

Bandera Canyonlands Alliance

Neighbors working together to protect and preserve the natural beauty
and rural way of life in the Bandera Canyonlands

Established 2008

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www.banderacanyonlandsalliance.org

The Bandera Canyonlands Alliance (BCA) wants to make sure that local landowners and concerned individuals have information about the proposed **Wastewater Pollutant Discharge Permit** applied for by Young Life, the current owners of the former Lonehollow Camp near Vanderpool. This application has been made to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

BCA is a group of neighbors working together to protect and preserve the natural beauty and the rural way of life in our area. Our members span the political spectrum and have a wide variety of interests, but we all share a common love and respect for the natural resources in our area and the people who live and work here. We feel community awareness and an open dialogue about community issues makes us all better.

Over the last few weeks, we have heard concerns and received questions from our members about the Young Life wastewater permit. We would like to share those questions and our views as a means of contributing to the dialogue.

Why is the Bandera Canyonlands Alliance, along with other local landowners and groups, opposing the Wastewater Pollutant Discharge Permit requested by the Young Life Camp (Lonehollow)?

Young Life has applied for a permit that will allow them to build a sewage treatment plant and **release up to 60,000 gallons of treated wastewater each day** into an unnamed creek that flows to Long Hollow Creek then into the Sabinal River just north of Utopia. We think it's important for local community members to register their opposition to this permit with the TCEQ. We hope Young Life will consider the other options they have and withdraw or amend the permit in its current form and change to a zero-discharge approach.

I heard Young Life plans to use the wastewater for irrigation on their property. If that's true, isn't it a good thing?

While Young Life has made statements to individuals that they intend to use the wastewater for irrigation the reality is that they have applied for a Wastewater Pollutant Discharge permit which **legally allows them to release wastewater into area creeks and the Sabinal River**. Their permit application makes no mention or specification of any other use than direct discharge of wastewater into our creeks. A different type of permit called a Texas Land Application Permit (TLAP) would allow them to irrigate with their wastewater and would prohibit the release of any wastewater into creeks and rivers. This would allow them to satisfy their needs and protect the river while respecting area landowners. **While we applaud their intention of using the water for irrigation, if they obtain a discharge permit then nothing would stop them or future owners from discharging all 60,000 gallons of wastewater per day.** Using wastewater for irrigation is a much better and proven option that would also reduce the need to pump water from local wells and the aquifer during significant drought like we've experienced in the past year.

If wastewater is treated to drinking water standards does that make it okay to release it into the creeks and river?

No. It sounds good, but the reality is that even wastewater that's treated to drinking water standards still contains much higher levels of nutrients that are not currently present in local creeks and the river. **When these nutrients including phosphorus are released from wastewater discharge it makes the water cloudy and causes algae blooms that can clog the water, kill fish and make the river unsightly.** Think about it this way. Releasing even highly treated wastewater is like introducing components of fertilizer into the water which causes this damage. Unfortunately, once this begins there's no stopping the harm to the river and the environment. There are many examples of this happening to other rivers in the Texas Hill Country like the San Gabriel and the Blanco rivers. More information about this damage to Texas rivers is available on-line at www.nodumpingsewage.org.

What makes the Sabinal River different from other rivers that already have wastewater treatment plants?

The headwaters of the Sabinal River from Lost Maples down to the city of Sabinal is ultra-pure and crystal clear. Some portions of the river have very low flow or may even go dry at times. **According to the Nueces River Authority this 48-mile stretch of the river is one of the last pristine river segments in Texas that is untouched by wastewater discharge.** If this permit is approved, it would set a precedent along this stretch of river making it easier for others to gain these types of permits and cause even more damage.

Do you oppose Young Life and other Christian Groups who want to come here?

No, we welcome and support Young Life and its Christian mission and the valuable work they do with young people. We do not support how they are planning to handle their wastewater by securing a permit to discharge it into area creeks and the Sabinal River. Our hope is they will change their approach and seek a zero-discharge plan. This would be the best way to respect the land, the river, landowners and local businesses that are dependent on visitors attracted to the beauty and pristine quality of the area. We believe that we should all work together to be good stewards of our natural resources.

Do other camps and retreat centers in the Hill Country Region discharge wastewater into creeks and rivers?

There are now 83 camps in our region of the state and only one of them discharges wastewater to waterways. **It's important to emphasize that 82 of these camps have found a better way to handle wastewater other than directly discharging it into creeks, rivers or streams.**

I'm not comfortable telling others what they can do on their property. What about landowner rights?

This is a valid concern and sensitive issue. **What makes this different is that the surface water in the creeks and river is a shared natural resource owned by all Texans.** It is classified as State Water and flows through many properties and benefits many people. It is used for drinking water, livestock and wildlife management and recreation. In fact, the river is a draw for many visitors to our area that spend

money for lodging, food and supplies at many small businesses. Damage to the river is something that would affect the community as a whole.

I've heard that Lost Maples State Natural Area already has a wastewater facility at the park?

The Lost Maples SNA does not discharge treated wastewater to the Sabinal River or any of its tributaries. Instead, the popular Natural Area uses a zero-discharge land application type system designed to protect our sensitive environment in the Sabinal Canyon.

What can I do to make sure Young Life does the right thing?

You can join others in the local area and across the region who are filing official comments with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) **asking that this permit be denied** in its current form. It's also **important for people to ask that a Public Meeting be scheduled** to allow the community to voice concerns, ask questions and gather factual information. We hope Young Life will consider available better and proven options that would allow them to prevent discharge to local creeks and the Sabinal River. We encourage you to share this information with your family, neighbors and others who may be impacted or interested.

Here's How to File Your Comments with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to Oppose the Young Life Wastewater Discharge Permit Application:

1. Go to this link: <https://www14.tceq.texas.gov/epic/eComment/?fbclid=IwAR1G41wKBcsHkyaGWk-byy6IA26nqnCGfE-xgkX8AfS07KsYiosbS8eRI0o>
2. Fill in the permit number: **WQ0015892001**
3. Complete your contact information
4. Enter your comments. It is **CRITICAL** that you include these exact words: **Ask that the (Young Life) permit be DENIED, and that the TCEQ hold a Public Meeting on the permit.** (Please note this specific wording is necessary to ensure your concerns are considered. If you simply state that you are opposed to the permit it will not count according to the strict TCEQ requirements.)
5. Include your personal reason for why the permit should be denied. Examples include: you own property downstream from the discharge point; your enjoyment of the river (name the activity- swimming, wading, kayaking) will be impaired; your ability to use the creek water for household drinking water; your concern for wildlife, etc.)

More information about Bandera Canyonlands Alliance is available at: www.banderacanyonlandsalliance.org.

Young Life Camp Waste Water Impact Area

