

# FROM THE ALAMO TO THE CAPITOL

A Legacy Project For All of Texas



**Garry Merritt**  
CEO  
[garry@greatspringsproject.org](mailto:garry@greatspringsproject.org)  
(210) 260-9839

**Scott Parker**  
Land Transactions Director  
[scott@greatspringsproject.org](mailto:scott@greatspringsproject.org)  
(415) 269-4231

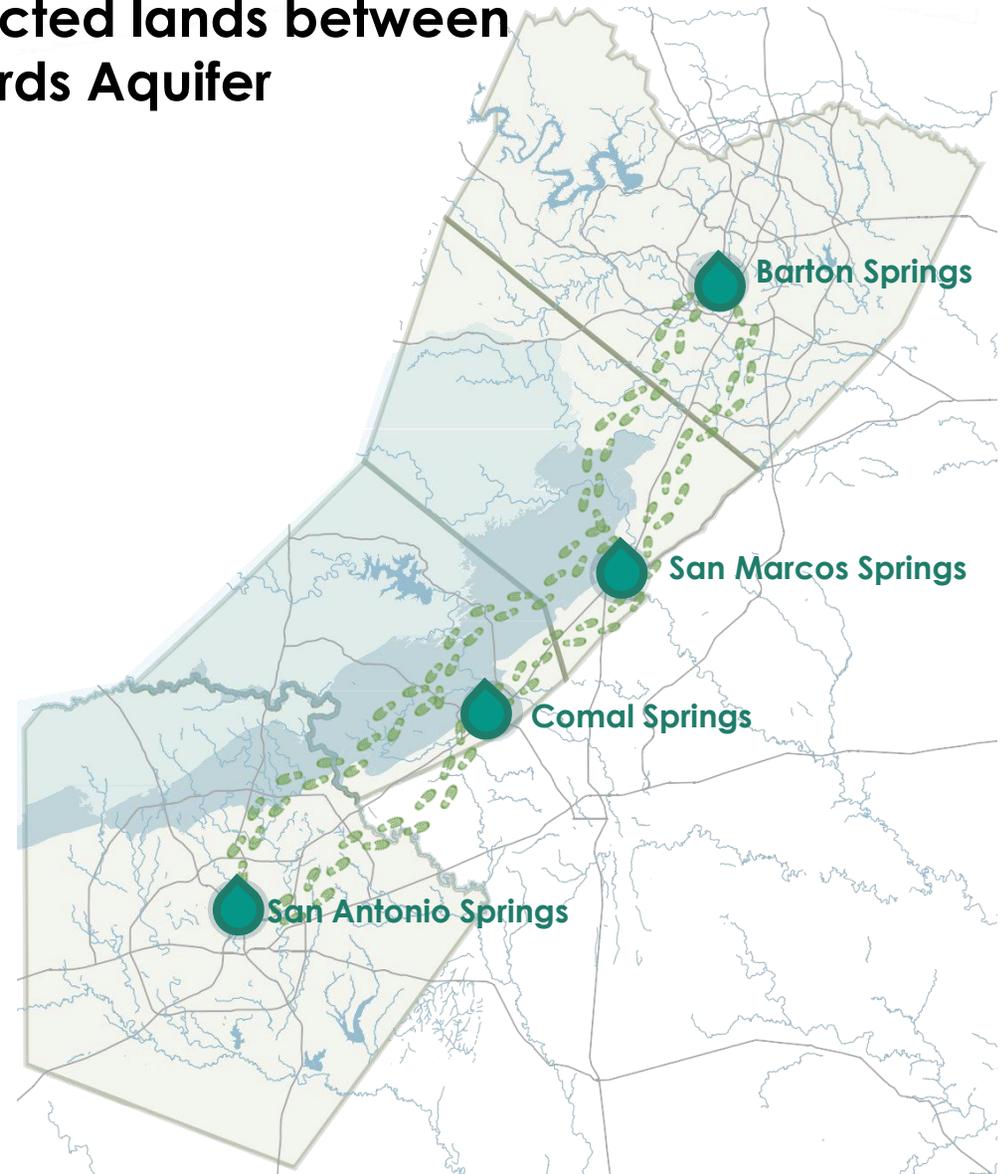


## Mission: Connecting Four Great Springs

A national park-sized corridor of protected lands between San Antonio and Austin over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone.

- A 100-mile spring-to-spring trail network from the Alamo to the Capitol.
- 50,000 acres of additional protected lands over the recharge zone between San Antonio and Austin.

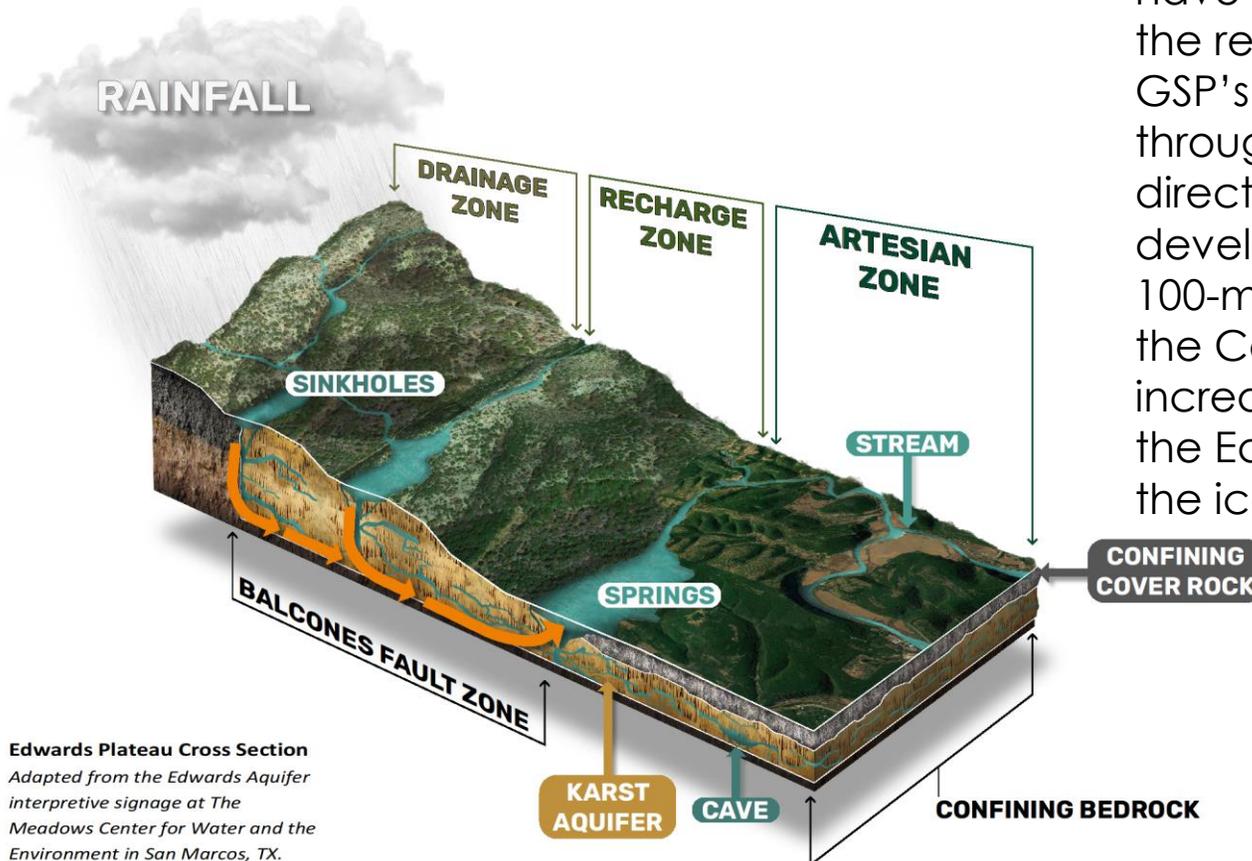
Connecting our Communities;  
Protecting our Springs



# Protecting the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone

GSP's mission is to protect an additional 50,000 acres of land in the Recharge Zone of the Edwards Aquifer, one of the most productive aquifers in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

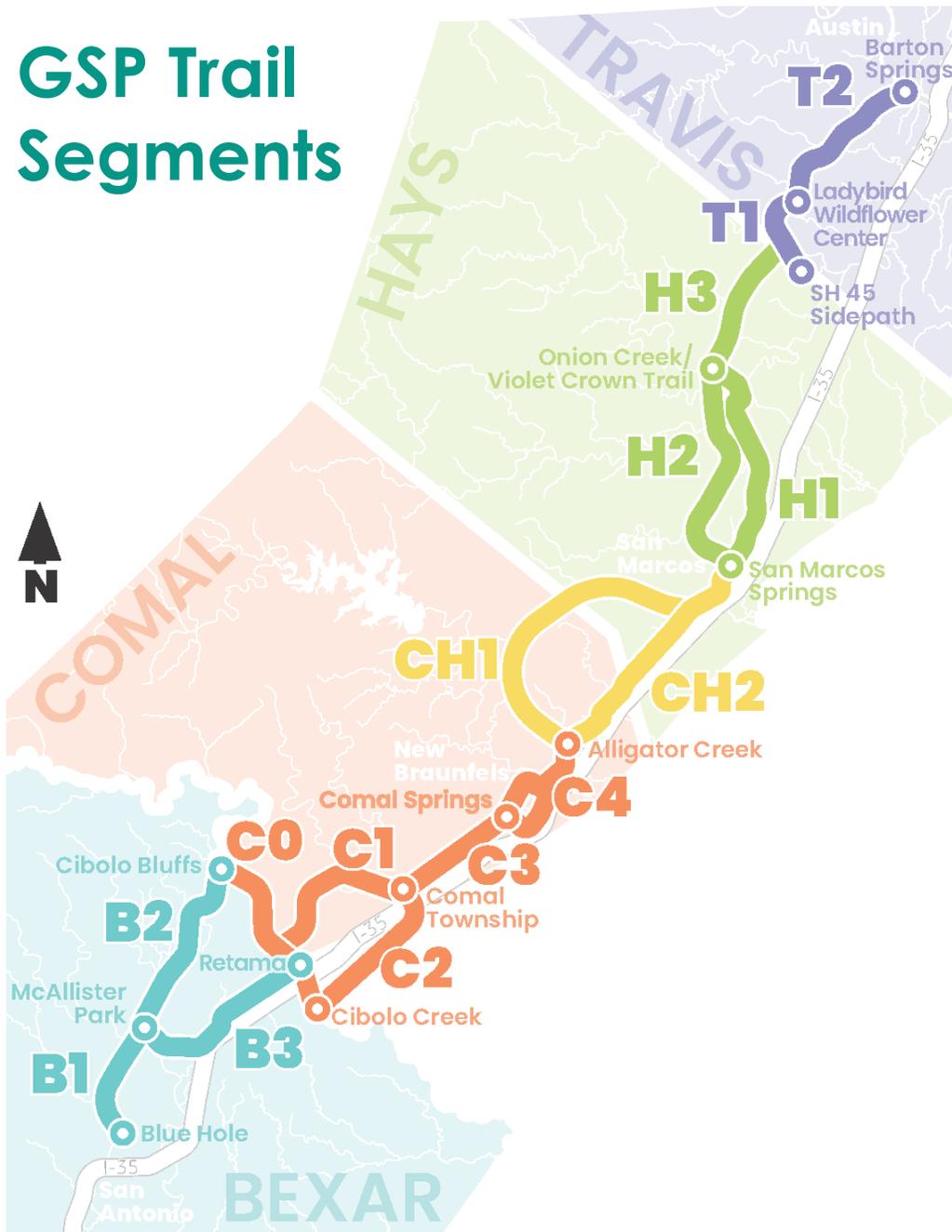
This corridor is characterized by the presence of sinkholes, sinking streams, caves, large springs, and highly productive water wells. Local and regional organizations throughout the Hill Country have been working for decades to protect the region's land and water supplies. GSP's conservation goal will be achieved through conservation partnerships and direct communication with landowners, developers, and local governments. The 100-mile trail network from the Alamo to the Capitol connects communities and increases awareness of the importance of the Edwards Aquifer and the protection of the iconic springs that flow from it.



Edwards Plateau Cross Section  
Adapted from the Edwards Aquifer  
interpretive signage at The  
Meadows Center for Water and the  
Environment in San Marcos, TX.

<sup>1</sup> Edwards Aquifer Authority. 2021. About the Edwards Aquifer. <https://www.edwardsaquifer.org/science-maps/about-the-edwards-aquifer/>

# GSP Trail Segments



## Bexar County Trail Segments:

### BEXAR 1: Spirit Reach + The Flyway

The Blue Hole to McAllister Park

### BEXAR 2: Bracken Path

McAllister Park through Mud Creek to Cibolo Bluffs Nature Preserve

### BEXAR 3: Beitel Creek Greenway

LBJ Park through Beitel Creek to Retama Park



## Comal County Trail Segments:

### COMAL 0: Cibolo Creek Greenway

Selma, Schertz, Cibolo

### COMAL 1: Comal Run

Cibolo Bluffs Nature Preserve to Comal Community Historic Site

### COMAL 2: Great Northern Trail

Schertz to Great Northern Trail to Dry Comal Creek

### COMAL 3: Dry Comal Creek Greenway

Solms Park To Landa Park and Comal Springs

### COMAL 4: Alligator Creek

Landa Park to Alligator Creek to Pantermuehl Pocket Park



## Comal/Hays Trail Segments:

### COMAL/HAYS 1: Western Swing

Pantermuehl to La Cima to San Marcos Springs

### COMAL/HAYS 2: Hunter Road

Alligator Creek to Kissing Tree to La Cima to San Marcos Springs



## Hays County Trail Segments:

### HAYS 1: Emerald Crown Trail

San Marcos Springs to connection with Violet Crown Trail

### HAYS 2: Blanco River

Presa to Blanco Bend to Emerald Crown Trail to Violet Crown Trail

### HAYS 3: Hays County Violet Crown Trail

Onion Creek to SH45



## Travis County Trail Segments:

### TRAVIS 1: Violet Crown to Lady Bird

SH45 to Ladybird Wildflower Center

### TRAVIS 2: Violet Crown to Barton Springs

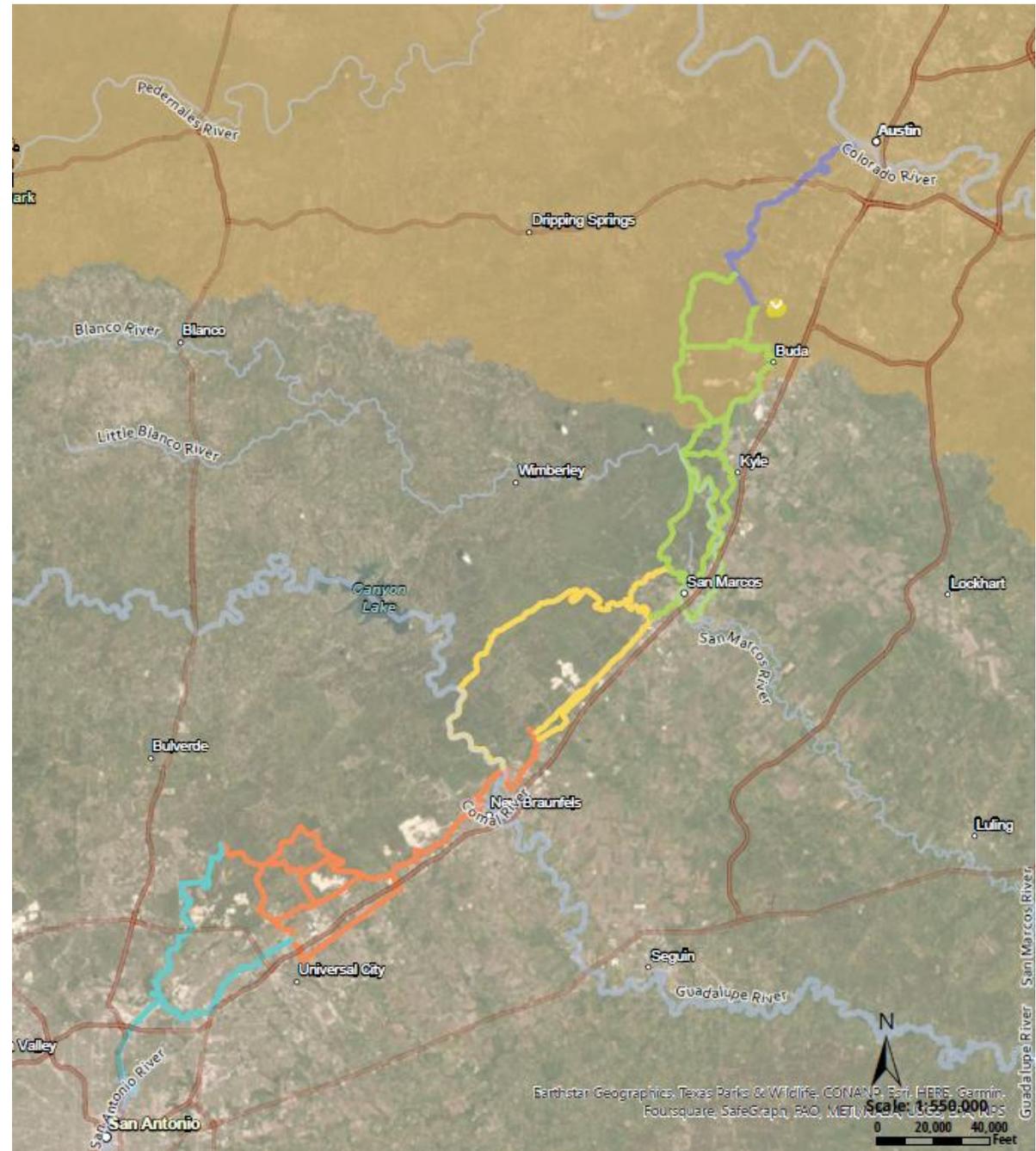
Ladybird Wildflower Center to Barton Springs

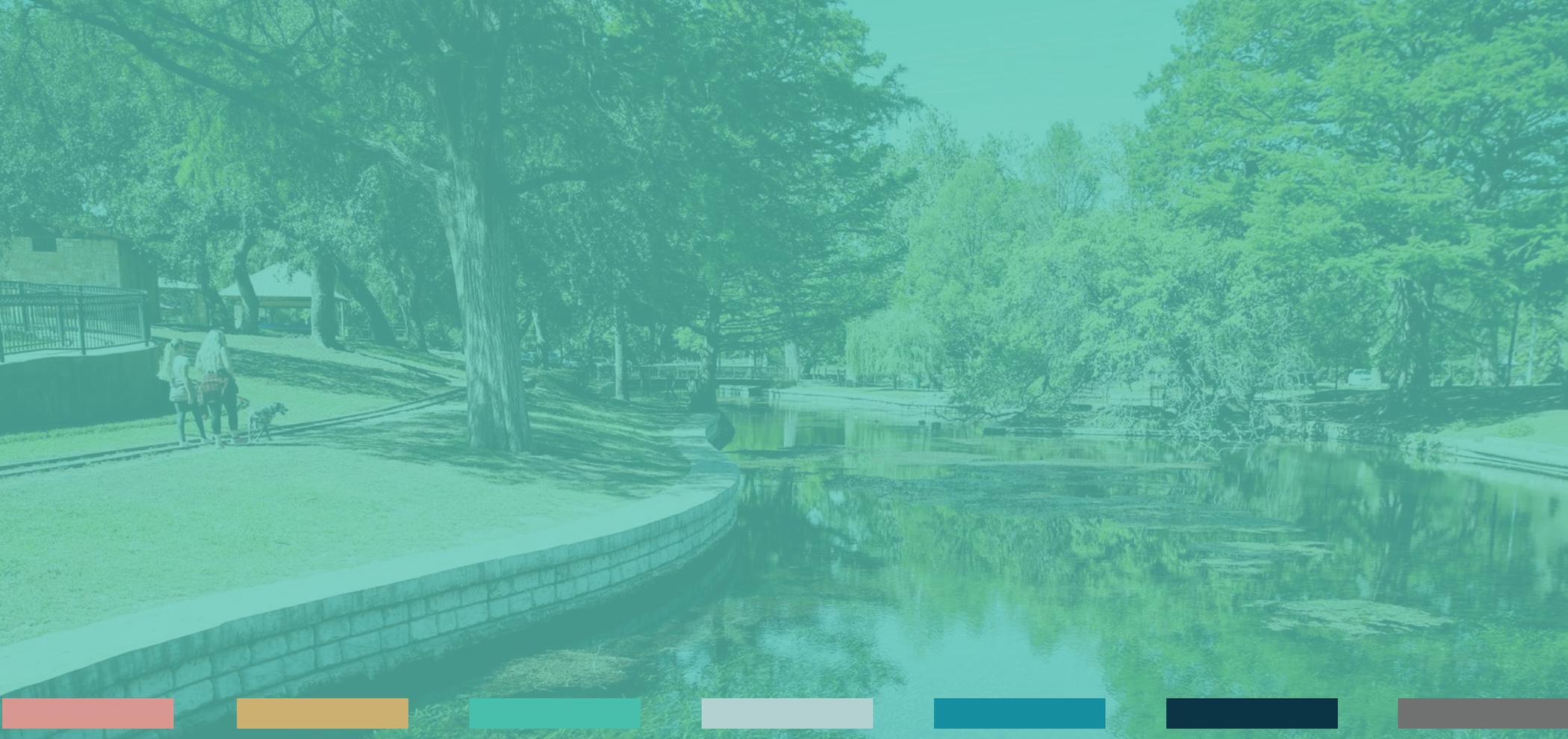


## GSP Corridor Overview

### *Proposed Trail Alignments*

-  Colorado River Basin
-  Bexar Segment
-  Comal Segment
-  Comal/Hays Segment
-  Hays Segment
-  Travis Segment





# GREAT SPRINGS PROJECT

## STRATEGIC CONSERVATION PRIORITIZATION

*June 23, 2022*  
*Produced by Siglo Group*

# CONSERVATION RESOURCES: WATER

**1. MAJOR & MINOR SPRING BUFFERS:** These datasets represent the vital lands surrounding springs, where freshwater emerges from the earth. These areas support a wide array of flora and fauna, some of which only exist in the unique conditions immediately surrounding springs. Springs are also important hydrologically, draining into rivers and contributing substantially to base flows throughout the basin. Furthermore, they are culturally important outdoor spaces where people gather, swim, and recreate. Major Spring Buffers were assigned a buffer of 1-mile while Minor Spring Buffers were assigned 750-feet.

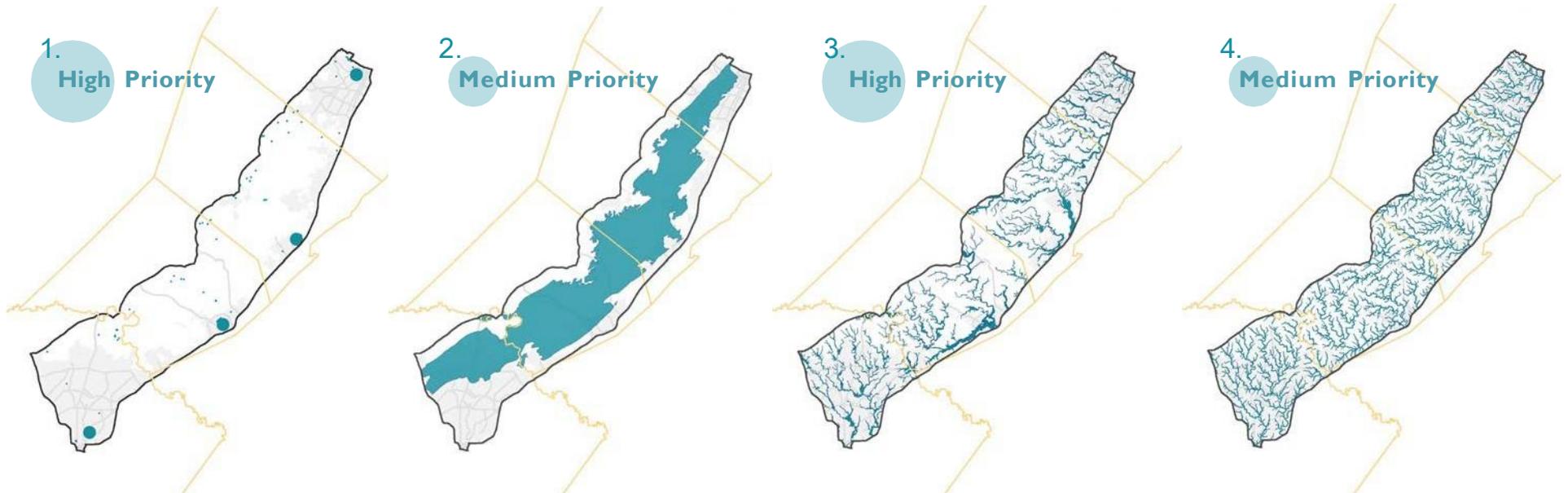
**2. EDWARDS AQUIFER RECHARGE:** Aquifer Recharge Areas replenish aquifers and renew the freshwater sources that municipalities use for drinking, residential, and industrial uses. Maintaining healthy water levels in these aquifers, especially the Edwards Aquifer, is essential for maintaining sufficient water flow in the river. The Edwards Aquifer is the primary source of

drinking water for San Antonio and is expected to become a source of drinking water for several rapidly growing population centers in the basin, making protection of land in the recharge zone, and thereby protection of the water flowing into the aquifer, even more critical.

**3. 100 YEAR FLOODPLAIN:** The 100-year Floodplain data was compiled by county and depicts if the area has a 1% annual chance of a flooding event. These areas, being less ideal for residential or commercial development, have a better chance of being conserved and utilized as public space for parks and trails.

**4. WATER QUALITY BUFFERS:** Water Quality Buffers are applied to waterways to protect from disturbances and runoff and are dependent on the size of the contributing watershed. Siglo Group created this later based on City of Austin code.<sup>34</sup>

Figure 5. Water Conservation Resources



# CONSERVATION RESOURCES: COMMUNITY

**5. PARCEL SIZE:** Larger parcels are easier to acquire than several smaller ones, have a proportionally larger effect on hydrology, and can support robust habitat for more species, thereby making land management more efficient.<sup>35</sup> Prioritizing larger parcels underscores the importance of reducing fragmentation (a common side effect of ownership transfer), while allowing landowners and their families to continue living and working on the land.<sup>28</sup> Parcel Size was grouped into four classes, with larger parcels assigned higher value as a conservation resource.

**6. OPEN SPACE ADJACENT:** Expanding existing conservation lands by managing adjacent properties is one of the most efficient and effective ways to increase the impact of conservation lands. Not only does proximity create connections between protected areas across the landscape, it also creates more robust habitats, offers additional wildlife migration routes, reduces management costs, and can provide for greater recreational opportunities. This priority is established by increasing the value of those areas that lie within

1,200 feet of existing conservation lands in the model, with an even higher priority assigned to lands within 400 feet.

**7. EXISTING & PROPOSED TRAILS:** The Existing Trails dataset is comprised of a combination of trail corridors that exist, or are in development. These alignments are sourced from Siglo Group and Alta Planning + Design and were assigned a quarter-mile buffer to take into account lands directly adjacent to existing trails. Proposed Trails were categorized by Siglo Group and Alta Planning to represent proposed routes for the Great Springs Project. These trails were assigned a larger buffer of one mile, with the assumption that the exact alignment is unknown.

**8. RESILIENT & CONNECTED:** This dataset from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) estimates landscape diversity of topography, vegetation, and soil to determine areas that would be more resilient in diverse climate conditions. It also estimates connectedness of landscape by analyzing human made barriers, such as roads, dams, and development. These climate-resilient sites are more likely to sustain native plants, animals, and natural processes into the future.

Figure 6. Culture Conservation Resources



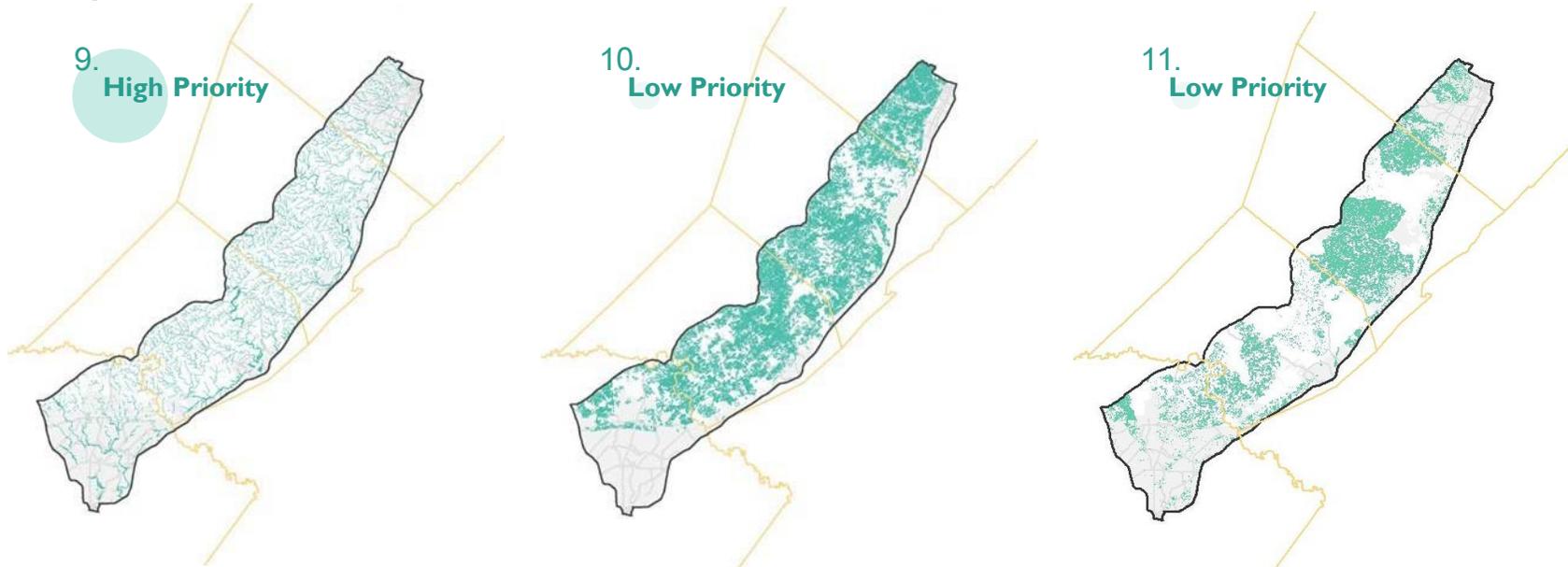
# CONSERVATION RESOURCES: ECOLOGY

**9. RIPARIAN CORRIDORS:** Riparian Corridors help mitigate flood damage and protect water quality and availability, critical habitat, and foraging grounds for both aquatic and terrestrial species. Texas Parks & Wildlife Department's (TPWD) Ecological Systems Classification was used to define and extract riparian areas that have the potential to be restored.

**10. GOLDEN-CHEEKED WARBLER HABITAT:** The 2013 Duarte model represents potential habitat for the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler. Populations of this species have been reduced by roughly 29% since 1999. Prioritizing breeding habitats through land conservation can help prevent further fragmentation of this species that breeds exclusively in central Texas.

**11. THE TERRESTRIAL FAUNA ECOLOGICAL INDEX:** This dataset was created by the TPWD, who assessed and assigned a score for various habitat areas based on the range and known habitat preferences of local wildlife species in each of the two ecoregions. The top 30% of ecologically valued lands are represented in this model, providing representation for all counties in the study area.

Figure 7. Ecological Conservation Resources



# FINAL CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

The Final Conservation Scenario identified 100,831 acres as high priority conservation areas—approximately 18% of the 572,398-acre study area. In addition, the Irreplaceable Conservation Priorities, 4% of the study area that include 25,220 acres, represent areas that are critical elements of a continuous conservation network no matter how we value different conservation resources.

The Final Conservation Scenario (Figure 9) combines the parcel scores of the three preliminary conservation scenarios to ensure that priority parcels included the conservation resources considered important to Great Springs Project staff and the Technical Advisors. In addition to the Final Conservation Priorities, the highest scoring parcels (the top 25,000 acres) are part of the Irreplaceable Conservation Priorities (Figure 11). The irreplaceable parcels are considered of extremely high value and can be looked at as those places that are the most important for the most conservation resources in the study area.

89% of the final results reside in Comal and Hays Counties, partly due to the highly developed lands in Bexar and Travis. Supporting the prioritization of parcels along trail corridors, 71% of the Final Conservation Priorities and 84% of the Irreplaceable Conservation Priorities intersect a proposed or existing trail corridor. Another resource of high value is the Aquifer Recharge Area, with 84% of Final Conservation Priorities intersecting the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone.

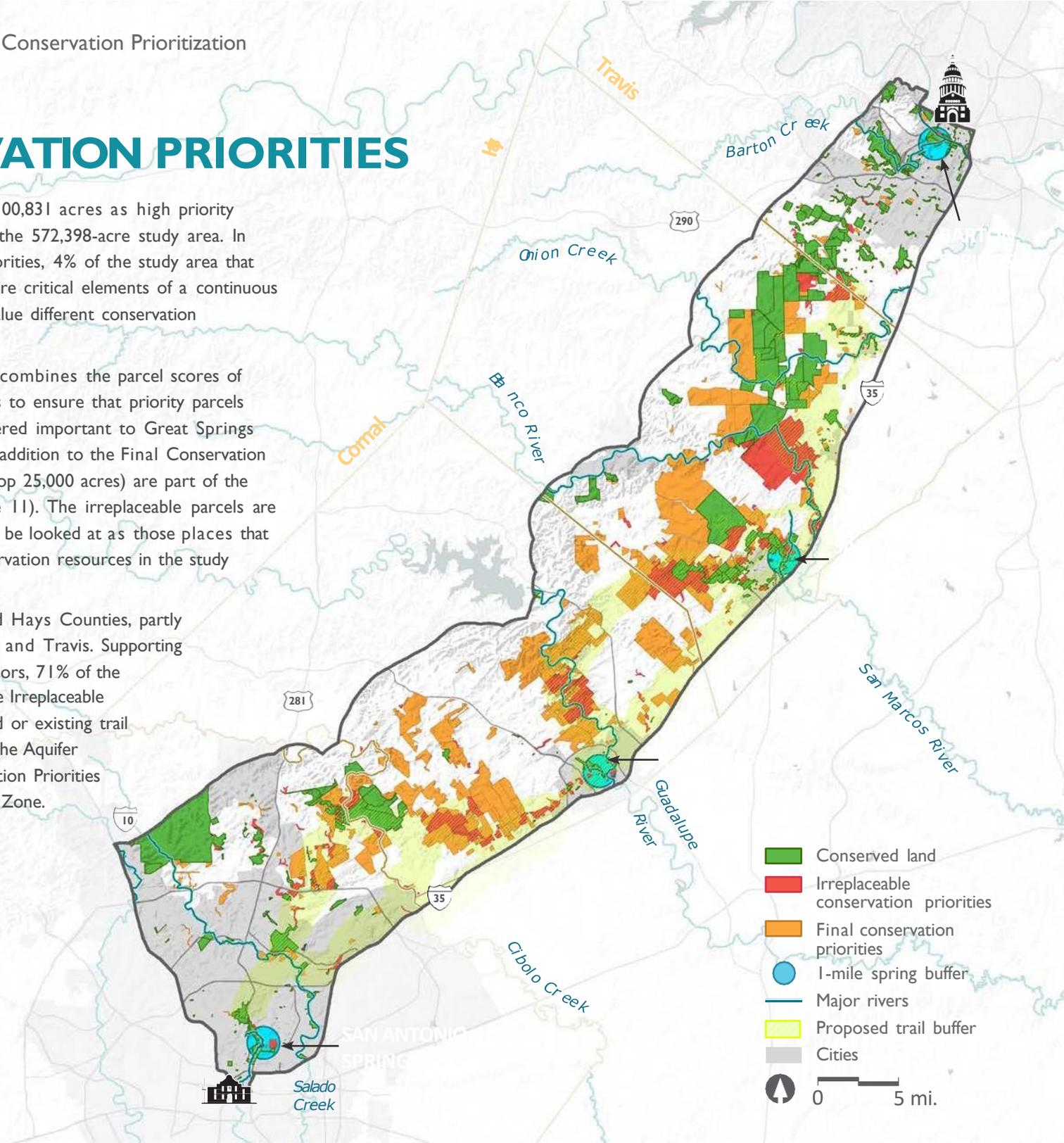


Figure 9. Final Results

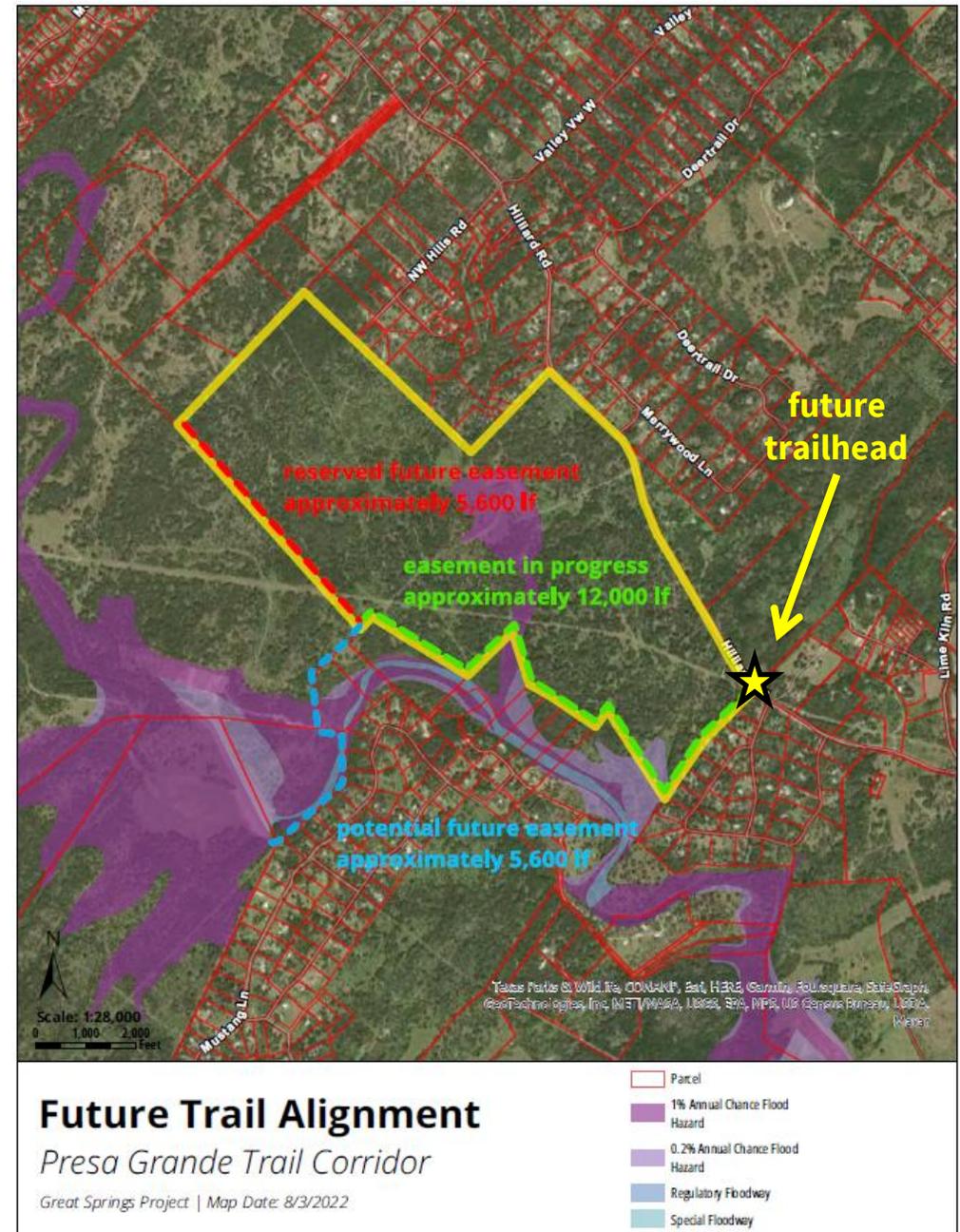


# LANDOWNER ENGAGEMENT

- ❑ 1,400 parcels 50 acres or more
  - 800 owners
  - 24 months
  - Sale, CE, ROW, conservation outcome
- ❑ Internal capacity
- ❑ Aggregate & mining industry
- ❑ External capacity (land trusts, NRCS, others)
- ❑ Systems (GIS mapping tools, Bloomerang)

## Presa Grande

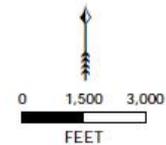
- 844 acres total area, 694 to go under CE including trail corridor
- Hays County and Edwards Aquifer Authority funding
- Significant karst and surface waters supporting Sink Creek and San Marcos Springs
- Approximately 2.3 miles of new trail, potentially connecting Hilliard Road trailhead to San Marcos Loop and Check Trail and new Outer Ring Trail.
- Potential new Loop and Check trails of ~3.5 – 4.0 miles; new outer ring trail of ~4.5 miles



## La Cima

- 1069 acres to go under CE to Hays County
- Hays County Funding
- Increases existing PCNA from 2,110 acres to 3,208 acres
- Critical Purgatory Creek watershed lands
- Trail connectivity; up to 4.5 miles of new trail
- Est. \$5.7M GCW mitigation credits

### HAYS COUNTY HABITAT PRESERVE, OPENSOURCE, & CLEAN WATERS OPPORTUNITY REGIONAL TRAILS MAP



FUTURE PROPOSED TRAILHEADS

PROPOSED ACQUISITION - 1,068 AC

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL ACQUISITION - 321 AC

EXISTING AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT TRACTS

NEW PROPOSED TRAILS

COMPLETED TRAILS

CURRENT PROPOSED TRAILS

HAYS COUNTY RHCP LA CIMA PRESERVE - 700 AC

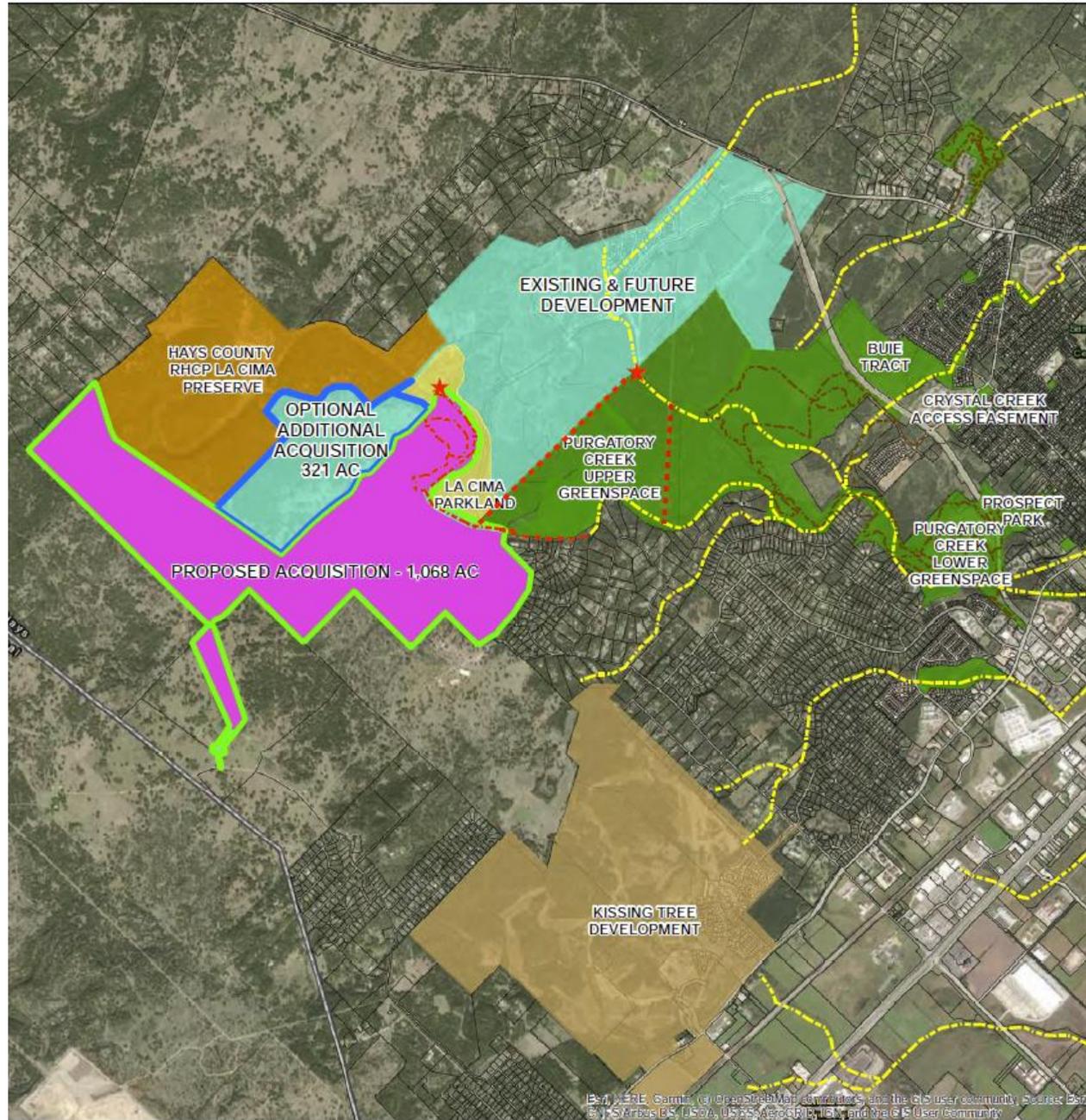
LA CIMA PARKLAND - 91.5 AC

PUBLIC PARKLAND

KISSING TREE DEVELOPMENT

HCAD PARCELS

COUNTY BOUNDARY



# THANK YOU!

For more information on Great Springs Project,  
including the Trails Plan,  
Economic Benefits Report,  
and to view an informational video,  
please visit our website at  
[www.greatspringsproject.org](http://www.greatspringsproject.org)



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**CEO**

[garry@greatspringsproject.org](mailto:garry@greatspringsproject.org)

(210) 260-9839

**Scott Parker**

**Land Transactions Director**

[scott@greatspringsproject.org](mailto:scott@greatspringsproject.org)

(415) 269-42321