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News Release

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Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District Habitat Conservation Plan to Conserve Salamanders and Address Water Withdrawals from the Edwards Aquifer Approved by Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has approved the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The HCP addresses water withdrawals and the potential impacts of these withdrawals from the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer on the Barton Springs salamander and the Austin blind salamander, both federally protected species.

The HCP establishes a voluntary conservation program designed to ensure that pumping withdrawals from the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer in Travis and Hays counties, Texas, will not jeopardize the survival of the Austin blind and Barton Springs salamanders, and their habitat. The Record of Decision (ROD) and issuance of an Incidental Take Permit will occur no sooner than 30 days after publication of the notice of availability (NOA).

The HCP and the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District's Incidental Take Permit will be in effect for 20 years. The HCP incorporates demand reduction measures, programs encouraging the development and use of new water supplies, greater enforcement capabilities, cooperative efforts with others, and mechanisms to adapt and address emergencies. The Service is also releasing the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that analyzes the effects of issuing the Incidental Take Permit based on the HCP.

The Edwards Aquifer supports a rich biodiversity of terrestrial and aquatic species, many of which are specially adapted to living underground and occur only in this area of Central Texas. The Barton Springs and Austin blind salamanders are aquatic and solely dependent upon water from the Edwards Aquifer for their survival, growth, and reproduction. The most significant threat to both species is the degradation of habitat in the form of reduced water quality and quantity.

Under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Service has developed a number of tools, including HCPs that provide businesses, landowners and state, and local governments with to the ability to continue their activities while ensuring the protection of listed species such as the Austin blind salamander and the Barton Springs salamander.

America's fish, wildlife, and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. The Service works actively to engage conservation partners and

the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/>. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [YouTube Channel](#) and download photos from our [Flickr page](#).

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