



# News Release

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## **Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program Requests Incidental Take Permit for Federally Listed Species Dependent Upon the Edwards Aquifer**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will announce in the *Federal Register* the notice of availability of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (dEIS) and an incidental take permit application for the Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program (EARIP) that includes a draft Habitat Conservation Plan (dHCP). This announcement begins a 90-day public comment period.

The Edwards Aquifer Authority; San Antonio Water Systems; the City of New Braunfels, Texas; the City of San Marcos, Texas; and Texas State University (collectively, the Applicants) applied to the Service for an Incidental Take Permit under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The incidental take proposed in the dHCP would occur in Bexar, Medina and Uvalde Counties and portions of Atascosa, Caldwell, Comal, Guadalupe and Hays Counties in Texas.

The dHCP describes measures the Applicants agree to undertake to minimize and mitigate the effects of incidental take of the following federally listed species dependent on the springs and river systems associated with the Edwards Aquifer: the fountain darter (*Etheostoma fonticola*), San Marcos salamander (*Eurycea nana*), Texas wild rice (*Zizania texana*), San Marcos gambusia (*Gambusia georgei*), Texas blind salamander (*Eurycea rathbuni*), Peck's cave amphipod (*Stygobromus pecki*), Comal Springs dryopid beetle (*Stygoparnus comalensis*) and the Comal Springs riffle beetle (*Heterolemis comalensis*). The dHCP would cover general activities associated with activities including the regulation and production of groundwater for irrigation, industrial, municipal, domestic, and livestock purposes; the use of instream flows in the Comal River and San Marcos River for recreational uses; and other operational and maintenance activities that could affect Comal Springs, San Marcos Springs and the associated river systems.

The Edwards Aquifer is one of the most prolific artesian aquifers in the world. It is also the source of the two largest springs in Texas: Comal and San Marcos. The Edwards Aquifer is the primary source of drinking water for more than 2 million people including the seventh largest city in the nation (San Antonio) and serves the domestic, agricultural, industrial and recreational needs of the area.

The Service issued a draft Environmental Impact Statement that evaluates the impacts of, and alternatives to, possible issuance of an incidental take permit covering the EARIP's management area.

The Service is requesting public comments on the application, dHCP and dEIS. To ensure consideration, we must receive written comments on or before close of business (4:30 p.m. CST) on October 18, 2012. Seven public meetings will be held in locations throughout south and central Texas, including Corpus Christi, Kerrville, New Braunfels, San Antonio, San Marcos, Uvalde and Victoria. The exact locations and times for the meeting will be noticed in local newspapers and on the Service's Austin Ecological Services Office website (<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/AustinTexas/>) at least two weeks prior to each event.

You may obtain copies of the dEIS and dHCP online at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/AustinTexas/>. For further information on how to obtain or review copies of these documents, or how to provide comments, see the *Federal Register* notice at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/index.html>.

America's fish, wildlife, and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We're working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov). Connect with our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/usfws](http://www.facebook.com/usfws), follow our tweets at [www.twitter.com/usfws](http://www.twitter.com/usfws) watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws>.

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