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Request for Coverage

GEAA Calls for Moratorium on New Development on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone

While the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance defers taking a position for or against the merits of the Vista Ridge water supply project until more details are forthcoming, the fifty one member groups of the Alliance unanimously oppose the acquisition of these new supplies if they are to be used to provide water utility service to new areas over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. The fifteen local member groups of the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance call on San Antonio Water System (SAWS) to adopt a moratorium on SAWS Utility Service Agreements to provide service to new developments on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone, Transition Zone, and five miles into the contiguous Contributing Zone until such time as an effective plan to regulate growth over these areas is implemented.

When: Monday, July 21st at Noon

Where: the Parking Lot of SAWS Headquarters (2800 U.S. Hwy 281 North)

As we near the 20th anniversary of San Antonio's water quality ordinances, we still see new development on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone grandfathered from complying with those ordinances. SAWS continues to contribute to high density development by providing water and sewer service to grandfathered and other inappropriate developments on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. GEAA research indicates that current development practices are not sustainable. Water quality monitoring reflects low levels of chlorinated solvents, unmetabolized drugs, and other constituents that should not be present if the current rules were adequately protecting the aquifer.

GEAA is calling on SAWS to amend State permits to exclude the entire Recharge Zone from the area where they are required by law to provide service. Additional recommendations include requiring adequate buffer zones to protect streams, springs and recharge features, prohibiting discharge of treated effluent into waterways that recharge the Edwards, prohibiting installation of sewage infrastructure in creek beds of intermittent streams that recharge the Edwards, more effective rules for the design and installation of engineered structures required to protect the aquifer, and other measures and strategies that we believe are needed to protect our water quality.

GEAA has stated opposition to the Vista Ridge water supply project if these additional supplies are to be used to expand service into new areas of the Edwards Aquifer watershed. SAWS is recommending that the City of San Antonio annex all areas within the current extraterritorial jurisdiction, which would vastly increase high density development on the Recharge and Contributing zones under current City regulations. We urge the City and the SAWS Board to devise and adopt policies and regulations that will adequately protect this irreplaceable groundwater resource before entering into any agreements to purchase additional water supplies from the Vista Ridge Consortium.

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The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance unites fifty member organizations behind a comprehensive plan to protect regional karst aquifers, their springs and watersheds, and the Texas Hill Country.

For more information visit www.AquiferAlliance.org