

## ENVIRONMENT



Steve Baxter, a fifth-generation rancher from Lampasas, poses near the Pedernales River, which bisects the Arch Ray development's property. The company said it will reuse wastewater onsite, rather than send effluent into the river. — Standard-Radio Post/Ken Esten Cooke

# A 180 on the Pedernales

## Arch Ray Resort to pursue wastewater reuse instead of releasing treated effluent into river

By Ken Esten Cooke

Standard-Radio Post publisher

Arch Ray, the development on the eastern edge of town, has done an about-face on how it will treat wastewater from its facility. After consulting a new project engineer, Arch Ray will now treat and redistribute its wastewater around its property, as opposed to having it processed into treated effluent and sent down the Pedernales River.

The Baxter family owners, who have been in ranching near Lampasas for six generations and own a stone quarry, made the announcement recently and want to clear the air with critics who feared for the health of the waterway.

“Coming from another small community, we’re trying to be considerate,” said Shane Baxter, son



The water treatment facility installed at the development. This facility from a Taylor company will treat wastewater and allow the treated effluent to be reused onsite.

of owners Steve and Sally Baxter, who oversees the construction projects. “We want to find a win-win solution.”

Shane Baxter said they did not know many engineers, and the first one they hired suggested processing the wastewater

then releasing the effluent into the Pedernales. The City of Fredericksburg does the same upstream.

“We never have intended to put any kind of water into the river ever,” Steve Baxter said.

The Baxters said they have been working on a

water permit for three years.

David Price, PE, said his group, AusTex Development, will design the zero-discharge system. Price, the family said, also designed the wastewater system for Altstadt Brewing.

Price will design a 100% reuse facility with a drip irrigation system that will provide water to the rest of the grounds, including, possibly, a future vineyard.

At a public hearing last year with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the treated effluent plan was not well-received by locals. Some feared a bad precedent with a private entity being allowed to send treated effluent downriver.

But the new plan will have the treated water

ARCH RAY ▶ A/B4

## ARCH RAY

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used all over the growing complex.

The owners are dealing with a fast-growing development and governmental agencies at every level: the City of Fredericksburg, from which it has requested annexation and possible city services, which takes a lot of time; Gillespie County, which has limited authority to regulate any developments, as dictated by state law; and the State of Texas, where the TCEQ oversees any issues dealing with river impacts.

But the Baxters want to be seen as responsible stewards as well as developers. At the family's ranch near Bend, the Baxter family ran as many as 3,600 acres, Steve Baxter said.

"We are six generations Texan from an area just an hour north of here," said Shane Baxter. "We do care about what we're doing with water usage. We're going to be considerate of the community. We are not dumping in the Pedernales. We had top TCEQ people out here inspecting. I want to make that very clear."

"We have a more to lose than anyone because we own the land along the river," Steve Baxter added. "We have lived on land on the Colorado River so we want to keep it clean."

That is reflected in the family's connection to the land, but also in new rules for the RV and short-term rental portion of the property, which states all plants must be native to Texas.

The family's ethos plays into the food and drink it serves as well. An Angus-Waygu beef served in the resort's restaurant is from the family's Bend ranch, and its beer and alcohols are produced onsite. Even their coffee is roasted locally.

"We're conscious of using local ingredients whenever possible," Shane Baxter said.

### History

The Baxters opened Fiesta Winery in 2010, which proved a success in the burgeoning wine industry. The family then purchased a plot of land along US 290 East with eyes for a resort and hotel which would house a winery location, a brewery and, eventually, a Wyndham Hotel.

Plans for the hotel are still under-



The development features a winery and brewery with a theme reflecting the family's ranching heritage.

way. Baxter said he chose Wyndham-Dolce because they would allow customization of the facility's look to match the rest of the facility, instead of the other way around.

That will be Phase 2 of the resort project, which will include a 120-room, L-shaped hotel between the resort and Highway 290.

Additional land, historically known as The Mogford Homestead, was purchased on the east side of the river to house an RV facility, now being expanded for luxury RVs, which include a hookup and, in some cases, a building for indoor storage and additional housing space. Baxter said of the 244 large RV sites, only 44 remain.

A historic but crumbling building on the Mogford land may be restored and moved to another part of the property to preserve it, he added.

And there is additional acreage where short-term rentals and second homes are being erected by eight different construction contractors. Those could help alleviate the housing crunch in Fredericksburg and perhaps return some properties to family homes, they said.

And they want to keep the look tasteful for Texas.

"We're trying to make the structures feel and look like they've been

there for 100 years," Sean Baxter said.

"Most of our buyers for these sites are people who visit the tasting room," Steve Baxter said. Those people want a second homesite near Fredericksburg, which they visit frequently, and can rent out when they are not in town.

"One thing we've been focusing on, because we know the area is sensitive to it, is the water component," Shane Baxter said. "We actually went in and reduced the water usage by 30 percent. And we ended up adding the engineer for 100% wastewater reuse and we are pursuing that. It's not yet complete but it's in the works."

The project's opponents may not like the overall development, Shane said, but development is here as Gillespie County has become an attractive place to invest.

Sally Baxter, who completed master gardener training and wants to complete the master naturalist training, sees an opportunity in "keeping things Texas," even in a new development.

Arch Ray, she said, will eventually mirror city development rules, including water use restrictions, in allowing only installation of native plants and having rules for those at their home and RV sites.