



Cities' water allotments being reduced for 2008

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The Associated Press

LUBBOCK – West Texas officials are cutting the 2008 water allotments to 11 cities because water levels at one of the region's major water sources, Lake Meredith, are dangerously low.

Culprits: The record low water level – 50.73 feet on Monday – is due to brutal drought conditions in two of the past three years as well as an invasive plant – salt cedar – sucking up water.

Affected cities: The Canadian River Municipal Water Authority provides water from the Panhandle lake as well as groundwater wells in Roberts County to Amarillo, Lubbock, Pampa, Borger, Plainview, Slaton, Tahoka, O'Donnell, Lamesa, Brownfield and Levelland.

Allocations cut: For the third straight year the cities will get 5,000 fewer acre-feet of water for an allocation down to 80,000 acre feet. One acre-foot equals about 325,800 gallons. When the lake opened in the mid-1960s, the annual allocation was 126,000 acre-feet.

Other options: The shortage is forcing cities to urge conservation and look around. For instance, Amarillo is buying its own water rights and adding wells in Potter and Carson counties; Lubbock is using wells in nearby Bailey County and has accelerated plans for a costly concrete pipeline from Lake Alan Henry, about 60 miles to the southeast.

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A no-wake buoy, which usually floats on the surface of Lake Meredith, sat amid dry land more than 50 yards from the water in this image taken in March. The lake's water level is at its lowest point since the lake was established in 1965.