

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

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January 8, 2019

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 RR 417, LLC, for TPDES Permit No. WQ0015713001

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

1. Background. RR 417, LLC, 8839 FM 470, Bandera, Texas, has applied to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for proposed Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (TPDES) Permit No. WQ0015713001 (EPA I.D. No. TX00138673) to authorize the discharge of treated wastewater at a volume not to exceed a daily average flow of 49,000 gallons per day. The domestic wastewater treatment facility will be located at 8839 FM 470, Bandera, in Bandera County, Texas 78003. The discharge route will be from the plant site to Commissioners Creek; thence to Hondo Creek, which flows into the Frio River and then to the Nueces 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 RR 417, LLC. GEAA's members' ability

to enjoy Hondo Creek and the upper Frio River watershed would be harmed by TCEQ approval of the application. Accordingly, GEAA urges RR 417, 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 Indian Creek. In the event DTB Investments, L.P is unable to reuse all of the wastewater generated, it is GEAA’s recommendation that the remaining amounts be land applied, with RR 417, LLC 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 via Commissioner’s Creek; thence to Hondo Creek; thence to the Frio River; thence to the Nueces River. There are several areas of concern with the current application:

a) Impact on the Edwards Aquifer. The proposed effluent discharge point is in the Edwards Aquifer contributing zone and less than five miles from the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone. The path through the contributing zone would often consist primarily of effluent, as Commissioner’s Creek and Hondo Creek are dry or low-flow during much of the year along these creek segments. There is little soil or vegetation in Commissioner’s Creek or Hondo Creek to absorb the excess nutrients and contaminants associated with the effluent, prior to entry into the recharge zone and the Edwards Aquifer. At the beginning of the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone, the effluent would seep from Hondo Creek into the Edwards Aquifer. Therefore, introducing a stream of effluent into Commissioner’s Creek would create a path from the wastewater treatment plant almost directly into the Edwards Aquifer, which provides drinking water for 1.7 million Texans via numerous local wells. This effluent would have high levels of nitrogen and phosphorous and would also contain Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs) including pharmaceuticals, surfactants, and other pollutants. There are numerous human health risks associated with the contamination of the Edwards Aquifer with wastewater plant effluent.

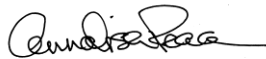
b) Impacts on Hondo Creek. Hondo Creek runs approximately 67 miles from its source west of Tarpley TX to its confluence with the Frio River. The point at which the effluent would enter Hondo Creek (the confluence with Commissioner’s Creek) is approximately 10 miles downstream from the Hondo Creek headwaters, so most of Hondo Creek (57 miles) would be impacted by this permit. The 4 miles of Hondo Creek below the confluence with Commissioner’s Creek consists of shallow, clear water that is used for recreation (swimming, fishing, tubing) and watering of cattle by local ranches that border Hondo Creek. Because of the low nutrient levels in this section of Hondo Creek, the introduction of high-nutrient effluent would have a dramatic impact on water quality, creating algae blooms and contaminating Hondo Creek. Beyond this 4-mile segment, Hondo Creek enters the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone. The 10-mile section of Hondo Creek in the recharge zone consists of alternating reaches of dry limestone creek and often lengthy pools of clear water which are home to fish and other aquatic life. These pools are small local ecosystems, supporting surrounding wildlife and vegetation. The proposed permit would not only impact the Edwards Aquifer as described in section a) above, but these pools would change from clear, pristine life-supporting water bodies

to algae-covered, low-oxygen nutrient-heavy ponds. Fish and other aquatic life that reside in these pools would not be able to escape to more oxygenated water and would likely die off.

c) Accidental Spills. Due to the close proximity of the outfall point to Hill Country State Recreational Area and Hondo Creek (both less than one mile away from the proposed outfall point), there is significant risk of sewage spills contaminating surface water and groundwater.

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 this area. Accordingly, GEAA encourages the TCEQ to reject the proposed permit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Annalisa Peace", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Annalisa Peace
Executive Director