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# Drilling underway on new monitoring well at Zilker Park

By Carissa Lehmkuhl | Published February 2, 2024 | [Austin](#) | [FOX 7 Austin](#) |

## Monitoring well being installed at Zilker

Rain from January helped a bit with drought conditions. Officials continue to monitor the health and wellness of the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer, and in the process of installing two new wells in south Austin.

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**AUSTIN, Texas** - The Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District installing two new wells in [South Austin](#) to monitor the Edwards Aquifer.

A well at Garrison Park was recently completed, and crews are currently drilling a multiport well at a second location just south of [Barton Springs](#).

"It's going to have 14 distinct zones in it. And we have a special tool that we use to go down the well," said Jeff Watson, staff hydrogeologist at BSEACD. "It's almost like an elevator. We can go to the different zones within the aquifer, and it links up with a little port and can tell us water levels."



Pictures of Garrison Park well. Courtesy: BSEACD

Image 1 of

They'll also be measuring dissolved oxygen concentration at different depths within the aquifer.

The Barton Springs and Austin Blind Salamanders rely on dissolved oxygen to survive.

As endangered species, the conservation district and the City of Austin are required to protect them.

They will also install equipment that continuously monitors water levels.

"All we have to do is come back and download the data every few months," said Watson. "So it will be kind of a combination of continuous data and then come back to visit and collecting water samples and water levels and things like that."

**Barton Springs-Edwards Aquifer update**

Officials with the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District anticipate declaring a Stage 4 exceptional drought, an unprecedented move expected to have wide impacts across the area.

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As they drill, they will preserve the aquifer core, sending limestone samples to a core repository at UT Austin's Bureau of Economic Geology.

"We actually have surprisingly little data about the geology of the aquifer immediately close to Barton Springs. So this is going to be a really unique dataset," said Watson. "We're going to have intact aquifer core that we're collecting from the surface all the way down to the bottom of the well, which hasn't been done before."

BSEACD uses an existing well, the Lovelady Monitor Well, along with Barton Springs discharge, as "triggers" for declaring drought levels.

The conservation district declared Stage IV Exceptional Drought in December of Friday, levels show Barton Springs flow in the Stage 1/No Drought level and Lovelady has moved into Stage III/Critical Drought.

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However, it can take several weeks to see the lasting effects of recent rainfall as the district also takes into consideration the 10-day average.

According to a recent update posted by the district, January rain did help recharge the aquifer.

"Notably, area creeks, such as Onion and Barton, saw significant flow for the time since 2022. Most importantly, this flow occurred over the recharge zone. While the recent rain is already having a positive impact on groundwater levels and spring flow, it may take up to two weeks to observe its full effect. However, the District anticipates remaining in drought conditions due to two consecutive years of below-average rainfall and consistently high summer temperatures.

District staff and board members are expected to evaluate updating the drought stage conditions sometime this month.

The new well is located off of Azie Morton Rd. and Barton Hills Dr. It is expected to be completed in a couple of weeks.

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