

## Ten good reasons to support the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance

**2004** – GEAA is officially recognized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit and grows from the nine original member groups to an alliance of 31 groups. Several of these new member groups were organized by GEAA to address specific local issues. The newly organized Helotes Heritage Association successfully defeats WalMart in plans for a new store on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. Today, GEAA has 51 member organizations that work together to achieve our mission and provide funding for GEAA's operations.

**2005** – GEAA presents at the *World of Water* exhibit at San Antonio's Witte Museum and holds a 3 day *Aquifer Summit* engaging citizens from throughout Central Texas and expert guest speakers in panels on campaign planning and organizing, media work, fundraising, legal strategies, working with elected officials, planning for growth, transportation issues, the science of water quality, water supplies and infrastructure, and preserving open spaces. With participation from hundreds of Texans, we set our agenda for the years to come. Each year since, GEAA member groups have convened to collaborate on local issues and set our agenda for the coming year.

**2006** - GEAA is recognized with a Community Stewardship award for *Raising Public Awareness* from Envision Central Texas and receives a grant from the Boeing Foundation to present Teacher training and classroom demonstrations. The GEAA education program grows to include field trips to Government Canyon; the creation, with KLRN TV, of a DVD for use in the class room; and an on-going partnership with Communities in Schools of San Antonio. To date, GEAA has trained approximately 600 teachers on how to teach the Edwards Aquifer, and has engaged thousands of middle and high school students in lessons on how our unique karst aquifer functions and provides us with water.

**2007** - GEAA organizes opposition to the 7,000 home Hills of Castle Rock subdivision in Medina County. GEAA is joined by the San Geronimo Valley Alliance and SAWS in protesting a discharge permit that would have allowed sewage effluent from this subdivision to flow into San Geronimo Creek, a major Edwards Aquifer recharge feature. The permit is denied, and the developers ultimately withdraw plans for the development. The property remains undeveloped.

**2008** - GEAA initiates collaboration between the EPA, State and local agencies, and the U.S. Green Building Council to promote Low Impact Development (LID) techniques to address non-point source pollution from urban storm water runoff, recognized as the greatest threat of pollution of ground and surface water resources within our region. Over 300 elected officials, agency employees, and developers' engineers attended the two day conference hosted by GEAA, resulting in on-going efforts to incorporate LID in Bexar and surrounding counties. EPA was so pleased with GEAA's management of this project that they asked us to present a second workshop in Austin in the fall of 2009. GEAA recently published an LID Manual – Watershed Stewardship for the Edwards Aquifer Region. You can see and purchase a copy on our web site, [www.aquiferalliance.org](http://www.aquiferalliance.org).

GEAA secured a temporary restraining order on a residential development that threatened to compromise the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone and Camp Bullis, the US Army's training grounds for medical combat operations. This action resulted in the adoption of a Camp Bullis Awareness Zone and purchases of large tracts of land to mitigate the loss of endangered golden cheeked warblers.

**2009** – GEAA worked with scientists from the City of Austin, the Barton Creek Edwards Aquifer Conservation District, the Edwards Aquifer Authority, and GEAA technical advisory team to assist in authoring HB 595 and

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companion SB 822 to prohibit the practice of discharging treated sewage effluent into waterways that recharge the Edwards Aquifer. The testimony of karst experts and the above named stakeholders was coordinated by GEAA staff for a hearing before the House Natural Resources Committee in January 2009. Despite support from a majority of the members on that Committee, the bill did not make it to the floor of the 81st Legislature. It is our intent to have this legislation filed on our behalf during the upcoming Legislative session. Each session of the Texas Legislature, GEAA monitors hundreds of bills, compiles a detailed legislative agenda, provides testimony and comment, and sends out alerts that engage thousands of Texans in the legislative process.

**2010** - GEAA releases a study on storm water pollution structures required by the State to mitigate non-point source pollution on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. Subsequently, the Edwards Aquifer Authority adopts all of GEAA's recommendations as part of their rule making process. Consequently, there is greater commitment from all agencies involved in monitoring these structures to ensure that they are functioning as intended to protect the Aquifer.

**2011** – GEAA succeeds in excluding a large portion of the Edwards Aquifer watershed in western Bexar and Medina counties from receiving SAWS water and sewer service, thereby forestalling high density development of the San Geronimo Watershed, an area that replenishes 7-15% of San Antonio's water supplies. GEAA presents proposals to the City of San Antonio for permanently protecting land in the San Geronimo Watershed which result in securing conservation easements for a large portion of the original Gallagher Ranch.

**2012** – GEAA releases a study of sewage leaks occurring on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone, accompanied by interactive maps that can be viewed by the public on GEAA's web site. Among the findings of this study is that during a 4 year period (2008-2012) 83 sewage spills totaling 809,000 gallons (or 2.5 acre feet) of raw sewage occurred on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. Because the Edwards Aquifer does not filter recharge, this is cause for concern. Many of the leaks were in close proximity to streams and creeks, where recharge of the aquifer is most likely to occur. This study, together with GEAA's study on *Land Applied Wastewater Effluent Impacts on the Edwards Aquifer*, released in 2011, will be compiled into a body of research on subsurface pollution of the Edwards Aquifer and published as a White Paper that will include recommendations on the safest course of handling human waste so as to preserve water quality.

**2013** – GEAA organizes opposition to a subdivision abutting the largest colony of mammals in the world, the Bracken Bat Preserve. Approximately 400 people attend a City Council hearing organized by GEAA, which resulted in on-going efforts to purchase the land from the developer.

**2014** – GEAA unites citizens from San Antonio, Del Rio, Kinney County, and Laredo to oppose a plan to export water from Val Verde County, thereby threatening continued flows to Las Moras and San Felipe springs, and the Rio Grande. After GEAA organizes widespread press coverage and hearings before the SAWS Board, the project is voted down. GEAA is currently working to ensure that water supply plans are sustainable and equitable, and that service from water utilities does not result in high density development over crucial recharge areas. As we move forward to address the region's future water needs, GEAA's role in achieving consensus in support of rational planning is more important than ever.