Neighbor To Neighbor

An Urgent Message to Belterra Home Owners from Your Downstream Neighbors

It's true we all live downstream from someone, and this communication comes to you from concerned neighbors living downstream – from you.

We want to share some important information that's sure to have an effect on your life (and certainly ours) in the months and years ahead:

The Utility District that supplies your drinking water and treats your wastewater has applied for a permit to discharge your treated sewage directly into Bear Creek.

A discharge permit in Hays County is unprecedented because our creeks and streams directly recharge our two major aquifers, the Trinity and Edwards, which thousands of residents rely on for their drinking water.

This is VERY ALARMING to your downstream neighbors. Our children swim and play in Bear Creek. Our drinking water comes from aquifers that are recharged by water flowing down Bear Creek. Our quality of life and our property values are tied to the quality of the water in Bear Creek and the groundwater just below it.

Numerous governmental bodies responsible for the protection of public health and welfare are responding to this permit, including:

- **The Hays County Commissioners Court** (passed a resolution opposing this discharge permit on March 14, 2006).
- **The City of Dripping Springs** (rejected pursuing a discharge permit for its own wastewater treatment plant – the Mayor has now asked the City's wastewater special counsel to consider options and appropriate actions for responding to the Notice of Application.)
- **The Hays Trinity Groundwater Conservation District** and the **Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District** (both filed official letters of concern and opposition with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)).
- **The City of Austin** (asked TCEQ for a public meeting, citing concerns for Barton Springs and downstream impacts).
- **Many downstream neighbors and other citizen groups** have expressed their concerns about the impact of this permit to TCEQ and our local elected officials.

We believe Belterra Home Owners want to be good upstream neighbors. And we believe you will join us in opposing direct stream discharge when you know the facts, the science, and the consequences — and understand that viable alternatives to this action do exist.

Please read inside for more information and to learn what you can do to be a good upstream neighbor.

This message comes to you from neighbors and members of the following organizations:

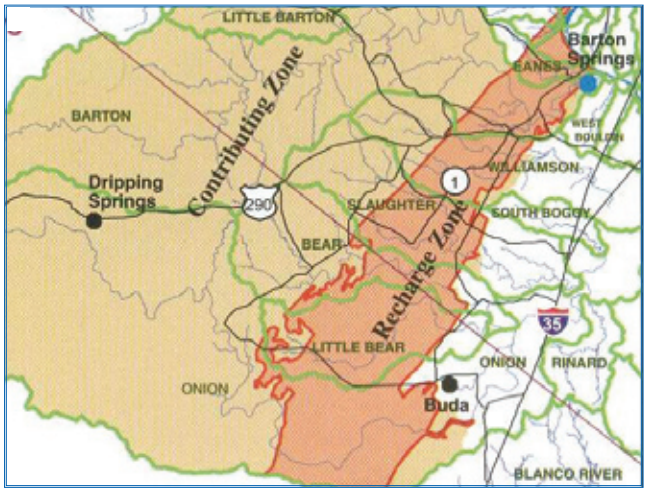
- **Bear Creek Property Owners Association** www.bearcreekpropertyowners.org
- **Friendship Alliance** (www.friendshipalliance.org)
- **Hill Country Alliance** (www.hillcountryalliance.org)
- **HaysCAN** (www.hayscan.org)
- **Davis Family Ranch** (adjacent to Belterra, first downstream neighbor)

Truth & Consequences

Truths

- Your home is built on the headwaters of Bear Creek, which recharges the Trinity and Edwards Aquifers (the water sources for our wells), as it flows to Onion Creek and across the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone on its ways to the Colorado River.

- The developers of Belterra formed the Hays County Water Control and Improvement District No. 1 (HCWCID #1) to provide water and sewage treatment for the planned 2,000 home development on 1,600 acres of ranch land in northern Hays County. Your utility district was permitted by TCEQ to use subsurface drip irrigation as the means to dispose of your treated wastewater effluent.



- The current TCEQ permit allows your utility district to drip irrigate 150,000 gal/day of wastewater effluent on 35 acres of Belterra green space.

- The property owners along Bear Creek supported the original drip irrigation application because it did not include direct discharge into the creek – where our aquifer is recharged and where we swim and spend time with our families.

A New Game Plan?

The TCEQ is now reviewing the application from the HC-WCID#1 to build a sewer plant capable of handling "a volume not to exceed a daily average flow of 800,000 gallons per day" of treated effluent from Belterra (and possibly surrounding developments as well) to be discharged into Bear Creek. There has never before been a discharge permit approved in the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer contributing area or the Highland Lakes area.

Consequences

What effect will the discharge of treated wastewater have on downstream neighbors?

- Stream discharge of wastewater effluent from Belterra could be a direct threat to the water quality of our two major aquifers and tens of thousands of downstream property owners and residents who rely on them for their water needs. (see: http://waterquality.lcra.org/gill/)

- Recreational use of Bear Creek could cease for hundreds of downstream neighbors because of elevated bacteria, nutrient overloads and pharmaceutical residues—and the aquatic ecosystem could be forever changed.

- Property values could suffer from reduced water quality, increased flooding, recreational loss and degraded stream aesthetics.

What effect will the discharge have on the ecology and biodiversity of Bear Creek?

- Based on 25 years of USGS creek flow data, the amount of effluent sought for direct discharge could produce a creek flow with predominately effluent.

- Excessive nutrients in the effluent will likely cause seasonal algae blooms to occur. As these algae blooms decay they will cause low dissolved oxygen levels — making it hard for aquatic life to thrive.

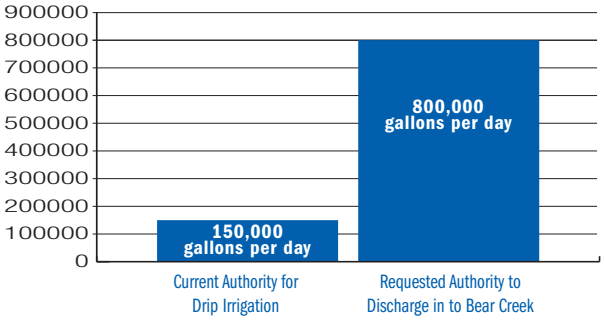
- Incompletely-processed pharmaceuticals and other chemicals within the effluent have been shown to impact human health and environment.

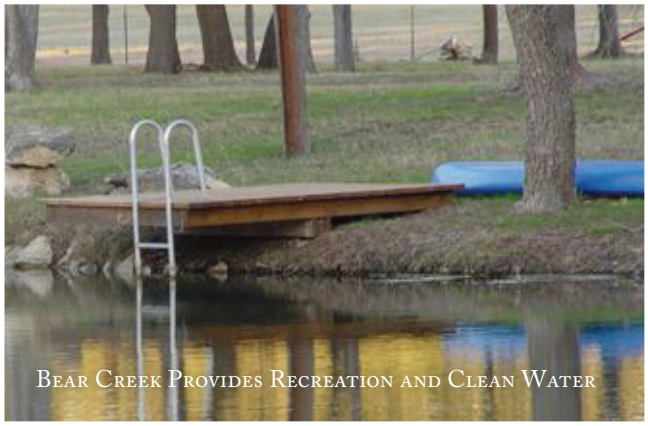
- Serious bacterial contamination can result from equipment and system malfunctions.

- If adequate de-chlorination of discharged effluent doesn't occur (or fails), the fragile aquatic ecosystem will be disinfected and destroyed.


Bear Creek is a beautiful and fragile ecosystem.

HCWCID#1 Waste Water Treatment





Bear Creek Provides Recreation and Clean Water

- Algae and other un-natural biological growth will lead to aesthetic and water quality deterioration – in both surface and groundwater.

If the sewage is treated to a Type 1 standard (the highest), why is it still a problem?

- Type 1 effluent pollutant levels allow for public contact with treated wastewater during reuse (irrigation) by treating conventional pollutants such as Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD), Ammonia and Total Suspended Solids (TSS) as well as nutrients such as Total Phosphorous to a great degree.

- Type 1 treatment DOES NOT effectively remove ALL pollutants, including chemicals used everyday in our homes that can eventually enter the environment through our wastewater. These include pharmaceuticals, hormones, detergents, disinfectants, plasticizers, fire retardants, insecticides, and antioxidants.

- Dispersing the treated effluent into the soil through subsurface drip irrigation will assimilate or strip these above-mentioned constituents whereas direct discharge in to a creek can expose the stream's ecology to these harmful chemicals and other constituents.

- During most of the year, the flow in Bear Creek will be dominated by the treated wastewater effluent.

There are Alternatives

- There are only two basic choices: onsite reuse or offsite discharge.

- HCWCID#1 states their intention to reuse most if not all the treated wastewater through on-site irrigation.

- Total, efficient onsite reuse of Belterra' treated wastewater will not require discharge in to Bear Creek.

- One solution could be to ask TCEQ for a seasonal irrigation permit with storage requirements that would allow application at rates where the nutrients and other constituents would be effectively used up in the soil.

- Other solutions for onsite use and dispersal on land includes drip irrigation on green space, real irrigation for common areas, and/or return of treated water to lots for cost-effective residential irrigation.

- Reuse can reduce the cost of water for irrigation.

- Treated wastewater can be a resource for you. Don't send it downstream where it will only cause permanent damage for your neighbors.

What Can YOU Do?

- **DEMAND no direct discharge into Bear Creek and that an alternative solution be explored. Call the HCWCID#1 Board of Directors – contact information on the back.**

- **WRITE to TCEQ requesting a public meeting so the project can be further explained and alternative solutions examined. (see address on back side)**

- **REQUEST that your name be put on TCEQ's mailing list for this project**

- **CONTACT your elected State officials (see list on back side)**

- **VISIT the Hill Country Alliance Web site (www.hillcountryalliance.org), or one of the other groups whose members have produced and distributed this message in order to follow the process and stay informed.**

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AFFIX POSTAGE WHEN MAILING

Contact list

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