



EAHCP STEWARD

News from the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan - May-June 2024



On December 29, 2016, Robert Leo Hulseman, the inventor of the “red solo cup” passed away at age 84. On February 20, 2024, the San Marcos City Council passed an ordinance to eliminate that iconic plastic party stein and other single use beverage containers from being used on the San Marcos River. And while no one expects the new ordinance to put a dent in plastic cup profits, City and Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP) leaders are hoping the new restrictions greatly reduce the impacts of single-use trash on the environmentally sensitive San Marcos Springs and San Marcos River.

Solo No Mo' - Continued



Mark Enders showing off the new Reuse at the River signs and his reusable cup. The EAHCP sign is just behind him.

“We know that people from all over the state come to San Marcos to enjoy the cool San Marcos Spring water on our hot summer days,” said Mark Enders, EAHCP Manager for the City of San Marcos. “And as our state grows, we expect our tourist count to increase as well. That means a likely increase in trash deposited in and around the river and we know that litter can negatively impact the endangered species and their habitats. So, it is up to city leaders to find a balance in welcoming visitors but also informing them about our collective duty to protect the environmental aspects of that ecosystem that is the heart and soul of San Marcos.”

Enders explained that fish like the endangered fountain darter can sometimes ingest small paper and plastic pieces, also known as “micro trash,” which can ultimately cause them to die. Larger pieces of trash like cans, bottles and plastic bags can crowd out native plant habitats, such as the endangered Texas wild-rice, and impact aquatic life.

Modern society’s throw away culture actually had a meaningful beginning. Disposable cups became widely used in the 1930s to prevent communicable disease spread by the practice of sharing water dippers and communal cups in public places. The Dixie Cup company began creating disposable items to address those community health issues and Robert Hulseman’s father and employee of Dixie, Leo, ventured out on his own to start a company called Paper Container Manufacturing Company. That company ultimately invented that plastic party sensation...the Solo cup.

“The Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP) specifically lists litter management as a funded habitat conservation measure,” Enders noted. “Because that provision is in the EAHCP, we are required to have a litter management program to ensure we are in compliance with the federal permit that protects endangered species. So, for the last 10 years we have hired contractors to remove litter from Spring Lake, the headwaters of the San Marcos River, all the way down to Stokes Park, which is the city park furthest

Solo No Mo' - Continued

furthest south along the river. Additionally, the City has dedicated significant staff and resources towards litter collection in City parks immediately adjacent to the San Marcos River. However, with the rise in the use of reusable containers and improper disposal, it really made sense for local governments to prohibit the single use beverage containers and require reusable ones to reduce the impacts of litter.”

The two major city ordinance provisions included in the Reuse at the River program include:

- river patrons are permitted to use only reusable drink containers on the river, along the banks of the river and in designated areas within City Parks, also known as "No Zones," and,
- each person is permitted one cooler/ice chest of less than 30 quarts within the No Zones.

In addition to the No Zones, the City established some Go Zones where single use cups and beverage containers are still allowed. Those Go Zones are designated areas where fixed picnic tables, away from river banks, are located and less prone to having trash blown into the river on windy days. Those established picnic areas also have more trash and recycling receptacles to help people dispose of their litter properly.

“There is a great map on the City’s web pages dedicated to this program that show exactly where the No Zones and Go Zones are,” Enders explained. “The map will give people some good general knowledge about the two zones’ locations. Once visitors get to the park and river entrances, they will also see some new signs that explain what is and is not allowed on the river and where those provisions apply. For the most part, there is a nice walkway that runs between river entrances and the park picnic areas. Those walkways essentially provide a dividing line between Go Zones and No Zones. Many of the new signs have been placed near existing EAHCP signs that explain which endangered species thrive in these areas and why we’re protecting them. We understand that these new practices will take some time to become commonplace with visitors. For that reason, we don’t expect the park rangers will be writing many citations the first year of the new ordinance. City park staff and the EAHCP Conservation Crew will be out in force this summer to inform people about the new regulations and explain why their cooperation is important.”

As it is with most city ordinances, there are penalties for violating ordinance provisions. In this case, a fine for taking single use beverage containers to the San Marcos River could be as high as \$500.



Here's a photo from the City of San Marcos' Reuse at the River website.

Solo No Mo' - Continued



Getting the new ordinance right...reusable cups, 30-quart ice chest and dog on a leash.

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“One of the things we are very interested in learning with this new ordinance is how much trash and litter will be reduced over time,” Enders said. “As mentioned, we’ve been collecting trash and data about that trash for more than 10 years as it is a program within the EAHCP. So, we’re really hoping that the new river and park guidelines will help reduce the amount of trash we have to pick up from within the river. That in turn could lead to helping us reallocate those EAHCP dollars to other research and endangered species protection programs. And since the EAHCP staff and permittees are the middle of developing a new permit application for 2028, this could be good timing for some beneficial results from the new San Marcos ordinance to inform that federal permit renewal application.”

Enders also noted that the City of New Braunfels has a similar and slightly more stringent ordinance in place, and the City of Martindale also prohibits single use containers as well.

[If you are interested in reading and/or downloading the new ordinance, click here.](#)

[The Reuse at the River website can be found here.](#)

[And for trivia buffs, you can read a lengthy story on the history of the Solo cup here.](#)

EAHCP STEWARD SHORT TAKES

[Listen to this month's EAHCP Steward Podcast by clicking here.](#)

EAHCP Happenings

- Texas Aquatic Plant Management Society – Applications for the David Allen Bass Scholarship are now open! For more information, visit: <https://www.tapms.org/annual-meeting>
- **Save the Date!** – The National Habitat Conservation Plan Coalition will be having their annual meeting December 10 -12, 2024 in Palm Springs, California. Visit <https://www.nhcpcoalition.org/2024-annual-meeting/> to join the mailing list and stay tuned for more information.
- 2024 **EAHCP Calendar:**<https://www.edwardsaquifer.org/habitat-conservation-plan/eahcp-calendar/>

Welcome Sarah Garcia to EAHCP Team

The Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP) has continued the Summer Internship program with University of Texas at San Antonio student Sarah Garcia.

Currently, Sarah is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in environmental studies with expected graduation in December 2025. Her work with the EAHCP includes using the ArcMap GIS application and helping EAHCP staff on various HCP projects.



How to Access EAHCP Committee Documents

The EAHCP Committee documents are available at this link: www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/r1ku53l7gz446edghx91l/How-To-Access-EAHCP-Committee-Meeting-Documents-on-EAA-Legistar_v3.mp4?rlkey=gr0qg4hodp47w47ekcnsepx1r&dl=0

