

THE TEXAS WATER SOURCE

UPDATING HAYS COUNTY LANDOWNERS
ON LAND MANAGEMENT & WATER ISSUES

July 2023

Take a Dive at the Blue Hole

A Beloved Natural Swimming Hole

In 1897, the Blue Hole property was owned by John R. Dobie and family. The Dobie family opened the Blue Hole for swimming and picnicking in the 1920s. Later on the Blue Hole was sold to a private partnership in Austin who allowed some limited swimming and camping on the property.

This unique spot is located at the center of Wimberley, Texas. The Blue Hole is a beautiful property which supports all kinds of wildlife and native greenery. With ties to Wimberley's history and the natural wonder it brings it is no wonder why the community has worked to maintain the property. In 2003, the Wimberley municipal government entered into an agreement which acquired the 126 acre tract along the Cypress Creek for public use and parkland. Later in 2005, Wimberley completed grants and received numerous donations for the land acquisition of the Blue Hole project.

Nearly Loved to Death

The Blue Hole Regional Park was so loved it was being overused threatening the sustainability of the park that the community worked so hard to protect. A plan was created in an informed stakeholder-led design process to be used to protect and enhance the sites ecological sensitive areas, despite the addition of 320,000 square feet of new park development.

The park design was completed and accepted by the city in 2010. The Blue Hole Regional Park was chosen by the Sustainable Sites Institute as one of 25 pilot projects in the world. Through this project the park constructed a rainwater system, created 4 designated creek entries to reduce stream bank erosion and protect the bald cypress roots, and utilized cedar and stone harvested from the park to avoid adding to a landfill.

Phase 1 of the project had a grand opening in 2011 and included the restoration of the historic swimming area. Phase 2 had a grand opening and opening ceremonies in 2012 to reveal the playscape, pavilion, and soccer fields.

Visit this Season

The Blue Hole swimming hole is only part of the Blue Hole Regional Park. There are also trails, basketball courts, a playground and more! Getting outside and in nature is a great way to improve mental health and spend quality time with family and friends. Unless you are a pass holder you have to make a reservation to use the swimming hole but otherwise the park is open to all!

For more information:

- Visitwimberley.com - Blue Hole Regional Park <http://bit.ly/3GOAKHi>
- History - Friends of Blue Hole | friendsofbluehole.org

Watershed Resource

Hays Trinity Groundwater Conservation District

The Hays Trinity Groundwater Conservation District (HTGCD) aims to conserve, preserve, recharge, and prevent waste of groundwater in Hays County. HTGCD gathers data, provides information, manages non-exempt commercial water use, and develops geologic and aquifer science to achieve their goals.

HTGCD has many resources for people within the district. One resource is their drought management page which shows the stage of drought for the district and shows the data for water bodies of possible concern. People can go to their website for the drought contingency plan and other helpful information regarding their water resources and effects.

If users go to the conservation tab of the HTGCD website they will find several links to resources including practice guides, water wise landscaping, and rainwater harvest system resources. Public awareness and education are part of the district's mission, spreading the importance of responsible water usage. One way they do this is through

research in aquifer science all of which can be accessed by the public. Other education resources can be found, including with news, presentations, the water wise speaker series, and other land management resources.

Permits and forms for drilling, wells, and water utility can be found and submitted on the HTGCD website. These resources are accessible to the public for anyone who may need them.



For more information:

- Hays Trinity Groundwater Conservation District (haysgroundwater.com)

Interactive Water Resources Maps

One of the interactive maps available through HTGCD is the water level monitoring map. HTGCD collects water level and precipitation data for each individual well on the map. This data is compiled from the measurements made by district field technicians while precipitation data is gathered from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. On this map you can view layers such as rivers, watersheds, groundwater management zones, and more. You can view both active and inactive wells on this map. If you click on a well you can find more information linked to that well.

The other interactive map can be found under the "Maps" tab in the menu bar. This map has more extensive layer options including different aquifers and aquifer authorities for the district, parks, pipelines, school districts, federal and state housing districts, and more. You can also adjust the base map view to an enhanced contrast map, an enhanced contrast dark map, imagery, and hybrid imagery.

For more information:

- Interactive Map – Hays Trinity Groundwater Conservation District (haysgroundwater.com)

Jacob's Well Natural Area

History

In 1847, land surveys were conducted across the Jacob's Well Natural Area by surveyor Bartlett Sims. The survey showed that the area consisted of five land surveys that all use the spring as a corner tying the property together. In the 1850s, the first Texas Pioneers used the water from Jacob's Well Creek (now known as Cypress Creek) to power a sawmill. William C. Winters, a San Jacinto veteran and early settler of Wimberley, hiked up Cypress Creek in the 1850s searching for the creek's source where he found an overflowing spring. At this discovery he exclaimed "like unto a well in Bible times." and thus the spring was named 'Jacob's Well.' Jacob's Well is the headwaters of Cypress Creek, which flows through the Blue Hole Regional Park and feeds into the Blanco River.

Jacob's Well Natural Area was brought together in 1991 when David Baker and family alongside partner investments purchased the first 25 acres half of which had access to Jacob's Well. This private stewardship effort continued when the Wimberley Valley Watershed Association (now called The Watershed Association) purchased additional land which included an RV park, tennis center, and condos.

Jacob's Well Natural Area is a little over 95 acres. The artesian spring called Jacob's Well is the second largest fully submerged cave in Texas and releases thousands of gallons of water each day. The main cavern is 4,341 feet long and the secondary cavern that branches off of the main cavern is 1,314 feet long. The deepest part of the cave system is 140 feet deep. Cave divers with the Jacob's Well Exploration Project have mapped over 6,000 feet of underwater passage.

In 1924, Jacob's Well was measured to have a flow of one hundred and seventy gallons per second or six hundred and forty liters per second. Flow rates have since been reduced due to development that

lowered the level of the Trinity Aquifer, so the flow rarely reaches the previous flow rate. There have been three times in recorded history that the spring ceased to flow, the first occurred in 2000, then in 2008, and most recently in 2011.

Since the 1850s when the area was settled the property has changed hands many times over and has now become a popular recreational destination. In 2010, the Jacob's Well Natural Area became official and was opened to the public.

Plan your Visit!

Anyone interested should plan a trip to the natural area. There are many great activities to do at the Jacob's Well Natural Area including hiking, birding, picnicking, geocaching, and viewing the spring that started it all. There is no fee for parking or entering the natural area and the only fee comes with reserving a swim time.

If anyone wants to swim at the spring, they have to make a reservation ahead of time. Depending on weather and time of year, it may be difficult to find an available time. From early October to late April Jacob's Well is in an annual period of aquatic restoration. Due to the influx of visitors during these months, swimming is closed to minimize the disruption to wildlife that call the area home. Depending on precipitation and groundwater flow, swimming access may be closed due to unsafe swimming conditions. Swimming conditions Permitting, Jacob's Well is normally open for swimming from early May to late September.

For more information:

- Jacob's Well Natural Area | Hays County (hayscountytexas.com)
- Jacobs Well Natural Area in Wimberley, Texas - A Visitwimberley.com Special

Distribution of *The Texas Water Source* is provided free of charge to forest landowners of Hay's counties. This publication is funded by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board through a Clean Water Act §319(h) grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. PLEASE ADVISE US IF YOU WISH YOUR NAME TO BE REMOVED FROM OUR MAILING LIST.

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The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment

In 2012, The Meadows Foundation made a generous contribution to Texas State University to “help establish a \$10 million center at Texas State University-San Marcos [to focus] on water research and water’s relationship with the environment.” To recognize the significance of this gift, the Board of Regents of the Texas State University System voted to rename the River Systems Institute to The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment. Now, MCWE works in many ways to further the science of water management and protection. One highlight is the Watershed Services team. This team works with “public, private, and non-profit organizations to provide practical, science-based solutions to complex water challenges.



THE MEADOWS CENTER
FOR WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT
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