



The Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan e-newsletter, "Steward," is published to highlight the efforts underway to protect the Comal and San Marcos Springs and ensure a healthy habitat for the threatened and endangered species.

EAHCP, SAWS Team Up to Meet Conservation Goal

With more than six thousand miles of various aged water mains buried below San Antonio streets, one can only imagine the issues leaking water can cause. But, San Antonio Water System (SAWS) literally keeps its ears to the ground to greatly minimize that problem.

Through a specially-designed water leak detection equipment, SAWS technicians can place a probe on a water meter, fire hydrant or some other system equipment and detect the gurgling or hammering of a cracked pipe below ground. The sensors also pinpoint the location of the leak so maintenance crews know exactly where to dig. Repairing water leaks before they become water line breaks saves huge amounts of water. And now, SAWS and Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP) are teaming up to put that water-saving technology to work for both organizations.



SAWS technician listens for leaks on water mains.

The Regional Water Conservation Program (RWCP) is one of four springflow protection measures in the EAHCP intended to reduce aquifer withdrawals, and subsequently increase aquifer levels and springflow. After conserving roughly 200 acre-feet through Universal City and the City of Uvalde, the RWCP was still in need of almost 20,000 acre-feet of conserved Edwards water to meet the obligation in the EAHCP. However, by investing in increasing SAWS' leak repair program, the remaining goal of conserved water will be met and a full 10,000 acre-feet will be committed to the groundwater trust until the year 2028. The \$18.6 million contract with SAWS will be in effect through the term of the Incidental Take Permit (ITP) and is estimated to conserve almost 20,000 acre-feet of Edwards Aquifer withdrawals.

"SAWS has long been focused on our water leak detection program because it helps us keep our lost water due to water main leaks under control," explained Darren Thompson, SAWS water resources director. "In fact, we've recently stepped up our efforts and now can survey our entire system over a two year period. The problem we encountered was that we were finding many more system leaks but didn't have the funding to ensure crews could get out to fix them in a timely fashion. The EAHCP funding will help us with those repairs making the overall program extremely effective."

"This program is a game changer for the EAHCP," stated Rick Illgner, special projects manager for the Edwards Aquifer Authority. "We had really struggled over the first three years to put together about 200 acre feet of conserved water. But because SAWS is responsible for such a large system, the water saved through leak detection and water main repairs will fulfill our entire EAHCP conservation goal of 10,000 acre feet into the groundwater trust and maintain the goal of our permit with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service."