

The Bandera PROPHECY

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Bandera Canyonlands Alliance launches public awareness campaign

The permit if approved would be the first of its kind to allow wastewater discharge into the Upper Sabinal River near Lost Maples State Natural Area.

Contributed

The Bandera Canyonlands Alliance (BCA) is urging local residents in Bandera and Uvalde counties to be aware of a precedent-setting permit application that would put pristine area waterways at risk.

The Colorado-based Young Life organization is asking the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for permission to build a sewage treatment plant and release up to 60,000 gallons of treated wastewater each day into creeks and the Sabinal River in Bandera County. The wastewater would be discharged into an unnamed creek which feeds Long Hollow Creek then flows into the Sabinal River just north of Utopia. The camp is the former Lonehollow property located on RR 187 between Vanderpool and Utopia in western Bandera County and is now owned and operated by Young Life, a non-profit Christian corporation based in Colorado Springs, CO.

“These applications are typically filed with little requirement to notify landowners in the area,” BCA President Merry Langlinais said. “A few people received letters but the vast majority of people near the camp and many along the river south to Utopia did not receive official notification of the Young Life plans. That’s why we think it’s vital that people become aware of this issue and speak out. The TCEQ needs to hear that we care about our community.”

The Nueces River Authority classifies the 48 miles of the Sabinal River from the headwaters at Lost Maples State Park south to Highway 90 as one of the last untouched, ultra-pure, clear river segments in Texas.

Experts say if treated wastewater is introduced into these creeks and the

Sabinal River it would create damage similar to that caused by wastewater discharge along the Blanco and San Gabriel rivers. The Young Life permit if approved would be the first to set a precedent along these waterways in Bandera and Uvalde counties and opponents are concerned if this is allowed to move forward it would lead to the issuance of other permits increasing damage to the river.

“We think everyone should work together as good stewards of our natural resources in this environmentally sensitive area near Lost Maples State Natural Area. Our hope is that the leaders of Young Life will hear community concerns and change or amend their plans to seek instead a zero-discharge approach that would protect the river,” Langlinais said. “Allowing even highly-treated wastewater to be discharged into these creeks and ultimately the river would release levels of nutrients that would clog the river with algae blooms and kill fish and impact wildlife. Many in the area are also concerned that damage to the river would also deter visitors impacting many of our local businesses. It’s important that local landowners ask that the permit be denied in its present form and ask the TCEQ to schedule a Public Meeting on the permit. We think the community has a right to hear the facts, share concerns and ask questions in an official meeting.”

The damage to the environment caused by wastewater discharge is gaining public attention throughout the Hill Country. Recently, the Hill Country Alliance released a whitepaper outlining the concerns and impacts.

That report is available at https://www.hillcountryalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/THC_DischargeMyths_Paper2019.pdf

The Bandera Canyonlands Alliance has created an information page on their website for local landowners and the public that includes current information about the issue and instructions on to how to file comments with the TCEQ regarding the permit. That information can be accessed at www.banderacanyonlandsalliance.org.

About Bandera Canyonlands Alliance

The Bandera Canyonlands Alliance was chartered in 2007 as a 501(3)c non-profit organization and is a group of local landowners working to protect and preserve the natural beauty and rural way of life. The BCA works to educate and inform local residents on issues that threaten natural resources in the ecologically sensitive area near Lost Maples State Natural Area and surrounding canyons.