

Alamo, Austin, and Lone Star chapters of the Sierra Club
Aquifer Guardians in Urban Areas
Bexar Audubon Society
Bexar Green Party
Boerne Together
Cibolo Nature Center
Citizens Allied for Smart Expansion
Citizens for the Protection of Cibolo Creek
Comal County Conservation Alliance
Environment Texas
First Universalist Unitarian Church of San Antonio
Friends of Canyon Lake
Friends of Dry Comal Creek
Friends of Government Canyon
Fuerza Unida
Green Party of Austin
Headwaters at Incarnate Word
Helotes Heritage Association
Helotes Nature Center
Hill Country Planning Association
Green Society of UTSA
Guadalupe River Road Alliance
Guardians of Lick Creek
Kendall County Well Owners Association
Kinney County Ground Zero
Leon Springs Business Association
Medina County Environmental Action Association
Native Plant Society of Texas – SA
Northwest Interstate Coalition of Neighborhoods
Preserve Castroville
Preserve Lake Dunlop Association
San Antonio Audubon Society
San Antonio Conservation Society
San Geronimo Nature Center
San Geronimo Valley Alliance
San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance
San Marcos River Foundation
Save Barton Creek Association
Save Our Springs Alliance
Scenic Loop/Boerne Stage Alliance
Securing a Future Environment
SEED Coalition
Solar San Antonio
Sisters of the Divine Providence
Travis County Green Party
West Texas Springs Alliance
Water Aid – Texas State University
Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation
Wimberley Valley Watershed Association

**PO Box 15618
San Antonio, Texas 78212
(210) 320-6294**

December 3, 2018

Bridget Bohac, Chief Clerk
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Office of the Chief Clerk, MC 105
P.O. Box 13087
Austin, Texas 78711-3087

Submitted electronically at www.tceq.texas.gov/about/comments.html

Re: Comments and Hearing Request Regarding Application of Silesia Properties for TPDES Permit No. WQ0015688001

Please accept the attached comments on behalf of the fifty-two member groups of the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance.

1. Background. Silesia Properties, LP, 24414 Blanco Road, San Antonio, Texas 78260, has applied to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for proposed Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (TPDES) Permit No. WQ0015688001 (EPA I.D. No. TX0138550) to authorize the discharge of treated wastewater at a volume not to exceed a daily average flow of 500,000 gallons per day. The domestic wastewater treatment facility is located at 26226 State Highway 46 West, Spring Branch, in Comal County, Texas 78070. The discharge route is from the plant site via pipe to a dry tributary; thence to Honey Creek; thence to the Guadalupe River.

2. Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance (GEAA). GEAA submits the following comments and requests a public meeting and contested case hearing regarding this permit application. GEAA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that promotes effective broad-based advocacy for protection and preservation of the Edwards Aquifer, its springs, watersheds, and the Texas Hill Country that sustains it. GEAA accomplishes this by producing and distributing educational materials that assist public and private sector decision-makers to take actions to protect and sustain the quality and quantity of Edwards Aquifer flows. We also expand and aid the coordination of existing public interest for sustainable water and land use practices in the Greater Edwards Aquifer region.

GEAA has multiple members who would be adversely affected by the proposed application of Silesia Properties LLC, including Dennis Dawson and Greg Elmendorf, whose properties are both contiguous to the property proposed for development.

GEAA's members' ability to enjoy Honey Creek, the upper Guadalupe River, and the surrounding area would be harmed by TCEQ approval of the application. Accordingly, GEAA urges Silesia Properties LLC to utilize a "One Water" approach for their wastewater treatment system, incorporating beneficial reuse of effluent, thereby eliminating the need to discharge effluent into Honey Creek. In the event Silesia Properties is unable to reuse all of the wastewater generated, it is GEAA's recommendation that the remaining amounts be land applied, with Silesia Properties purchasing the necessary land for such and obtaining the requisite TLAP permit from TCEQ.

3. Comments on the Application. As noted in the Receipt Of Application And Intent To Obtain Water Quality Permit, the proposed discharge route is from the wastewater plant site via pipe to a dry tributary; thence to Honey Creek; thence to the Guadalupe River. There are several areas of concern with the current application:

a) Impact on Honey Creek. Honey Creek is one of the clearest-flowing streams in the Texas Hill Country, with low levels of nutrients (Nitrogen and Phosphorous) and a unique aquatic habitat resulting from these low nutrient levels. The proposed application would introduce Nitrogen levels of at least 20 times that needed to cause eutrophication of the stream; Phosphorous levels introduced by the effluent would be over 40 times the level needed to cause eutrophication of the stream. Streamflow discharge measurements made near the mouth of Honey Creek indicate that often there is no flow in Honey Creek, especially in summer months, which means at certain times the entire flow in the creek would be wastewater, creating an algae-filled stream high in nutrients and low in aquatic life. Even during average flow conditions, almost half of the streamflow would consist wastewater. There simply isn't enough natural flow in Honey Creek to offset the proposed 500,000 gallon/day wastewater discharge.

b) Impact on the upper Guadalupe River. Because Honey Creek has a limestone bed with little soil and aquatic vegetation to absorb nutrients, the wastewater flow would remain largely intact as it enters the Guadalupe River from Honey Creek. Streamflow discharge measurements made on the upper Guadalupe River near the mouth of Honey Creek indicate that often there is no flow in Honey Creek, especially in summer months, meaning the proposed permit would create an all-wastewater, algae-filled flow in the upper Guadalupe River. Even during average Guadalupe River flow conditions, a substantial portion of the flow would consist of nutrient-laden effluent, impacting recreational activities such as swimming, fishing, canoeing, and inner tubing on the river.

c) Impact on Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) assets. GEAA recognizes the value of protecting the iconic and life supporting Honey Creek and Guadalupe River and their adjacent Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) assets, namely Guadalupe River State Park and the Honey Creek State Natural Area. These assets represent enormous taxpayer investment and serve as both a park destination and as a bioreservoir in which aquatic species find sanctuary during periods of low or no flow in the Guadalupe River. Issuance of a discharge permit will degrade both public and private property assets that bring considerable value to countless local residents, visitors, and the citizens of Texas who benefit from the long-term economic

prosperity provided by the clean waters of the Honey Creek State Natural Area and Guadalupe River State Park. The value of these assets will be severely degraded if the current pristine Honey Creek is replaced by an algae-filled waterway that spills into the Guadalupe River. The riparian zones along both Honey Creek and the Guadalupe River will also likely be affected, with negative resulting impacts on local flora and fauna.


d) Impact on local wells. Under the proposed application, the effluent flow will cross the Trinity Aquifer recharge zone, allowing for a direct conduit into the water wells that thousands of local citizens rely on for their drinking water. In addition to the high nitrogen and phosphorous levels described above (which are harmful to humans as well as aquatic life), effluent contains a number of Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs), including pharmaceuticals, personal care products, surfactants, various industrial additives and numerous organic chemicals identified as Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs), creating additional negative health impacts from the water supply.

An accidental spill or discharge of raw sewage or partially-treated sewage from the proposed wastewater plant would prove catastrophic, given the local conditions described above. But even under normal operation, following standard procedures and safeguards for wastewater treatment plants, the local impacts would still be severe.

The TCEQ has previously stated that in evaluating wastewater permits, they consider the baseline conditions in the receiving stream, the physical and hydrological characteristics of the stream, water body uses, and the associated water quality standards that protect those uses. None of these criteria would indicate that the proposed wastewater plan is suitable for the Honey Creek area. Accordingly, GEAA encourages the TCEQ to reject the proposed permit.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments.

Sincerely,



Annalisa Peace
Executive Director