



**Water & Wastewater Commission
Review and Recommendation**

Commission Meeting Date:	July 14, 2021	COA Strategic Direction:	Health and Environment
Council Meeting Date:	July 29, 2021		
Department:	Austin Water		
Client:	Kevin Critendon		
Agenda Item			
Recommend approval to negotiate and execute an interlocal agreement with the University of Texas at Austin for mutual support and assistance regarding cave management.			
Amount and Source of Funding			
This item has no fiscal impact.			
Purchasing Language:	N/A		
Prior Council Action:	N/A		
Boards and Commission Action:	July 14, 2021 — To be reviewed by the Water and Wastewater Commission.		
MBE/WBE:	N/A		

This action authorizes an interlocal agreement to allow the Austin Water (AW) Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) program to conduct cave restoration, cave management, and offer cave expertise to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 LaCrosse Avenue, (a part of the University of Texas system).

AW BCP may utilize cave specialist contractors and other cave specialists working under existing Austin Water agreements to restore filled caves and install cave gates and other structures to protect the cave, its ecosystem, and visitors. This work helps fulfill City obligations under the 1996 Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan and permit issued by the US Fish and Wildlife Service to preserve cave ecosystems, to direct traffic away from federally listed permit caves, and yet provide opportunities for public education on caves. The agreement promotes free or reduced-price for students of Title 1 schools and other low-income groups.

The University's Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center contains caves that would serve as suitable alternatives for educational tours and other visitors if restored, enabling their use as substitute public access caves, for University and City purposes. In addition, the caves on the Wildflower Center property are part of the Barton Springs-Edwards Aquifer recharge zone, and restoring filled caves on the property is expected to promote natural aquifer recharge, enhance water quality, provide ecosystems and nutrient input for cave ecosystems, and provide resources for cave education. This restoration work will also reduce flooding potential.