

begins milking. Once the cow is finished milking, the teats are sprayed with an orange dye that protects the teats. The cow is released back into the herd, and the next cow comes through.

Vieth noted there are usually two to three cows waiting to enter the robotic milker.

After the cows are milked, the liquid goes to the milk tank where it is chilled to 35 degrees. The quicker the milk gets cool, the longer its shelf life is.

After a day, the milk is shipped to Daisy to be used for sour cream and later distributed to a major restaurant chain.

Vieth's cows are currently producing 5,500 gallons of milk a day.

The robotic milkers have given Vieth more production and helped him maximize the genetic potential of each cow. Vieth said his father was known

for his farm's genetics and was one of the leading dairy farmers in Texas and the country.

He hopes to carry on that same reputation.

"I think the biggest benefit of this type of technology is the fact that sometimes you have human error, and the robot eliminates that," Vieth said. "I can go to my computer at any time of day or look at the app on my phone and see if a cow is sick or has any kind of problems."

The robots allow Vieth's schedule to be flexible and spend more time with his family, too.

The dairy industry has been a centerpiece for the Windthorst community. At one time, there were 100 dairies in the Windthorst and Scotland area, but those numbers have since declined.

"It's been a big part of this community, and it's sad to see some of the farms go over the

years," he said. "The dairy industry is a really competitive industry. If you don't keep up with the times and technology, it'll leave you behind."

Vieth also has a Juno, which is like a Roomba for dairy cows, that pushes the feed up for the cows six times a day. As the cows tend to sort through their feed, the Juno comes down the rows and pushes the feed closer for the cows to continue eating.

The cows even have waterbeds to lay on after being milked.

Vieth's dairy is a prime example of constant evolution of the dairy industry. Cow comfort, animal health and nutrition, efficiency and sustainability are key components of this important segment of Texas agriculture.

And it's allowing him to carry on his family's tradition of dairy farming.

participated in a Fort Chadbourne dig, working alongside a group of military retirees. The painstaking work of troweling and then sifting through the soil removed from meter-square sections was balanced with the joys of minor discoveries and the unsettling realization that humans leave behind a lot of debris.

"We found almost half a million artifacts below the floor of the double officers' quarters—the dogtrot house where rancher Tom Odom and his wife raised 13 children," Garland says. In 1877, the Odoms purchased the land from well-known pioneer Mary Maverick and turned the fort into a ranch headquarters.

"The archaeological picture of Fort Chadbourne is probably more complete than any other Texas military site," Garland says, based on the number of artifacts recovered.

The 12,500-square-foot Fort Chadbourne Visitor Center opened in 2012 to give people a firsthand look at some of the military, ranching and Native American history of West Texas. Half of the center's exhibits sit inside a spacious walk-in vault with displays of cavalry items uncovered during digs: buckles, spurs, buttons, helmet badges and metal powder flasks along with flattened bullets used as poker chips. A Native American exhibit contains 48 large knife and spear points found near the fort in a foot-square cache that

dates back 6,000 years. There's also a 450-piece antique gun collection and a replica stagecoach.

A walk around the fort and into the buildings puts the center's displays into perspective. Even in daylight, the quiet creates a haunting atmosphere. Inside the restored Fountain House, bullet holes in its thick, plastered walls shared space with graffiti from 1870 on. After circling the unrestored hospital and the restored barracks, I spotted a rusty, 4-inch sliver of metal on the ground. Garland explained it was a square-headed nail common until 1880 or so. "You're in the Butterfield stage corral area," he says. "It's littered with artifacts."

Each excavation answers some questions but raises others. Ground-penetrating radar has revealed a building that isn't mapped.

If you discover archaeological treasures on your land, contact your local archaeological society, Lana recommends. "We did this correctly, thanks to Larry's help," she says.

Millions of Years Away
While exploring family property near Snyder, about 80 miles northwest of Bronte, Tina Roland came across large bones eroding out of a gully. Determined to find somebody who could identify the bones, Roland contacted Eileen Johnson, professor of museum science and a paleobiologist at Texas Tech University.

(Continued on page 7)

Scratching the Surface

By Eileen Mattei

In its heyday, more than 150 years ago, Fort Chadbourne housed 450 soldiers. Today, it sits by its lonesome on a desolate rise in West Texas. Six restored limestone buildings and others, crumbling but stabilized, surround the parade grounds.

The inhabitants are long gone, but traces of them remain.

Garland Richards' family has lived on ranchland here, north of Bronte, in rural Coke County, for eight generations. The site includes a former stagecoach stop on the Butterfield Overland Mail Co. route and the remains of the frontier fort, used by the U.S. Army 1852-67.

Richards, a member of Taylor Electric Cooperative, knew history was being lost to time and the elements.

"When I was a kid, there was a waist-high adobe wall here," he says. "In my lifetime, it has melted to ground level."

The Richardses and another

West Texas ranching family, knowing their properties hold remarkable history, are trying to stop the destructive march of time, welcoming excavations by archaeologists and paleontologists and preserving important stories.

In 1999, soon after he inherited the property, Garland and his wife, Lana, set up the nonprofit Fort Chadbourne Foundation and gave the fort to the foundation to preserve and protect it. They marked a grid over an aerial photo and began keeping meticulous records.

"Everything we have found has been recorded on the grid," Richards says. "You do the best you can with the money you have and common sense."

Their first goal was to stabilize the weathered fort buildings, making them safe to work in and around. Lana took grant writing classes and got the needed funding.

"We joined the Concho Valley Archeological Society and let

them come," Lana says. "It was one way of learning about what we had." CVAS members under the direction of Larry Riemenschneider, a Concho Valley Electric Cooperative member and volunteer steward with the Texas Historical Commission, began unearthing the fort's past.

The volunteers cost the Richardses a lot of bologna sandwiches, Lana says, but the workers are proud of their part in excavating a frontier fort. I know that's true, because 15 years ago, my husband and I

Water Weekly

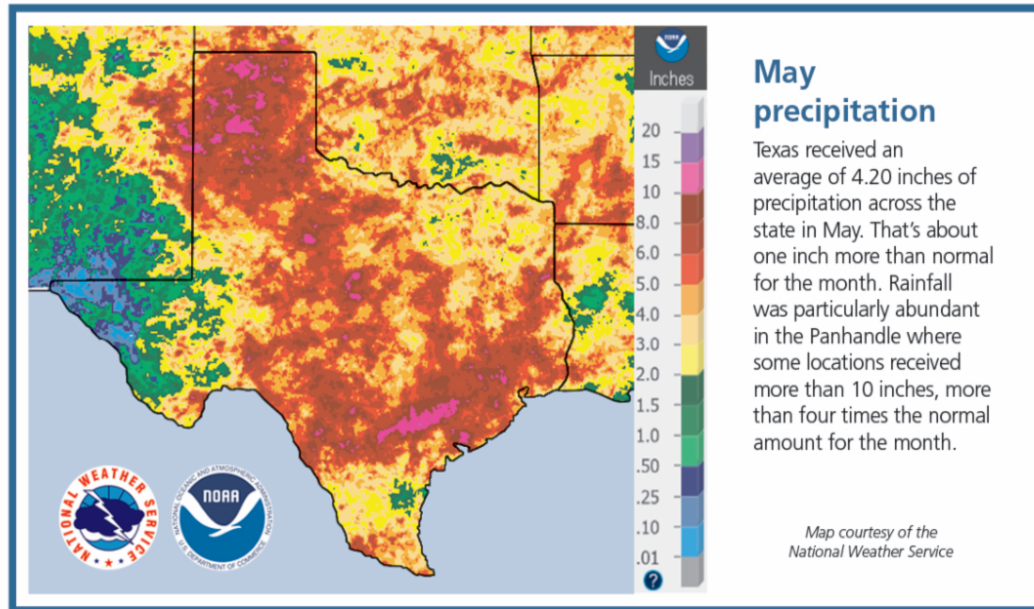
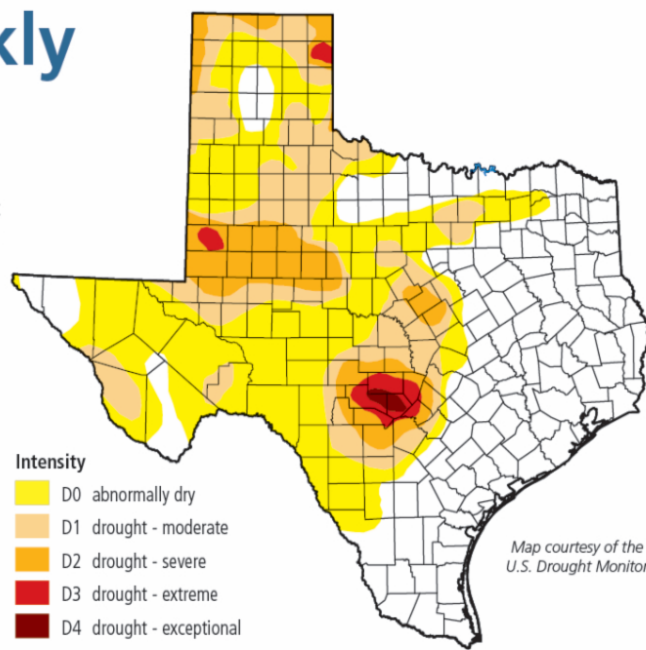
For the week of 06/12/23

Water conditions

The area of the state impacted by drought has decreased consecutively for 10 weeks. The latest drought map, for conditions as of June 6, shows that drought now impacts the least area of the state since October 2021. But severe or worse drought continues to grip 10 percent of the state.

Drought conditions

- ◆ 28% now
- ◆ 34% a week ago
- ◆ 64% three months ago
- ◆ 79% a year ago



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

Bryan McMath, Governmental Relations | bryan.mcmath@twdb.texas.gov | 512-463-7850
Media Relations | MediaRelations@twdb.texas.gov | 512-463-5129

www.twdb.texas.gov

Stay connected:



Russell Davis
Agent

611 Austin Street
PO Box 1079
Robert Lee, Texas 76945
(325) 453-4505 office
(325) 453-4524 fax
(325) 650-1904 mobile
TXFB-INS.COM

Member SIPC

Is a Roth IRA right for you? Let's talk.

Larry M Gilbert, CFP®, AAMS™
Financial Advisor

122 N 8th St
Ballinger, TX 76821
325-365-2505

> edwardjones.com

MKT-5894N-A