



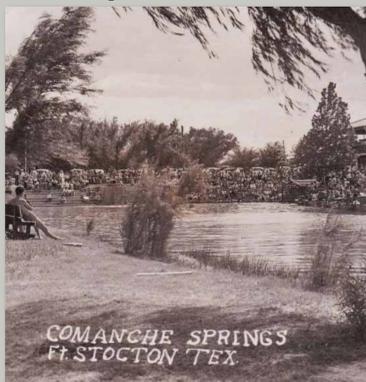
Comanche Springs

Pecos County

Compilation and layout by Robin Gary, Watershed Association, July 2022

Water Source: Edwards-Trinity Plateau Aquifer

Description



A crowd of swimmers at the Comanche Springs swimming pool. Historic Photo: Howard, 1938 #612

Comanche Springs is a series of springs in the southeastern part of Fort Stockton. The springs flow from faulted limestone. In arid west Texas, Comanche Springs was historically important source of irrigation water in Pecos County. By 1938, a bathhouse, swimming pool, and pavilion were constructed at Comanche Springs and these structures remain part of James Rooney Memorial Park. In 1899 the spring flow was 67 cubic feet per second, but today flow is intermittent and frequently has no flow.

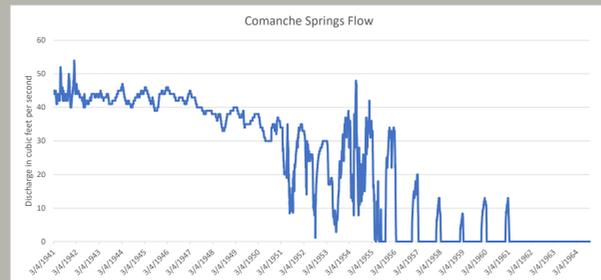
The Edwards-Trinity Plateau Aquifer is the water source for Comanche Springs. Residents and farmers in and around Fort Stockton rely on the same water source for drinking and agricultural needs.



John Mace, Sacred Springs Kite Exhibition

Challenges

In the late 1800's, Comanche Springs was incorporated into an agricultural irrigation district. Heavy pumping from the Edwards-Trinity Aquifer caused the flow of Comanche Springs to decline after 1947. By March 1961, the springs had completely ceased to flow. The rare and endangered Comanche Springs pupfish lived there until the springs dried up. Active oil and gas operations, agriculture, irrigation, and domestic use continue today and rely heavily on groundwater from the Edwards-Trinity Aquifer. In recent years, the springs have begun flowing again in the late winter months, when water levels in the aquifer have recovered from high summer pumping.



Spring flow record from 1941-1964 at the USGS monitor site. Data from the USGS.

Protection

The Middle Pecos Groundwater Conservation District, created in 1999, regulates pumping from the aquifer feeding Comanche Springs. A small set of entities own the groundwater rights, with the majority of water use supporting cultivation of crops. Texas Water Trade has begun work on market-based incentives for agricultural producers to reduce their groundwater pumping while keeping their farms in production. These efforts have been supported and vitalized by the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, the Fort Stockton Convention and Visitors Bureau, Still Water Foundation, Mitchell Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Texas Water Development Board.



Comanche Springs locations within James Rooney Memorial Park. Map from the Texas Water Development Board Water Data Interactive

Access and More Information



Comanche Springs Pool and Pavilion. Photo by Fort Stockton Convention & Visitors Bureau

James Rooney Memorial Park is open year-round and hosts the Comanche Springs Pool, two children's playgrounds, baseball and softball fields, a disc golf course, and hiking trails. When the springs are flowing, they run in the channel with a trail beside it through the park. The Comanche Springs pool pavilion was built in 1938 over the Big Chief Spring, the largest spring in the Comanche Springs system. The pool, as it exists today, was built in 1953.



Art4Water is a program of the Watershed Association, a 501(c)(3) non-profit



Photo credit: Robert Mace, Meadows Center for Water and the Environment