



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)s

1) What is the City seeking a permit for?

Dripping Springs (DS) has applied for a permit with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to discharge up to 995,000 gallons of treated sewage into Walnut/Onion Creek each day

2) What is our Community's reaction to the City's permit request?

Our neighbors downstream to the requested discharge have serious concerns. The following have filed formal public opposition and/or written resolutions.

- City of Austin, City of Buda
- Barton Springs/Edward Aquifer Conservation District
- Hays-Trinity Groundwater Conservation District
- Wimberley Water Supply Corporation
- Hill Country Alliance
- Save Barton Creek Association, Save Our Springs Alliance
- Driftwood Historical Conservation Society
- Sierra West Property Owners Association
- Protect Our Water
- 1500+ Citizens

3. What is the nature of the concerns?

- Public Health Risk. Groundwater scientists (Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer and Hays/Trinity Groundwater Conservation Districts) oppose the DS permit because of scientific analysis providing strong evidence that Onion creek recharges the aquifer - meaning that public and private wells pulling from the aquifer could be contaminated by this treated sewage. *Special note*: this study was initiated prior to any permit application so it was not done in response. To the contrary, it emerged at a critical time with compelling evidence that should be considered for the health of our community.
- Degradation of Pristine Hill Country Creek. Treated sewage will also cause algae blooms that rob the creek of oxygen and degrade the pristine wildlife habitat of Onion Creek. Scientists have modeled the degradation impact and it would occur for miles on the creek.
- Protecting Community Growth. Nothing can threaten our community's growth quicker than having a contaminated ground water. Opponents believe there is a viable alternative to re-use the water (DS is promoting this) and build storage for wet weather (this would require a storage pond).

4. Isn't this Discharge needed for community growth? Isn't our community 'at capacity'?

No. Dripping Springs is not 'out of capacity'. There are 1.2M+ gallons/day of wastewater capacity already permitted by TCEQ (5 permits) in our community. We understand the City is seeking to consolidate, but that is different from making an argument that they are 'out of capacity'.

5. But isn't treated sewage safe?

It can be- but it isn't in this case.

- The Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District (BSEACD) - Groundwater Hydrologists have presented strong, evidence that the segment of creek directly below the discharge point is a 'losing segment' of stream that recharges the aquifer and that groundwater could be at high risk of contamination.
- Back in 2001-2002, the Dripping Springs Water Supply Corp (DSWSC) acknowledged this connection. In opposing the proposed Caliterra land application permit, the DS Water Corp told the State of Texas, "Any spills from the wastewater treatment plant...will enter North Onion Creek and may easily contaminate the groundwater".
- The connection between our creeks and our aquifers is not controversial. Since at least 1990 the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) has acknowledged "Onion Creek may serve as a source of recharge for the system at the WSC well field. Consequently, any pollution to Onion Creek could result in contamination to the Lower



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Glen Rose (Deep) aquifer which is hydrologically connected to the underlying water-bearing units of the Trinity Group aquifer currently providing ground water to the WSC wells.” (Daniel Muller, 1990)

6. What is the City’s response to these concerns?

The City of Dripping Springs and Dripping Springs Water Supply Corporation haven’t provided any science contradicting the connection of surface and groundwater (i.e well impact). Additionally, neither have provided any science contradicting degradation impact of the creek as modeled by City of Austin. These studies can be found on www.protectourwaternow.org

7. Is there a way to avoid any Public Health or other risks?

Yes! And the City could still get its discharge permit – but completely re-use the water.

- Beneficial Re-Use. DS has promoted re-use of water and they have been actively enlisting contracts by developers to take the effluent for irrigation purposes. The GAP is that there are approximately 40-60 days/year where irrigation is not feasible due to wet weather/saturation. During these periods the water must either be stored (via pond) or discharged
- Water Storage will address current Gap. DS can store the water during wet weather/saturation events and then re-use when dryer weather returns. The challenge right now is that DS does not have the cost of this storage built into their plan and they have stated that without private stakeholders paying for this storage they will simply discharge into the creek. The irony is that discharge can be completely avoided with adequate storage (i.e. likely a few million dollars).
- Avoid Discharge Completely. Using its discharge permit, with appropriate contracts to re-use the water and storage (pond) for water during wet weather, it is possible to eliminate risks to groundwater since a discharge would not be needed.

8. How would storage work?

There is greater risk of discharge entering the aquifer during wet seasons (irrigation not feasible). A storage pond may be created to hold the all effluent during those seasons, rather than discharging it. That pond water could then be reused when dry weather returns. This alone would eliminate any need for discharge.

9. Is Dripping Springs opposed to storage?

No, but to date they have been unwilling to consider a 100% no-discharge solution.

10. How would re-use work?

DS has promoted re-use of water and they have been actively enlisting contracts by developers to take the effluent for irrigation purposes. However, there are approximately 40-60 days/year where irrigation is not feasible due to wet weather/saturation. During these periods the water must either be stored (via pond) or discharged

11. How can I stay informed and get involved?

Join Protect Our Water! POW is a citizen-formed group committed to responsible development and growth.

Responsible Growth pays for itself, preserves and protects public health and protects our natural resources. We are making concerted efforts to reach win/win conclusions, but we are also willing pursue all feasible legal options for protecting our community as required. Please join us via our website @ www.protectourwaternow.org . POW has retained technical specialists, legal counsel and intends to monitor this situation well beyond the initial decisions made on this permit. We need your support!

Please also join us November 10, 2016 at 7pm for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Public Meeting at the Dripping Springs Ranch Park, Special Events Venue Room, 1042 Event Center Drive, Dripping Springs, TX 78620