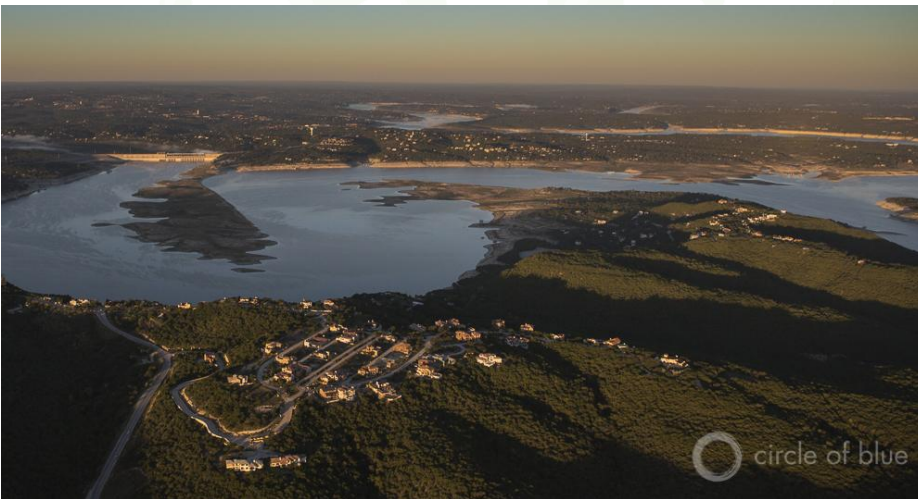


M A R C H 6 , 2 0 1 5

South Llano Watershed Alliance

# Watershed Week in Review



If you appreciate the Llano and all it has to offer, please consider joining the South Llano Watershed Alliance—soon to be the *Llano River Watershed Alliance*. Our group of volunteers works to preserve and enhance the Llano River by encouraging land and water stewardship through collaboration, education, and community participation. [Click here for application form](#)

## The new Drought of Record?

By now, most have heard the [news](#) that LCRA has declared this drought the new drought of record, ie worse than the one in the 50s. The reason for this declaration is that inflows into the Highland Lakes are at an all-time low.

But are these low inflows due to a lack of rain? Only partly...  
**Continued on next page**

### Save the Date!

Oasis Fire Restoration  
Workshop

April 18, 2015

details coming soon

SLWA Board Meeting

March 10, 2015

[Draft Agenda](#)

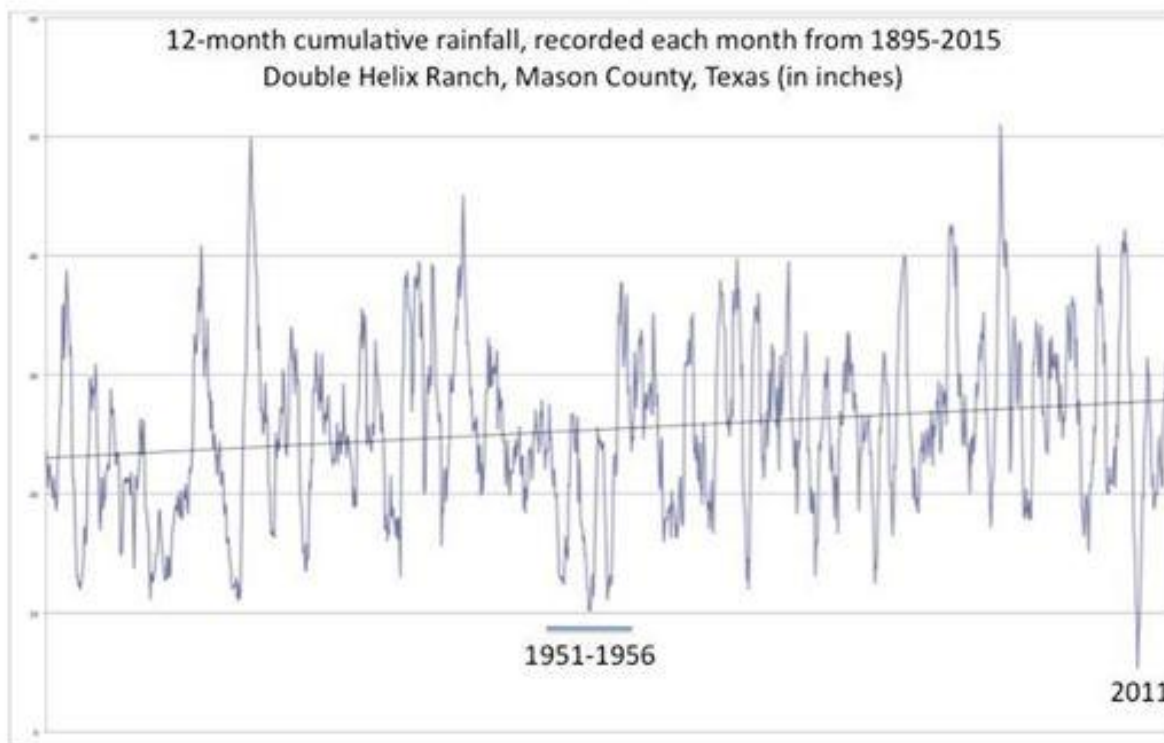
## Llano Earth Art Fest

March 13 and 14

[details](#)



## ...the new Drought of Record?



David Hillis, a Mason County rancher and also a biology professor at UT, provided us with rainfall records from his Double Helix Ranch (see graph above). As Dr. Hillis notes, *“The graph shows the running 12-month cumulative rainfall, sampled monthly (so every point represents a full year of rainfall, thus eliminating any yearly seasonal effect).”*

Hillis observes, *“First, the trend line shows that average rainfall has actually increased over this time period, from about 23"/year to 28"/year. Second, note the three consecutive major droughts from 1951-1956. That drought was far worse (in terms of rainfall) than any other five-year period in recorded history, and certainly much worse than the past five years. Our 2011 drought was indeed the worst one-year drought on record, but rainfall has not been unusually low (compared to the historical average) since then.*

In further discussion with Dr. Hillis, we both

agree that paucity of rainfall isn't the only likely reason for the drought. In all likelihood there are at least two other reasons.

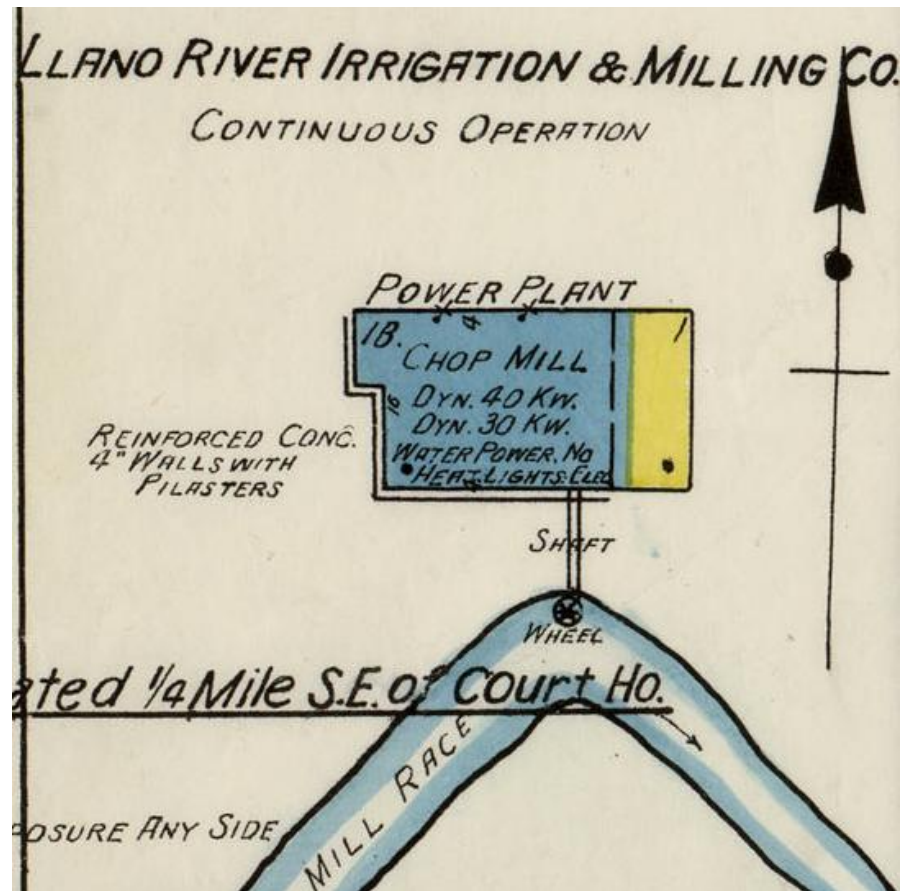
One is increased water use. There are more straws in the river and the ground than there were in the 50s.

And if you saw [last week's newsletter](#), you probably know the other: during the 50s, the watershed had a lot less vegetation due to both the drought and land management practices. Today, the landscape is in better shape, and consequently, retains more moisture. Some of this retained moisture evaporates through the vegetation, but some of it also seeps into the soil and the aquifers. The increased vegetation also prevents devastating erosive events like the one in 1952.

## Map of Llano River Irrigation and Milling Co Junction 1921

The Llano River Irrigation & Milling Company, shown on this 1921 Sanborn Map of Junction, was located  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile southeast of the Courthouse Square in Junction. In 1927, the newly formed City of Junction [purchased the waterworks system for \\$18,000](#) to serve as the water supply source for the new city.

Sanborn Maps began in 1867 and were originally created to assess fire insurance liability. This map, along with old maps of Llano can be found at [University of Texas' Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection](#) webpage. Happy browsing.



(Photo credit: Jonathan Nimerfroh - Instagram: @jdnphotography)

## Now that is cold

Last week was cold across the Llano watershed, but this may bring a new definition to the term. Pictures taken off of Nantucket Island [see more photos](#)



# How drought-tolerant are Central Texas' favorite plants?

*The study will examine 100 of the most popular Central Texas plants to determine the minimum amount of water required by the plants to survive and recover after a drought*  
[more about this study](#)



## Good News and Bad News from State Climatologist

*As far as drought is concerned, for the next 20 to 30 years, State Climatologist Dr. John Nielsen-Gammon, College Station, said he is optimistic...  
[so what's the bad news?](#)*

## New Center for Private Land Stewardship

*Through activities such as land use forecasting, experiential learning, professional training and policy innovations, the center will communicate and demonstrate the value of proper stewardship of private lands.*

[Learn more about the Center](#)