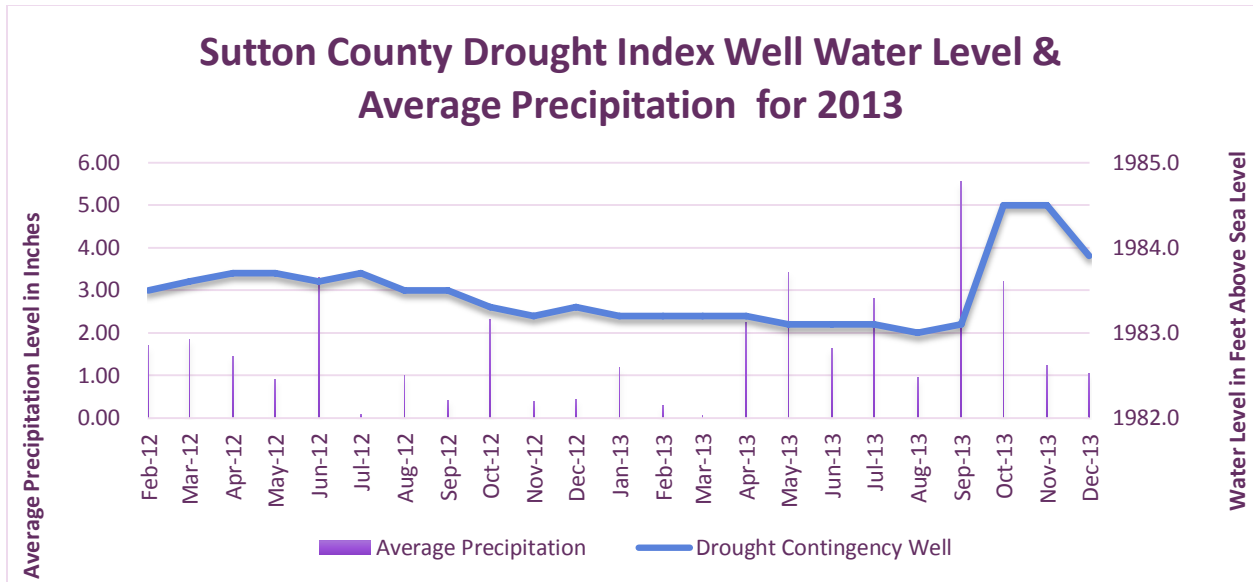


## Drought!

Springtime is the season of blooming wildflowers, greening grasses, flowing water splashing over rocks in a creek or river, along with many other signs of the season. Not this year! Springs – some are dried up while others are flowing very slowly. Rivers are trickling or have ceased flowing. Lakes and ponds are at very low levels or have completely dried up. Trees are dying; grasses have all but disappeared from the landscape. Winter and spring rains were nonexistent. Farmers and ranchers are trying to meet their needs without depleting their water resources. Municipalities are closely monitoring their water resources hoping the supply will support their populations until lifesaving rains return. The list of large and small municipalities at TCEQ's website, with short supplies of water continues to lengthen.

Water, the essential substance of life, is taken for granted, abused, and neglected. As long as it flows from the faucet, we use it to drink, cook, bathe, wash clothes, water lawns, clean vehicles, grow crops, sustain livestock and wildlife, incorporate into products we manufacture, and many other uses. Yet, if we do not conserve, none of these uses will be possible and our very existence will be threatened.

The Sutton County UWCD (Underground Water Conservation District) is monitoring our water resources by gathering data from water wells around the county, collecting rainfall data, and verifying the quality of the water supply. The District has adopted a drought contingency plan containing a series of drought stages associated with a series of trigger levels corresponding to water levels in the drought index well. The water levels from this well are recorded and graphed along with any precipitation measured during the same time period. See graph below.



Large rain events such as the one that occurred in September 2013 gave rise to a higher water level in the well. Note over time, without more rain the level starts to drop once again. In order to keep the water level higher, we need more rain. To prevent the water level from dropping during this drought, we need to conserve our water by putting into practice water conserving methods. Some conservation methods are very easy and you may already be practicing them. Washing laundry only with a full load or by utilizing the small load setting is a simple but effective water conservation practice. Also, keeping showers to a minimum of four to five minutes or replacing shower heads with a low flow head will save much water over time. If washing dishes by hand, use a pan to wash and another to rinse. Rinsing under running water uses much more water than if a pan were used. For additional water saving tips please go to the following website:

[http://fcs.tamu.edu/housing/efficient\\_housing/water\\_management/water\\_conservation\\_checklist/laundry.php](http://fcs.tamu.edu/housing/efficient_housing/water_management/water_conservation_checklist/laundry.php)

There are many people in the community and surrounding area, who are already conserving water in their homes, businesses and ranches. The District would like to hear from you about the ways you

have been conserving water. Ideas received that could help others in the community will be shared in a future article or possibly on the radio at KHOS. With everyone joining the conservation effort, we can conserve our water supply and hopefully not have to invoke stringent water saving measures. By working together we can save a lot of water.

For example, there are about 4300 people in the county, including Sonora, if everyone saved **five gallons of water per day** that is 21,500 gallons. In a month that amounts to 645,000 gallons of water. In a year that is 7,740,000 gallons, or 23.75 acre-feet of water saved. Of course, if that amount were increased our savings would be greater. It is estimated the average American family uses 300 gallons of water per day; 70% of that within the house and 30% outside. Let's make our District the shining example for the state on how to save water. Remember let us know how you are saving the precious resource. The District would appreciate your input.