

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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PRESS RELEASE

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Real County Commissioners Join Uvalde County Leaders in Opposing Young Life Wastewater Discharge Permit

(Vanderpool, TX) The Real County Commissioners Court voted unanimously to support a resolution opposing the wastewater permit application the Colorado-based Young Life organization has before the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Young Life has applied for a Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit at their new camp near Vanderpool that would allow them to build a wastewater treatment plant and legally release up to 60,000 gallons of treated wastewater into local creeks that lead to the Sabinal River.

The resolution against the current Young Life plans was approved by Real County Commissioners at their April 12th meeting in Leakey. The resolution states: *"...Whereas, these streams can be protected by prohibiting discharge of treated sewage and instead requiring alternative means of disposal through land application, reuse or other means;... and Whereas, the Real County Commissioner Court recognizes the value of these streams, including the Sabinal River and its tributaries, to the environment of Real County and surrounding counties..."*

The Real County Commissioners Court joins the Uvalde County Commissioners Court in passing resolutions against the Young Life plans. Landowners and small business owners throughout the region are concerned about the prospect of releasing treated wastewater into rivers and streams in the Upper Nueces River Basin that includes the upper reaches of the Nueces, Frio and Sabinal Rivers. If approved the Young Life permit would set a harmful precedent allowing others to seek similar permits creating even more risk for the pure rivers in the region.

"Our region is very dependent on visitors coming to our area for recreation and people are concerned. Opposition to this proposed permit is widespread and brings together ranchers, small business owners and wildlife enthusiasts who want to see the Upper Sabinal River protected," said Bandera Canyonlands Alliance President Merry Langlinais.

The Upper Sabinal River is one of the last remaining pure and pristine rivers in Texas with no existing permits that would allow wastewater to be discharged. Treated wastewater if released into the river would cloud the water and trigger algae blooms that could clog the

waterway making it unsightly. Algae can also deplete the oxygen in the water making it toxic to fish, wildlife and pets.

The Real County Commissioners join the Uvalde County Commissioners, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Friends of Lost Maples, the Nueces River Authority, Keep Utopia Beautiful, Sabinal Canyon Coalition and the Bandera Canyonlands Alliance in either opposing or raising serious questions about the Young Life permit application.

“We are asking Young Life to adopt an iron-clad Zero Discharge method for disposing of their wastewater by using it for irrigation or other approved beneficial reuses. This is already being done by many camps and organizations in our area to avoid releasing wastewater into these pure waterways, including: City of Camp Wood, Alto Frio Baptist Encampment, Leakey Regional Wastewater System, Garner State Park, Lost Maples State Natural Area, HEB Family Foundation, Camp Eagle, Camp OTX and Cornerstone Church Conference and Retreat Center,” Langlinais said.

Almost 500 landowners have filed official written comments with the TCEQ opposing the permit and asking that a public meeting be held to address citizen concerns and questions. Also, more than 21,000 people have signed a Change.org petition asking Young Life to change from a discharge permit to a Zero Discharge plan to prevent any wastewater from reaching the creeks and river. A video outlining the issue is available for viewing at: <https://vimeo.com/526591042> The petition can be signed at <http://chng.it/d4YPgc8rdS>

Additional information is also available at www.banderacanyonlandsalliance.org