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THE WATER SOURCE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE EDWARDS UNDERGROUND WATER DISTRICT

August 1992

Consensus Grows for an Edwards Management Plan

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John Hall, Chairman
Texas Water Commission

Editor's Note: In the last issue of The Water Source, readers were promised that future editions would discuss the changes concerning the status of the Edwards Aquifer and its accompanying effects. Fulfilling this commitment, Chairman Hall agreed to write this column and address our readers. As the newsletter goes to print, the Edwards Aquifer management situation continues to change and future editions will continue to address the issue as it evolves.

An increasing number of citizens and political leaders are signing on to the efforts underway to shape a management plan for the Edwards Aquifer or underground river. We commend and appreciate this level thinking and sincere interest in resolving a matter which has divided communities, created hostilities and which endangers the future of one of this nation's most beautiful and vibrant economic regions.

During five public hearings held in June, more than 400 citizens, business representatives and public officials provided their comments regarding the proposed management of the Edwards. The Texas Water Commission (TWC) appreciates these comments and the time taken by each presenter. These

comments and the results of extensive consultations that have taken place over time, will be factored into the final rules that will be considered by the Commission this summer.

Here is the timetable for additional action: The Commission will approve final management rules for the Edwards by early August. Each user of the Edwards will then have 30-45 days to submit a history of their water use and a claim for their water right. Those claims will be reviewed by the TWC staff which will prepare a detailed summary of recommendations.

Implementation of the TWC management plan and water rights would be set for April or May 1993. This would allow the Texas Legislature the opportunity to enact a management plan for the Edwards and to confirm the water right of each user. The Legislature would also decide the entity or entities that would administer and enforce the Edwards management plan. This could be a regional entity already in place such as the Edwards Underground Water District. It would not be the Texas Water Commission.

Meanwhile, the TWC has asked that a federal trial regarding endangered

species be delayed. The trial involves a lawsuit that seeks to drastically limit pumpage from the Edwards to protect endangered species in Comal Springs and the San Marcos River. We hope that the record water levels of the Edwards, a sound TWC management plan developed and ready to go and the interest expressed by the Legislature for addressing the problem will persuade the court to allow the delay.

The TWC will also continue extensive talks that are underway with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Sierra Club. These efforts are aimed at reaching agreement on pumping limits from the Edwards that would provide reasonable interim protection for endangered species without the drastic reductions that could wreck the region's economy.

The work, of course, is far from complete, and there are still major hurdles, but we applaud the consensus-building that so many are joining. The Edwards is the sole source of water for 1.5 million people and 700,000 jobs. Protecting it and properly managing it is not only desirable but is vital. ■

River or Not: Compromise Key to Achieving Edwards Management Plan

*Russell Masters, M.S., Environmental Management
EUWD General Manager*

In 1989, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority filed suit in state court contending that the Edwards Aquifer was an underground river. The Edwards Underground Water District (EUWD) Board of Directors went on record opposing the action. The Edwards Aquifer was once again declared an underground river three years later when the Texas Water Commission took action on April 15, 1992. The EUWD Board continues to reaffirm its position that the Edwards Aquifer is not an underground river.

This designation by the Texas Water Commission however, has not affected the EUWD Board's interest in working with the Texas Water Commission. During recent action taken by the Board of Directors, Bexar County representative Jo Ann De Hoyos summarized the District's position by stating, "the District will continue to work with the Texas Water Commission in developing technical, legal, and administrative information that will contribute to the resolution of the regional controversy."

Since 1983, the Edwards Underground Water District has worked diligently with diverse interest groups in the region, especially the City of San Antonio, to arrive at an acceptable regional plan. In 1988, those efforts resulted in a consensus-based Regional Water Management Plan. The issues today remain the same as those in 1988. The key issue, yesterday and today, remains the establishment of a regulatory process that is fair and equitable to everyone involved.

The Texas Water Commission and John Hall are to be commended for their efforts at attempting to forge an

agreement on a management approach for the Edwards Aquifer. While there have been countless talks with individuals, groups and entities, the difficult task remains; getting everyone to agree to the same limitations and regulatory controls. The Texas Water Commission has reached "agreements" with various groups on several issues of concern, however these "agreements" must come together in the form of a workable regional plan.

The 1988 Regional Water Resources Management Plan contained the following components:

- Reuse
- Alternative sources
- Recharge
- Allocation
- Conservation

With the exception of the "allocation" component, the 1988 Regional Water Plan had the support of all the key players in the region. This plan however, was never put into place because the enabling legislation failed in the 1989 legislative session.

Since that time, numerous attempts have been made at taking a "different look" at solving the issue, such as the current efforts by the Texas Water Commission. In nearly every instance the "different approaches" have always come back to the basic principles set out in the 1988 Regional Water Plan.

There are no new approaches. There are no "different looks." What remains is the acknowledgement that the Edwards Aquifer must be protected. In order to accomplish that end for the well-being of everyone who relies on the aquifer, there must be compromises. ■

Teachers' Turn to Learn



Randy Williams, EUWD Geologist, explains how the water level is recorded at the Bexar County Index Well during a field trip for workshop participants.

The Edwards Underground Water District offered six summer workshops on the geology and biology of the Edwards Aquifer for elementary and secondary school teachers. After completing the Texas Education Agency AAT (Advanced Academic Training) credit approved workshops, participants had the opportunity to attend a day-long field trip highlighting the unique features of the aquifer. ■



EUWD Education Coordinator Cinde Thomas-Jimenez (center) assists Jo Ham from Hondo ISD (left) and Susan Palmer from NEISD in building a model of the aquifer during the "Water Down Under" workshop for elementary school teachers.

THE WATER SOURCE Reader Survey

The Water Source newsletter was created in 1989 to provide a forum for discussing critical water issues, as well as the various programs of the Edwards Underground Water District. Please take a moment to complete the following survey and return it in the enclosed envelope. Your feedback will help determine if any changes need to be made. It will also let us know how the newsletter can better provide you with the information you wish to receive. Additional comments and suggestions are welcome.

1. Overall, the content of the articles is:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> average |
| <input type="checkbox"/> above average | <input type="checkbox"/> below average |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> poor |

2. I find the articles (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> interesting | <input type="checkbox"/> have too much information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> boring | <input type="checkbox"/> have too little information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> too technical | <input type="checkbox"/> fine the way they are |
| <input type="checkbox"/> too general | |

3. Overall usefulness of published information:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> fair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> very good | <input type="checkbox"/> poor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> average | |

4. After reading The Water Source, do you feel you have learned more about the Edwards Aquifer?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

5. After reading The Water Source, do you feel you have learned more about what the EUWD does?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

6. Generally, the newsletter focuses on EUWD programs. Would you like to see (check all that apply):

- more water related issues covered
 more guest columnists
 other _____

Who are you?

Age

- 20-25
 26-35
 36-45
 46-55
 56+

Career Field

- Government
 Education
 Industrial/Technical
 Consulting/Law
 Other _____

Salary Range

- 10,000+
 20,000+
 30,000+
 40,000+
 50,000+

Location

- Bexar Co.
 Comal Co.
 Hays Co.
 Medina Co.
 Uvalde Co.

Comments/Suggestions: _____

News Briefs...

□ The Leon Valley City Council has agreed to participate in a plumbing rebate program funded by the Edwards Underground Water District. This will be the first program in the Edwards Aquifer region to reimburse homeowners who replace existing fixtures with those that are water efficient.

The rebate program will encourage retrofitting by offering a rebate incentive of \$50 to offset replacement costs of ultra low flow (ULF) toilets. Showers, faucets, and toilets account for nearly two-thirds of indoor usage—toilets are the largest consumptive fixture in the home. Residents who install ULF fixtures will recoup their investment in under two years.

The pilot program funded by the District will provide \$30,000 for the replacement of 600 fixtures. Leon Valley residents will save an estimated 936,000 cubic feet of water per year, or roughly 13% of average

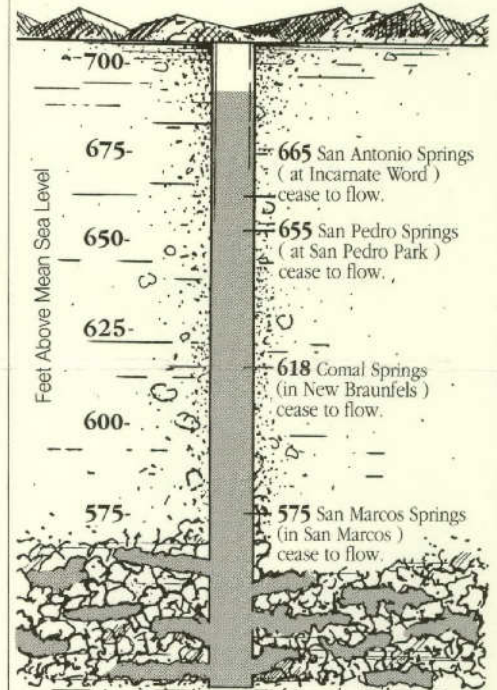
indoor use. The Leon Valley/EUWD pilot retrofit rebate program is part of the District's ongoing commitment to work with local governments to protect the water resources of the region. Low volume fixtures will prolong our limited water supplies through the efficient use of water.

□ As part of the Edwards Aquifer Preservation Program (EAPP), the Edwards Underground Water District recently completed construction of a grate over the Hills & Dales Cave (or Pit) in northern Bexar County. The grate was installed to keep the recharge feature intact, as well as protect curious explorers.

The protection of the cave is important because of its location on the sensitive recharge zone. Located in a floodplain, all of the rain or storm water runoff in the immediate vicinity is directly recharged into the cave. A conservation easement protecting the surrounding property is pending with the owners. ■

The Water Level

This reading reflects the daily high artesian water elevation at the Bexar County Edwards Aquifer Index Well.



Current Status: On July 27, 1992 the water elevation was recorded at 692.6. Average for July is 660.4

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