



Dear GEAA members and friends,

On March 1st, the [TCEQ filed](#) in the 3rd Court of Appeals to dispute the January 30th Final Judgment of the lower court to reverse the TCEQ Board's decision to approve a permit to discharge 350,000 gallons/day of sewage effluent from the Johnson Ranch Subdivision directly on to the ranch next door.

If you recall, GEAA has been [working](#) with the Lux and Graham families, the owners of this ranch, since 2014 to oppose this permit, as [we oppose all permits that would allow direct discharge into waterways that recharge the Edwards Aquifer](#). In this case, the discharge from the Johnson Ranch sewage treatment plant would flow into Cibolo Creek, a major Edwards Aquifer recharge feature.

What we find particularly galling is the TCEQ's persistence in challenging a [court ruling](#) that found that the permit would lessen the value of the ranch and severely compromise the owners' use and enjoyment of their property. As we have stated repeatedly, it seems like the rights of developers to do whatever makes them the most money are the only property rights recognized by TCEQ and the State of Texas.

We will be working during this legislative session to oppose legislation that grants any Municipal Utility District powers of eminent domain outside of the MUD boundaries, and on other efforts to curb the abuse of eminent domain.

Towards this end, we are pleased to announce that GEAA has joined [Texans for Property Rights](#), a coalition of landowners' organizations dedicated to ensuring that the process of eminent domain is fair and respectful of their private property rights when they are forced to sell their land. You can read more about these legislative reforms [here](#) and [here](#).

These eminent domain reform bills stand in stark contrast to some bills masquerading as property rights bills that have been filed this session on

behalf of developers – bills that would torpedo municipal rights to protect trees and the Edwards Aquifer.

Yesterday, [Senator Donna Campbell](#) and [Representative Paul Workman](#) filed [SB 1385](#) and [HB 1135](#), which would require cities to purchase conservation easements to offset current impervious cover restrictions on the [Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone](#). If passed, this bill would have the effect of establishing a new threshold for regulatory takings at anything less than 45% impervious cover, undoing existing environmental regulations and weakening new ones. Thus, more construction would occur on steep slopes, around sensitive environmental features, and in sensitive areas, reducing groundwater recharge, exacerbating non-point source pollutant loading, and increasing erosion and downstream flooding. Both of these legislators represent districts that contain parts of the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. We urge their constituents among you to contact their offices and express your displeasure.

We are also concerned about legislation filed by [Senator Campbell](#), [Representative Workman](#), [Representative Phelan](#), and senators [Nichols](#), [Kolkhorst](#) and [Bettencourt](#), that challenge tree protection ordinances. Our region is recognized as one of the most flood-prone areas in the nation. Allowing unlimited tree removal for new development exposes property owners in topographically lower areas to property damage from flooding. Please [contact your legislators](#) to request that they vote no on [SB 782](#), [SB 1082](#), [SB 898](#), [HB 1572](#), [SB 744](#), [HB 2052](#). You can read more about these bills in the [Alamo Sierra Club's newsletter](#) article *Clearcutting Bills Threaten Texas Trees*.

Stay tuned for more news on the legislative session, especially news about bills we are working on to protect the Edwards Aquifer from sewage discharges. We hope to have some good news soon!

Annalisa Peace

Executive Director
[Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance](#)

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