



## Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District

### **District Receives Recognition from Texas Senate**

In Senate Proclamation No. 242, the Senate recognized the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District for its “longstanding commitment not only to preserving our aquifers, but also to conserving, protecting, recharging, and preventing waste of our groundwater.” The proclamation commends the District for its use of best available scientific knowledge to formulate the policies necessary to manage droughts, implement water usage restrictions, and protect the habitat of endangered species like the Barton Springs salamander, and for its hard work and valuable service in ensuring that the people of Central Texas will have access to water for many generations to come.



The Board of Directors and staff are sincerely grateful for the commendation. The proclamation and letter from the Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development, Senator Zaffirini, are framed and on display in the District headquarters.

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### **Southwestern Travis Co. Groundwater Conservation District**

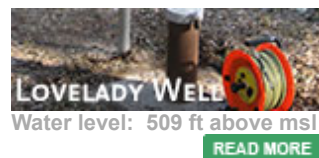
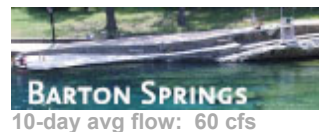
Back in 1990, the TCEQ had designated southwest Travis County a Priority Groundwater Management Area. This designation is intended to be the impetus for creation of a groundwater conservation district (GCD) because of the high demand but the limited volume of groundwater in the area ([TCEQ Groundwater Conservation District Recommendation for Hill Country Priority Groundwater Management Area](#)). During the last legislative

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#### Current Drought Stage: NO DROUGHT

The District uses two drought triggers to manage pumping and coordinate conservation.


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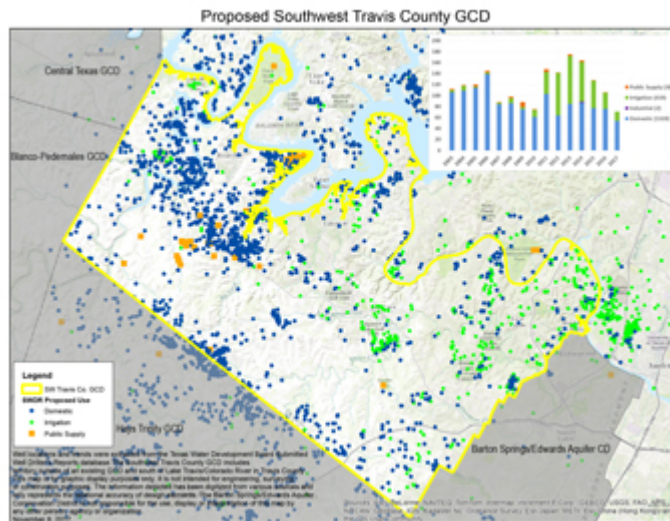
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The legislation exempts existing domestic and livestock small-capacity wells from permitting. Large capacity wells used for public water supply, commercial, and irrigation will need permits, pay a nominal fee (10 cents per 1,000 gallons) based on actual production, and report volumes pumped. The new district will help manage groundwater resources to coordinate conservation during droughts, monitor aquifer conditions and water availability, and track permitted pumpage. The bill calls for a board of temporary directors to be appointed by area elected officials to serve prior to confirmation of the district by voters. Accordingly, Representative Workman (original bill author) has two appointments, Senator Buckinghaml has two appointments, Travis County Commissioner Daugherty has two appointments, and Travis County Judge Eckhart has one appointment. A combination confirmation election and initial director election will be called at the next uniform election date in May of 2018.

Well drilling trends and increasing production from the Trinity Aquifer, which is also shared by the BSEACD downgradient, supports the need for coordinated groundwater management in this area. The creation and confirmation of the district will fill a void and provide for a means through this new GCD to study aquifer conditions and manage groundwater production.

A meeting is being organized to provide more information on the pending GCD to the public.

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## **Dye Trace Studies Update**

Dye tracing is a widely used technique to understand groundwater flow paths and travel times in aquifers using non-toxic dyes. Since 1996, the District (BSEACD), City of Austin, and the Edwards Aquifer Authority have been conducting such traces in the Edwards Aquifer.

Recently, the District has participated in a number of dye trace studies, and it's time for an update. Most recently, graduate students from St. Edward's University, Austin Water Utility, and the City of Austin Watershed Protection Department collaborated to trace routes from features in Little Bear Creek and Onion Creek. Dye from all three features were detected at Barton Springs within a week. More detailed discussion will be published in a report by the City of Austin in the coming months.

This fall and winter the first phase of dye tracing is underway for the Trinity Aquifer along the upper Onion Creek watershed near Dripping Springs. The study is a collaboration among the Hays-

(lead investigator), the BSEACD, City of Austin, and the Meadows Center (TSU). To better understand recharge to the Middle Trinity Aquifer, the trace targets several karst features along upper Onion Creek downstream of the bridge at Ranch Road 12. The dye tracing results will complement other recent data that documents recharges along portions of Onion Creek to the Middle Trinity Aquifer in that area ([link](#)).



Non-toxic dye being poured into a recharge feature along upper Onion Creek.

While we are all very excited to be involved in the first dye tracing studies of the Upper Onion Creek watershed, we have to keep in mind that these studies are an iterative process. It takes many traces during various flow conditions that tests different combinations of injection and monitoring sites. The reasons for no results from an injection are numerous, and include: not monitoring the right place or time, not using enough dye, the timing and concentration of the dye below detection limits, absorption of the dye, etc. Dye tracing takes time and persistence, but yields important understanding of the link between surface water flows and the underlying aquifers.

Stay tuned for more information and reports as they become available.

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## **Proposed Dripping Springs Wastewater Permit**

Discussions continue regarding the Dripping Springs requested wastewater discharge permit. Dripping Springs and LCRA executed a settlement agreement on October 27th, 2017. And on November 8th, the TCEQ issued the long-awaited Response to Comments (RTC) to address comments on the draft permit submitted back in November of 2016. The RTC provided responses to 160 separate issues and concerns raised by commenters. The issuance of the RTC also triggers a 30-day period where commenters have an opportunity to formally protest and request a contested case hearing. This period expires on December 8th.

At the regular meeting of the BSEACD Board of Directors on November 16th, the Board considered the RTC and determined that the RTC did not sufficiently address all of the District's comments and concerns. The Board then took action to instruct the District staff and attorney to proceed with requesting a contested case hearing on the permit.

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## **Upcoming Events, Meetings, & Deadlines**

Fri., Dec. 1: **Permittee Meter Readings Due** ([details](#))

Thurs., Dec. 14: **BSEACD Board Meeting**

Dec. 25-27: **Office closed for Christmas**



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Thurs., Jan. 11: **BSEACD Board Meeting**  
Mon., Jan. 15: **Office closed for MLK Day**  
Thurs., Jan. 25: **BSEACD Board Meeting**

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