

# **Austin Water Water Treatment Plant 4 (WTP4) Timeline and Cost Summary**

## **Timeline Summary**

- Nearly 40-year history from conception to online status of WTP4
- 1975 – Comprehensive Master Water Supply Development Plan, recommended construction of a water treatment plant to draw water from Lake Travis
- 1984 – Bond election for WTP4 approved \$190M for design and construction of a plant and related facilities
- October 1984 – original site for WTP4 was purchased for approximately \$20M at the headwaters of Bull Creek (Bull Creek site)
- 1984-86 – Engineering Design for WTP4 was approved and moved forward
- Summer 1986 – AW sought construction bids in the summer of 1986
- 1986 – the City had not yet acquired the right to withdraw water from Lake Travis from the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA)
- December 1987 – City and LCRA come to agreement as part of state adjudication of water rights in the basin, Comprehensive Water Settlement Agreement gave Austin authorization to draw water from Lake Travis and gave LCRA an option to purchase an initial ownership interest in WTP4 (the option was removed by mutual consent in the 1999 amendment to the 1987 Agreement)
- 1987 – Austin was in midst of severe economic bust with real estate sector particularly hard hit, WTP4 was subsequently put on hold
- Early 1990s – Construction of WTP4 remained on hold while City pursued a strategy of expanding capacity at existing water plants
- Late 1980s and 1990s – the Ullrich WTP was expanded twice, from 40MGD to 100MGD capacity, then from 100MGD to 167MGD
- 1970s on – Area around the Bull Creek site has been a key focus of controversy regarding development and environmental concerns, significant Karst features, numerous caves, springs, seeps, endangered species and other critical environmental features
- 1992 – Austin voters approved \$22M in bonds to purchase preservation lands to protect endangered species, provided special status for WTP4 site as a “Special Use Tract” which allowed for the use of this site as a WTP
- 1996 – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a permit for the WTP4 site region and the City was cleared to build WTP4, provided for infrastructure corridors to accommodate the WTP4 project
- 1996 – 2007 – Another potential endangered species, the Jollyville Plateau Salamander, was discovered in the Bull Creek watershed, the WTP4 Bull Creek site proved to be one of the principal habitats for the salamander, in 2007 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found the salamander “warranted” for endangered species protection, but “precluded” from actual listing the salamander as endangered

- 2002 – Austin Water revived plans for WTP4 as the City’s next treatment capacity improvement project, in April, the Council awarded a contract to Carollo Engineers for professional engineering services including preliminary site assessment and environmental studies related to the use of the Bull Creek site
- 2004 – Carollo Engineers completed its initial scope of work
- 2005 – Austin Water returned to Council for authorization of the next phase of engineering services for Carollo, significant community opposition to the plan reemerged, concerns regarding the plant location at the Bull Creek site, whether a plant should be built on Lake Travis and even if the plant was needed at all
- May 2005 – Council postponed further decision on funding engineering services and issued a set of directives including evaluation of alternative sites, water conservation analysis and demand forecasting review
- 2005 – the Save our Springs Alliance petitioned to have the salamander listed as an endangered species
- 2005-06 – reconsideration of building WTP4 continued, Green WTP, located downtown, was being decommissioned which raised additional concern within the environmental community since Green WTP was the only plant with an intake downstream from the outlet of Barton Creek into Lady Bird Lake, environmental community feared this would cause the City to not be focused on protecting water quality in the Barton Springs watershed, Council and AW considered building a new Green WTP on Lady Bird Lake rather than Lake Travis, Council directed staff to consider aggressive water conservation plan and leak detection plan to change the time line for WTP4 construction
- 2006 – Water Conservation Task Force was appointed by Council to develop program to achieve 25MGD in peak day demand reductions aimed at achieving the deferral of WTP4 to 2013 and lay the foundation for possible future deferrals
- June 2006 – Austin Water brought forward to Council two main options for constructing additional water treatment capacity, incorporating water conservation plan, the options were (1) build a Lake Travis WTP4 and then a new Green WTP in 2041, and (2) build a new Green WTP on Lady Bird Lake first with a Lake Travis plant following in 2017
- 2006-07 – after considerable discussion with Council and community, Council directed Austin Water to move forward with WTP4 on Lake Travis, but at an alternative site call Cortana, Council also directed Austin Water to purchase a site for the future New Green WTP, Austin Water purchased a 50-acre site near Thompson Lane and US 183 in May 2007
- 2006-07 – Cortana site also faced numerous environmental concerns, Cortana was a part of the Balcones Canyonland Preserve and would require approval from Austin’s BCP partner, Travis County, to develop the site as a water treatment plant, Council designated Cortana as the WTP4 site but also granted approval in September 2006 to use the original Bull Creek site if the County did not approve the Cortana site, the County refused to grant approval for use of the Cortana site, the City moved forward with engineering design for the plant construction on the Bull Creek site
- Summer of 2007 – construction of WTP4 on the Bull Creek site was imminent, the City’s Environmental Board and the environmental community expressed serious concerns about a plant on the Bull Creek site, the beginning of construction required a Zoning and Platting Commission approval, the ZAP approved the permit but it was appealed to Council at the August 9, 2007 meeting
- August 9, 2007 Council meeting – Council decided to make one more search for an alternative site, they voted to delay construction for up to one year and to commence a site search
- 2007 – WTP4 completion date was moved to spring 2014 based on the delay of construction, the continued alternative site search, and the recommendations of the Water Conservation Task Force

- December 2007 – Interdepartmental team worked to recommend a new alternative site for WTP4, staff returned in December 2007 with a recommendation of a 95-acre Bullick Hollow site as well as a WTP4 Backup Site, the Bullick Hollow site, while in an environmental sensitive area, have no salamanders, no karst invertebrates found, no bird impacts, few springs and seeps, and site was already planned for development so impact of plant would be less than the planned development
- 2008 - Council approved the purchase of the Bullick Hollow site in January 2008 and the WTP4 Backup site in June 2008, City staff developed a Site Development Ordinance (SDO) which provided upfront variances for impervious cover and a process for administrative approval for other variances, the SDO also establishes the original Bull Creek site will be set aside as part of the Balcones Canyonland Preserve, this SDO was unanimously approved by Environmental Board, Planning Commission, ZAP Commission and was passed unanimously by City Council on May 15, 2008
- January 2009 – Council approves use of Construction Manager at Risk alternative delivery method
- September 2009 – Council holds WTP4 Town Hall Forum to provide opportunity to debate moving forward on WTP4 construction, participants included Council, environmental community representatives and Austin Water staff
- 2010 – 2012 – Council approves Construction Manager at Risk contractor, MWH, to construct WTP4 with multiple “Guaranteed Maximum Price” amendments for specific construction phase deliverables of the project over the construction period
- 2010 – Major construction on WTP4 at Bullick Hollow site commences, initial phase of WTP4 was a 50MGD plant, 3 screened intakes at various depths within Lake Travis, approximately 7 miles of finished water transmission main are included in the project providing water into the Jollyville reservoir
- November 2014 – WTP4 online and producing water into Austin Water’s system

**Cost Summary**

- Original Cost Estimates for WTP4
  - Plant Facilities           \$280.3 M
  - Transmission Mains     \$116.8 M
  - Other Costs               \$13.8 M
  - Inflationary costs       \$54.2 M
  - Land Costs                \$42.9 M

Total Estimated Costs           \$508.0 M
- Total Expended as of 6/5/17:   \$529,026,942

**Rate Impacts**

Austin Water developed an estimated water rate increase and average residential bill impact associated with the construction of WTP4. Below is the estimate:

Water Rate Increase is 13.2% spread out over a 7-year period of design and construction.

Average Residential Customer Monthly Bill Impact:     \$3.52