

A photograph of a crowded swimming area, likely a spillway, with many people in the water and on a sandy beach. A bridge is visible in the background. The text "BARTON SPRINGS SPILLWAY" and "STAFF RECOMMENDATION" is overlaid on the image.

BARTON SPRINGS SPILLWAY

STAFF RECOMMENDATION



COUNCIL DIRECTIVE

- 8/28/2014 – Council passed Resolution No. 20140828-82, directing the City Manager to seek recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Board and the Animal Advisory Commission regarding potential code amendments to allow for swimming and an off-leash area at the Barton Springs Spillway.

CURRENT REALITY

- Chapter 8-5-49 of City Code
 - A person may not swim in Barton Creek between Town Lake and Barton Springs Pool or between the western dam of Barton Springs Pool and a point 100 yards west of the dam.
- Chapter 3-4-1 of City Code
 - Except as provided in Section 3-4-4(*Public Areas Where Restraint of a Dog is Not Required*), an owner or handler of a dog shall keep the dog under restraint.

PARK RANGER OBSERVATIONS

Field observations collected during the week of July 20-26, 2014

Observation	Weekly Total
People in the Water	1362
Dogs Off-Leash	1022
Smoking	466
Alcohol	337
Dogs On-Leash	236
Drug Use	116
Bridge Jumpers	90
Rope Swingers	58
Dog Waste	50
Glass	22
Vending	8
Litter	2

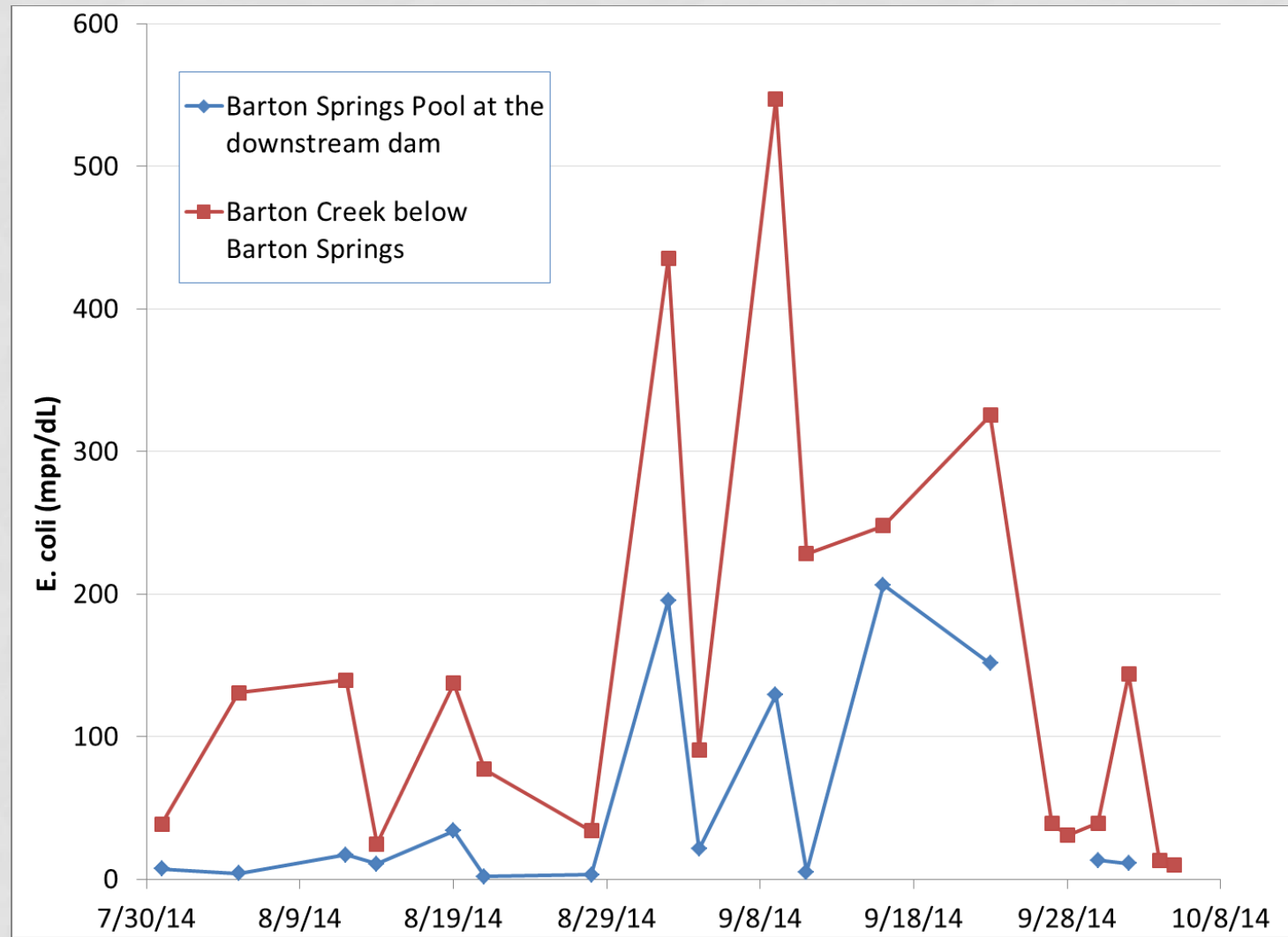
FECAL BACTERIA DATA

- In July 2014, Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department began collecting fecal indicator bacteria data on Tuesday and Thursday below the spillway
- In September, Watershed Protection Department initiated weekend sampling during high-use periods to provide more complete contact recreation safety assessment

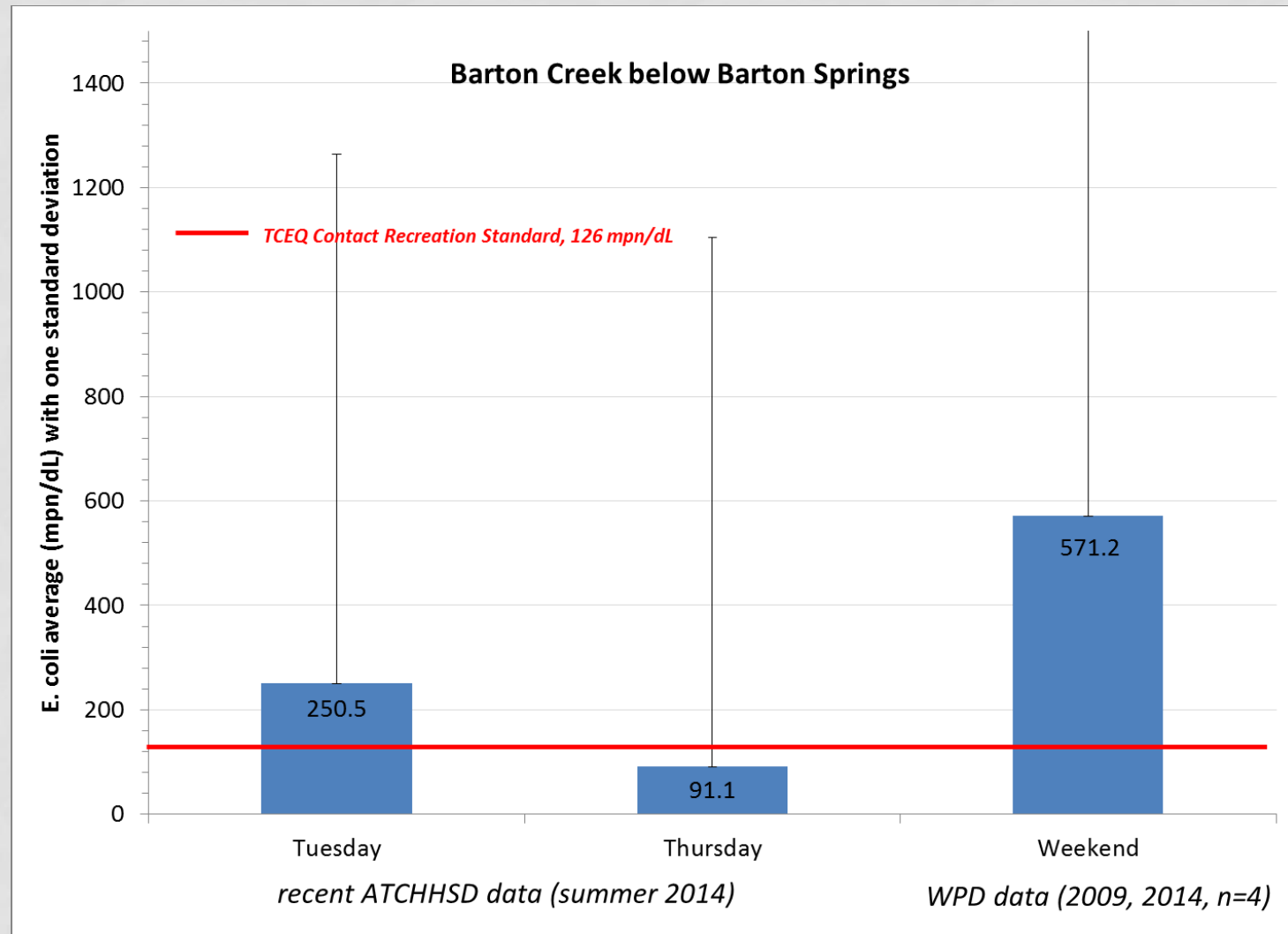
FECAL INDICATOR BACTERIA

- Fecal indicator bacteria (*E. coli*) used to assess water quality for contact recreation
- Measures potential for fecal contamination
- Long-term measure of conditions
- Contact recreation standard (126 mpn/dL) set by Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

FECAL BACTERIA DATA



FECAL BACTERIA DATA



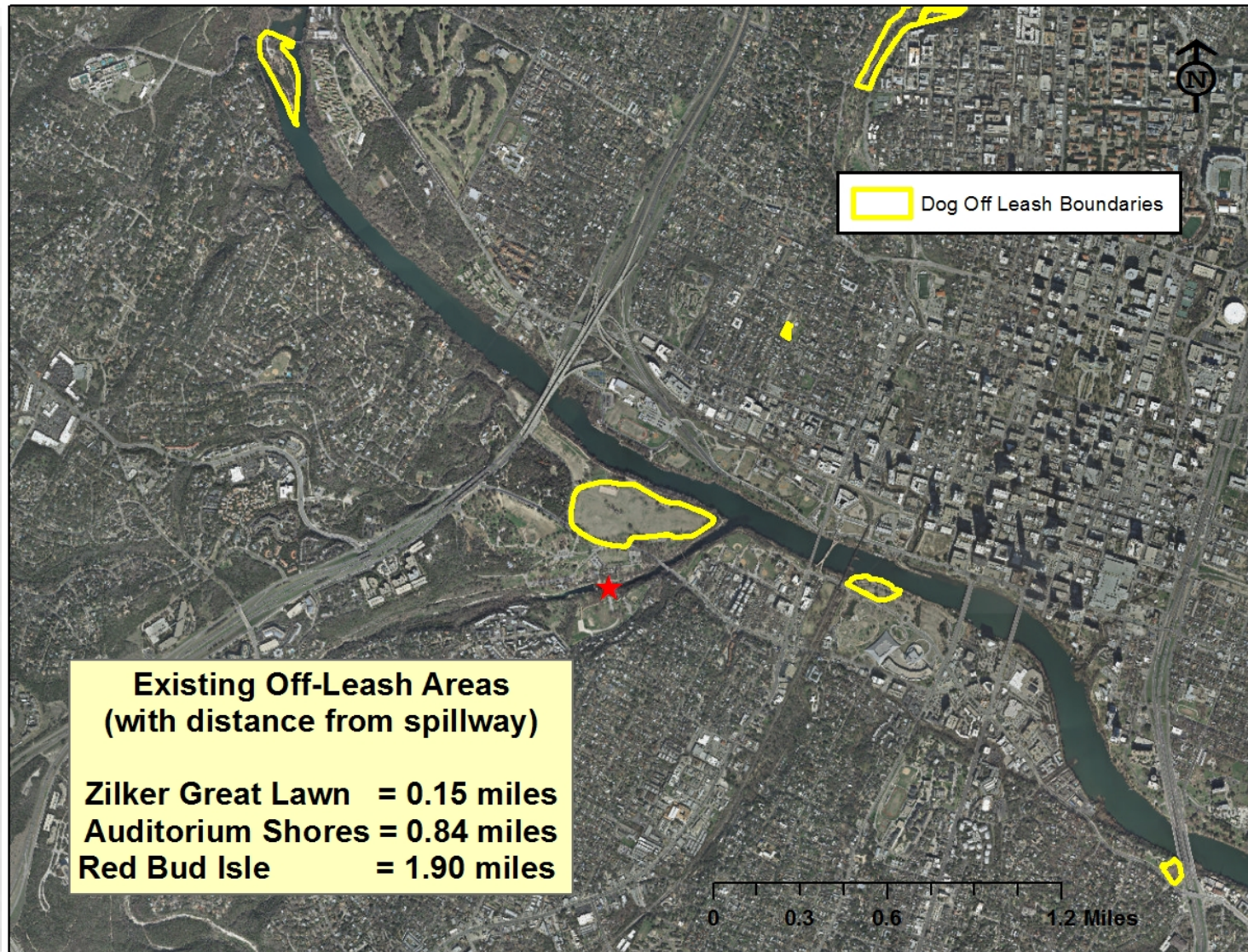
FECAL BACTERIA DATA

- Based on the last 5 years of available samples collected on weekdays and weekends (n=22), fecal indicator bacteria levels in Barton Creek below Barton Springs Pool support human contact recreation: **Geometric mean *E. coli* = 115 mpn/dL**
- Bacteria levels are variable, and exceed standards during periods of higher use
- National guidance and previous experience in Austin indicate that concurrent human and dog swimming areas do not support safe fecal indicator bacteria levels

SAFETY CONCERNS

- Interactions between individuals and off-leash dogs
 - Slips, falls and knock-downs
- Erosion of the creek banks
- Flow rate and water quality levels are not consistent
- No lifeguards on duty

AVAILABLE OFF-LEASH AREAS



STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- Amend City Code section 8-5-49 to allow a person to swim in the Barton Springs Spillway and in Barton Creek between Barton Springs and Lady Bird Lake
- Enforce existing dog off-leash restrictions in this area if human contact recreation is allowed
- Continue water quality monitoring to assess long-term conditions

OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Amend code to allow human swimming, enforce existing dog off-leash restrictions and prohibit dog swimming
(staff recommendation)
- Enforce existing no human swimming and no dog off-leash restrictions
(current status)
- Allow dogs off-leash, enforce existing no human swimming restrictions