

## AGENDA



Thursday, December 18, 2008

**Austin Water Utility  
RECOMMENDATION FOR COUNCIL ACTION****Item No. 4**

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**Subject:** Authorize negotiation and execution of an Interlocal Agreement, with Texas AgriLife Research, a member of the Texas A&M University system, to conduct an assessment study including survey and focus groups of landowners in the vicinity of the City's Wildlands properties, for twelve months, with authority to extend for an additional twelve months, in an amount not to exceed \$90,016 (\$55,961 for year one and \$34,055 for year two if extended)

**Amount and Source of Funding:** Funding is available in the amount of \$90,016 from the Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Operating Budget of the Austin Water Utility.

**Fiscal Note:** A fiscal note is not required.

**For More Information:** William Conrad, 263-6430; Denise Avery, 972-0104

**Boards and Commission Action:** To be reviewed by the Water and Wastewater Commission on December 17, 2008.

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Austin Water Utility currently manages more than 33,000 acres of Wildlands in Austin, Travis County, and Hays County. Most of this land directly interfaces with urban and suburban developments. Many homes and residences front directly on the boundaries of the land held and managed in public trust as watersheds for public water supplies, for protected habitat for Endangered Species, or both.

As staff manages these properties they often encounter people on the property engaged in activities detrimental to the land or the purposes for which it is held in trust. These activities include: expansion of back yards into protected property; dumping of yard waste and debris; collecting rare plants or archaeological resources; and discharge of fireworks. When engaged by staff, it is often found offenders live adjacent to or nearby protected property, and they know little about how and why the land is being managed.

At times, up to forty percent of the programs' workloads can be consumed intervening with these threats to the protected properties. In order to counteract this problem an intensive and extensive education and outreach program has been deployed to help address these concerns. However, these programs have been developed on staff assumptions about knowledge levels and attitudes of the target audience and have met with limited results.

The study being funded by this Interlocal Agreement with Texas Agrilife Research will survey the knowledge and attitudes of property owners adjacent to and near protected properties. Results from the analysis of the survey responses will be used to more effectively target education and outreach to inform our neighbors. This in turn is intended to result in less investment of staff time to intervene with inappropriate actions on protected properties.