

Lack of rainfall hasn't affected water supply in Calhoun County



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star

Anniston Water Works water treatment operator Jesse Castillo looks over the spillway at Coldwater Spring at the Anniston water pumping station.

- By Katelyn Schneider, Special to The Star

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The drought is not drying up hope for local water authorities, who are confident in the steady flow from their water sources despite the lack of rainfall.

Rainfall is 12 inches below the annual average. Local water authorities are monitoring their water production levels to know how they will be affected.

The Jacksonville Public Water Utilities Department noticed a decrease in water production which may result in the need for conservative use in the near future, according to Jacksonville's Mayor Johnny Smith.

"We can really tell a difference in the runoff," Mayor Smith said.

Jacksonville is still able to use its average of 1 million gallons per day, but the gallons of overflow are decreasing, according to Chris Patterson, the city's water plant manager. He said the extra has decreased from 600,000 gallons to 188,000 gallons per day.

"We're not in immediate danger, but we are getting a game plan together," Patterson said. The city's water department plans to meet at the beginning of next week to decide if it should make the city more aware of the deficiency, according to the mayor. He said this meeting will determine if it will ask residents to begin conserving water.

Jacksonville also buys 6 million gallons of water per month from Anniston Water Works and Sewer Board, according to Patterson. Smith said more can be purchased if it becomes necessary.

"We'll start buying more and more from them if we have an increase in difficulty," the mayor said.

The Calhoun County Water Authority purchases water from Anniston Water Works and the Oxford Water Works and Sewer Board, according to Randy Smith, the filtration plant manager.

Calhoun's water authority also has six other sources, including three springs throughout the county, according to Smith. He said staff members haven't noticed a decrease in water production when checking sources' levels each day.

However, the water authority is in the process of building another well in Ohatchee just to have another source, according to the filtration plant manager.

"We hope it will make us even more secure in the future," Randy Smith said.

The water authority also has a drought plan if conditions worsen but they are not using it, according to Echols Bryant, the chairman of the directors for Calhoun's water authority.

Oxford Water Works has not seen a decrease in water from its five production wells, according to Wayne Livingston, the general manager. He said it still retrieves about 4.5 million gallons everyday.

“I wish we would hurry up and get some rain, but we’re not having any problems,” Livingston said by phone.

Livingston said Oxford Water Works will continue to monitor water levels.

Anniston Water Works supplies water to the City of Anniston and many neighboring areas, according to Rodney Owens, the assistant general manager. He said this water supply comes from Coldwater Springs.

The drought has decreased the level of water production in the spring. He said the average 32 million gallons per day has fallen to 30 million gallons per day. However, this decrease has not affected the water Anniston Water Works uses. Owens said the city still use 16 million gallons daily.

“Anytime we have a deficiency in rainfall, it definitely gets our attention,” Owens said by phone Friday. “We just become more vigilant about regional forecast and rainfall.”

With that in mind, General Manager Ed Turner said there is no reason for people to worry now.

“This is not a crisis,” Turner said. “We would tell people if there were and if there was a need to start conserving.”

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