

An underwater photograph showing a diver in a blue wetsuit and red life preserver swimming in clear blue water. The title 'EAHCP STEWARD' is overlaid in large white and gold letters.

EAHCP STEWARD

News from the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan - May-June 2025



Allowing people to recreate on the San Marcos River has been a centerpiece of the City of San Marcos' appeal for decades. But, in today's environment with continuing population growth, increasing popularity of floating the San Marcos River and increasing need to protect the endangered species and their habitat in the San Marcos River, environmental stewards and policy makers alike are working together to re-create how recreation occurs in and along the river.

Recreating Recreation - Continued

“From the very beginning of the Edwards Region’s planning processes aimed at protecting endangered species in the Comal River and San Marcos River, managing recreation has been a constant topic of discussion and policy making,” said Mark Enders, City of San Marcos Habitat Conservation Plan Manager. “In fact, there is an active list of recreation management measures written into the current Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP). There are structural types of controls like dedicated stabilized river access areas and fencing that restrict access to the river as well as ongoing educational activities like communicating with visitors about endangered species and how they can help us protect them.”



Enders explained that the first 13 years of working on this issue within the EAHCP, which is linked to a Federal Incidental Take Permit, will likely be a bit different for the renewed EAHCP permit expected to occur in two years. The new permit request will be for 30 years rather than current permit’s 15-year length. The longer permit request paired with continued population growth and popularity of recreation in the San Marcos River is likely to cause policy makers to enact stricter management measures regarding river access and usage, especially during prolonged drought periods when river flows are low.

“The [single use disposable beverage container ordinance](#) authorized by the San Marcos City Council in 2024 is one such action that changes what people can bring to the river,” Enders noted. “Last summer, San Marcos enacted this ordinance in which river patrons are permitted to use only reusable drink containers on the river, along the banks of the river and in designated areas within City Parks, also known as ‘No Zones.’ Additionally, each person is permitted one cooler/ice chest of less than 30 quarts within the No Zones and within the river. We also established ‘Go Zones’ where fixed picnic tables, away from river banks, are located and less prone to having trash blown into the river on windy days. Over the past 12 months we have been informing the public about these changes and with advanced notice that fines would be implemented in 2025 for violations. It is still early in this year’s peak recreation season, so we’re still tracking how the new regulations are being followed. Ultimately, compliance is our goal. So, if we warn someone about a problem, we would rather they comply than forcing park rangers to fine them and escorting them out of the park.”

Recreating Recreation - Continued



With increased restrictions on recreational activities along the river, there is an associated cost for being able to enforce new ordinances. Enders talked about the City of San Marcos reworking some of the local riverfront parking lots to enable the city to charge nonresidents a fee for parking. The City of San Marcos recently released the entire schedule for [parking fees, which can be found here](#). Parking fees will be used to help fund staffing, improvements or litter cleanup within City parks. The paid parking at City Park will start July 1, more information about [registering here](#).

Another major development on the San Marcos recreation front is the installation of fencing around Rio Vista Park, the city's busiest riverfront park. There are some small water falls there with flat terrain that makes it a very popular place to enjoy the year-round 72-degree water in the spring-fed river. There will be approximately five gated access points to funnel visitors into Rio Vista. Park Ambassadors will man the gates to greet guests and screen what is being brought into the park as well as talk to visitors about the environmental sensitivities of this section of the river.

"People have been coming to the river from all over the state for decades and they've brought all sorts of things like charcoal grills, alcohol and all types of containers," Enders said. "The ambassadors at the park entrances will improve compliance by explaining that those types of things are no longer allowed and why the changes are being made. That goes to the notion of getting people to voluntarily comply and understand why it is important before they enter the park rather than having to get aggressive with fines after they've set up all of their gear. It will just work better for everyone if we address park rules before visitors possibly have their fun interrupted by a park ranger."

One particularly sensitive area of the San Marcos River known as the "Eastern Spillway" is being eyed for permanent closure. That location is where water from Spring Lake flows into the San Marcos River. Enders explained that the State of Texas allows the City to cordon areas like that with buoys and other controls when the San Marcos Springs flow less than 120 cubic feet per second. With the ongoing multi-year drought, it has been a few years since river-goers have had access to the Eastern Spillway above Sewell Park.

Recreating Recreation - Continued



“The Eastern Spillway provides great habitat for endangered San Marcos salamander, fountain darter and Texas-wild rice. And even though we have had this area ‘temporarily’ closed for some time, we are wanting to permanently shut this part of the river off from tubers and waders as part of the new Habitat Conservation Plan which will be the basis for a renewed federal permit. That is a major change for river management here, but we think it is necessary due to its importance to sustaining endangered species populations.

Enders stated the most interesting and promising part of this evolution of how they manage recreation on the San Marcos River is that as situations negatively impacting the environment have occurred, responsible parties have taken necessary actions to mitigate those problems. The situation with Rio Vista Park is a perfect example. As City staff and environmental program managers saw significant increases in numbers of visitors, they documented the associated levels of litter and trampling of riparian areas, and then took steps to control access to the park. The recent fencing of Rio Vista illustrates a type of higher level of protections that can be taken to ensure ecosystem sustainability despite increased popularity of the park.

“As we’re trying to discern what recreation in the San Marcos River will look like in 30 years, we’ve learned that success of any program needs to be implemented collaboratively,” Enders concluded. “The entire EAHCP team is really focused on helping us in San Marcos. The City Council understands the balance required in protecting endangered species while still inviting tourists from all over the state to come here and enjoy this natural wonder. The students and faculty at Texas State are equally invested in high-level research as well as one-on-one relationship building with visitors. And the whole team has demonstrated its willingness to address issues, at the level required, knowing that it is our duty to protect these amazing natural resources well into the future.”



EAHCP STEWARD SHORT TAKES

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New Habitat Protection Signs Posted in San Marcos



Student and faculty members of the [River Education and Stewardship Alliance \(RESA\)](#) organization from Texas State University recently met up with Senior EAHCP Coordinator Kristina Tolman and Edwards Aquifer Authority Graphic Designer Micah Meyers to celebrate the installation of several habitat protection signs in Sewell Park near Texas State University. RESA's vision is to be a source of education, outreach and resources to support a healthy San Marcos springs, river and watershed that is frequented by Texas State University students, staff, faculty and visitors.

Mark Enders, who is the EAHCP lead for the City of San Marcos, coordinated with multiple university departments (Facilities, Marketing, and Campus Recreation) to get feedback and final approval.

The new educational signs look great and help inform visitors to Sewell Park on how they can help protect the endangered species and habitats in that stretch of the San Marcos River.



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Upcoming EAHCP Meetings

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EAHCP Stakeholder Committee Meeting

When: Thursday, August 7

Time: 10:00 AM

Where: Edwards Aquifer Authority

[Teams Meeting Link](#)

EAHCP Implementing Committee Meeting

When: Thursday, August 7

Time: after the Stakeholder Committee adjourns

Where: Edwards Aquifer Authority

[Teams Meeting Link](#) (same as Stakeholder link)

EAHCP Science Committee Meeting

When: Wednesday, September 10

Time: 9:00 AM

Where: STAR Park in San Marcos, enter left side of building

[Teams Meeting Link](#)

PREVIOUS MEETING VIDEOS

[5/22/2025 Implementing Committee recording](#)

[4/17/2025 Science Committee recording](#)

[3/27/2025 Implementing Committee recording](#)

[2/26/2025 Science Committee recording](#)

[2/6/2025 Implementing Committee recording](#)

[2/6/2025 Stakeholder Committee recording](#)

PREAHCP UPDATES

On May 22 the Implementing Committee reviewed and approved the [revised Conservation Measures Memorandum](#) to inform the permit renewal process. The ICF Team used the [Conservation Measures Subcommittee report from 2024](#) as the basis for evaluating and recommending proposed changes to the Conservation Measures strategy.

[PREAHCP Detailed Schedule](#)* was recently updated on 6/3/2025, additional information is available on the [PREAHCP website](#).

**specific dates for upcoming PREAHCP memo review periods are subject to change.*

PREAHCP progress updates will be provided at every EAHCP Committee meeting in 2025

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New EAHCP Intern

Morgan Gingerich has joined the EAHCP team for a summer internship, June 9-August 4, her duties will include organizing and analyzing water quality data, creating metadata for biological monitoring data, and various GIS tasks. Morgan is pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Geoscience from Trinity University, with an expected graduation date of May 2026. At Trinity, she serves as an Undergraduate Research Student, where she uses Raman Spectroscopy to analyze rhyolitic glass samples, processes spectral data, and compiles visual and data outputs to support geological research. In her spare time, Morgan enjoys playing the viola and guitar, reading, and painting.



Farewell Darcy Frownfelter

This week the EAA and EAHCP bid farewell to Darcy Frownfelter who has served as EAA's general council and lawyer at Kemp Smith, LLP for many years. The EAHCP team thanks Darcy for his many contributions to the EAHCP Program and wish him the best as he enjoys retirement.

RELATED NEWS

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Fort Worth District and City of San Marcos officials led a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Bicentennial Park on May 21, celebrating the completion of the [San Marcos River Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Project](#). June 2, 2025

Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District ([BSEACD](#)) recently released an [interactive map of Edwards Aquifer wells](#). BSEACD regulates Edwards Aquifer pumping in the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer, the jurisdictional boundaries of EAA's northeast extent and BSEACD's southwest extent overlap in Hays County. Therefore, some wells displayed in Hays County on the BSEACD interactive map include wells regulated by EAA, click each well to view a pop-up containing the well information. May 2025 [BSEACD Drought Update: May 2025](#), June 5, 2025
[BSEACD Drought Update: April 2025](#), May 7, 2025

TWDB's desalinization overview in [Salt to Solution: Desalinization's role in Texas' water supply](#). 5-15, 2025

TWDB's rainwater catchment tips in [Simple Steps to Harvest Rainwater in Texas like a Pro](#). 5-15, 2025

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Related News Continued

[TWDB approved \\$1,000,000 financing to the City of San Marcos for wastewater system improvements.](#)

Funding will support the planning phase for a new wastewater treatment plant on a proposed site near anticipated developments southeast of the City. The City will develop environmental and geotechnical assessments, surveying, and engineering planning to produce an engineering feasibility report for the project.

[TWDB approved \\$2,140,000 in financing to the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority \(Comal and Hays counties\) for wastewater system improvements.](#) Funding will support the planning and design phase for expanding the Sunfield Water Reclamation Facility to meet future demands.

[TPWD](#) graduated the 67th [Texas Game Warden](#) and [Texas State Parks Police cadet class](#) on May 30 in Austin. The class includes 28 new game wardens that will be stationed throughout Texas to serve as the primary enforcement officers focusing on hunting, fishing and water safety regulations.

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/newsmedia/releases/?req=20250602a>, June 2, 2025.

TPWD awarded [\\$6.8 Million in Recreational Trails Grants to Texas Communities](#). Funding covers 24 trail construction and maintenance projects across the state. Regional projects include: \$220,800 to Universal City in **Bexar County** for phase two of the Cibolo Creek Recreational Trail; \$57,427 to [USFWS's SMARC](#) in **San Marcos** for renovation of a 1.75-mile trail and construction of a .56-mile trail and signage; \$300,000 to Castroville Regional Park in **Medina County** for construction of 1.3-miles of trail, a pedestrian bridge, parking spaces, 2.4-miles of trail renovation and signage. May 22, 2025.

TPWD launched [Better Outside podcast](#), to explore the woods and waters of Texas through stories about conservation, recreation and the outdoors. [May 19, 2025](#).

TPWD's renovated [Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center \(TFFC\)](#) will open to the public July 1st. Renovations started in 2023 include new large aquariums, theater, new and improved exhibits, and recreational fishing ponds. [May 14, 2025](#).

Community Events

Texas Water Safari, June 13 at 9 am

The [Texas Water Safari](#), also known as the "World's Toughest Canoe Race", will start on Friday, June 13 at 9 AM at The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment in San Marcos. Participants will paddle the entire stretch of the San Marcos River, or 260 miles, from it's headwaters in Spring Lake to the Gulf of Mexico. Sensitive habitat zones in Spring Lake and the San Marcos River have been marked with buoys to reduce disturbance during the race.

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Community Events Continued

Summer Snorkel Cleanups, dates below, 8-9:30 am

The [Ecological Research Group](#) at the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment is hosting guided snorkel trips to collect litter in the San Marcos River, dates listed below. [Register here.](#)

Upcoming dates: June 18, June 29, July 20, and July 30.

Getting started on Xeriscaping, June 14, 9:30-10:30 am

The Headwaters at Comal is hosting a workshop, How to Tame a Water-Thirsty Yard: Getting started on Xeriscaping, to share tips for landscaping with native plants to enhance your landscaping while reducing your water use and your water bill. [More info here.](#)

Effective Landscape Use of Native Plants, July 15, 6:30-7:30 pm

The Headwaters at Comal will host a workshop that introduces the benefits of native landscaping as well as tips for replacing non-native plants with natives. [More info here.](#)

Guadalupe River HCP Stakeholder Meeting, July 30, 9 am

Guadalupe River Habitat Conservation Plan (GRHCP) will host their next Stakeholder meeting at GBRA on July 30 at 9 am. The agenda will include updates on the GRHCP planning process and methods for calculating take of their proposed Covered Species. [More info here.](#)

Summer in the Park Concert Series, San Marcos Plaza, 7:30 pm

The City of San Marcos is hosting their free annual [San Marcos Concert in the Park](#) concert series every Thursday, now until August 14.

Live @ Landa: Concert in the Park series, dates below, 6-9 pm

The City of New Braunfels is hosting [Live @ Landa](#), a free Concerts in the Park series in Landa Park. Local musicians will perform a variety of songs that range from Country, Classic Rock, Folk, Tejano, and other popular music in Landa Park, adjacent to the Comal Springs.

Upcoming dates: June 12, and July 4.

EVERY Wednesday: Downtown San Marcos Clean Up

Where: Meet at the San Marcos Chamber of Commerce (202 CM Allen at Hutchison)

Time: 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Activity: landscaping, sticker removal, litter cleanup, painting, and beyond!

Special instructions: only need 3-5 volunteers each time

Email [Jeremy Gonzales](#)

EVERY Monday during the Summer: Rio Vista Sunrise Clean Up

Where: River Park System (Rio Vista Park by the Ranger Station)

Time: 6:30 am-8:30 am

Activity: picking up litter in and along the San Marcos River

Special Instructions: we will provide all supplies

Email [Jon Lopez](#)

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EAHCP Meeting Calendar for 2025

Here is the EAHCP meeting calendar for 2025. All meetings will be held in person and can be joined online as well.



2025 EAHCP Committee Meeting Calendar

Committee(s)	Date	Time	Location	Online Meeting Access	Meeting Recording
Stakeholder and Implementing Committees	Thursday, February 6, 2025	10:00 AM	Pauline Espinosa Community Hall	Microsoft Teams Link	Meeting Video
Science Committee	Wednesday, February 26, 2025	9:00 AM	STAR Park - San Marcos	Microsoft Teams Link	Meeting Video
Implementing Committee	Thursday, March 27, 2025	10:00 AM	Edwards Aquifer Authority	Microsoft Teams Link	Meeting Video
Science Committee	Thursday, April 17, 2025	9:00 AM	STAR Park - San Marcos	Microsoft Teams Link	Meeting Video
Implementing Committee	Thursday, May 22, 2025	10:00 AM	Pauline Espinosa Community Hall	Microsoft Teams Link	Meeting Video
Stakeholder and Implementing Committees	Thursday, August 7, 2025	10:00 AM	Edwards Aquifer Authority	Microsoft Teams Link	N/A
Science Committee	Wednesday, September 10, 2025	9:00 AM	STAR Park - San Marcos	Microsoft Teams Link	N/A
Implementing Committee	Thursday, October 9, 2025	10:00 AM	Pauline Espinosa Community Hall	Microsoft Teams Link	N/A
Stakeholder, Science, and Implementing Committees	Thursday, December 18, 2025	10:00 AM	Edwards Aquifer Authority	Microsoft Teams Link	N/A

Updated June 2025

