

NEWS RELEASE

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Hays County Announces New Watershed Coordinator Position

Wimberley, Texas —In collaboration with the city of Wimberley, the city of Woodcreek, the Watershed Association, and the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State University, Hays County announced on November 1st the creation of a watershed coordinator position.

The position results from more than 10 years of ground-breaking collaboration between these entities in creating the Blanco-Cypress Watershed Protection Plan (BCWPP) with previous support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Texas Commission for Environmental Quality. Watershed protection plans are community-developed initiatives that identify potential sources of contamination in a watershed and provide a framework for implementing strategies that can reduce pollution and improve water quality.

After a rigorous collaborative interview process, Jonas Rosenthal was selected for this essential new county position. Rosenthal comes from an environmental enforcement background, having worked previously as an environmental health specialist in Hays County and Travis County, where he developed and administered industrial stormwater and civil environmental compliance programs.

"We welcome Jonas to this new position and look forward to the important work this collaboration is focused on to keep our surface and groundwater resources clean, clear and flowing," said Hays County Precinct 3 Commissioner Lon Shell.

The BCWPP is the culmination of many years of work executed by the Watershed Association and the Meadows Center to protect Cypress Creek and its iconic artesian spring, Jacob's Well. Subsequently, the work has expanded to include the upper Blanco watershed from the county's western boundary to its confluence with Cypress Creek in downtown Wimberley.

"The Meadows Center is proud to continue partnering with the group on this community-driven effort to protect the natural wonders and essential water resources of our region for generations to come," said Jenna Walker, director of Watershed Services at the Meadows Center. "We look forward to further growing the network of collaborators over the next several years to build upon the strong foundation laid before us."

"The health of our county's watersheds, groundwater, and surface water are vital, given the fragile state of our aquifers. These resources not only supply much of our public water but also

feed Jacob's Well and Blue Hole—natural treasures of the Wimberley Valley that attract thousands of visitors annually, the backbone of our economy," said David Baker, executive director of the Watershed Association. "Unfortunately, the flow over the last few years has diminished due to drought and over-pumping of groundwater, and zero flow is coming from Jacob's Well today."

Jacob's Well, a perennial artesian spring and the primary source of Cypress Creek, which once flowed at a rate of 170 gallons per second, has stopped flowing repeatedly over the last three years due to increased groundwater demand in the area to support the tremendous growth in Hays County and the lack of management tools and authority for local governments and communities to manage groundwater and surface water sustainably.

"We look forward to Jonas helping us draw attention to both the depletion of groundwater levels that resulted in the cessation of spring flows at Jacob's Well, as well as educating the public about ways we can conserve water and mitigate the effects of pollution sources, such as stormwater runoff and wastewater systems, on our delicate surface waters," stated Jeff Rasco, mayor of Woodcreek.

While the BCWPP is working primarily in the county's western portion, the long-term goal is to protect the entire Blanco River Watershed and create watershed protection plans that support water quality initiatives across all of Hays County.

"Water does not follow jurisdictional boundaries. Working collaboratively through this Interlocal Agreement is the best way to protect and manage our water resources regionally and develop water-resilient communities," said Jim Chiles, mayor of Wimberley.

Rosenthal added, "I am honored to be selected for this position and am excited to begin working with our community to help protect our most precious natural resource – water."