

Propositions 1 and 2: Aquifer and Park Taxes Are Approved

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San Antonians approved a sales tax increase Saturday to buy sensitive land over the Edwards Aquifer and create new linear parks, breathing new life into two tax initiatives for environmental protection that expired last year.

Voters supported a 1/8-cent sales tax increase to raise \$135 million for aquifer protection and linear parks initiatives.

With 100 percent of precincts reporting, San Antonio voters were solidly behind Proposition 1, which will raise \$90 million to buy land over the Edwards Aquifer and its recharge zone — passing with a margin of 55 percent.

Proposition 2, which will share the tax increase to raise \$45 million to purchase land and build linear parks along the city's creeks, passed with almost 54 percent of the vote.

The increase will expire when the \$135 million is raised. It's expected to take about nine years.

"I can't tell you how thrilled I am for the city of San Antonio that first of all, we have the money to continue to invest in parks and water protection," said former Mayor Howard Peak, a proponent of Proposition 2. "But beyond the money, I'm so pleased that people looked at the propositions apart from the overarching issue of cutting government spending that was associated with Proposition 3 (the tax freeze for seniors)."

Former City Councilwoman Bonnie Conner, who fought hard for the passage of Proposition 1, gave voters credit for recognizing its importance: "My mantra through this has been San Antonio gets it when it comes to water."

The money raised for linear parks also will provide flood control, said Peak, who heads the oversight commission for the creekway acquisitions.

Both propositions are an extension of a similar tax increase approved by voters in 2000. That project collected \$45 million to preserve 6,484 acres over the aquifer and \$20 million to develop linear parks along Leon and Salado creeks.

"We'll be able to complete the gaps in the land purchases and people will begin seeing construction of the parks soon," Peak said.

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