



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS

*Empowering all Texans to engage in a more responsible and responsive
democracy*

2017 ACTION PAPER – PROTECT WATER QUALITY IN EDWARDS AQUIFER

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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