

May 28, 2013

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Mayor Castro, San Antonio City Council Members and San Antonio Water System Board Members:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Hill Country Alliance and our supporters throughout the 17 counties of the Hill Country, we respectfully ask that you rescind your decision to provide water and wastewater service to the proposed Crescent Hills subdivision in Comal County. The Texas Hill Country is a fragile landscape with significant water resource challenges; decisions such as these can have irreversible long-term consequences.

The Hill Country is one of the fastest growing regions of North America, and yet we do not have a framework in place to manage land development outside the boundaries of incorporated cities. Infrastructure proposals, such as water and wastewater lines, actually become the region's land-use plan by default often without regard for subsequent issues such as groundwater management, impervious cover, adjacent land incompatibility, and development rules.

The land in and around the proposed Crescent Hills subdivision is particularly vulnerable. It neighbors Bracken Cave, the largest known habitat for Mexican Free-tailed bats, as well as a large conservation area protected by the Nature Conservancy. The area contains known wildlife habitat, recreation and tourism assets, and perhaps most important, the property lies directly over the recharge zone of the Edwards Aquifer (EARZ). This is the poster-child for property best suited for conservation, or even conservation development, rather than high-density development. Eventually, lawn pesticides, roads, gas stations, clothes cleaners and more will follow and further endanger our region's major water resource and the surface ecosystem.

The quality of water in neighboring creeks, streams, and ultimately the aquifer, is also at high risk due to the scale of development facilitated by this water (and sewer) line. Point source pollution from water treatment leaks and spills, and nonpoint source degradation from development runoff, pose significant threats to drinking water supplies. The recent sewer main break from flooding in San Antonio is one example of the dangers of locating development over the EARZ. Many serious pollutants could flow into the precious Edwards Aquifer.

As articulated in the 2012 State Water Plan and the 2012 SAWS Water Management Plan, the water demands of San Antonio will exceed supply in the near future. Such expansion of

SAWS' service area puts additional stress on already limited local and regional water resources and finances.

The Hill Country Alliance is dedicated to ensuring future generations have an opportunity to enjoy the unique features of the Hill Country region, including the countless spring-fed streams, its multi-ethnic and agricultural heritage, spectacular scenic beauty and of course and adequate water supply.

San Antonio sets a great example for others in Texas when it comes to water conservation. SAWS has proven that environmentally sensitive planning and development pays off not only for our resources, but for all concerned. You have an opportunity now to also lead the way for better regional planning by making smart, strategic water infrastructure decisions.

Please listen carefully to your community and give this decision a second, hard look.

Sincerely,



Milan J. Michalec
President
Hill Country Alliance



Christy Muse
Executive Director
Hill Country Alliance