route.

Santiago Rodriguez spoke to the San Angelo District office and they will come out this week to look at signs on 277. Once the Council approves and it is advertised in the newspaper, the signs will be posted.

A motion was made by Santiago Rodriguez to approve the Streets Ordinance 2nd Reading and was seconded by David Bedford. The motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

Paul Gohman welcome Sherry Bailey to the City staff. They have been working on the budget and trying to streamline the process. Paul Gohman expressed how thrilled he is with how the repairs came out across from the post office. North Washington had a lot of major batching strip fixed and will be looking around the school. Pot holes will be addressed next. Later this year the County is to help with the gravel streets in the north side of town. Plans were

discussed to enhance the Water Treatment Plant and housing developments look for ways to be the "city of choice". Code Enforcement is long overdue and plans are made to clean up lots.

Stormy Vaughn voiced concerns regarding the City Notices being sent out for boat on the street but then no notice was sent for an RV being near the City Cemetery two doors down. The new revised public nuisance ordinance will give the City the teeth they need but to treat everyone the same.

Teresa Ballard discussed the budget workshop schedule and will send an email for available dates.

Ricky Royall reported that TxDOT was out this week and looked at the erected sign in front of Bud Johnson's office. They looking at putting a painted "arrow" in the middle of the road for better notice on the upcoming turn. Ricky mentioned that they said keeping people off of the phone is the problem.

Stormy Vaughn would like to look at updating other ordinances since these two have been implemented.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:39 pm.

# Water Weekly

For the week of 09/17/18

## Water conditions

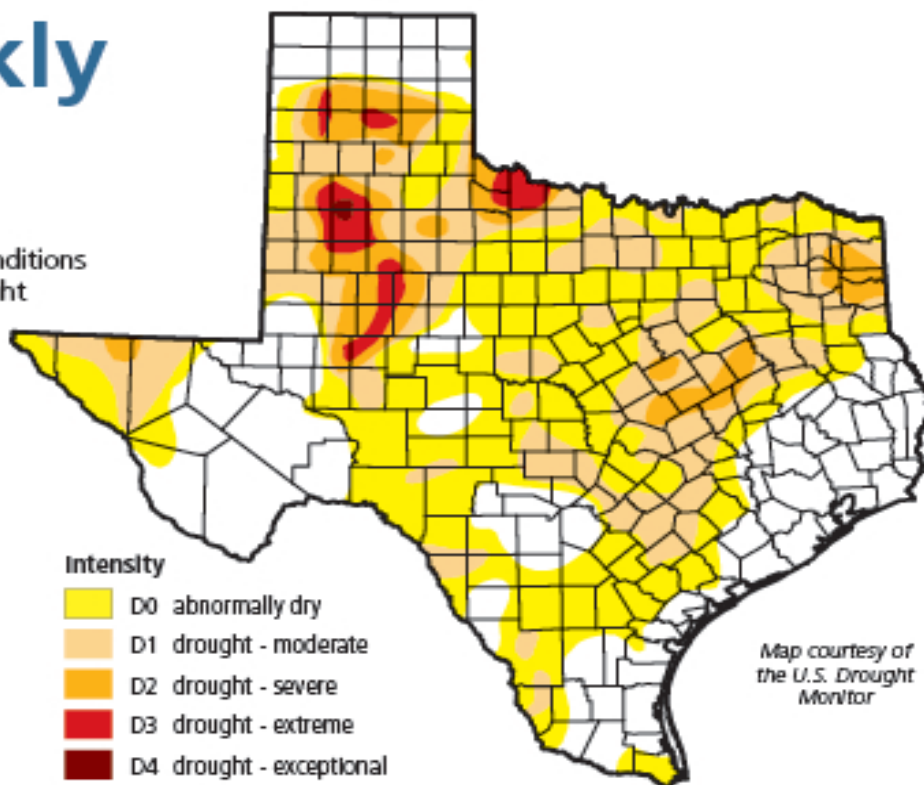
The latest drought map shows improved conditions across South, Central, and East Texas. Drought continues to linger in scattered areas, particularly the Panhandle, where extreme and exceptional drought are still impacting about 2 percent of the state.

### Drought conditions

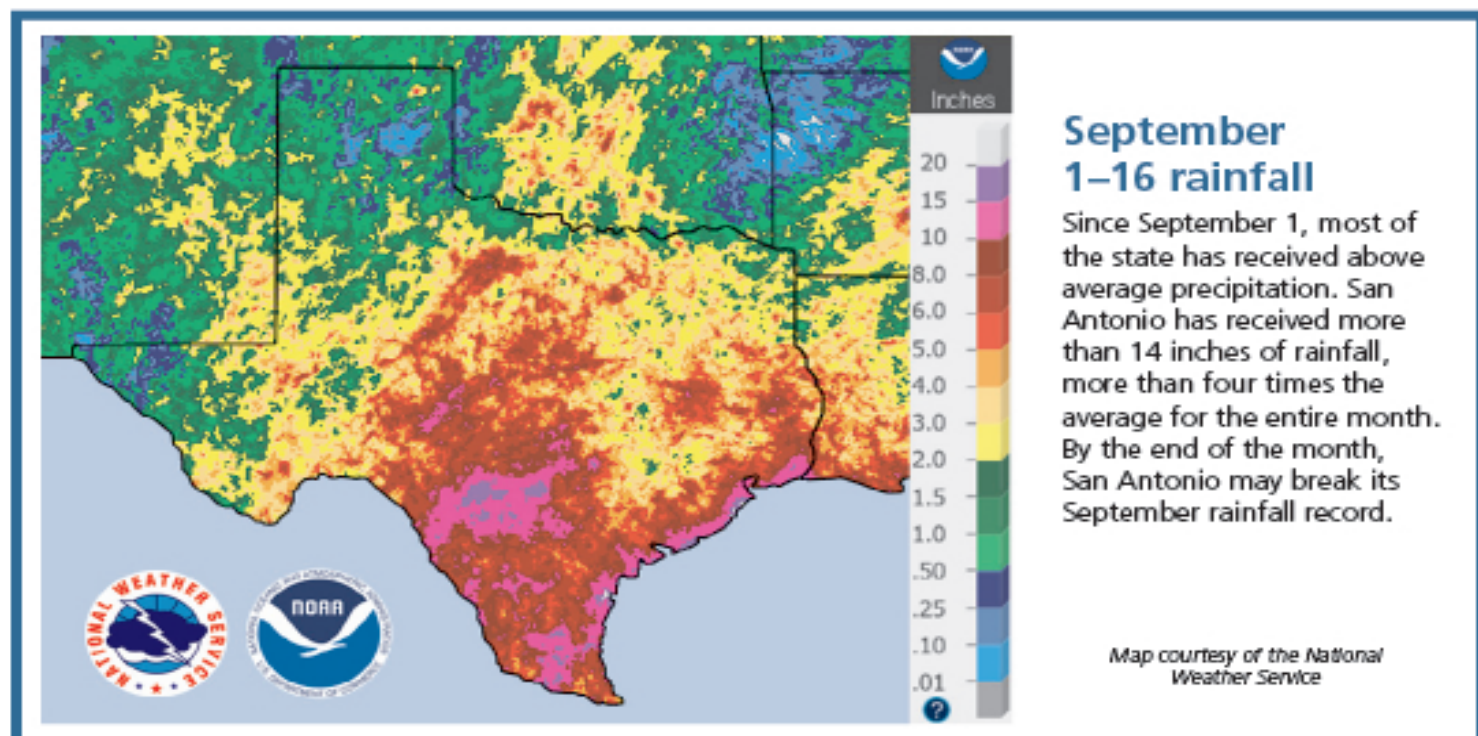
- 31% now
- 64% a week ago
- 50% three months ago
- 2% a year ago

#### Intensity

- D0 abnormally dry
- D1 drought - moderate
- D2 drought - severe
- D3 drought - extreme
- D4 drought - exceptional



Map courtesy of the U.S. Drought Monitor



## September 1-16 rainfall

Since September 1, most of the state has received above average precipitation. San Antonio has received more than 14 inches of rainfall, more than four times the average for the entire month. By the end of the month, San Antonio may break its September rainfall record.

Map courtesy of the National Weather Service

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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