

headed out on the water, but according to Olson the fishing was challenging at the start.

“We caught a couple of smaller fish and around 3:30 p.m. I was almost ready to go home,” said Olson. “Then I saw one sitting on the top of a tree and it looked right and ready to eat. I cast my Alabama rig over there and she turned on it hard. As soon as I set the hook, I knew it was a big fish, but not that big. I figured it may be an eight-pounder from the way it looked on the scope. We got it up to the boat, netted it and we looked at each other in awe. I weighed the fish, and the scale said it was over 13 pounds, so we headed straight to Elm Creek to get a weight on the certified scale.”

When the official weight was registered, Olson immediately called the ShareLunker program to begin the entry process. The fish also surpassed his previous personal best, which was a 10.5-pound largemouth bass at Lake Fork.

“I spoke with Natalie; she was super-helpful and great to work with along with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Inland Fisheries Division staff from the San Angelo District who arrived to get the fish,” added Olson. “The ShareLunker program is awesome, and it’s made a big impact on lakes throughout the state. I’m originally from Oregon and we don’t have the largemouth bass fishing opportunities like Texas does.”

Waldon arrived at O.H. Ivie with his wife on Jan. 12 and fished until the 16th during the freeze. He left and then returned to fish over three more days.

“The fishing has been tough at O.H. Ivie this winter. I really fished the lake hard during the last three days,” said Waldon. “I pulled up on some rocks in about 20 feet of water and I knew the fish were there. I was using a spinning rod with a 10-pound test leader paired with a 6th Sense Fishing 106DD jerkbait. I let the bait sink until it was about five feet off the bottom. I made two pulls and on the third she came up and crushed it.”

Waldon’s persistence and hard work ended up paying off with the catch of a lifetime.

“It seemed like an eternity fighting her, but I wore her down and netted her,” added Waldon. “As soon as she hit the bottom of the boat, I thanked God and my wife for allowing me the opportunity to do what I love. The ShareLunker program and this experience is amazing. Everyone associated with this program is top notch.”

During the first three months of the season (Jan. 1 through March 31), anglers who reel in a 13-plus pound bass can loan it to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for the ShareLunker selective breeding and stocking program. These anglers can call the ShareLunker hotline at (903) 681-0550 to report their catch 24/7 through March 31, 2024.

Anglers who catch and loan one of these 13-plus pound lunkers earn Legacy Class status, receive a catch kit filled with merchandise, a 13lb+ Legacy decal for their vehicle or boat, VIP access to the Toyota ShareLunker Annual Awards event, a high-quality replica mount of their fish from Lake Fork Taxidermy, and Bass University will provide a swag pack and annual subscription. These anglers will also receive entries into two separate drawings – a Legacy Class Drawing and the year-end Grand Prize Drawing. Both drawings will award the winner a \$5,000 Bass Pro Shops shopping spree.

The year-round Toyota ShareLunker program offers four levels of participation for catching bass over eight pounds or 24 inches in Texas.

Anglers who enter data for any lunker they catch greater than eight pounds or 24 inches during the 2024 calendar year also receive a catch kit, a decal for their vehicle or boat, a one-month subscription to Bass University and an entry into the year-end Grand Prize Drawing to win a \$5,000 Bass Pro Shops shopping spree. ShareLunker entry classes include the Bass Pro Shops Lunker Class (8 lb.+), Strike King Elite Class (10 lb.+), and Lew’s Legend Class (13 lb.+).

Once a lunker is reeled in, anglers need to enter the catch data on the Toyota ShareLunker mobile app – available for free from the? Apple App Store and? Google Play – or on the Toyota ShareLunker online app at? TexasSharelunker.com.

In addition to providing basic catch information, anglers have the option to send a DNA scale sample from their lunker bass to TPWD researchers for genetic analysis. Anglers who contribute a sample to the program in 2024 will receive a Lew’s baitcast reel valued at up to \$200 while supplies last, with a limit of one

reel per angler. Anglers that send in a genetic sample will also get a three-month subscription to Bass University. Instructions for submitting DNA samples are located on the? Toyota ShareLunker website.

The Toyota ShareLunker Program is made possible in part by the generous sponsorship of Toyota. Toyota is a longtime

supporter of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation and TPWD, providing major funding for a wide variety of fisheries, state parks and wildlife projects.

Additional vital program support comes from Legend class category prize sponsor Lew’s, Elite class category prize sponsor Strike King, Lunker class category prize sponsor Bass

Pro Shops, American Fishing Tackle Co., Bass Forecast, Bass University, Lake Fork Taxidermy and 6th Sense Fishing. For updates on the Toyota ShareLunker Program, visit? facebook.com/sharelunkerprogram/,? https://www.instagram.com/TexasShareLunker/? or? TexasSharelunker.com.

## Water Weekly

For the week of 01/29/24

### Water conditions

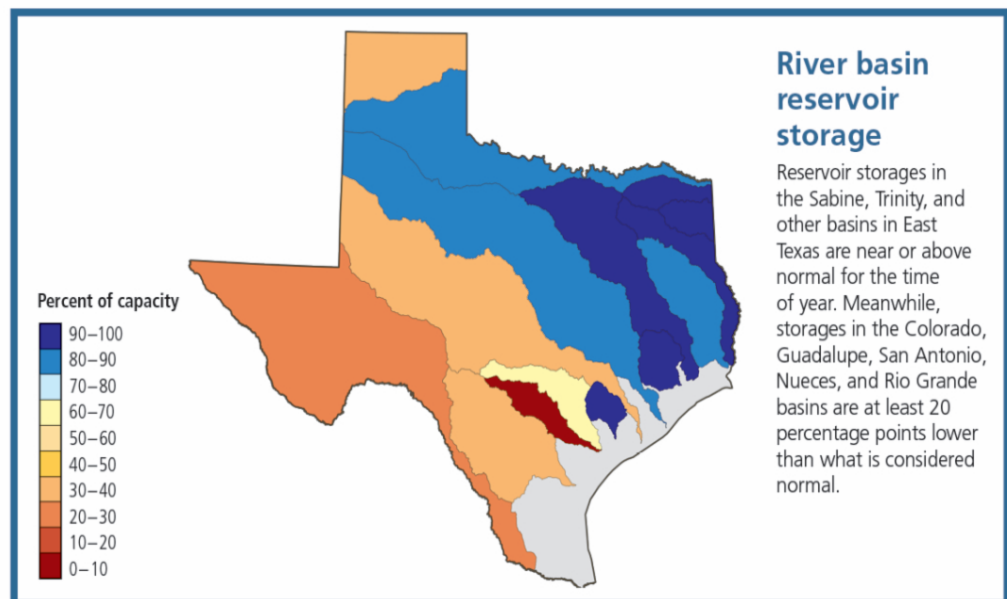
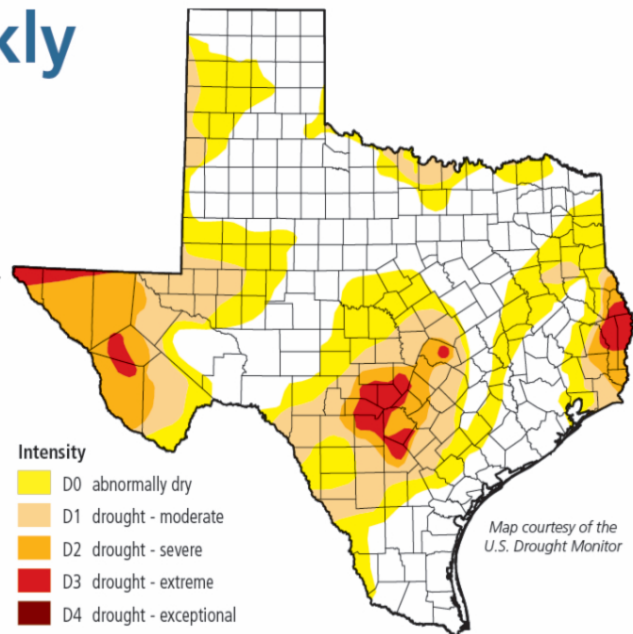
The latest drought map for conditions as of January 23 shows significant improvement from the previous week. But long-term drought continues to linger stubbornly in some parts of the state. During the last 27 months, at least one-fifth of the state has been in drought.

### Drought conditions

- ◆ 27% now
- ◆ 31% a week ago
- ◆ 75% three months ago
- ◆ 55% a year ago

#### Intensity

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



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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