



Volume 35, Number 5

April 26, 2013

Dear Client:

**Continued and developing drought is projected for the next three months. Does the coming hurricane season offer any hope for drenching rains in Central Texas? Possibly.**

As the drought continues, storage capacity is diminishing in reservoirs that provide drinking water and water for commercial and agricultural usage -- such as the Austin area's reservoirs, lakes Travis and Buchanan. The state climatologist and professor of atmospheric studies at TexasA&M, **John Nielsen-Gammon predicts that even with normal rainfall, the reservoirs all across Texas will drop below 50% capacity by September.**

Right now, statewide, reservoirs are 66% full. It's much worse this week at lakes Travis and Buchanan. Even after the admittedly-spotty rains of the past few weeks, **lakes Travis and Buchanan combined are only at 41% of reservoir capacity.** And the prediction is for a dramatic drop to a combined storage capacity in these two lakes of only 30% by this fall.

**In years past, the Highland Lakes have been replenished – even reaching flood stage at times – as the result of heavy tropical rain activity,** usually due to hurricanes or tropical storms roaring in from the Gulf of Mexico. The hurricane season starts each year on June 1st. So what are the prospects for storm activity impacting Central Texas this year?

First of all, hurricane forecasters agree that a number of factors, principally higher-than-normal temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean where most tropical storms form, indicate **this hurricane season will see a flurry of tropical activity.** In fact, noted hurricane forecaster **Joe Bastardi** with weather website *Weather Bell*, was quoted in the *Houston Chronicle* as saying **“a wild season is on the way.”**

Also, the longtime hurricane specialists at Colorado State University are predicting about 50% more activity than during a normal season – calling for **18 named storms, 9 of them hurricanes with 4 of those developing into major storms.**

For the past three years running, there have been an abnormally high number of named storms. **But it has been five years since a significant event occurred in Texas.** You may remember Hurricane Ike. So, what do the hurricane odds-makers think about the **possibility of a tropical storm system impacting our drought-stricken area?** Check out the next item.

**What is the likelihood of a tropical storm system drenching the Austin area with drought-busting rainfall? Especially during an upcoming hurricane season that forecasters agree will be more active than normal. Good question.**

At this stage, hurricane forecasters are saying, “yeah ... maybe ... but ...” when asked if these big rainmakers are likely to alight in Texas. **It has been five years** since Hurricane Ike came crashing across the Texas coast, impacting weather patterns deep inland. So, you might think **Texas is “overdue.”** But instead of playing with the odds, a **careful analysis of current conditions and weather patterns may paint a picture that does *not* include Texas.**

According to Houston weather reporter **Eric Berger** “forecasters have shown some skill at predicting whether a given season will be more or less active than normal, but they have not been able to consistently say what area of the tropics will be most active. **Still the consensus this year seems to be that Florida and the East Coast are at a greater risk than Texas.**”

Why is that? “That’s because atmospheric patterns this year mimic years in which storms have affected those areas, **rather than tracking farther to the west toward Texas,**” Berger reported.

This view is balanced by the National Hurricane Center’s director **Rick Knabb** who told Berger “last year most of the impacts were elsewhere. But just because of that, and just because it’s been nearly five years since a major impact on the Texas coast, **doesn’t mean you’re not going to get a severe impact this year.**”

So what’s the takeaway from all of this? Keep an eye on the sky. The one thing *constant* about the weather is *change*. No one is hoping for a dangerous property-damaging storm to slam Texas. **But tropical rains, without gale-force winds, could be helpful in breaking the drought and re-filling the life-sustaining reservoirs.**

**The nuclear power plant that furnishes a portion of the electricity for the City of Austin’s electric utility customers is up-and-running this week, following a four month shutdown of one of its reactor units due to a fire.**

Not much has been reported on the January fire that erupted at the South Texas Project (STP), causing a **reduction in the amount of power generated at its plant in Bay City**, downstream from Austin on the Colorado River. The city of Austin owns 16% of the plant and is guaranteed 16% of the nuclear power plant’s output. San Antonio owns 40% and NRG Energy owns 44%.

The resumption of electricity generation comes just **prior to the greatest power usage of the year** by Austin’s utility customers. FYI, this was the 2<sup>nd</sup> major shutdown at STP in two years.

**Who are the five most powerful people at UTAustin? The student newspaper, *The Daily Texan*, weighed in with its ranking this week.**

The university president is the obvious choice as the most powerful person on campus. Here's some of what the student newspaper said about him and the other four on its list:

1. **Bill Powers, president.** "Since stepping into office in February 2006 after a stint as dean of the School of Law, Powers has helped the University's budget grow from about \$1.6 billion to about \$2.2 billion last year, kicked off a \$3 billion fundraising campaign and opened 20 new buildings. Additionally, with seven years under his belt, **Powers has set the vision he wants of the University, as every high-level administrator – from deans to vice presidents – has either been hired or re-hired by Powers.**"
2. **DeLoss Dodds, men's athletics director.** "During Dodds' 31-year tenure as Texas' men's athletics director, the Longhorns have won 14 national titles, 106 conference championships and have become the **most profitable athletics program in the country.** The Longhorns' football program alone generated \$103.8 million during the 2011-12 fiscal year, according to *USA Today*, the first time a college football program brought in \$100 million of revenue."
3. **Kevin Hegarty, vice president and chief financial officer.** "Some understand budgets, while others understand people. And then there are people like Hegarty, who understand both well enough that they can toe the line and serve as a translator for both worlds. **The former Dell executive ... not only oversees the University's \$2.2 billion operating budget, but is UT's go-to guy for dealing with messy situations.**"
4. **Mack Brown, football coach.** "It's easy to retain power when you're the highest paid public employee in the state. **Brown remains the face of not only Texas Athletics, but also the entire school.** The perennial success of Brown's program, along with his ascension to national recognition, is the chief reason Texas is one of eight (athletics programs) not requiring university financial assistance."
5. **Gage Paine, vice president of student affairs.** "Paine joined the University as the first woman appointed as vice president of student affairs. At first glance, the role may not seem particularly powerful, but **Paine oversees 14 of the University's largest non-academic units, including the University health services, the office of the dean of students and the residence halls.**"

Unrelated, but important, UTAustin's Texas Union Ballroom has been re-named the **Shirley Bird Perry** Ballroom, in recognition of Perry's contributions from her student days, 1954-1958, through her tenure in various administrative positions at UTAustin until her recent death.

**Is South by Southwest “a strange animal where things like day drinking while consuming 5-Hour Energy are acceptable and downright encouraged?” This is the claim by one attendee.**

The head of a start-up company wrote a column about winning the “Best Pitch” accolade for his company when he returned to California. **“When I arrive I am informed I have 30-minutes until it is my turn to pitch.** Operation Sober Up commences and I finish the rest of my 5-Hour Energy and chase it with a few more beers,” he wrote. His pitch before his peers at SXSW:

**“I’m Danny Boice.** I’m the co-founder and CTO of Speek. We fix lousy conference calls. Instead of a dial-in service with a PIN, we give you a simple link.” He didn’t stop there. Saying the competition is unrelenting, he kept going. **“But that’s not all.** My co-founder and Speek’s CEO **John Bracken** left me to do this pitch so he could have dinner with **Vincent Gray**, the mayor of D.C. But he left with a promise that **if I won this pitch, he would get the Speek monkey logo tattooed on his ass. Vote for Speek.**” Boice lied. But it worked.

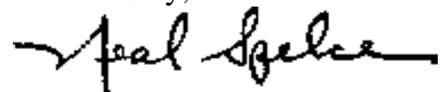
**“We won the prize for ‘Best Pitch,’ including bragging rights and promotion in front of a huge audience of potential investors.** When I called my co-founder to share the news, I never thought in a million years he would actually get the tattoo. John is my polar opposite. He looks like the Nutty Professor,” noted Boice.

Did Bracken do it? Boice published a photo of Bracken getting the tattoo before they left Austin. **“Sure, John’s wife is probably mad. And yes, his butt probably hurt a lot while getting a cartoon monkey tattooed on it,”** Boice admitted. “But he followed through.”

Boice concluded his column with these words: “So, to my fellow passionate Speek founder, John Bracken, I thank you. **And to Mrs. Bracken, my apologies.**”

Speaking of telling a lie, **Dr. Louis Overholster** remembered it was Will Rogers who said the American tax code produced more liars than anything but golf!

Sincerely,



Editor/Publisher