

...Dreaming Big

(Continued from page 3)

“People have been telling me for years that they wanted to build tiny homes for homeless veterans, but if they’re transitional, there has to be some sort of infrastructure to support those living in them. Barbara supplied that missing piece.”

Lange’s infrastructure is deeply rooted in community. There are currently 10 tiny homes on her property and 27 agencies providing residents with such services as job coaching, counseling, legal aid and palliative care.

But creating a communal environment is one of her highest priorities. When she conveyed that to the people at OFH—who are helping her clear and prepare her land to receive 20 more houses over the next five to seven years—they recommended putting them in pods of six, which will serve as micro communities.

“We now know from a scientific point of view that loneliness can be as harmful to the body as cigarette smoking,” Lange says. “When you’re in a community of people who’ve been where you’ve been, when you’re living with others who are going through what you’re going through, you’re less likely to feel like a freak.”

“It advances the healing process.”

Humble ISD is expanding Big Heroes, Tiny Homes to five high schools. The program offers students a hands-on building experience with mentoring by professionals—architects, plumbers, electricians, general contractors—giving the teens invaluable work experience and the opportunity to explore various career paths.

Due to its resounding success, other school districts and universities have reached out to Humble ISD to find out how the project works.

“Our instructors are willing to talk to your instructors,” Segura says. “We are happy to connect your principals to our principals, your superintendent to our superintendent. Let us tell you how we did this.”

Lange estimates that most residents will transition into permanent housing within two years. Phillips, who is approaching that milestone, may stay longer because he’s become a strong leader in the community. Though he now has a job as a heating and air conditioning tech, he serves as a liaison and an advocate for the other veterans. He also assists with some of the property’s maintenance and administrative needs.

“Veterans aren’t homeless because they’re not gifted, intelligent or experienced,” Lange says. “They are broken. When you connect them with the resources they need and provide a safe place to heal, many will find their way back to

the person they were before the trauma. All veterans deserve that chance.”

On This Day in Texas History

January 5, 1854

On this day in 1854, the first telegraph company in Texas was

chartered. The Texas and Red River Company opened its first office in Marshall on February 14, offering patrons connections with New Orleans via Shreveport and with Alexandria, Louisiana, and Natchez, Mississippi. Wires were strung from treetop to treetop, and in many instances

telegraph operators closed the offices and rode along the lines to make repairs when the wind swaying the trees caused breaks in the wires. By 1870 there was an estimated 1,500 miles of telegraph wire in Texas. Expansion was rapid up to 1890 as the transcontinental railroads

completed lines across the state. By 1943 the Western Union Telegraph Company, which had begun operating in Texas in 1866, was the only telegraph company still operating in the state. The company closed the Marshall telegraph office—the oldest in the state—in 1972.

Water Weekly

For the week of 01/01/24

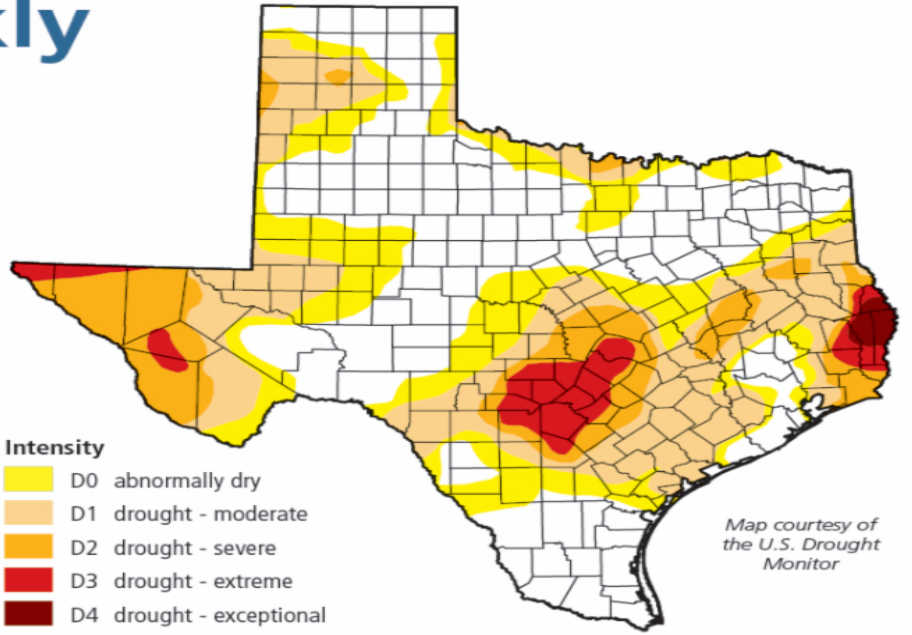
Water conditions

The latest drought map for conditions as of December 26 shows less than 40 percent of the state impacted by drought. That’s still a significant portion of Texas dealing with drought but a decrease of 47 percentage points since mid-September and 11 percentage points since the start of 2023.

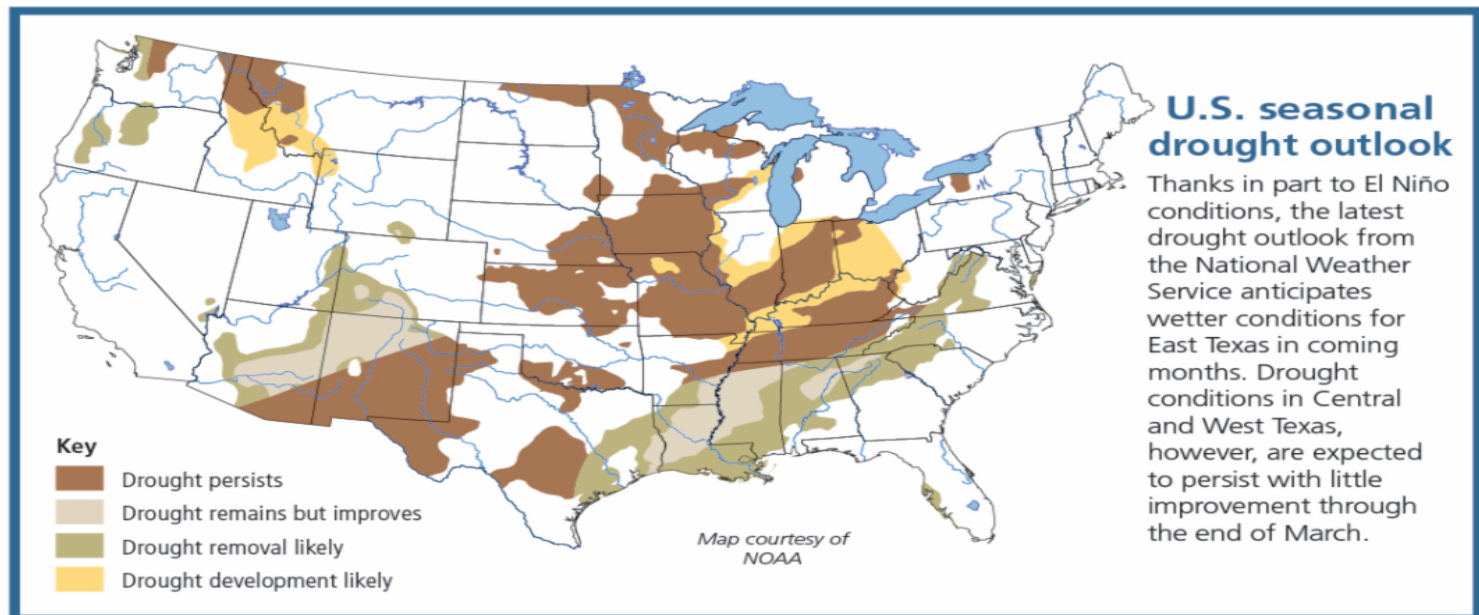
Drought conditions

- ◆ 39% now
- ◆ 43% a week ago
- ◆ 81% three months ago
- ◆ 49% a year ago

- Intensity**
- ◆ D0 abnormally dry
 - ◆ D1 drought - moderate
 - ◆ D2 drought - severe
 - ◆ D3 drought - extreme
 - ◆ D4 drought - exceptional



Map courtesy of the U.S. Drought Monitor



U.S. seasonal drought outlook

Thanks in part to El Niño conditions, the latest drought outlook from the National Weather Service anticipates wetter conditions for East Texas in coming months. Drought conditions in Central and West Texas, however, are expected to persist with little improvement through the end of March.

Map courtesy of NOAA

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