

Protection of the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone through the Sensitive Land Acquisition Program

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Abstract

The Edwards Aquifer is the sole source of drinking water for over a million people in South Texas. Our responsibility to protect this precious resource is becoming increasingly important, especially with a rapid rate of residential and commercial development occurring within the boundaries of the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone.

The San Antonio Water System initiated a Sensitive Land Acquisition Program in the fall of 1997 specifically for the purpose of protecting and preserving the quality and quantity of water entering into the Recharge Zone. The Land Acquisition Program is a unique and innovative program established to protect lands that are predisposed to geologic sensitivity and contamination. The main objectives of the Land Acquisition Program is to protect water quality through the preservation and protection of point recharge features, such as caves, solution cavities, and sink holes in the Edwards region. Other methods of protection for San Antonio's sole-source aquifer include the establishment of conservation easements and fee simple acquisition of sensitive lands thus achieving the goal of reducing the detrimental impact of certain land use practices on the recharge zone.

To date the Land Acquisition Program has played a role in the preservation of 6,471 acres of recharge zone and approximately 13,700 acres are currently under negotiation. The success of the Land Acquisition Program is a direct result of the partnerships that have been established with non-profit agencies such as The Trust for Public Lands, The Nature Conservancy of Texas, and The Bexar Land Trust. These agencies share a common goal of preservation of open space, protection of water quality, and the protection of species habitat associated with the Edwards Aquifer.