

Central Texas Water Coalition

Summary of Presentation presented by Shannon Hamilton, Director

Fern Bluff MUD Board of Directors Meeting on February 27, 2024

On Feb. 27th the Fern Bluff MUD Board of Directors had Shannon Hamilton, Director for the Central Texas Water Coalition (CTWC) speak to us about the lack of public awareness of the water supply issues we are now facing. Ms. Hamilton presented several issues that are affecting our central Texas water supply (including Fern Bluff customers). A summary of the key issues follows:

- Our on-going four-year drought is expected to continue. She presented evidence that the current El Nino continues to act like a dry event for our watershed, and thus far has not produced the sustained heavy rains we need to fill the lakes. Without a major rain event, our Highland Lakes' reservoirs could be out of water as early as 2029, unless significant changes occur.
- Water planning in Texas assumes that we will continue to get the same amount of inflows we received during the last 2008-2016 Drought of Record. However, we now appear to have reached a new normal of longer droughts, which is complicated by the fact that our watershed is now only producing a fraction of the inflows that have been historically received. Based on the new normal, our water management planning needs to be much more protective and adaptive to get us through these extended periods of drought. Changes to the LCRA Water Management Plan and State Water Codes must be made.
- Mandated water restrictions need to be implemented throughout Central Texas to limit outdoor watering, which accounts for 70% of our water usage. Laws encouraging or mandating xeriscaping are needed.
- There are now tens of thousands of unmanaged retention ponds that have been constructed upstream in our watershed due to essentially no regulations by the State. The rapid growth of these ponds has significantly reduced the water flowing into our lakes. Lawmakers need to recognize the need to manage this growing problem that is tapping our water supply and establish practical standards.

For those interested in more information, you can visit the Central Texas Water Coalition website at CentralTexasWaterCoalition.org

Notes provided by Fern Bluff MUD Board Member, Marc Smith