

HELEN BALLEW

The Great Springs Project, Inc.



“

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I fell in love with Barton Creek when I first began hiking down to Sculpture Falls for a watery shoulder massage, or to witness the magic of Frostweed on the morning of the first frost when the stems split open and gorgeous white sculptural forms give new meaning to the word impermanence. (They soon melt with the rising sun.) I fell hopelessly in love with Barton Creek in the summer of '92 when the creek ran crystal clear and high enough for rollicking paddles with friends and politicians in our bright yellow platoon of rubber ducky boats. We hardly did any work, except help others fall in love with the Creek.

Great Springs Project, Inc, Project Director & Co-Founder

Hill Country Foundation, Director 1991-1997

Austin Business Leaders for the Environment, Founder 1992

Save Our Springs Coalition Steering Committee, Co-founder 1990-1992



Actually in those five-plus years when I first moved to Austin until I moved away in the mid '90s, I devoted my life to the fight to save Barton Creek and Barton Springs. I was and still am a professional nature-lover a.k.a. conservationist. So protecting this extraordinary and extraordinarily sensitive treasure from the ravages of Freeport-McMoran's planned city-on-the-creek became my life's passion and purpose. That I was married to a long time Barton Creek lover-lawyer-activist who was likewise devoted to the cause made those years especially Creek-focused, heady and fun. In truth, it

was Bill who first introduced me to the beauty and natural wonders of Barton Creek, and Bill who I went into battle with to save it.

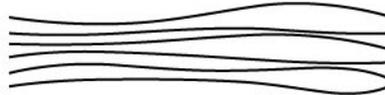
HELEN BALLEW CONT'D

We joined forces with many long-time Creek-loving activists to build the formidable citizen movement that delivered the strongest ever watershed protection regulations to protect Barton Creek and Springs. It was love of the Creek and Springs that first brought me into the movement, and the empowering thrill of working alongside so many smart, savvy, little "d" democratic activists that kept me in it. We were making history.

Before getting involved directly in the Barton Creek watershed, I was deeply involved in the creation of the Austin Regional Habitat Conservation Plan to protect a suite of endemic species endangered by Austin's rapid growth and land development. When the HCP was well on its way to becoming the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP), and when the imminent threats to Barton Creek took front and center stage with Jim Bob Moffett's PUD, I along with a few others, formed the Barton Springs Initiative of the Hill Country Foundation. This was a research, public education and awareness effort aimed at building citizen support for the protection of Barton Springs and all of its contributing watersheds, especially Barton Creek. I thus became one of the founding members of the Save Our Springs (S.O.S.) Coalition Steering Committee, a political action committee that wrote, vetted and campaigned for the passage of the S.O.S. Initiative. Part of the campaign strategy involved getting members of the business community to support the effort. I, and a few others formed another political action committee we called Austin Business Leaders for the Environment (A.B.L.E.). We raised funds and published a series of big newspaper ads featuring businesses and business leaders delivering S.O.S. campaign messages and demonstrating their support for the cause. Because "S.O.S. was good for business."

I have a thing about springs, and Barton Creek is a crystal clear spring-fed creek that runs through the center of a fast growing city. Who else has that? Austin is fortunate indeed to have such a priceless natural treasure and would do well to preserve it with all the City's might.

BARTON CREEK



TIME STREAM