



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**

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**Agenda Item Number:** {{item.number}}

**Agenda Date:** June 20, 2024

**In Control:** City Council A Session

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**DEPARTMENT:** Parks & Recreation Department

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Homer Garcia III

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** Citywide

**SUBJECT:**

Edwards Aquifer Protection Program Acquisition – Hilthon Ranch Division 1

**SUMMARY:**

An ordinance authorizing payment in the amount of \$876,996.19 from the San Antonio Municipal Facilities Corporation fund, included in the FY 2024 - FY 2029 Capital Improvement Program, to Mission Title Company as escrow agent for title on a conservation easement, due diligence and closing costs on a 346.71-acre tract of land known as the Hilthon Ranch Division 1 property located in Uvalde County, Texas. This action also authorizes the execution of necessary documents to accomplish said acquisition.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The purpose of the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program is to obtain property rights by fee simple purchase, conservation easements or donations of land over the sensitive zones of the Edwards Aquifer. This program was initiated in May 2000 when voters approved Proposition 3, a 1/8-cent sales tax venue up to \$45 million for the acquisition of lands over the Edwards Aquifer for parks and watershed protection. Proposition 3 ran from 2000 through 2005 and was limited to Bexar County.

The 2005 Proposition 1 program was an extension of the initial voter-approved Edwards Aquifer protection endeavor and was extended by voters in 2010 and renewed again in 2015. Changes in state legislation allowed watershed protection activities to expand outside of Bexar County. In 2020, City Council approved a 10-year, \$100 million alternative funding program through the San Antonio Municipal Facilities Corporation which will issue debt for the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program to continue its mission of protecting recharge water quality and quantity over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge and Contributing Zones.

The proposed purchase of the conservation easement on the Hilthon Ranch Division 1 property is located over the Edwards Aquifer Contributing Zone and consists of 346.71 acres in Uvalde County, Texas. The property was initially identified through use of the Scientific Evaluation Team's GIS Spatial Model and subsequent site visits identified favorable recharge features on the property. The Hilthon Ranch Division 1 property is located within the Brushy Creek – Frio River watershed which contributes to significant recharge of the Edwards Aquifer. The Edwards Aquifer Authority issued a geological assessment of the property confirming that preservation would provide high water quantity and high water quality benefit for the City of San Antonio.

#### **ISSUE:**

This ordinance authorizes payment in the amount of \$876,996.19 to Mission Title Company as escrow agent for title on a conservation easement, due diligence and closing costs on a 346.71-acre tract of land known as the Hilthon Ranch Division 1 property located in Uvalde County, Texas.

Acquisition of this property is consistent with the policy for the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program and will increase the total protected lands under the City's aquifer protection program by 346.71 acres; the current protected acreage is 182,334 acres. The City Council-appointed Conservation Advisory Board has reviewed and recommended this acquisition.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

An alternative would be to defer this acquisition until a later date subject to the property owner's willingness to sell real estate interests and future market conditions. Additionally, other properties could be targeted for acquisition foregoing this conservation easement and losing the geological benefits and the protection of additional acreage within the Brushy Creek - Frio River watershed in Uvalde County.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

This acquisition is a one-time expenditure in the amount of \$876,996.19 for purchase of a 346.71-acre conservation easement located in Uvalde County over the Edwards Aquifer Contributing Zone funded through the San Antonio Municipal Facilities Corporation included in the FY 2024 -

FY 2029 Capital Improvement Program.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the acquisition of a conservation easement on the 346.71-acre Hilthon Ranch Division 1 property in the amount of \$876,996.19 under the San Antonio Municipal Facilities Corporation fund.

The Contracts Disclosure Form required by the Ethics ordinance is attached.