



LATEST NEWS

Lennar's development plans in the Hill Country put Edwards Aquifer at risk

Op Ed by: Annalisa Peace Express News Jan. 1, 2025



William Luther, Staff / San Antonio Express-News

Proposed housing developments will create the potential to pollute San Antonio's water supplies by discharging sewage effluent into Helotes Creek, which is a stream that recharges the Edwards Aquifer.

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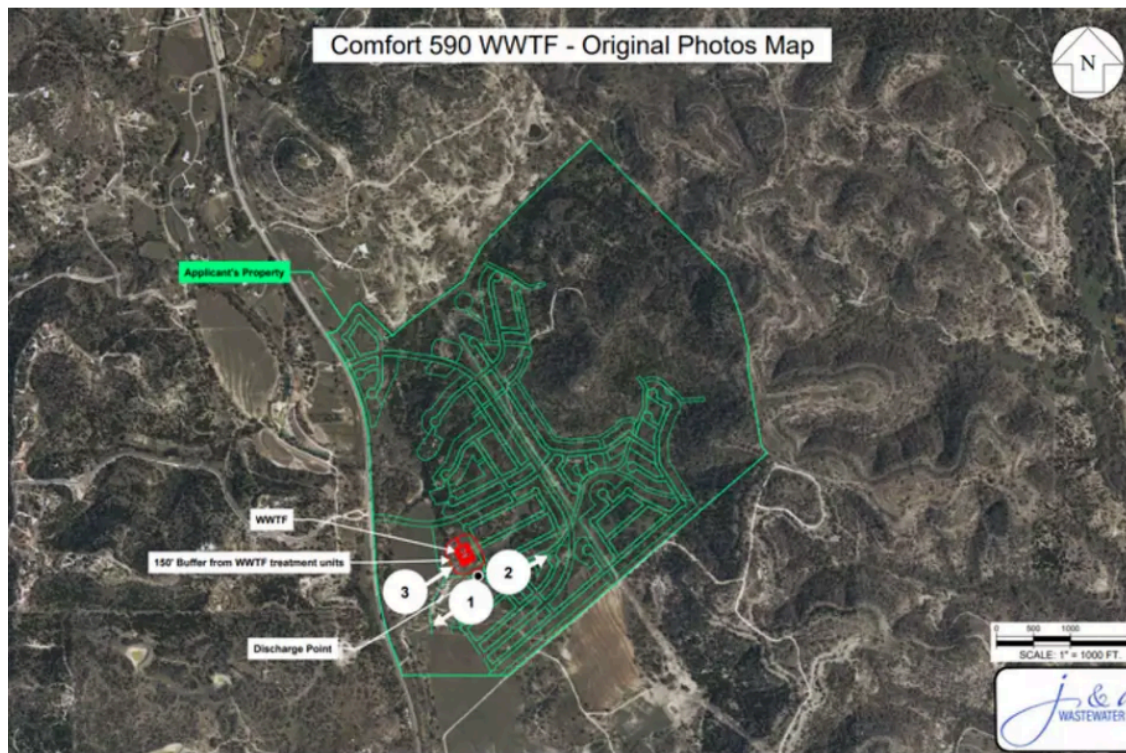
The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, along with local residents, has heartburn over two projects proposed by Florida-based developer Lennar Corp.

Lennar plans to build 2,900 homes on 1,100 acres of the Guajolote Ranch near Grey Forest and has proposed a 1,100-home development on 600 acres, referred to as “Comfort 590,” with plans for an additional 1,300 units near Comfort.

While we are aware of the need for affordable housing, building such high-density projects on lands that furnish our water supplies will have long-term adverse impacts.

Both projects are on the Edwards Aquifer contributing zone — the drainage area of the Edwards Plateau that contributes surface water and groundwater to the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

Our issue with Lennar’s plan for Guajolote Ranch is its potential to pollute San Antonio’s water supplies by discharging sewage effluent into Helotes Creek, a stream that recharges the Edwards Aquifer.



A map detailing the location of a proposed 1,100-home-development north of Comfort and the wastewater plant serving it. There is concern the development will lead to discharging

sewage effluent into Helotes Creek, which is a stream that recharges the Edwards Aquifer.
JA Wastewater, LLC

The Comfort 590 project proposes to discharge sewage effluent into Cypress Creek and hence to the Guadalupe River, which contributes to the Trinity Aquifer recharge. Lennar also proposes to draw 250 gallons of groundwater per unit per day, threatening to deplete the already overdrafted Cow Creek formation of the Trinity Aquifer.

Compounding our anxiety is our past experience negotiating with Lennar.

In 2016, the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance and the Bulverde Neighborhood Alliance [signed a settlement agreement](#) with Lennar for the 4S Ranch. The settlement called for, among other things, protection of a large recharge cave on the property and a stormwater drainage plan that would protect neighboring property owners.

In September 2019, we learned that Lennar had violated significant provisions of this settlement agreement. Lots were sold within the buffer zone agreed upon to protect the cave, and stormwater culverts were built that would inundate the property of downstream neighbors.

During the 4.1-inch storm of Oct. 24, 2019, stormwater laden with mud and debris from construction of the subdivision deluged a contiguous property; not only was Lennar in violation of the negotiated settlement, it was also in violation of its Texas Commission for Environmental Quality-issued permits for requirements to meet the Clean Water Act.

Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance and Bulverde Neighborhood Alliance [secured an agreement](#) to relocate the development's stormwater detention pond, along with payment of \$175,000 from Lennar and its contractors, Pape-Dawson Engineers Inc. and SACC Inc., to remediate stormwater damage.

There was no way, however, to secure permanent protection of the

recharge features that were violated as the agreed-upon buffers were already encroached by newly built homes.

Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance has had multiple discussions with Lennar about the developments within our service area due to the unique requirements of protecting the Edwards and Trinity karst aquifers. Despite the fact that they employ Pape-Dawson Engineers, the authors of San Antonio's Low Impact Development Manual, Lennar has declined to incorporate these best practices into their site designs.

The Edwards Aquifer is designated by the [Texas Commission for Environmental Quality](#) as the most environmentally vulnerable aquifer in the state. Scientists concur that to protect this groundwater supply, impervious cover should be limited to 10%.

The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance has no problem with most of Lennar's developments slated for the San Antonio area. We only ask that Lennar leadership respect the discrepancies in what constitutes good sites for their projects and refrain from proceeding with these two projects on the Edwards Aquifer contributing zone.

Annalisa Peace is executive director of the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, which unites 62 member organizations and hundreds of individuals to build statewide support for conservation and sustainable management of the Edwards Aquifer ecosystem.

Jan 1, 2025
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