

## ANOTHER VIEW

# Water doesn't start at the tap, and other things to know

By Bill Hurley

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"Back where I came from ..." used to be heard a lot from people who had just moved in from out of state.

They'd mention their river marshes, forests, massive prairies, caves and ice-covered mountains. But today, beyond traffic problems and good places to eat, so many are blind to their own natural locale. How cold and how hot — that's about all people notice.

When asked about San Antonio, do we describe indoor malls, concerts and sports parks? Urban sprawl has created highways with numerous billboards, neon signs and stoplights in most every city and town, concrete jungles that look alike.

It's not just cosmetics, though. Population growth has put a critical importance to how we engineer for practical concerns. At a recent forum at

the Urban Ecology Center, "Drought Meets Development: Balancing growth and water conservation," panelists stressed that every resident should know more about their local natural resources.

A good example is understanding the Edwards Aquifer. It's our primary water supply and is dependent on a contributing zone over a karst limestone aquifer that doesn't filter out impurities. The conversation encompasses the different concerns about building on top of it. There are discussions around such topics as building up and not out, how to dispose of waste and where to build roads.

These are important decisions and need to be well thought-out.

Unfortunately, many believe that human numbers are small, the aquifer is so big and we shouldn't worry. Some think that no matter how much man-made sewage leaks into our supply, a man-made filtration system can get it clean again. These are dangerous assumptions.

It's not that simple.

It depends on what — and how much — you mix into it. But even if we could, there would be a need to build different plants for different pollutants. Taxpayers would riot at the cost.

I know it's hard to fathom, but there are even some who don't think much about it at all, who believe water starts from the tap or is bottled — that's it.

We used to require all high school students to take a Texas history course. Perhaps that's because of the need for good citizens to understand the history of our area and the development of its people. But how about the regional natural structures? Can't we insist they know Texas ecology, too?

Back where I came from, oh so many years ago, I wasn't really concerned. But there was one-third the human congestion. Now I think about it every time I run an errand.

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Courtesy photo

**Every resident should know more about their local natural resources, including the Edwards Aquifer, the primary water supply for this area.**