

Wastewater Permitting in Austin



City of Austin, Environmental Board, 20 April 2011

Wastewater Permitting in Austin

- permitting authority and special rules
- general staff review process
- updates on individual permit actions
- pending legislative actions
- ongoing scientific investigations
- WPD long term goals

WPD Objectives

- Prevent degradation of sensitive waters
- Improve TCEQ review methods
- Scientific support for new regulations
- Response to Council directives

Permitting Authority

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality issues wastewater permits:

- TPDES = Tx Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (DISCHARGE)
- TLAP = Tx Land Application Permit (NO DISCHARGE)

Austin Review Process

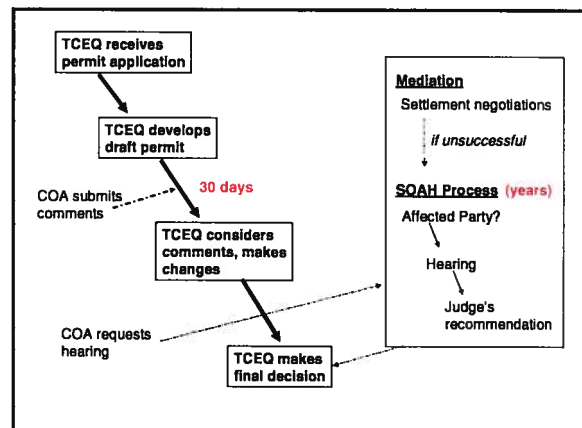
Limited opportunities for Austin to engage in TCEQ permit actions:

- Major amendments and new applications
- Short response time frame (30 days)

Limited available actions for Austin:

- Submit comment letters
- Request public meetings
- Request contested case hearing
- Participate in rule-making process

WPD actions coordinated internally (CMO, Law, AWU) and with regional partners (LCRA, BSEACD, counties)



Special State Rules for Austin

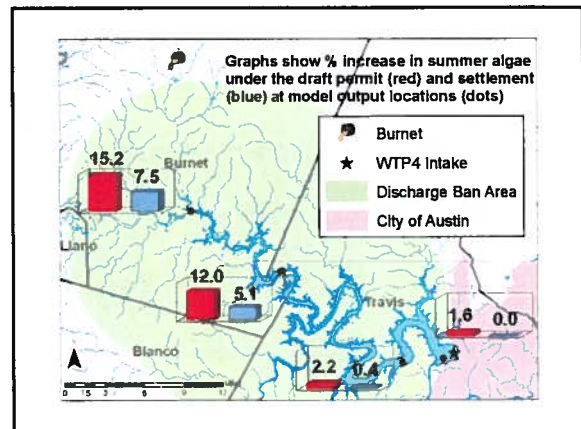
- Highland Lakes Discharge Ban (Ch 311)
- Prohibition on discharges in the recharge zone of the aquifer (Ch 213)

Belterra – TPDES

- First discharge permit in the contributing zone
- 0.5 mgd discharge to headwaters of Bear with 0.1 mg/L phosphorus and 6 mg/L total nitrogen
- Hybrid: discharge when effluent cannot be land applied
- Includes before/after water quality study now on-going

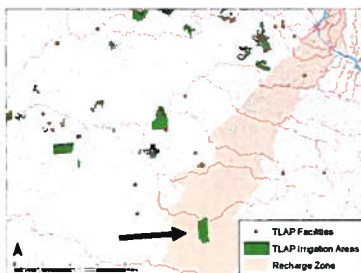
City of Burnet - TPDES

- Burnet applied for a major amendment to increase flow from 0.726 mgd to 1.7 mgd
 - Draft permit had 0.5 mg/L phosphorus limit and no limit on total nitrogen
- Austin and LCRA negotiated settlement for 0.15 mg/L total phosphorus and 6 mg/L total nitrogen
- www.ci.austin.tx.us/watershed/publications/files/SR-10-04_Burnet_WW_Discharge.pdf



Jeremiah Ventures - TLAP

- First major TLAP over the recharge zone



Pending Legislation

Senate Bill 853 (Watson)

- Re-affirms prohibition on discharge in the recharge zone
- Provides additional restrictions on discharge in the contributing zone
- Supported by Council resolution (03/24/11)

On-Going Investigations

- Joint study with USGS on potential wastewater contamination of the contributing zone
- Review of permits in Barton Springs Zone
- Calibration of WASP models to predict impacts to creeks
- Source water investigations to evaluate TLAP impacts

WPD Long-term Goals

- Accumulate “weight of evidence” to influence individual permit actions
- Engage in TCEQ stakeholder processes to improve rules
- Pursue legislative relief at all opportunities
- Work with TCEQ staff to improve impact assessment methods
- Rule petition to improve TLAPs

