



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:** 17-3262

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**Agenda Item Number:** 7.

**Agenda Date:** 6/1/2017

**In Control:** City Council A Session

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**DEPARTMENT:** Parks and Recreation

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Xavier D. Urrutia

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** City Wide

### **SUBJECT:**

Edwards Aquifer Protection Program - Conservation Easement Acquisition for Schuehle Ranch.

### **SUMMARY:**

This ordinance authorizes payment in the amount of \$2,607,421.39 to Texas Heritage Title Company as escrow agent for title on a conservation easement, due diligence and closing costs on a 1,706.567 acre tract of land known as the Schuehle Ranch located in Medina County, Texas for the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program, a Proposition 1 Edwards Aquifer Protection Venue funded project. This ordinance also authorizes the execution of necessary documents to accomplish said acquisition.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The purpose of the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program is to obtain property rights by fee simple purchase, conservation easements or donations of land over the sensitive zones of the Edwards Aquifer. This program was initiated in May 2000 when voters approved Proposition 3, a 1/8-cent sales tax venue up to \$45 million for the acquisition of lands over the Edwards Aquifer for parks and watershed protection. Proposition 3 ran from 2000 through 2005 and was limited to Bexar County.

The 2005 Proposition 1 program was an extension of the initial voter-approved Edwards Aquifer protection endeavor and was extended by voters in 2010 and renewed again in 2015. Changes in state legislation allowed watershed protection activities to expand outside of Bexar County.

The proposed purchase of a conservation easement on the Schuehle Ranch is located over the

Recharge and Contributing Zones in Medina County. The property was initially identified through use of the Scientific Evaluation Team's GIS Spatial Model and subsequent site visits identified favorable recharge features on the property. The Schuehle Ranch is located entirely within the Medina River drainage basin which is an important recharge contributor to the Edwards Aquifer. The property contributes heavily to surface water recharge due to the number of springs as well as extensive fracturing and dissolution of limestone documented on the property. The Edwards Aquifer Authority issued a geological assessment of the site confirming that preservation of the Schuehle Ranch would provide both high water quantity and high water quality benefits for the City of San Antonio. This ranch is located near other Edwards Aquifer protected properties and would result in the protection of over 50,000 acres of land located within Medina County. If approved, inclusion of the Schuehle Ranch would increase the total of protected lands under the City's aquifer protection program by approximately 1,707 acres for a total of 147,782 acres.

#### **ISSUE:**

This ordinance authorizes payment in the amount of \$2,607,421.39 to Texas Heritage Title as escrow agent for title on a conservation easement, due diligence and closing costs on a 1,706.567-acre tract of land known as the Schuehle Ranch located in Medina County, Texas. Acquisition of this property is consistent with policy for implementation of the Proposition 1 Edwards Aquifer Protection Venue Project as approved by voters. The City Council-appointed Conservation Advisory Board has reviewed and recommended the acquisition of this conservation easement.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

An alternative would be to defer acquisition until a later date subject to the property owner's willingness to sell real estate interests and future market conditions. Additionally, other properties could be targeted for acquisition foregoing this conservation easement and losing the high water quality and quantity benefits and the opportunity to protect additional acreage within the Medina River watershed.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

This acquisition is a one-time expenditure in the amount of \$2,607,421.39. Funds for the acquisition of this conservation easement have been appropriated through Proposition 1 of the Edwards Aquifer Protection Sales Tax fund included in the FY 2017-2022 Adopted Annual Capital Budget. This action appropriates \$25,891.73 from the 2005 Proposition 1 Sales Tax Fund into the Aquifer Acquisition project and amends the Adopted CIP FY 2017 - 2022 Budget.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the acquisition of a conservation easement on this 1,706.567-acre tract of land known as the Schuehle Ranch for a total of \$2,607,421.39 under the Proposition 1 Edwards Aquifer Protection Venue Project.

The Contracts Disclosure Form required by the Ethics ordinance is attached.

