

## San Antonio River Authority Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC)

October 18th, 2024. 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (Q1) Meeting Notes

San Antonio River Authority Guenther Office Board RM, 100 E. Guenther St, San Antonio Tx 78204

| <b>EAC Attendees:</b>                | <b>EAC Absent:</b>                                  |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Dr. Janis Bush <b>(JB)</b>           | Stephan Lucke                                       |
| Heather Hansen <b>(HH)</b>           | Annalisa Peace                                      |
| James Dodson <b>(JD)</b> virtual     |   |
| Jason Katcsmorak <b>(JK)</b> virtual |   |
| Dr. John Hooker <b>(JH)</b>          |   |
| Joedy Iglesias <b>(JI)</b>           |   |
| Carl Clapsaddle <b>(CC)</b>          |   |
| Christopher Fullerton <b>(CF)</b>    |   |
| Mary Lozano <b>(ML)</b> virtual      |   |
| Glynis Strauss <b>(GS)</b>           |   |
| Connie Waters <b>(CW)</b>            |   |
|                                      |   |
|                                      | <b>San Antonio River Authority Staff Attendees:</b> |
| <b>Citizens to be heard:</b>         | Rebecca Reeves <b>(RR)</b>                          |
| Matt Stellbauer <b>(MS)</b>          | Minna Paul <b>(MP)</b>                              |
| Crystal Mendez <b>(CM)</b>           | Shaun Donovan <b>(SD)</b>                           |
| Aarin Teague <b>(AT)</b>             | Salem Farner <b>(SF)</b>                            |
|                                      | Brian Mast <b>(BM)</b>                              |
|                                      |   |
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|                                      |   |

### 1. Welcome

- Welcome by EAC co-chairs Dr. Janis Bush and James Dodson (Virtual)
- FY 24-25 EAC membership nominations and selection of new member
- Introductions of committee members, River Authority staff, and other attendees
- Approval of last meeting minutes

### 2. Implementation of the Watershed Protection Plan in Lower and Middle Cibolo Creek

Matt Stellbauer, Research Specialist III, TWRI

Texas Water Resource Institute – USGS funded and grant funding thru TCEQ. Primarily monitor surface water quality and develop watershed implementation plans.

2004 impairments identified – E.coli bacteria in M-L Cibolo Creek. 2017 worked with a local steering committee. 2017 WPP approved. Active engagement in education and outreach.

Using citizen science for data collection.

**Post Presentation topics discussed:**

WPP – who was it adopted by – HH. **MS-** adopted by the EPA

JH – can you comment on two or three top priorities in terms of improving the water quality?

MS – feral hogs is one of the largest contributors to bacteria in the watershed. Pet waste stations at public spaces. And septic systems. And education!

JB – what is the range of the mid and lower Cibolo, what is the target areas

MS – primarily Bexar and Wilson counties

SD – bracken to I-10 is mid and I-10 down is lower

CF – have you had an opportunity to connect with the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA) Education Outreach Center (EOC). They have lots of school groups that come through.

MP – These activities our team does here as well and there is room to share resources and partner. We have a Texas Stream Team (TST) and have lots of iNaturalist participation.

### **3. Water Markets and Land Trusts**

Shaun Donovan, Manager Environmental Sciences

FY25-FY30

Goal 1 – the acquisition of strategic assets to enhance creeks and rivers throughout the basin. Part 1 begin identifying those assets and Part 2 Acquire conservation easements/land trusts. Property that protects habitat and offers recreational activities.

Prop 1 – a protection program for the EAA. Most of the recharge zone is out of Bexar County. Opportunities to collaborate with EAA and other organizations and overlap.

Environmental Markets:

Conservation Easements – voluntary collaboration with landowner and holder (governmental entity or qualified conservation org) and benefits both parties.

Cassin Lake was donated to the River Authority from A&M San Antonio but is a conservation easement and the holder remains the Texas Land Conservancy. – limited number of roads and development and impervious surfaces.

Edwards Aquifer Protection Program – the focus is water quality and quantity.

Land Trusts – Charitable orgs that are recognized for land and water conservations.

Mitigation Banking – selling credit of expanded conservation easements to fund further projects to support enhancing and preserving an aquatic resource.

CF – are there opportunities to set micro banks along the west side creeks project?

GS – dimensions of credits? SD- depends on linear creek miles of restoration or what products or activities would make sense to credit address credits for the banks you're paying towards.

GS this bank would not pertain to Refugio County? SD – we would have to identify what would regional bank consist of.

Water Rights – surface water is owned by the state. Southern County landowners may obtain water rights for agricultural use or various uses. There are restrictions imposed with environmental flows.

JI – A landowner that's grandfathered in with diversion water rights, if they sell their rights does the new landowner maintain that right? SD – they maintain the same rights but are usually more costly and adding to those water rights would obtain a new date and would not be included in the original grandfathered rights.

Texas Water Rights Viewer site

San Antonio River Authority Water Rights Dashboard viewer tool developed to look at how we view water rights and whether we would like to acquire them should we decide to acquire water rights.

Water Markets – not a lot of water being sold or traded in our watershed, developing a water market would entail a lot of inquiry. What type of water market is there that would benefit constituents and the river?

**Post Presentation topics discussed:**

CF – aside from SAWS are there any environmental flows? SD – we have a lot of ours as environmental use. There are also flows for recreation use and there is an increase in permits for environmental or recreation flows. CF – would you be water rights enforcers SD- that would be TCEQ

**Water Quality in Wells**

Aarin Teague, GM Evergreen UWCD

Evergreen Underground Water Conservation District – Frio, Atascosa, Wilson, and Karens  
Conserve, protect, preserve, groundwater in this jurisdiction.

Manage 3,845 sq mile jurisdiction and 5,923 total wells.

Aquifers are within Evergreen jurisdiction – Carrizo/Wilcox/Sparta/Queen City/Gulf Coast/Yagua/Cook Mountain/Edwards.

How the San Antonio River Watershed interacts with groundwater –

Groundwater and surface water impact one another. Preferential pathway for groundwater is through creeks and rivers. Which parts of the SA are a losing/gaining streams? The complexities of this are always changing. The water is connected! It will change over space and time and based on human activity.

How do contaminants get to my well? One can be the direct pathway through the well itself. Can be through flood inundation or negligence or stormwater runoff to the stream of a gaining/losing stream.

Water Quality – all the drinking water constituents and Total Dissolved Solids (TDS).

Reasons for variable water quality – aquifers are complex!

Know the Water Below Newsletter and Texas Well Owner Network.

What can you do to protect the water?

1. Conservation. There is about a ½ inch of recharge per year that goes into the Carrizo.

2. Being careful of Household Hazardous Waste. Properly disposing of these is key.

Plugging wells – you must create a solid barrier in the well so there is no longer a hole where animals or people or any source of contamination can pollute.

**Post Presentation topics discussed:**

**GS** – How does the salts of the Evergreen impact? **AT**- Brine from industrial use disposal can be reinjected into an unused system. There must not be a use for drinking water. Protest every injection well to get standing.

**CF** – have you had any injection sites turn into geysers?

**AT** – I have heard stories of things that go wrong. Example of West Texas. When you have these injection wells and seismic activity or change in pressure through the strata, you can have wells you thought were properly capped or plugged can be no longer capped or plugged and what was benign is now spewing brine. Beamer Lake has no one to fix the issue and has hydrogen sulfur gas that is a huge environmental concern which no one is claiming responsibility for.

**JH** – are you monitoring levels of coastal aquifers.

**AT** – There are monthly monitor checks. What happens in terms of quantity of water level; there is a general downward trend on some wells. It is highly dependent on who decides to put in a well and rainfall.

**HH** – The spot in Carrizo/Wilcox where Edwards is placed, is it still staying separate?

**AT** – SAWS operates an Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) water. When Edwards has lots of good water. They scout water when they have enough to and inject it to the Carrizo/Wilcox.

**BM** – Water in Poth must be cooled before used, what is the geothermal feature doing this?

**AT** – the pressure

**MP** – is it easy to recognize wells? How do you get the community to understand that they may have wells on their property.

**AT**- That is a struggle we face. Notice to purchasers include information about wells! Well permits cost \$25 and must be renewed every 5 years.

4. James Dodson & Dr. Janis Bush, EAC Co-Chairs

- a. Q2 Meeting at the Coast Discussion

5. **Future meetings dates and items for future consideration:**

**Q2** – January 24<sup>th</sup> (Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center)

**Q3** – April 18<sup>th</sup>

**Q4** – July 18<sup>th</sup>

**Meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM**