The League of Women Voters of Texas supports legislation to prohibit permits authorizing direct discharge of wastewater into waterways leading to the Edwards Aquifer.

✔ Problems with Rapid Growth:
  • Burgeoning growth in the Hill Country is creating demand for **residential subdivisions** in previously undeveloped areas over the Contributing and Recharge Zones of the Edwards Aquifer.
  • These subdivisions are being built more densely, and developers are applying for **permits to build subdivision-wide sewer systems with water treatment plants**.
  • TCEQ issues 2 types of permits:
    • TLAP (Texas Land Application Permits) for discharge onto the land, also known as “beneficial reuse”
    • TPDES (Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) for discharge into surface water or dry creek beds

✔ Problems with TPDES:
  • Treated wastewater has had pathogens removed, but there are other **components in human sewage which are not removed**: pharmaceuticals, hormones and other organic compounds. Studies are still incomplete about the **cumulative effects of these compounds in drinking water**.
  • The Edwards Aquifer is the primary source of drinking water for almost 2 million residents of the Hill Country. Its features allow for **rainwater, storm water, and waste water to enter the aquifer without filtration through fractures and sinkholes** throughout the contributing and recharge zones.

✔ LWV-TX supports:
  • Measures to protect, conserve, and develop groundwater resources.
  • Management to maintain groundwater quality by preventing harmful contamination of aquifers.
  • A state land use policy that includes the protection of areas of particular significance, including fragile ecosystems.

✔ Legislation needed because:
  • The **Edwards Aquifer** contributing and recharge zones in the San Antonio and Barton Springs segments are **unique geologic formations that require special protection**.
  • Direct discharge of sewage effluent into the aquifer may cause **unknown cumulative effects on future water quality**.
  • Increasing numbers of TCEQ contested case hearings are being held as more TPDES permits are applied for. It is costly and inefficient for this issue to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
  • **There is an alternative** to discharge of wastewater into streams and dry creek beds: **land application** (the TLAP permit). Surface irrigation, evaporation, drain fields, or subsurface land application allows a natural filtration process of vegetation and percolating through large volumes of soil to remove organics and many dangerous chemicals.

For several research articles regarding nutrient pollution and other threats:
http://www.aquiferalliance.net/library/geaa-initiatives-and-issues/

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