

The Best Christmas Gift I Ever Gave

By W.A. McCormick

When I was about 8 or 10 years old, back in the 1950s, an old man moved into a little shack of a house about a quarter-mile from my family's little, very modest house. He was alone, and I worried about him.

Maybe my folks had mentioned that he was having hard times, but I don't remember for sure.

We had several big native pecan trees, and during the holidays we usually had an abundance of the delicious nuts.

One year when Christmas was coming up, the old man was in the back of my mind. I told my grandmother that I wanted to give him something for Christmas because otherwise he probably wouldn't get anything.

It was the first time in my life that I had thought about giving a gift, but I knew how a gift could brighten my day. My grandmother suggested that I give the man a paper bag full of pecans, probably a pound or two.

That seemed so wrong to me. Gifts should be bright and shiny. But pecans were so common to me that they were like biscuits. The bag was just plain brown and didn't even have a ribbon.

Nevertheless, Grandma handed it to me and told me to go give it to the old man. I was almost embarrassed about the gift that seemed so unlike Christmas to me, but I did as Grandma said.

When I knocked on the door, the old man came, and I gave him the bag and told him I wanted him to have it for Christmas. He opened the bag and looked inside.

A big, beautiful smile spread across his face, and he told me that his Christmas wish for me was that I would have a "double header." I went back home puzzled about what a double header was until my grandfather explained that it

was twice as much good as I might expect.

I learned later that the old man did not have any type of

heat in that shack of his, and both his feet froze that winter.

He died not long after that.

I have given a lot of gifts in

my 76 years, but that one is at the top of my list of memorable gifts. I wish I (we) had done a lot more for a lonely, cold, probably

hungry old man.

His wish for me has followed me all my life and kept me warm.

Water Weekly

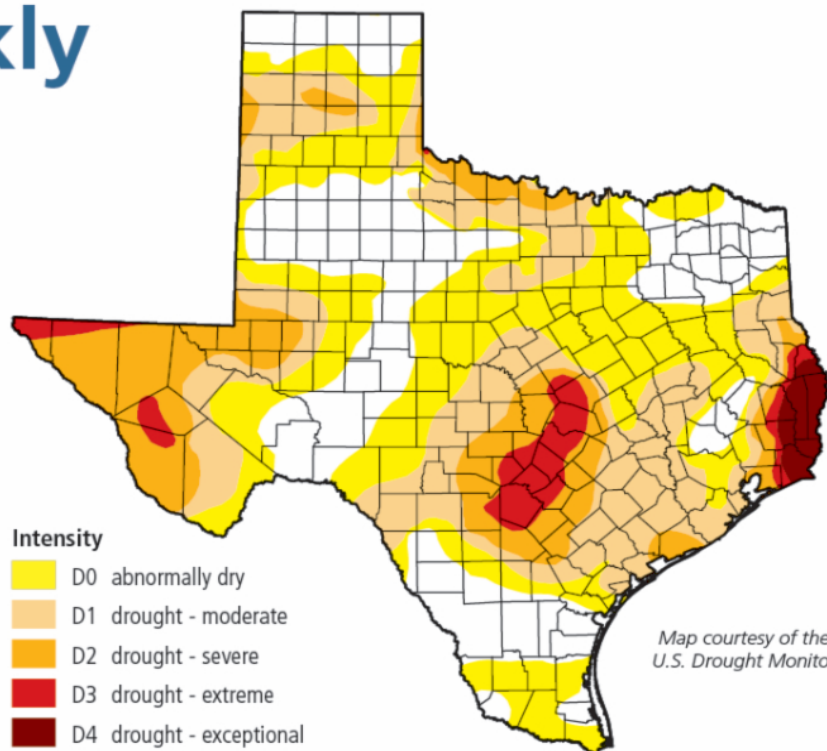
For the week of 11/27/23

Water conditions

Compared to the previous week, the drought map for conditions as of November 21 shows a 10 percentage point decrease in the area of the state impacted by drought. That's the second consecutive week with a double digit decline. Drought area has reached its smallest value since mid-July 2023.

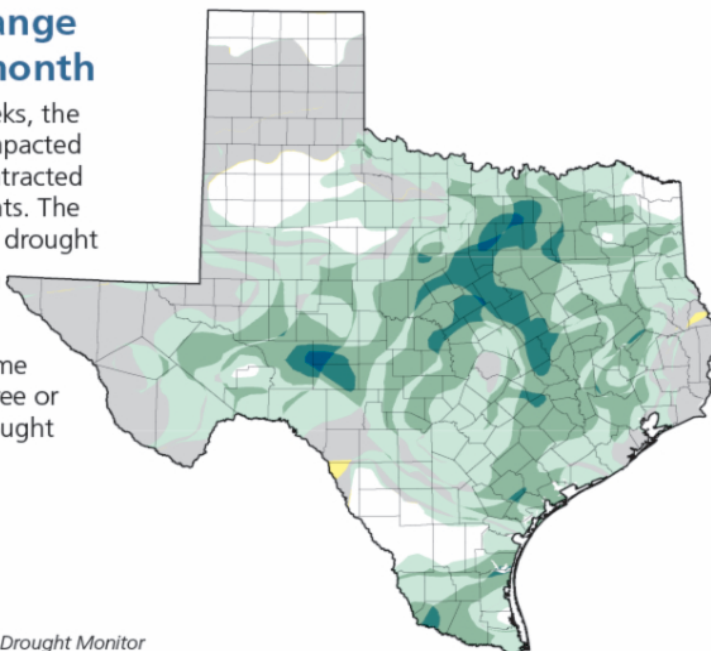
Drought conditions

- ◆ 44% now
- ◆ 54% a week ago
- ◆ 79% three months ago
- ◆ 63% a year ago



Drought change in the last month

In the last four weeks, the area of the state impacted by drought has contracted 31 percentage points. The area of exceptional drought has decreased from almost 7 percent to less than 2 percent. Some areas have seen three or more classes of drought improvement.



Written by Dr. Mark Wentzel — Dr. Mark Wentzel is a hydrologist in the TWDB's Office of Water Science and Conservation.

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Texas Water Development Board

Deadline to submit information to The Observer/Enterprise is Monday at 5 pm.

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