



**Barton Springs  
Edwards Aquifer**  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

**MEDIA COMMUNICATION**

**For Immediate Release:** Monday, February 28, 2011

**For more information, Contact:** Robin Gary, Public Information and Education Coordinator, (512) 282-8441.

**Austin's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Austin Cave Festival Kicks Off National Groundwater Awareness Week**

(Austin) – Nestled among the neighborhoods of southwest Austin is a little-known nature preserve called the Village of Western Oaks Karst Preserve. It encompasses approximately nine acres in the recharge zone of the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer. Despite its small size, the preserve contains six karst features, including one that is habitat for cave-dwelling species of concern and one that recharges, or contributes replenishing water to, the aquifer.

Each year, the Barton Springs/ Edwards Aquifer Conservation District (BSEACD) and the Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) hold the Austin Cave Festival at the Village of Western Oaks Karst Preserve to educate citizens about the importance and sensitivity of the Edwards Aquifer and its recharge features. This year, the Austin Cave Festival kicks off National Groundwater Awareness Week (Mar. 6-11), providing an opportunity to highlight groundwater resources and raise awareness of local groundwater issues. In and around Austin, over 60,000 people rely on the groundwater stored in the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer as their sole source of drinking water and even more enjoy its groundwater resources when swimming at Barton Springs—the main, natural discharge point of the aquifer. Additionally, Barton Springs is the only known habitat for the endangered Barton Springs salamander.

All Austin-area citizens are invited to this fun, free event. The Austin Cave Festival will be held from 9 am to 3 pm, Saturday, March 5, 2011, at the Village of Western Oaks Karst Preserve, which is located on Davis Lane at La Cresada Drive, just west of South MoPac freeway.

The day's activities will include short caving adventures into the Preserve's Live Oak and Get Down Caves, informational booths from local organizations, hands-on activities for children, a drawing for a rain barrel, and a cave-themed storytime with Master Naturalist Peggy Murphy at 11a.m. and 1p.m. Other educational and fun things to do and see include:

- Visit 2 wild caves.
- See how water gets to Austin-area aquifers.
- Learn about animals that call Austin's caves home.
- See real arrowheads and how replicas are made by flintknappers.
- Enjoy a cave-themed storytime.
- Learn about your local creeks and what steps you can take to protect them.

Guests to the Festival are asked to bring only water to drink while visiting; food and drinks attract fire ants, which are harmful to wildlife and humans.

Members of the press can contact Robin Gary ([rhgary@bseacd.org](mailto:rhgary@bseacd.org), 512-282-8441) to coordinate a visit to the Preserve and its caves prior to the event.

For directions, photos from last year's festival, and more information, please visit:

[www.bseacd.org/events/austin-cave-festival/](http://www.bseacd.org/events/austin-cave-festival/)

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