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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community Plans to Protest Against Proposed Sewage Dumping in the Comal River Watershed

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NEW BRAUNFELS, TX- Local environmental groups and concerned members of the community plan to speak out against a [proposed permit application](#) filed by a Comal County landowner with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality at a public meeting planned for June 8th. The application requests permission to dump 600,000 gallons of treated sewage into the West Fork of Dry Comal Creek, which feeds into Dry Comal Creek and, eventually, into the Comal River.

Austin Faught, chairman of Dry Comal Creek Neighbors, expressed significant concerns about the proposed wastewater plant. Faught warned, "If an Olympic-sized swimming pool of sewage pours into the creek from thousands of homesites a day, it will be disastrous for our community. Drinking water for our residents could be directly impacted, and the sensitive ecosystem of the surrounding area will be degraded. This wastewater flowing through my property and my neighbors' properties could damage our homes, water wells, livestock, and ecosystem."

Emphasizing the impact on vital resources, Faught added, "[There are caves](#) located on the property of the proposed facility location and neighboring properties. The very real possibility of discharge flowing through these porous formations located in the Edwards Aquifer Contributing Zone has everyone worried." Dry Comal Creek Neighbors is determined to persuade the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to approve the project in a manner that prioritizes the community's welfare.

The proposed wastewater facility poses a real threat to the [health and safety of the surrounding community](#), and if the facility fails, it will be the community that bears the consequences. The dumping of such a large volume of treated sewage into the creek could lead to eutrophication and a reduction in biodiversity, [making the water unsuitable for both human consumption and recreational activities](#).

Although there is currently no operator listed for the wastewater facility on the permit application, SJWTX, Inc., is listed as the operator on the Standard Permit Application Information Form. Area environmental groups are concerned that If SJWTX is the facility operator, the company will continue to repeat the [pattern of non-compliance](#) found at other wastewater treatment facilities the company operates.

During a [previous investigation](#) conducted by TCEQ in January 2020, SJWTX was found to

have multiple violations at another facility, including the release of sewage with effluent limits beyond the standards set by TCEQ for that facility's permit. Following this investigation, the company [was fined \\$46,000](#) in October 2021.

Since the October 2021 enforcement order, TCEQ has received [28 complaints](#) of odor issues at the facility, resulting in four [TCEQ investigations](#), all of which have been closed. In addition, SJWTX, Inc. is now operating under the name of The Texas Water Company, leading some in the community to worry that the company is attempting to skirt around its previous record of non-compliance.

Many believe that modern sewage treatment plants scrub all contaminants out of effluent before it's discharged, making treated water cleaner than the water in the stream. [The truth is](#) even effluent treated to drinking water standards has more nutrients than our streams and rivers can handle.

"The proposed location for this large treatment plant and discharge is over the Edwards Aquifer contributing zone and just 2000 feet upstream from the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone," David Drewa, Communications Director for Preserve Our Hill Country Environment, explains. "Other options would be much more protective of our water supply and ecosystem, such as beneficial reuse, land application permit (TLAP), and treatment to potable standards. We are unsure why Mr. Harrison, who is requesting the permit, has not pursued these better alternatives instead of his permit to discharge wastewater into our Hill Country creeks and aquifers."

[The Edwards Aquifer](#) provides drinking water for 2 million people that live in and around San Antonio. In addition, the Dry Comal Creek and Comal River are essential natural resources in Comal and Guadalupe Counties, supporting economic development, recreational activities, and agricultural operations. Unfortunately, Dry Comal Creek was listed as having [impaired water quality issues](#) dating back to 2010, and the proposed permit application only adds to the challenges facing these invaluable and irreplaceable resources.

This issue comes at a time when the Texas Legislature has sent [Senate Bill 471](#) to Governor Greg Abbott for signature, which could result in fines for citizens who submit complaints to environmental regulators. There are concerns across the state that the bill could silence those speaking out about potential environmental threats.

The public meeting is on Thursday, June 8th, at 7 pm at [Smithson Valley High School](#). Concerned citizens can also submit comments on the TCEQ website before 5 p.m. on June 8th.

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At Save Our Hill Country, our mission is to empower communities and organizations to make informed decisions that positively impact our environment. We aim to increase awareness, facilitate advocacy, and promote education that leads to a healthier, cleaner, and more

sustainable future. For more information, please contact Sarah Mercer at 210-570-6262 or [saveourhillcountry@gmail.com](mailto:saveourhillcountry@gmail.com).