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**DATE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Drought Causes Edwards Aquifer Region's Habitat Conservation Plan Implementing Committee to Stop Work In the Comal and San Marcos Springs

HCP Requesting Waiver to Restart Habitat Protection Efforts

Low flows in the Comal Springs and San Marcos Springs caused by the ongoing drought have stopped work projects in New Braunfels and San Marcos associated with the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The work will restart when officials can ensure no damage is being done to endangered species or their habitats.

According to "Provision M" of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Incidental Take Permit, work not covered by USFWS permits for scientific research and near the springs must stop when flow at the Comal Springs reaches 130 cubic feet per second (CFS) or the San Marcos Springs reach 120 CFS. Work may resume after HCP and U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials complete a review for the work areas and a variance is issued by USFWS.

"While we can't control the weather, we can control how we prepare for these extremely dry periods, and that's what the HCP is all about," said Tom Taggart, HCP Implementing Committee chairman. "We know the springs lose flow and water levels across the Edwards Aquifer can drop significantly during prolonged droughts. The good news is that the region has done a very good job of coming together to help us minimize impacts as much as possible."

Current HCP work includes:

- flow-split construction project designed to keep water in the Comal Springs old channel where most of the endangered species and habitats flourish
- sediment removal program to take out excess erosion materials that could cover up habitats in Comal and San Marcos Springs
- vegetation restoration efforts to remove exotic vegetation and replace with native vegetation that represents prime habitat for the species during low flows in Comal and San Marcos Springs

"Due to the HCP programs implemented in 2012, the Edwards Aquifer, spring flows, endangered species and their habitats have a fighting chance to weather this current drought," Nathan Pence, HCP program manager stated. "Overall, the HCP regional stakeholder efforts are designed to strike the right balance in protecting spring flows, ensuring all water users have the water they need each day and preserving the Edwards Aquifer as a resource."

In addition to new HCP science being applied to Edwards Aquifer protection, residents and businesses are encouraged to continue their water conservation efforts as well. Make sure all water leaks are repaired, and reduce indoor water use by using low-flow fixtures and appliances. Outdoors, only water your landscape when it is needed, and make sure to follow your local area's Critical Period watering guidelines.

————— **HCP** —————

The Edwards Aquifer is a unique groundwater resource and primary source of water for more than 2 million people in Uvalde, Medina, Bexar, Comal and Hayes Counties. The Edwards Aquifer is also the source of the only two major springs remaining in Texas - the San Marcos and the Comal. These springs feed the San Marcos and Comal Rivers which are tributaries to the Guadalupe River.

The Habitat Conservation Plan was developed to protect and preserve this vital water resource. You can read more about the HCP at www.eahcp.org.