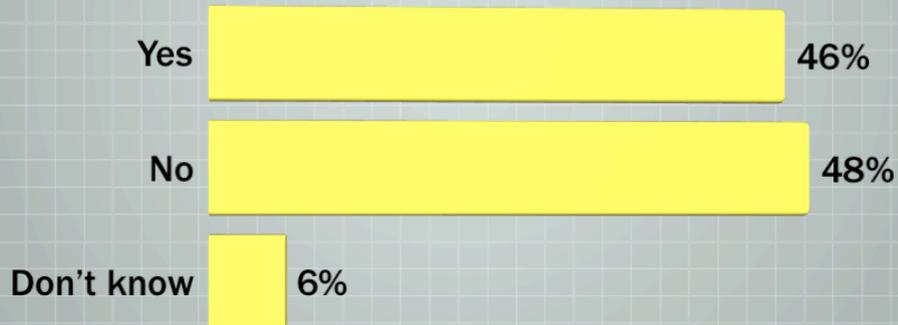


“INSIDE” INTELLIGENCE

*The Texas Weekly/Texas Tribune insider's poll
for the week of September 19.*

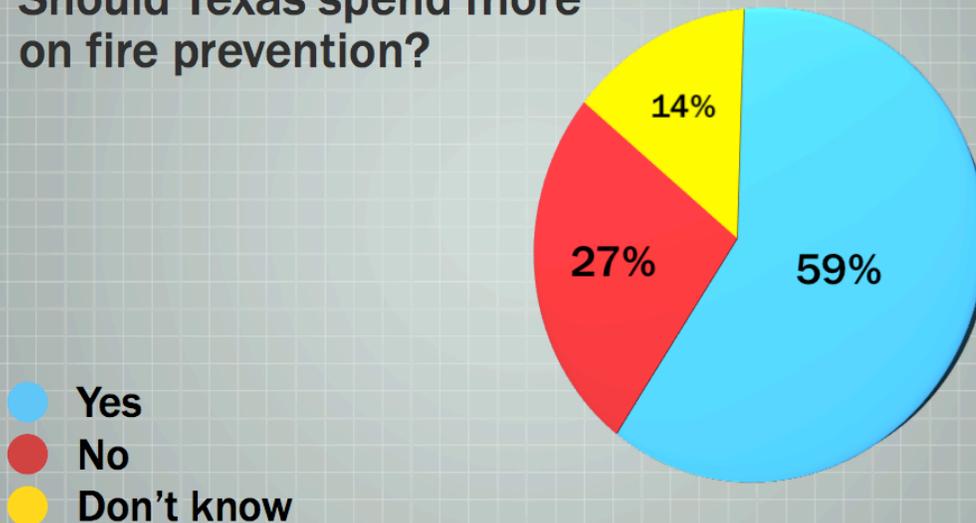
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should some water restrictions be permanent?



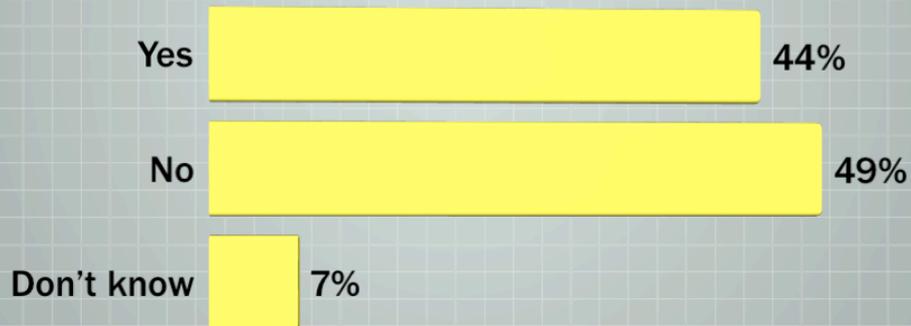
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should Texas spend more on fire prevention?



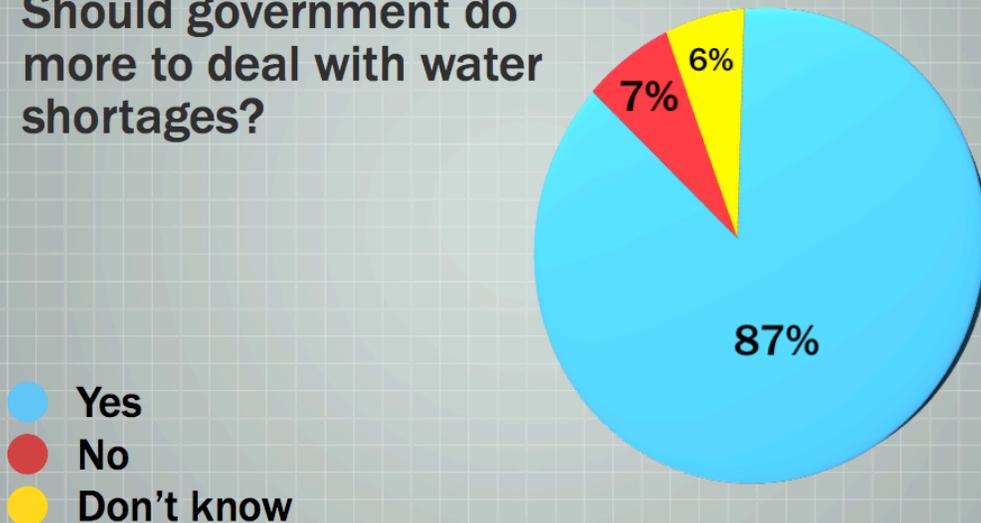
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should development be limited in fire-prone areas?



INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should government do more to deal with water shortages?



Periodic water shortages are a fact of nature in Texas; should state or local government be doing anything more to prepare or cope with them?

- "It may take a change in culture to convince everyone that they don't need a St Augustine lawn. It will be a long and painful road to conservation, but it's a path that we must embark on."
- "Restrict development in fire prone areas."
- "Educate its citizens. For too long, water issues have taken a back seat with voters."
- "Yes. Texas should act more like a government and less like the paid staff of a conservative think tank. Many local governments, Houston to name the largest, has for decades been heavily engaged in insuring a dependable water supply. This has been costly, and required strong community courage, but water is a wise investment in Texas."
- "Continuing focus on conservation and the use of incentives or penalties to improve water efficiency."
- "Build more reservoirs put mandatory water savings measured and incentives in place."
- "Since nature is apparently changing, the likelihood of more frequent droughts is probably going to increase. El Paso has gotten ahead of the curve; the rest of the state should follow its example."
- "One major question for next session is whether the Legislature finally funds the \$53 billion State Water Plan, or whether the strict 'no new taxes/ fees' philosophy keeps pushing that off to another day. Sometime it feels like water supply is the issue of the future - but always will be."
- "The state needs to fund its water plan."
- "The state has passed on finding a dedicated water project funding source for over a decade. Hopefully, the tragedies of this summer will change that. And we also need to remove barriers to moving water among regions."
- "Our growth patterns and water needs don't match our resources. A comprehensive approach is needed."
- "The state has a water plan. It hasn't been funded. From David Counts in 1997 to Kip Averitt in 2007 to Allen Ritter in 2011, legislators have tried to lead the state to prepare for the future. But those who control the purse strings placed a higher priority on handouts to private companies, cancer research, and building up a hefty reservoir of money in the Rainy Day Fund--pun intended."
- "We must prioritize water for critical functions like home use and farming. Water masters should prioritize this use over golf courses and entertainment. Also, we should charge a fee for heavy use such as golf courses and industrial use such as fracking. The fee could pay for any new infrastructure needs to make this work."

- "Thresh holds should be raised so conservation measures are in place sooner. It is too early to determine if severe droughts are here to stay-so don't set policy that anticipates this type of drought each year. And definitely don't let the state have full control!!! Water is already a political ball."
- "Land planning? But if we are against health care imagine the uproar over land use planning in front yards. Get rid of all those water hog Caribbean grasses in dessert prone parts of Texas would be a start. Or; they could just let the market do its magic and go broke like they did in the 50's."
- "Yes. It is absurd that the Lege has failed to find a permanent funding source for water infrastructure. Perhaps this drought will continue long enough that some cities actually run out of water. Maybe then the legislature will act. The Lege has to have the political will to make Ag users pay like everyone else. Otherwise every group starts bailing out of any plan. I am not holding my breath..."
- "San Antonio and Dallas have accomplished a lot with conservation methods. It might be time to create greater incentives to move from green lawns to xeriscaping."
- "This is putting a sharp focus on the need to fund and implement the state water plan which calls for 23 percent of our future water supply to come from conservation. We can't just cross our fingers--it is time to act."
- "Reclaiming waste water for commercial and industrial use should be a priority for state and local governments to consider for watering lawns and plants on state property or golf courses and parks in cities and counties."
- "Local entities should begin a comprehensive process of replacing the aging water infrastructure. It is widely known a vast amount of water is wasted from leakage."
- "Today's Midland is tomorrow's Texas. Got water trucks? It's not the sage brush lizard that will kill fracking, it's the lack of water."
- "I don't like the idea of reactionary policy-making to extraordinary natural phenomena."
- "Build new reservoirs NOW."
- "LCRA should only be able to sell water until Lake Travis is above a certain level."
- "The State should be careful to not create new laws that usurp local control."
- "Better development of conservation efforts that really have an impact, beyond the low water use toilets and shower heads, and landscape watering, aimed at commercial and residential users. The public wants to do more but no strong leadership on what is best to do. No coordination with local and state government."
- "Implement the State Water Plan!"
- "That's what SB1 is supposed to do."
- "You need a mix of public education, limited regulation and innovative use of technology."

- "Conservation efforts that seemed PC a few years back don't seem so fluffy feel good anymore. In large planned communities, HOA policy wastes a lot of water. Transparency of water use by consumers (not the list of names in the paper but aggregate data) might spur more thoughtful debate."

- "They should but they won't until we're in crisis mode. We are quickly becoming if not already there the poorest, most illiterate state and leadership continues to exacerbate rather than 'solve' that economic crisis."

- "Pass the water bond election"

- "Make San Antonio grow up, pass a bond issue and build a reservoir"

instead of sucking the Edwards Aquifer and all surrounding river basins dry each every summer."

- "How many statewide water plans have been developed? How many have been embraced and/or fully funded?"

- "The state needs to fund the water plan. Tough choices."

- "Allow for a free market in water: charge market prices and allow water to be extracted and transported much like oil and gas."

- "Imperative that we get hooked up on water the way the electric grid is designed to be able to cover shortages"

Should development in areas prone to fire be limited?

- "No. It's called private property for a reason."

- "No, but there has to be full disclosure by developers and builders. Unlike living in the gulf coast, where we know the possibility of a Kat 5 is always around the corner, most people do not know if an area is prone to fire."

- "Of course. Otherwise we are inviting more of these disasters, destroying lives and running up insurance rates that are allowed, due to effective lobbying among weak minds and hearts, to lunge forward at any sign of loss."

- "No, but developments should be required to provide more adequate

infrastructure to address obvious risk."

- "All living quarters should be required to have a cleared perimeter around them. Insurance rates should reflect failure to do so. No subsidies like we have for dumb people living in coastal and flood areas."

- "But I'm sure insurance rates will be higher there"

- "However, the owners should be required to acknowledge upon purchase or construction that they are aware of the increased risk of their location and they do not qualify for ANY taxpayer relief unless they have adequate reconstruction insurance."

- "Pretty much any area in Texas can be a tinderbox right now."
- "The Insurance market will probably take care of that, much as it has development in 100 year flood plains."
- "That's a hard one but given that Texas is hesitant to make the slightest suggestion to the housing industry other than, 'We are here to protect you from greedy homeowners.' I doubt those restrictions would be seen as socialism."
- "What does 'prone to fire' mean?"
- "Everywhere in Texas is prone to fires. Where do you expect a developer to build; under water?"
- "Look at California's new restrictions"
- "Yes, but probably not by government. Insurance companies should make it cost prohibitive."
- "All areas of Texas are prone to fire...so what are we going to do? Limit all development across the state? That is not an answer."
- "But the design and planning should take into consideration fire prevention/mitigation."
- "There is no evidence that some areas are more 'prone' to fires than others. Prohibition of development would empower government, rather than encourage personal responsibility."
- "Appropriate regulations. Not prohibition."
- "It is hard to see the difference between building in some of these places and building on the beach."
- "If you can determine what constitutes 'areas prone to fire.'"
- "Through clever and innovative land use, architecture and planning, you can mitigate those issues."
- "And then let's limit the beach houses on the coast and those who live along the boarder and near creeks (do we have those anymore?) Nice in theory, hard to practice."
- "Yes also for beaches, river deltas, mud slides areas, etc."
- "Fuzzy science. The Bastrop 'development' has been there since the 1970's with very little growth."
- "There is a such a thing as private property rights"
- "Right now...any area in Texas is prone to fire."
- "But I as a taxpayer shouldn't have to pay for this stupidity."
- "The better question would be: do our politicians at the state have the courage to limit homebuilders? We all know the builders would never agree to it... bob Perry and others just want to build, sell, then leave any problems behind... good luck trying to limit their ability to build a questionable house in a questionable area."

Should the state spend more on fire prevention?

- "A lot of the Bastrop fire's intensity could have been prevented by clearing underbrush. We are going to have a lot of that in the Hill Country after this summer."
- "No. The state spends too much money already."
- "Of Course! Though the geni in charge of TX cling to their belief that violent change in weather patterns is God's work, we - at least - must prepare ourselves to put up a better fight!"
- "Both state revenues, and individual contributions to local volunteer fire departments. The volunteers deserve much more of our support and appreciation."
- "Need local restrictions on tree and shrub growth around residences."
- "Programs would have to show a demonstrated effect in reducing the incidence of fires, and generating savings by reducing loss of property, resources, or lives."
- "Its easy to say this now, but obviously, yes. I do think we should have more controlled burns when the long term fire season permits it - the Bastrop State Park was probably full of thatch."
- "Every crisis should not become an opportunity for bureaucratic growth and more government spending."
- "The incremental benefit of a once in a decade event can not justify the increased cost."
- "The State needs to monitor the weather conditions and anticipate that in prolonged draughts or when one is predicted that money be set aside to be used if needed."
- "Has it Ben shown to work?"
- "The state should have access to emergency funds. The only way to prevent the disasters we are having is to invest in a statewide sprinkler system."
- "But they might want to not blame the federal government when they just cut the budget of the volunteer fire departments."
- "Why bother, as long as FEMA has an unlimited supply of 'Monopoly money' with which to bail us out?"
- "One doesn't remove adequate funding for fire fighting equipment during a drought."
- "No."
- "There's not really much you can do when it doesn't rain for months on end."
- "Local funding will insure local control, which is paramount in all types of natural disasters."
- "The state is seriously underfunding many areas of state functions, which becomes obvious at a time like this with the wildfires."
- ""Prevention? Or response? How do you prevent forest fires? I guess only 'you' can. Are there any spending programs to prevent fires? Fire

prevention is by regulatory action is it not?"

- "But then we should spend more on a lot of things."
- "You need a mix of public education, limited regulation and innovative use of technology. You can utilize native plant species, xeriscape and unique landscaping and use of desalination facilities and wells."
- "The threat of wildfires is partially man made and partially natural disaster, and Texas needs the assets necessary to respond to and combat the threat. This requires funding likely shared by the state and local governments."
- "Local communities can better serve the people. There is nothing you can do about wildfires in the middle of the drought. All the air tankers in the world will just slow it down, not stop it."
- "No, the state should spend more on using fire as a land management tool."

Texas cities are limiting water use in the midst of the drought; should some restrictions be permanent?

- "We've got to take the forecast of a drier than usual decade coming seriously."
- "Not at the present time."
- "The state needs to consider the energy needs of its residents. We need water to cool down energy generation facilities. If we don't do something now, expect rolling blackouts to become the norm."

Controlled fires rarely result in the tragic property/life losses we're witnessing. With all due respect, you are asking Exactly the wrong question and framing the dialogue backasswards. Fire 'prevention' is a lose/lose/lose. Using fire early and often as an effective public safety and land management tool is always a win/win/win."

- "Good piece in The Statesman today about unspent funds."
- "That is a local government function"
- "The state SHOULD spend more money in funding a comprehensive statewide water plan."
- "Maybe a no rainy day fund would be in order"
- "The state should financially assist counties in an effort to clear more underbrush (can you say Westlake Hills)?"

- "No, but incentives or penalties should be considered to improve water efficiency."
- "Why? If these restrictions were in place the last 5, 10 years, it would have zero effect on whether or not a drought occurs."
- "Cities should limit you only if they allow you to dig your own water well. Then only limit what they can sell you. I don't think ordinances will

allow you to dig you own well however, without a permit from city. Perverted right of capture rule I guess..."

- "Only if necessary"
- "What is wrong with each city continuing to evaluate water restrictions based on local conditions? In my area, despite routine draught, a couple of big rains refills the aquifer."
- "In times of plenty take all the water you can without affecting the in-stream and bay and estuary flow."
- "Policies should be set based on conditions. If we conserve to plan for the next 50-year drought we will greatly damage some economic development. Instead limitations should kick in earlier when conditions hit a higher mark. Don't wait for such a disaster."
- "Shutting the water off for lawn care folks will rock the gravel and quarry guys' world. Nobody complains about watering or cutting their yards in El Paso"
- "Until new reservoirs or desal plants are built, conservation is the greatest source of 'new' water. It makes sense to implement some of the less draconian restrictions on a full time basis."
- "Nothing's permanent, but this drought sure seems to be."
- "Some restrictions ought to apply based on a per gallon usage per day. It's easy to calculate one's personal use for water and that of watering grass and plants."

- "If cities and users don't take proactive steps to reduce water consumption, then, yes, they ought to be made permanent. In any event, they ought to be on a regional basis so that one city is not penalized for trying to conserve water."

- "Well, as anyone who has studied for the LSAT will tell you, 'some' means at least one. And surely there's at least one restriction that should be permanent."

- "Conservation works - just ask the people of Llano. They've cut consumption by 50%."

- "Let's be honest - the pride in a green lawn year round just isn't that appealing any more."

- "Throughout history civilization has found ways to preserve water, even in the most arid climates. TX needs to build more lakes and to implement more water-saving technologies. More government regulation is NOT the solution."

- "If we're willing to leave the invocation of divine intervention out of the equation, the rains will come eventually."

- "This is Texas. We could have floods tomorrow."

- "The Coalition for Greener St. Augustine Grass must be defeated!"

- "Unless Texas's ecology / weather becomes a rain forest, then, yes, restrictions should be permanent. The restrictions should have been implemented in 2008 and should be far more restrictive. Using water to keep lawns green is beyond insane."

It's stupidly shortsighted. Water rates should be structured to encourage conservation. Heavy water users for swimming pools, golf courses and other 'vanity' uses should pay 100 x what conservation-oriented users pay. Just one guy's opinion.... if the current drought evolves to a mega-drought (Google it), we will probably see massive human migrations in our life times. Plants and animals are migrating to higher, cooler climates at a measurable and unprecedented rate. (Google it)"

- "El Nina predictions indicate we will need to. (Except for the light, cooling rain that will make ACL Fest fabulous.)"
- "Agriculture is the biggest user of water. Irrigators should bear the biggest responsibility for conservation and paying for a statewide water plan."
- "We should...but we won't."

Our thanks to this week's participants: Gene Acuna, Cathie Adams, Brandon Aghamalian, Clyde Alexander, George Allen, Jay Arnold, Louis Bacarisse, Charles Bailey, Reggie Bashur, Walt Baum, Luke Bellsnyder, Rebecca Bernhardt, Andrew Biar, Allen Blakemore, Tom Blanton, Hugh Brady, Chris Britton, Andy Brown, Jay Brown, Lydia Camarillo, Kerry Cammack, Janis Carter, William Chapman, George Cofer, Rick Cofer, John Colyandro, Kevin Cooper, Hector De Leon, Tom Duffy, Jeff Eller, Jack Erskine, Alan Erwin, Ryan Erwin, Jon Fisher, Dominic Giarratani, Bruce Gibson, Scott Gilmore, Daniel Gonzalez, John Greytok, Billy Hamilton, Wayne Hamilton, Bill Hammond, Jim Henson, Ken Hodges, Steve Holzheuser, Laura Huffman, Shanna Igo, Deborah Ingersoll, Richie Jackson, Cal Jillson, Jason Johnson, Mark Jones, Robert Kepple, Richard Khouri, Tom Kleinworth, Nick Lampson, Pete Laney, Dick Lavine, Donald Lee, Luke Legate, Leslie Lemon, Ruben Longoria, Vilma Luna, Matt Mackowiak, Luke Marchant, Dan McClung, Bee Moorhead, Craig Murphy, Keir Murray, Keats Norfleet, Pat Nugent, Sylvia Nugent, Todd Olsen, Nef Partida, Gardner Pate, Tom Phillips, Wayne Pierce, Royce Poinsett, Kraege Polan, Jay Propes, Bill Ratliff, Carl Richie, Jason Sabo, Mark Sanders, Jim Sartwelle, Stan Schlueter, Bradford Shields, Christopher Shields, Dee Simpson, Ed Small, Martha Smiley, Todd Smith, Larry Soward, Dennis Speight, Jason Stanford, Bob Strauser, Colin Strother, Charles Stuart, Michael Quinn Sullivan, Sherry Sylvester, Jay Thompson, Trey Trainor, Ken Whalen, Darren Whitehurst, Woody Widrow, Ellen Williams, Michael Wilt, Seth Winick, Angelo Zottarelli.