



October, 14, 2016

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **Coalition of Six Local Environmental Groups Urge City of Austin Not to Allow Treated Sewage Discharge into Onion Creek**

The City of Dripping Springs (DS) has applied for a direct discharge wastewater permit from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to discharge treated sewage into Onion Creek. TCEQ already issued a draft permit which would allow DS to discharge 995,000 gallons per day into the Creek, which supplies 40% of Barton Springs flow.

Six environmental organizations wrote to the Austin City Council on Tuesday urging COA not to settle with DS unless the result was no direct discharge into the Creek. The Coalition is comprised of Save Barton Creek Association, Clean Water Action, Sierra Club (Austin Regional Group), Save Our Springs Alliance, Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, and Protect Our Water (Hays County). Steve Beers, Co-President of Save Barton Creek Association, says, "We've reason to believe that the City of Austin is trying to settle with Dripping Springs to allow some degree of sewage discharges into Onion Creek."

He continues, "Prior City policy has opposed any direct discharge of treated effluent into streams crossing the Barton Springs Zone, because of negative effects to the Springs, Creek, and private wells. We are asking them to persist in opposing all such direct discharges and to keep trying to win a better outcome for our citizens."

TCEQ has already gotten 870 public comments, an unusually high number, from concerned citizens. Currently, TCEQ is taking additional comments from the public leading up to a November 10 public hearing in Dripping Springs. The coalition is trying to activate Austin residents since the water in Onion Creek flows into Austin and recharges the aquifer that feeds into Barton Springs.

David Foster, State Director of Clean Water Action explains, "Sewage discharge into Onion Creek is a huge threat to Barton Springs. This is one of the most pressing threats facing the aquifer today. If a settlement is reached that allows direct discharge into Onion Creek it will mean a new paradigm in development in Hays County where developments expect to be allowed to pollute the Creek "

The threat from this pollution is not just recreational. Sarah Faust of Protect Our Water explains, "The segment of Onion Creek immediately downstream of the proposed discharge is pristine and very beautiful. A direct discharge would forever alter the water quality of the creek and the wildlife habitat it provides. This is also a drinking water issue for area residents. There is much more groundwater science that needs to be done, but recent studies show strong evidence that Onion Creek recharges the Trinity Aquifer immediately downstream of the proposed wastewater discharge point. There are over a hundred domestic water wells, in addition to the main wells of the Dripping Springs Water Supply Corp., that are in the potential flow path and threatened to be adversely affected by pollutants from the proposed discharge of wastewater effluent."

Opposition to the wastewater discharge goes beyond the groups that signed the letter to COA. The Hays Trinity Groundwater Conservation District and Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District



have also spoken out against the plan. Save Barton Creek Association is asking City of Austin residents to write to their City Council members and TCEQ at [www.savebartoncreek.org/onioncreekeffluent](http://www.savebartoncreek.org/onioncreekeffluent). There will also be a [Rally for Onion Creek](#) on Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm at Barton Springs Pool.

**Contact:** Angela Richter, Interim Director, Save Barton Creek Association

[angela@savebartoncreek.org](mailto:angela@savebartoncreek.org)

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