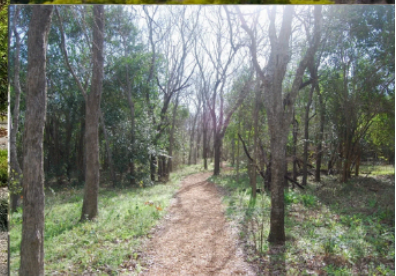
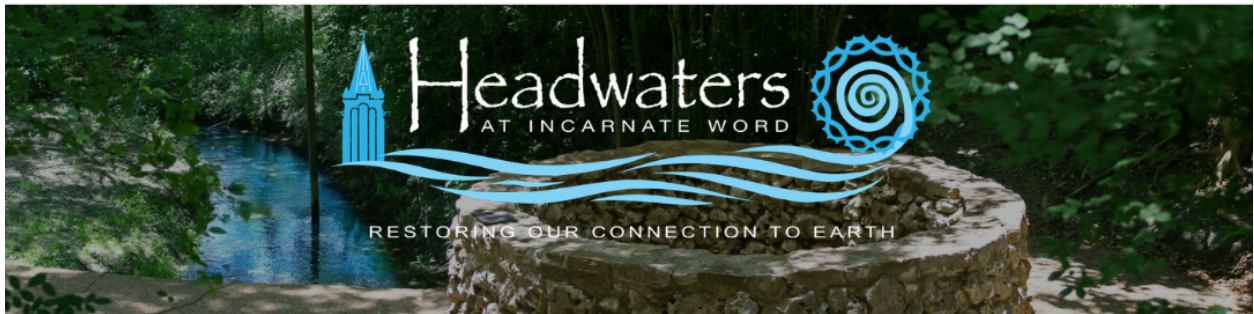


GEAA

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



"Care for our common home"

Member Group Spotlight:
Headwaters at Incarnate Word

Mission

Headwaters at Incarnate Word is an urban nature sanctuary built on ecological restoration, spiritual reflection, and community stewardship. The Sanctuary's vision is to center the Blue Hole spring in a place of beauty and quiet, acting as a safe haven for native plants, animals, and people who need an escape from urban surroundings. The Sanctuary invites exploration through connective walking trails, and through interpretive programs reflecting on the area's ecology, hydrology, history, and prehistory. Headwaters is a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. The Headwaters Sanctuary is free and open to the public.

"Our mission is to preserve, restore, and celebrate the rich natural, cultural, historical, spiritual, and educational values of the headwaters of the San Antonio River, especially within the 53-acre Headwaters Sanctuary.

We respond to the call for a sustainable relationship with God's creation by offering environmental education, reflective experiences on care of creation, and practical, hands-on volunteer opportunities to restore and protect the land. Headwaters at Incarnate Word is a nonprofit sponsored Earth care ministry of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word."

History

The Blue Hole is one of the four great fountain springs of Texas, alongside Comal, San Marcos, and Barton Springs. All four come from the same source: the Edwards Aquifer. Evidence of human presence dates back nearly 12,000 years, and the springs hold profound cultural significance across that span of time. Once a fountain spring, the Blue Hole's flow has been greatly diminished by more than a century of aquifer pumping. The first artesian wells drilled into the Edwards Aquifer in the 1890s immediately reduced spring flow, and continued draws to supply a growing population has left the springs dry for most of the year. Yet the headwaters remain a powerful symbol of the literal and spiritual life-giving essence of water. The Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word established Headwaters at Incarnate Word in 2005 as an Earth care ministry to steward and restore the land. In 2020, Headwaters took a landmark step by placing the Sanctuary under a Conservation Easement, permanently protecting the Blue Hole and its surrounding ecosystem for future generations.

Programs

Headwaters pursues an ambitious and interconnected suite of restoration, scientific, and community programs across the Sanctuary.

Chief among these programs is the Invasive Plant Management Program, which began in 2020, and is now approximately 69 % complete across the Sanctuary property. A growing community of volunteers continue to contribute countless hours to restoring as much native biodiversity as possible, including clearing invasive tree species, protecting what grows naturally, safeguarding seeded native areas, and building a native multi-layered understory to restore structural diversity to the land.

A recent phase of the program focused on the steep embankments of Olmos Creek, and was made possible through support from the **Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund**. This grant allowed Headwaters to hire a specialized chainsaw operator and crew to safely remove the invasive canopy. Working three mornings per week, volunteers required three months to haul brush and trunks to a staging location for future mulching and transport.

The Prairie Restoration Program and Circle of the Springs Garden are both volunteer-driven extensions of this broader effort, returning native grasses, wildflowers, and pollinator habitat to the Sanctuary.

Additional Programs and Projects:

- Solar-Powered Wildlife Water Station Project 2026
- Sanctuary Master Plan 2026
- Spirit Reach Project (2026–2028): A major multi-year initiative to connect the Blue Hole to Mission San Francisco de la Espada.
- Pedestrian Bridge Project (2025–2026)
- 12-Month Biodiversity Study (2026–2027)
- Bexar Audubon South Central Texas Bird Surveys (multi-year, initiated 2026)

How to follow and support

- Visit the Sanctuary! Open to the public, pedestrians and leashed pets are welcome.

- Attend a 2nd Friday Bird Walk or other public events listed at www.headwaters-iw.org.
- Sign up to volunteer at volunteer @ headwaters-iw.org. Online Headwaters Volunteer Calendar.
- Sign up for the Headwaters newsletter to stay informed on programs and events; info@headwaters-iw.org.