

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Austan S. Librach, Director  
Environmental and Conservation Services Department

DATE: March 30, 1995

SUBJECT: Investigation Regarding Complaint of Possible Algae Kill in  
Barton Creek Properties Tributary to Barton Creek

Staff from the Environmental and Conservation Services Department (ECSD) have investigated a complaint by a citizen regarding possible release of an algaecide in a tributary of Barton Creek. The complainant indicated that algae in the tributary had been killed. The tributary drains the portion of the Barton Creek Properties Crenshaw golf course immediately south of the resort/country club building complex. It empties into Barton Creek approximately 3 miles upstream of the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer.

ECSD staff received permission from Barton Creek Properties on March 24, 1995 to collect samples from the tributary and irrigation holding ponds. Mr. Jim Sanders of BCP escorted staff to the subject tributary. Staff examined the tributary beginning at a holding pond across from the maintenance building and continuing 300 feet downstream. The bed of the tributary downstream of the pond was brown from a mixture of abundant dead algae still attached to rocks and covered with fine brown sediment. The only obvious live algae were scattered mats on the upper surfaces of some rocks out of the water. Clear water was flowing in the tributary downstream of the holding pond, apparently originating from seepage out of the pond and from drainage areas adjacent to the tributary. Water, sediment, and algae samples were collected.

For comparison, a nearby tributary draining a residential area was examined and sampled. Water in this tributary also appeared clear but the substrate was generally clean with no dead algae or fine sediment. Only small patches of live algae were found growing. Samples were collected from near the tributary mouth.

Samples were taken to local laboratories for analysis of nutrients, nitrogen isotopes, and possible indications of algaecides. Although

results of these analyses are not expected for several weeks, I am notifying you of this incident at this time due to the airing of the issue on public television and potential coverage in the Austin American Statesman this week.

Please feel free to contact me at 499-2749, or Nancy McClintock at 499-2652 if you have any questions regarding this investigation.

Austan S. Librach, P.E. AICP  
Director  
Environmental and Conservation Services Department

cc: Jim Smith, Assistant City Manager  
Nancy McClintock, Manager, Environmental Resource Management