



# MARSHALL FRECH

Writer/Producer

*Flash Flood Alley*, PBS Documentary film 2006

*Barton Springs Interactive*, CD-ROM 1997

*Barton Springs Eternal*, Book (co-author) 1991

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On the advice of South Austin friends, I swam at Barton Springs my first day in Texas and regularly until it was finally time to move back to Colorado more than a decade later. I struggled at first in the heat but more from the lack of public land. I took great solace in walks on Barton Creek and came to know it well - in drought and flood. I had come to study long-form journalism and set into producing an oral and photo history of the Springs. I spent many hours with the old and ardent as well as families and hipsters along the banks. I took their pictures and gathered more from generous and gifted photographers. Oh, what a wonderful place to observe and learn from the great human stories played out here at the water's edge. So many swirling issues - so many contemplations and contrivances all reflected in these waters. I made many great friends and was blessed with a few mentors along the way. There were hard lessons too. To get published, I had to learn to navigate the social circles, the creative circles, and the political circles that make up Austin's environmental landscape. I came to understand that most come by the watering hole to enrich their lives, but certainly some are more set on enriching their reputations. Well, I had come for an education—and as a content creator, slow on self-promotion, I certainly got one. Austin, I love you but there is a lot of social climbing and fame-seeking that clouds your waters.



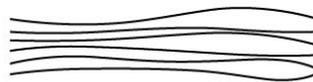
My experiences working in Central Texas and eventually running the Texas Environmental Center really helped me develop my BS detector. I was also somewhat lucky in that I always knew I would return to the Rocky Mountain West. I could handle some abuse and infighting. But far greater than any minor contribution I would ever make, I got to see and marvel at those Austinites who did the real work, those who stayed in it for the long haul and fought not just for the environment, but to keep their humility and generosity of spirit. I took great inspiration from these rare and exemplary souls.

# MARSHALL FRECH CONT'D

I had come to Texas as a displaced river guide, and I eventually had the great fortune to enjoy Barton Creek in my kayak in some wonderful floods. A small group of us chased storms and ran rivers at giant flows throughout the region and I cherish those days from the prime of my life. I was so inspired, I would go on to study floods in many parts of the world. In that line of work, I got to see a lot of devastation and a lot of political leadership reading aloud from the script of denial. But I managed to navigate that landscape and my BS detector served me well in that pursuit. These questions have long driven me: Why do we build in the path of water? How can we ignore the signs and science that show these arteries of life are best left unclogged? Who is benefitting from this development and who will ultimately pay the costs? Parks and public land (a rare commodity in Texas) are a great use for floodplains. So if you see a building badly damaged by a riverine flood, one may ask "maybe that shouldn't be there?"

In my last chapter in Austin it was my great pleasure to work with the noted United States Geological Service hydrologist (and supreme BS detector) Raymond Slade. I helped Raymond with a report showing Central Texas and the land along the Balcones Escarpment is the epicenter of huge, world class, rainfall events. There will always be these giant rains and floods in that land. But after the muddy flows subside these waters run clear, and it behooves us all to step a little closer and look deeply into them.

**BARTON CREEK**



**TIME STREAM**