

EAHCP STEWARD

News from the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan - September 2022



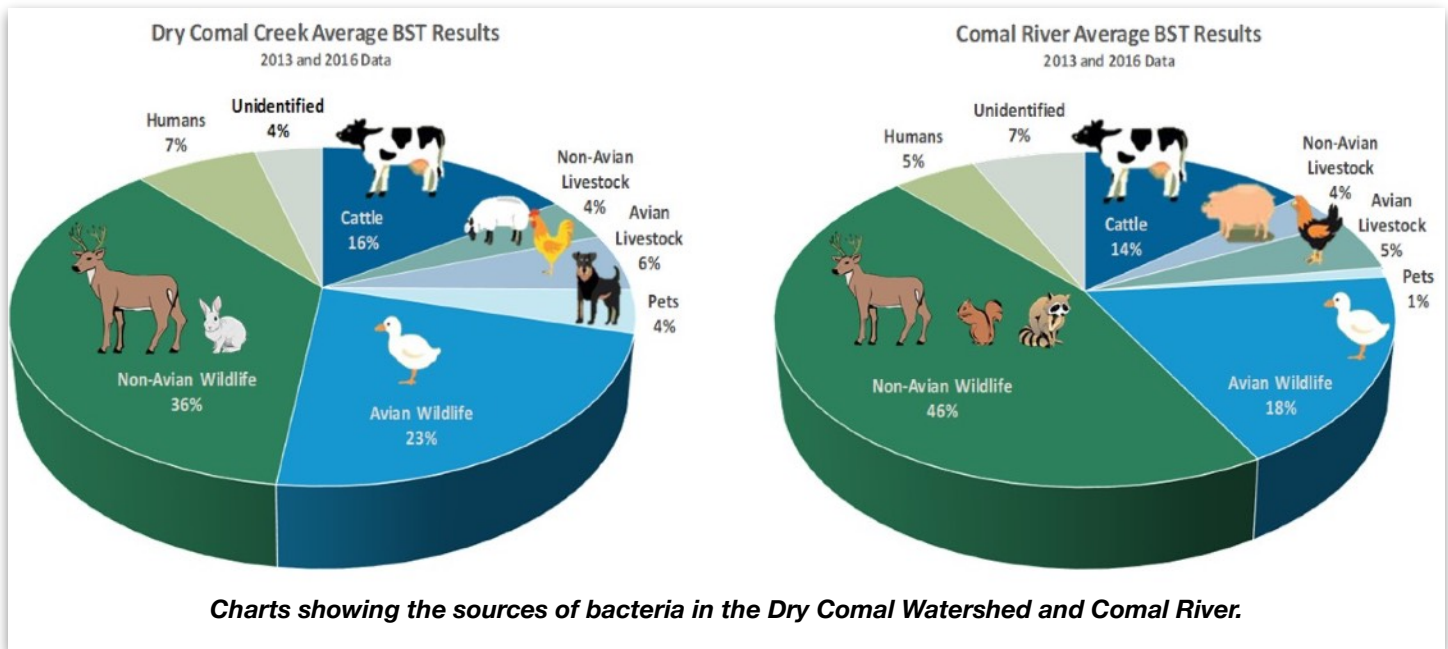
Born to be Wild

New Braunfels receives major grant to help the city implement its watershed protection plan. Mark Enders talks about the City's efforts to stop visitors from feeding wildlife in Landa Park.

Toward the end of 2021, the City of New Braunfels received some welcome news that it would be the recipient of an \$826,377 grant to help the municipality continue its efforts to improve the water quality in the Dry Comal Creek and Comal River.

“We feel very fortunate to have received that sizable grant as well as the previous three grants we’ve applied for over the past couple of years to help fund the development and implementation of the Dry Comal Creek and Comal River Watershed Protection Plan,” said Mark Enders, the City of New Braunfels watershed program manager. “The grant came from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as part of their Clean Water Act non-point source pollution grant program. The funds flow through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), which is responsible for evaluating the water quality of waterways in the State. While that’s good news to report, the flip-side is the reason for the grant is to help reduce growing

Born to be Wild - Continued



levels of bacteria discovered a few years ago in the Dry Comal Creek and Comal River. More than half of the most recent grant award will be used to construct an underground stormwater treatment vault just upstream of the confluence of the two waterways. That significant piece of infrastructure will collect stormwater from an existing underground storm drain pipe and clean it up before finally discharging the water into the Dry Comal Creek and Comal River. Other uses of the funds will include public outreach regarding the issue as well as pet waste and urban wildlife management.”

The City of New Braunfels has two programs in place to help protect surface water quality and the associated ecosystem. One is what’s known as a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit program which includes the development and implementation of a stormwater management plan that maps out how the City manages stormwater runoff and minimizes stormwater pollution. This type of permit is mandated by the federal government and administered through a state environmental agency, which in Texas is TCEQ. There are a myriad of stormwater pollution prevention measures associated with the MS4 stormwater permit to include public education, oversight of active construction sites and regulating how new developments are constructed to ensure water flowing off of those developments is not contributing stormwater pollutants to nearby streams and rivers. The city is also responsible for inspecting those projects after completion. In addition to watching over privately-owned facilities for water quality purposes, the city also must manage its own operations and infrastructure to ensure they are not causing an increase in pollution to the environment.

Stormwater runoff is generated from rain events that flow over land or impervious surfaces, such as paved streets, parking lots, and building rooftops, and does not soak into the ground. The runoff picks up pollutants like trash, chemicals, oils, and dirt/sediment that can harm local rivers, streams, lakes and eventually the bays at the end of a river system. To protect these resources, communities, construction companies, industries, and others, use stormwater management measures, known as best management practices (BMPs) to prevent the discharge of pollutants and/ or filter out pollutants near their source.

The other water quality program that New Braunfels is engaged in, along with project partners, is the Watershed Protection Program (WPP) which addresses the management of bacteria loadings in the Dry Comal Creek and Comal River. A few years ago, both of these waterways were listed on the EPA’s 303(d) list, which essentially means that state water quality standards for bacteria were exceeded. The State of Texas, through the Clean Rivers Program, monitors its water bodies for various water quality parameters

Born to be Wild - Continued

and then it provides a list to the EPA of waterways that don't meet the water quality standards established by the state and EPA. One upside of these programs is that the two agencies also can help local authorities establish water pollution prevention programs to get those out-of-compliance waterways back to healthier water quality levels.



Enders noted that this type of watershed protection

plan is voluntary as opposed to the mandatory MS4 stormwater program. And while the City's WPP is not directly tied to the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP), the advances it makes in improving the quality of its stormwater runoff also benefits the EAHCP's ability to protect the endangered species and species' habitats that are in the Comal River and Comal Springs.

"Once we discovered that we had elevated levels of bacteria in the Dry Comal Creek and Comal River, we set out to find out what the causes were in order to put the best remedies in place," Enders said. "So we started with what's known as bacteria source tracking to get some answers to the source question. What we learned is that 60-70 percent of the bacteria was coming from urban wildlife. There is a large population of ducks and geese in Landa Park and we found that those numbers were growing due to visitors feeding the wildlife. Additionally, there is an over-population of white tail deer in the area and so the combination of those two were escalating our bacteria levels in the rivers."

To address the situation, the City of New Braunfels passed an ordinance prohibiting the feeding of wildlife within the City, including City parks. There are signs throughout these areas explaining the situation and asking patrons' cooperation. Additionally, the City traps nonnative waterfowl in Landa Park to help reduce the amount of waste running into the local creeks and rivers.

"We are only a couple of years into the implementation of the WPP and the overall plan has a 10-year planning horizon. Our goal is to reduce the bacteria counts by 34 percent in the Dry Comal Creek and 50 percent in the Comal River over the 10 years. We do monthly water quality sampling and analyze our findings on a regular basis. It's a little early to speak specifically about results, I can say that we're moving in a positive direction. There are many variables we contend with like rainy and dry cycles, stormwater runoff and best-practices being used in newer developments, but I'd like to think that our efforts in the watershed protection plan have been helping move us in the right direction. The larger infrastructure pieces which are yet to come will also play a central role in helping us."



EAHCP STEWARD SHORT TAKES

Upcoming Listen and Learn Workshops

Workshop 3: Climate Change and System Vulnerability

Thursday, September 22, 2022, 3:30 PM – 6:30 PM
Dunbar Recreation Center
801 W. MLK, San Marcos, TX 78666

Workshop 4: Conservation Measures

October 4, 2022 - 3:30 PM – 6:30 PM
New Braunfels Civic Center – Garden Room
375 S Castell Ave, New Braunfels, TX 78130

You can learn more about the Listen and Learn series at www.eahcprenewal.org.

National HCP Coalition Conference Set for Oct. 24-27 in Austin Sign Up Today

The National HCP Coalition Annual Meeting brings together HCP practitioners from across the country, including federal, state, and local agency staff, consultants, stakeholders, policy experts, and scientists. Complete event information is available on the NHCP website.

Conference Overview Itinerary:

- Evening Welcome Reception on October 24
- Day 1: October 25 - Welcome and lecture series
- Day 2: October 26 - Field Trip Day (Texas Cave Tour, Springs and Songbirds (ADA accessible), or Edwards Aquifer Tour)
- Day 3: October 27 - Lecture series and closing

[You can read more about the agenda topics and keynote speakers at this link.](#)

San Marcos Fall River Clean-Up Happening Saturday, Oct. 1

It's that time of year for the San Marcos Fall River Clean-Up. It will be held Saturday, October 1, from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Registration is now open to anyone in San Marcos or the surrounding communities.

If you need assistance completing your registration or have any questions, please contact Brittney Moore at this email address, BMoore@sanmarcostx.gov, or call 512-393-8422.

[You can go to this link to select a watershed you want to work in and then register.](#)

EAHCP STEWARD SHORT TAKES

City of New Braunfels Dos Rios Clean-Up Set for Oct. 8

The City of New Braunfels will be holding its annual Dos Rios Fall River Clean-Up event Saturday, October 1, 9 a.m. - noon. The group will meet at the Headwaters at the Comal, 333 E. Klingemann St., and the clean-up will happen rain or shine.

No pre-registration necessary! Just show up and participate. Cleanup supplies, t-shirts, and breakfast provided while they last!

To learn more about the event, [you can click on this link](#). Or, you can email pquast@newbraunfels.gov with questions.

New Informational Signs Posted in New Braunfels and San Marcos



The EAHCP team has posted some new informational signs in New Braunfels and San Marcos. You can see a [short slide show at this link](#).