

The Bandera PROPHEET

November 5, 2019

Friends of Hondo Canyon schedules informational meeting

Landowners will be informed on the next steps in the TCEQ process on the pending wastewater discharge permit, and also receive a briefing on a New Water Rights Permit the camp has applied for that would use well water to fill recreational lakes on camp property and supply water to their water slide.

Special to the Prophet

The Friends of Hondo Canyon has alerted members they should begin receiving their packets in the mail from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality in coming days. These packets contain the official responses from TCEQ to the public comments and concerns expressed about the wastewater discharge permit. More than 300 area residents attended the meeting to voice opposition to plans by RR 417 LLC (Camp Ozark) in Tarpley to release treated wastewater into Commissioners and Hondo Creeks, and the Edwards Aquifer. Additionally, more than 500 official complaints were filed with the TCEQ.

As part of the process, the TCEQ is required to respond to those who filed complaints or spoke out at the meeting. Now that the TCEQ responses have been mailed, there are less than 30 days to file rebuttals to those comments and request a Contested Case Hearing. FOHC leaders say it's vital that concerned individuals understand the need to file opposition to the permit, reattest requests for a Contested Case Hearing,

and engage public officials who represent citizens in the area to voice opposition to this precedent-setting permit.

The meeting on Sunday, Nov. 10, at 2 p.m., in the Old Tarpley School House, will provide additional information on the process.

“It’s vital that people understand the process. It’s complicated, convoluted and not public-friendly. So we have to be smart. The good news is we have great attorneys to help us navigate this and a wonderful group of engaged people that are not easily discouraged by the bureaucracy. We can’t let TCEQ or the Torns use the process against us, or to silence us,” Friends of Hondo Canyon Vice President Brenda Saunders said.

The meeting will also allow FOHC to brief residents on a new Water Rights Permit filed by camp owners. This new permit application asks TCEQ to allow them to pump well water out of the Cow Creek Aquifer to fill recreational lakes at the camp and to operate water slides and other equipment. The permit application also states the camp needs to pump the water from the aquifer to irrigate fields.

Interestingly, the camp has refused to use all of its treated wastewater for irrigation purposes, saying they need the ability to release it downstream. Landowners in the area are concerned about this new proposed Water Rights Permit, since their wells could be impacted during drought.

“It’s really a sad situation, since the camp has the ability to use the treated wastewater in a way that would allow them to irrigate fields and fill the lakes, without releasing it downstream. This would also resolve their issue of needing to pump more well water. We support the mission of the camp, but are concerned about how they are going about things. A good community member would be concerned about those downstream. The greater issue is this permit would not protect our precious water for generations to come,” Becky Westbrook, of Los Encinos Ranch, Tarpley, said.

Landowners, concerned citizens and anyone who loves the Texas Hill Country are invited to attend the informational update meeting at the Old Tarpley School House in Tarpley on Sunday, Nov. 10, at 2 p.m.