



SEARCHING FOR A PRE-

**KAHLIG  
AUTO GROUP**  
INSTANT LOCATOR

CHOOSE FROM OVER 2500 PRE-OW

OPINION // COMMENTARY

# Commentary: Smart growth in the San Antonio area is key to water conservation

By **Mike Mecke**, *For the Express-News*

Feb 12, 2024



Drought and intense growth threaten the region's water supply, but water conservation can be prompted with rebates, xeriscaping and rainwater harvesting. Here, a gauge in New Braunfels monitors Comal Springs.

William Luther/Staff photographer

The San Antonio area is growing rapidly, and we should all be concerned about preserving critical resources, such as water. It will take all of us to build a sustainable future.

New subdivisions add hundreds of roofs, driveways, streets and facilities that further hinder the watershed abilities of the Edwards Aquifer.

When shopping areas and neighborhoods are heavily paved or covered over with impervious materials, rain cannot soak into the soil, and life-giving water for trees and for recharging aquifers is lost. Instead, runoff fills our streets and drainage system, and stormwater and pollutants cause new problems.

**ADVERTISEMENT**  
Article continues below this ad

Concrete and asphalt hold heat, and roofs can reflect heat, magnifying the heat island effect.

Uncontrollable factors such as the weather and rainfall should be considered, and extra care must be taken to plan for unexpected changes.

In arid Texas and the Southwest, most water planners have long

---

### MORE OPINION

**Reader voices: Cartels profit as U.S. border policy fails**



---

**Steve Allison the best choice in GOP primary for District 121**



---

**Our recommendations in Democratic Texas House primary races**



---


**Names and datelines change in mass shootings, but not federal gun laws**



---

**Proposed sewage treatment plant at Helotes Creek stinks**





**Submit a Letter to the Editor**

---

We want to hear from you.

used rainfall averages tempered by data from the most severe long-term drought in our recent recorded history, referring to the the drought of the 1950s.

You may want to read Texas author Elmer Kelton's book about that long, terrible drought, ["The Time It Never Rained."](#)

Perhaps you'll want to pass it on to others. We've had many more hot and dry years in the past decade than normal, and climatologists aren't forecasting better times.

---

**ADVERTISEMENT**  
Article continues below this ad

---

As a rule, outdoor water use is from 40% to 50% of total annual home use, but some San Antonio-area cities and utilities refuse to require or even strongly urge water conservation with rebates, landscaping with native plants, xeriscaping and rainwater harvesting.

Done properly with education and consistent communication with residents, smart growth can happen, and our precious

water resources can be saved. Homes and subdivisions should utilize native plants and xeriscape designs that are attractive, easy to maintain and not so susceptible to hard freezes or droughts.

Home and business owners, as well as parks and public buildings, can save money and effort with an appropriately landscaped area. This also can improve our native bird, butterfly and invertebrate community.

Improved zoning on and above the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone and commonsense development could reduce further poorly planned growth and protect recharge waters and stormwaters from pollution.

To become a sustainable, livable, well-planned and managed urban region, we must address these challenges.

Mike Mecke, a San Antonio native, is a natural resources manager and water specialist. He retired from San Antonio Water System and Texas Water Resources Institute.

Feb 12, 2024

---

By **Mike Mecke**

---

**MOST POPULAR**



**FOOD**

**Are Texas barbecue joints thinking about not serving brisket? Maybe.**

The economics of selling brisket are broken. And for now, pitmasters are stuck selling an unprofitable product.

**NEWS**

**Police investigate fresh tip in search for Lina Sardar Khil**

Police are searching a wooded area in Northwest San Antonio after receiving a tip in the Lina Sardar Khil case. The 3-year-old disappeared in 2021.

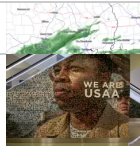


**HIGH SCHOOL**

**Southside forfeits girls basketball playoff win against Burbank**

**FORECASTS**

**Shows, strong cold front aiming for San Antonio. Here's when. Here's a roundup of class-action lawsuits against USAA**



**NEWS**

**San Antonio police say father, daughter shot themselves. USAA members injured in car wrecks battling San Antonio insurer**



[Return To Top](#) ^

San Antonio Express-News



**About**

- Our Company
- Careers
- Our Use of AI
- Standards and Practices

**Contact**

- Customer Service
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Newsroom Contacts

**Services**

- Archives
- Advertising
- Corporate Subscriptions
- Photo Store

**Account**

- Subscribe
- Newsletters
- e-Edition

**HEARST** *newspapers* © 2024 Hearst Newspapers, LLC [Privacy Notice](#) [Your California Privacy Rights](#)

[Interest Based Ads](#) [Terms of Use](#)