

Press Advisory

PRESS CONFERENCE TO ANNOUNCE 281 LAWSUIT

Tuesday, February 26 @ 10 AM

Southwest Corner of Stone Oak Pkwy & Highway 281 (former Exxon/Speedy Stop)

Presentations by Terri Hall and Enrique Valdivia

For more information contact Enrique Valdivia at 210-789-0900.

Another Lawsuit Filed to Stop Construction of US 281 Freeway Toll Road

Aquifer Guardians in Urban Areas (AGUA), advocates for protection of the Edwards Aquifer, and **Texans Uniting for Reform and Freedom (TURF)** have joined together to file a lawsuit in federal court today (Tuesday, February 26) asking that plans to convert US 281 to a toll road be stopped pending full compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act. An Environmental Assessment has also recently been completed for Loop 1604, an even larger highway expansion project over the recharge zone that intersects with US 281.

Together the highway expansions and toll projects of US 281 and Loop 1604 will cost well over \$2 billion. US 281 is now up to \$450 million, and Loop 1604 is \$1.77 billion. They will add over 300 acres of impervious cover mainly in the recharge zone, and also will destroy over 100 acres of woodlands. Both projects cross karst zones 1 and 2, areas where karst invertebrate habitat is known to exist or where there is a high probability of such habitat existing.

"This lawsuit is really about common-sense. It is ridiculous to say adding \$2 billion worth of infrastructure over the recharge and contributing zones will have no significant impact on the aquifer," said **Enrique Valdivia, President of AGUA**. "TxDOT and US Fish & Wildlife issued a 'Finding of No Significant Impact' (FONSI) for highway 281, and a 'not likely to adversely affect' finding for endangered karst invertebrate species and the golden-cheeked warbler. We think paving over 300 acres of recharge is pretty significant to everyone who depends on the aquifer."

"Charging a toll will only hurt local businesses and residents who have invested in the 281 corridor. This is double taxation and taxation without representation," said **Terri Hall, founder of Texans Uniting for Reform and Freedom (TURF)**. "Powerful special interests will profit from these tolls. It is time for people to stand up and tell them NO."

The Edwards Aquifer is a karst aquifer that is highly vulnerable to water pollution because surface water quickly enters the aquifer through recharge features without significant filtration. Many toxic pollutants, such as benzene, are being found in aquifer wells and are common components of highway and parking lot run-off.

The plaintiffs are represented by Save Our Springs Alliance. SOS Alliance's litigation docket and information on the adverse affects of highways can be found at www.sosalliance.org.

AGUA's website is www.aquiferguardians.org

TURF's website is www.TexasTURF.org

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