

Staff: Thank you for taking the time to send us your comments on the BSPMP and supporting efforts to protect the watersheds feeding the springs. Responses are included below in the text of your message.

Citizen: I have been swimming at Barton Springs on a daily, year-round basis since I moved to Austin in 1984. The pool is a glorious place and I, like many others, depend on it for mental and physical well-being. After many years of witnessing a steady deterioration in the water quality and experiencing a growing sense of despair that city officials would or could take action to address issues at the pool, I am encouraged by most of the recommendations presented in the Barton Springs Master Plan.

My primary concern at the pool is the water quality. I fully recognize that development in the aquifer recharge zone is the main factor contributing to the declining quality of water in the pool and so I have long supported efforts to control growth in these sensitive areas. In an ideal world there would be no development along Barton Creek, homeowners in the recharge zone would not use lawn fertilizers, we would not be experiencing urban sprawl in the western portion of Travis County and I could go down to the pool on the day after a heavy rainstorm certain that the water would be as clear and clean as the day before the storm.

Sadly, this is not even remotely our reality. That's why I wholeheartedly support the short-term recommendations presented in the document. I believe we must do what we can to improve conditions in the pool — for salamanders and swimmers — and that failure to act would have profoundly negative effects on the pool, its aquatic life, swimmers and the reputation of the City of Austin. I particularly support the removal of the sediment and gravel from the deep end of the pool and the initiation of water quality and flow studies to better understand pool dynamics and to help determine needed projects and their feasibility. Though I, like every daily swimmer, hope that pool closures can be minimized, I applaud city officials for taking action because I firmly believe that failure to act in the past has worsened conditions at the pool for its inhabitants and its human users. I also believe that we, as a community, can do better to protect, preserve and enhance this truly unique and fragile site and the lovely but largely neglected park that surrounds it.

Staff: Much of the gravel bar was dumped by floods several years ago. At the time we were trying to encourage the growth of native aquatic plants in the pool and thought the gravel and sediment would also harbor seed stock from upstream to help us do that. Well, it's obvious that did not work out so removal of the gravel bar is planned for Spring 09. The methods is not been finalized and staff are looking at options. We hope to do this during the time the pool is normally closed for 2-3 weeks for spring cleaning but we should know more about a timetable this fall.

Citizen: Though I am currently less supportive of the some of the structural changes proposed as long-term recommendations (in particular, those listed under the headings 'ground improvements' and 'buildings' in the document), I am open-minded about their possible need as long as our top priority remains the shared goal of improving habitat for the salamander and water quality for pool users.

Staff: The focus for many of the short term projects is water quality in the pool that we hope will make it a better place for both swimmers and salamanders. As you noted, the pool grounds have been somewhat neglected over the years but still enjoyed by thousands, The funds will help the facility and grounds for the future.

Citizen: I do support the concept for a SMALL bathhouse/changing room/toilet facility on the south side because it seems evident that restroom facilities on that side of the pool are warranted.

Staff: Public concern regarding this structure pushed it to the long-term list but I agree that the need is apparent.

Citizen: I also support efforts to unite the spring flows, if studies show this is desirable, to restore and improve conditions at Eliza Springs and Sunken Gardens, and to better integrate these two sites into 'the Springs' experience. I also support some of the recommendations for improvements in the grounds, such as better use of native plants, rainwater collection and more aesthetically pleasing fencing, though I would never give these priority over water-quality related projects.

Staff: Thanks for the support.

Citizen: I have been impressed by the openness of the process to public input and though I am certain that improvements in transparency (in decision-making and budget) are always possible, I think pool users have been given adequate notification and ample opportunity to obtain information, attend meetings and forums, offer suggestions and provide comments on draft documents. I have attended several forums and feel that I was well advised in advance about meeting dates, agendas and so on. I also would like to thank the city and the consultants for seeking the input of the Scientific Advisory Committee and I hope this group will continue to be involved in the process. It may be possible for other such advisory groups of practical experts to be formed (e.g. native plant, tree and xeriscape gardening experts; green builders and architects; and possibly others) that could help inform the process and to provide a level of public confidence as the effort "to return Barton Springs to its rightful glory" proceeds.

Staff: Again, thanks. When planning changes at such a loved place as Barton Springs, emotions can run high and not everyone will be happy but we are trying to do what is best for the endangered species and human species at the same time. We want this place to continue to be special in the next 100 years.