



**Barton Springs
Edwards Aquifer**
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Aquifer District Announces 2017 Groundwater Stewardship Award Winners

At its December 14, 2017 meeting, the Board of Directors of the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District selected its 2017 Groundwater Stewardship Award winners. The District presents these stewardship awards every two years to deserving individuals, organizations, companies or agencies that have invested exemplary effort towards the protection and conservation of water resources in the District.

"Central Texas continues to experience significant growth. With increased demands on our resources, there are some incredible examples of ingenuity that help encourage wise water use, land management, and water quality protection that are worthy of special recognition," noted General Manager John Dupnik. "We are proud to take a moment to turn the focus on those who have been part of the solution—innovative, creative, inspiring, and passionate folks going above and beyond."

The District recognizes and commends the following extraordinary efforts to conserve and protect the groundwater resources of the area:

Permittee of the Year:

Ruby Ranch Water Supply Corporation

Over the years, the Ruby Ranch Water Supply Corporation (WSC) has been a collaborative partner with the District in working on local groundwater issues and new and innovative water supply strategies. This year was especially notable as the Ruby Ranch WSC team began feasibility testing for an Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) project using their Edwards and Trinity wells. This ASR project is only the fourth system in Texas and is a unique example of decentralized ASR at the neighborhood scale. Ruby Ranch WSC worked together with the District to navigate the TCEQ application process, designed and implemented several phased step/cycle testing of injection and recovery, helped collect detailed water quality data, and participated in refining the District rules.

Lifetime Achievement Award:

Dr. Jack Sharp

In 32 years at the UT Austin Jackson School of Geosciences, Dr. Sharp has researched and published landmark concepts in Edwards Aquifer related hydrogeology, founded courses to introduce students to groundwater issues in Central Texas, and supervised over

125 students—many of whom chose to research topics that provided valuable insight into groundwater dynamics pertinent to the Aquifer District.

Aquifer Advocate Award:

Will Conley

As Hays County Commissioner, local business owner, and resident of Hays County, Will has been a strong advocate of science-based groundwater management, a proponent for additional monitoring sites to better understand dynamics between the Trinity and Edwards Aquifers, and a political leader in extending groundwater protection in Hays County. He is a strong advocate for sustainable use of groundwater.

Water Quality Protection Award:

Protect Our Water

The Protect Our Water grassroots advocacy group has been an active, passionate voice during the City of Dripping Springs' wastewater permit request. Onion Creek currently recharges both the Trinity and Edwards Aquifers with high quality water which could be compromised with long-term and cumulative direct discharges of treated wastewater. They have been integrally involved with the permit negotiations, researched possible effects of the proposed permit as it evolved, synthesized and shared research and permit news for downstream land and well owners, and served as a voice for those with similar concerns. Protect Our Water has provided invaluable perspective, and inspired active citizen engagement throughout the permit process.

Innovation Award:

City of Austin Education Cave Restoration Team

The Education Cave Team has found creative solutions to enhance underground classrooms and provide safe and accessible environments to teach about underground habitats, aquifer dynamics, and water quality protection. They have formed partnerships to better use the education caves to educate students, teachers, and the general public about the environmentally sensitive Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone, and inspire them to be environmental stewards.

Education Award:

City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department, Sheffield Education Center

The Sheffield Education Center located at Barton Springs hosts an engaging visitor's center, active education program, and strong community partnerships. Creative and resourceful staff have extended the Center's limited funding to allow for significant upgrades to the Splash! Exhibit, expanded programming, and a diverse cross-section of community events. The Center effectively educates visitors about local endangered species, water quality protection, and responsible land management.

Nominations were made by members of the public and District staff, and the nominees were evaluated and winners selected by the Board of Directors.

BSEACD is a groundwater conservation district charged by the Texas Legislature to preserve, conserve, and protect the aquifers and groundwater resources within its jurisdiction, which includes parts of three Central Texas counties. It is governed by a Board of five elected directors and staffed with hydrogeologists, groundwater regulatory compliance specialists, environmental educators, geospatial systems specialists, and administrative support personnel.#