

## **SAN JACINTO RIVER AUTHORITY KIDS PAGE**

# **Do you have to live in a desert to experience a DROUGHT?**

No, in fact recent news stories report that 98 percent of Texas is now experiencing drought conditions -- with some areas much worse than others. One of the hardest hit areas in the state is to the northwest of here -- the Brazos Valley -- now in the "exceptional" drought category.

Most of us think of drought as no rainfall, but it is more complicated than that. Drought is when there is less rainfall than expected over a period of time, usually several months or even longer. It is a normal part of climate, and occurs almost everywhere, but the features can vary from place to place. For example, a drought in Maine would be different from a drought in Texas. No matter where it occurs, however, a drought can have an impact on agriculture, recreation, water supplies and the environment.

According to Texas climatologist, John Nielsen-Gammon, "The worst drought in 44 years is damaging the state's wheat crop and forcing ranchers to reduce cattle herds." Under drought conditions, there may not be enough water in the soil for farmers to grow good crops, or to produce enough grass for livestock to thrive. When this happens, we may have to pay more for vegetables, fruit and beef at the grocery store. During a drought people are usually asked to use water only for necessary purposes.

Scientists are learning more about why we don't always get the amount of rainfall we need. There are lots of things that influence rainfall -- the winds that cause weather patterns to move around the Earth; the behavior of the "Jet Stream"; and weather phenomena like El Niño and La Niña. Human beings play a role in drought, too, such as how and where people live and the amount of water we rely on to sustain our lifestyles.

There is no way to know how long the drought might continue. Texas had only had 4.7 inches of rain between October 2010 and February 2011 -- the driest it has been since 1967. Perhaps we should think of the drought as a "wake up call", reminding us that we take adequate supplies of precious water for granted!

Consider the many ways that you use water every day. Sadly, much of the water "consumed" is wasted...not on purpose, of course...just through careless behavior. Everyone can help. Try to do one thing each day to conserve water. **EVERY DROP COUNTS!**  
The water we conserve today can serve us tomorrow!

