

Bob Dylan wrote it and sang it in 1963: *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*.

I heard the sound of a thunder and nobody listenin'/Heard the roar of a wave that could drown this whole world/And it's a hard rain a-gonna fall.

On Sunday evening, [Aug. 21, right here in North Texas](#), a hard rain fell, a foot of hard rain. In essence, a lake of water came down on our heads and homes, our streets and businesses.

The problem is two-fold: first, it had been so hot and so [dry for so long](#) that when that blessed liquid hit the ground, much of it did not soak into the land. Instead, it skated to the stormwater system and headed to the Gulf of Mexico via the Trinity River watershed. Second, the region's ever-increasing amounts of concrete pushed more water downstream even faster.

Severe weather is here to stay. Here then are ways that we can better receive the next hard rain that comes our way:

1. It is counterintuitive, but the wise thing to do during a drought, when you learn that a big rain is headed your way, is to **water your lawn**. A decent watering can help soften the ground so that the hard rain can be absorbed when it does come.
2. Cities, homeowners, architects, and builders can incorporate new ideas that lessen the load on our systems and ensure that the rain is put to good use before running off. For example, using **rain gardens, bioswales, and detention ponds** slows the rush of water into the storm system. The city of Dallas is implementing these practices in a variety of settings.
3. We must never develop the **6,000-acre Great Trinity Forest**. It must remain in its natural state. Someday even bigger rains are going to come, and that wonderful forest is the big sponge that is going to save us. Dallas Water Utilities is wisely, and absolutely, committed to protecting the forest.
4. We need to embrace creative, forward-thinking projects such as the **Dallas Water Commons**, which will be built just south of downtown Dallas. It will be an urban wetlands that provides flood mitigation, stormwater filtration, and a beautiful public space with trails and an active outdoor classroom. Groundbreaking is expected in the next 18-24 months.
5. Support initiatives that protect the **Trinity River watershed**, which is the longest watershed in Texas. Both major cities and open land touch the Trinity on its way to the Gulf. In places, rainfall is filtered by grassy natural areas. In the cities, the river picks up Styrofoam, plastic bottles, petroleum distillates from the roadways, bacteria from bird poop, tiny fragments of tires and brake linings, and all manner of detritus from our daily lives. The rain comes to us clean, and we send it away dirty.

6. We need to use more **native plants**, especially those with the deepest root systems. Some widely used grasses, such as St. Augustine, do not have deep root systems. The reason that natives, such as Little Bluestem, can adapt and survive in this harsh climate is because their roots go deep into the earth. The same is true with native trees. Their roots can become as thin as silk ribbon winding their way down through soil and rocks looking for moisture.

7. We need to be proactive in seeking **water infrastructure funds**, which are being made available in large quantities through the bipartisan infrastructure bill. More money is being made available for water projects now than at any other time in our history. Given the enormous growth taking place in North Texas, we need to be seeking our fair share of those funds to address the needs of this region.

8. In every decision we make regarding the future growth of North Texas, we must remember that our watershed is a living, breathing resource that ties our region together. When concrete is poured into one part of the watershed, it affects everything downstream. A dynamic economy is a good thing, and concrete comes with growth. **How we pour it and where we pour it are essential** to our region's health and well-being.

9. Perhaps most of all, we need to take a hard look at our own culture. Our nation has become a hard-pan, hard-baked place. Nature's brilliance in many ways lies in its ability to adapt. Adapting means being resilient and being open to the cross-pollination of thought and ideas. We as the American people need to **learn lessons from nature** to prepare ourselves for the severe droughts and hard rains falling in our culture today. Water is all around us. In our art and music, in our spiritual traditions, in our commerce and public policy. When we respect the water, we respect each other and respect as well the very rains that fall upon both the just and the unjust.

There will be other droughts and more hard rains to come. That much is certain. The question is, will those hard rains fall on a just and wise region? Or will they wash us away?

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