

# CHRIS HERRINGTON

City of Austin Environmental Officer

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Throughout my 23-year career with the City of Austin’s Watershed Protection Department and its predecessors, I participated in a range of efforts seeking to protect Barton Springs for humans and aquatic life. My earliest efforts included collecting water samples from the creeks feeding the springs, to providing analytical support during the City’s development of the first prohibition on coal-tar based pavement sealants, to studying the nutrient dynamics of water in the Barton Springs Zone, to modeling change in spring water quality over time, and educating the public on those results.

To protect salamanders and their habitat, I managed the City’s extension of the Barton Springs Habitat Conservation Plan in 2013, when the Austin blind salamander was listed by the federal government as an endangered species. To encourage more regional collaboration in the protection of the Edwards Aquifer, I helped expand the biennial Kent Butler Memorial Summit, going beyond the Barton Springs Zone to include stakeholders across the Edwards Aquifer.

In my role as Environmental Officer, I used the City’s Land Development Code to ensure that environmental protection, including protection of Barton Springs, receives the highest priority in all development. Not only have I served as a scientist myself, but I have had the high honor of managing the amazing team of professional City biologists and hydrogeologists in the City’s Watershed Protection Department who demonstrate their passion for protecting Barton Springs every day. However, I am perhaps most associated with efforts to protect Barton Springs water quality from the impacts of wastewater disposal. I led the City’s scientific efforts to oppose the Belterra Subdivision and City of Dripping Springs’ wastewater discharge permits, including modeling the impacts of those permits and providing expert testimony in contested case hearings. I have opposed legislation in testimony at the Texas Legislature that would degrade Barton Springs, and championed legislative attempts that would protect Barton Springs.

**Environmental Officer, City of Austin, 2018-2020**

**Analyst/Engineer/Supervising Engineer, City of Austin Watershed Protection Department, 1996-2018**

# CHRIS HERRINGTON CONT'D

I hope that my biggest “win” in protecting Barton Springs will ultimately prove to be a demonstration that a new paradigm is necessary to protect Barton Springs as uncertainty increases and political conditions change into the future. As exemplified by a successful rule petition to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality by the City to improve wastewater disposal by land application regulations, adopted into state rules in 2020, I hope to have shown that smaller “wins” can be achieved when built on an open dialogue about differing values facilitated to reach a consensus across a broad range of stakeholder interests, including both developer and environmental perspectives. Smaller “wins” can aggregate to bigger “wins” over time, and are certainly better than no “wins” in hopes of an elusive perfect solution that may never be realized.

