



**Barton Springs
Edwards Aquifer**
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Longtime Director Craig Smith Steps Down From the Board

For Immediate Release: October 14, 2022

For more information, contact: David Marino, Communications & Outreach Manager at (512) 282-8441 or dmarino@bseacd.org

After serving on the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District's (District) Board of Directors for 24 years, Craig Smith is stepping down. Earlier this year, Craig decided not to run for re-election, enabling a new generation to participate in a leadership role. He attended his last meeting as a Director/ Board Vice President on October 13, 2022.

Craig was first elected to the board of directors in 1998. He credits his wife, Mary Ann Neely, for being a great political organizer and helping him win that first election 24 years ago. Craig, an attorney, moved to Austin from Nacogdoches in 1973 to go to law school. He first became involved in environmental politics in 1990 with the Austin Sierra Club. He served as president of the Sierra Club in 1991 and 1992. Craig has also served on the board of Save Barton Creek Association Board since 1991. He was president of the organization in 1997 and 1998.

"I was encouraged to run for the District board in 1998 by Sue Johnson, who was retiring as the director for Precinct No. 5, and my late friend Jack Goodman, who was the board president," said Smith. "I am proud to have served with many fine board members and staff professionals since then, as we worked to balance the sometimes conflicting roles of the aquifer: drinking water supply, industrial resource, endangered species habitat, recreation spot, future water source, and others."

One of Craig's motivations for serving the District is his deep love of Barton Springs. He is an avid swimmer and like many Austinites, has enjoyed taking daily dips in the Barton Springs pool for decades. As a Director, he has been committed to protecting the springs and the 60,000+ people who rely solely on the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer for their water supply. The Barton Springs complex is also home to endangered salamanders, and is the only known habitat for the Barton Springs salamander.

"Serving on the board of directors of the Barton Springs Aquifer District for the past 24 years has been the pinnacle of my public service. I started out as a Barton Springs swimmer and environmentalist, trying to protect a unique swimming hole in the heart of my city. Then I learned that the Springs were at the end of an aquifer that reached for twenty miles or more underground through caverns occupied by little-known endemic salamanders, that also provided

water to thousands of homes, businesses, and industries. I always wanted to save the world, starting with where I was. This seemed to be a good place to start.”

Over the years Craig has been involved in various District projects, including Aquifer Storage & Recovery, Demand Reduction, Habitat Conservation Plan, Multiport Monitor Wells, Pipeline Projects, Travis County Groundwater Study, Trinity Aquifer Sustainable Yield Study, etc. In 2005, Craig was involved in the creation of the Barton Springs Zone Regional Water Quality Protection Plan, which takes a regional approach to protect the aquifer and the springs. He currently chairs the Regional Water Quality Planning Group that is working to implement the Regional Plan.

“For decades, Director Smith has been a true champion of water-resource stewardship,” said General Manager Tim Loftus. “Craig has been an exemplar in his role at the District with balancing the legitimate use of groundwater with sustainable use for all, nature included, who depend on our aquifers. We wish him all the best in his next chapter.”

“Director Smith holds the record as the longest serving BSEACD board member,” said Board President Blayne Stansberry. “During his tenure, he helped our district, in the infancy of GCDs (Groundwater Conservation Districts), grow into a sophisticated, science-based organization. His strong commitment to the aquifer, and to the people and endangered species that depend on it, has never wavered. Craig was instrumental in the permitting of the Districts Habitat Conservation Plan with the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Craig’s longtime service to the District created a strong foundation of policies that will protect the shared resource for generations to come.”

For more than two decades, Director Smith has worked to conduct the District’s mission of conserving, protecting, recharging, and preventing waste of groundwater and preserving all aquifers in the District. His dedication, proactiveness, engagement, and dedication to the District has been invaluable.

“When the District annexed new territory, our focus expanded to include the Trinity Aquifer that also is the source of beautiful springs and many domestic wells. I am proud that the current board, General Manager, and staff are continuing to uphold the responsibility to manage our irreplaceable natural groundwater resources sustainably, so that they will be undiminished for future generations,” said Smith. “I am confident that my successor, Vanessa Puig-Williams will carry on with this work. Thanks for allowing me to serve.”

On behalf of the Board of Directors, General Manager Tim Loftus, and staff, we want to thank him for his service. Well done, Director Smith.

-###-

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.