



News Release

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CITY OF AUSTIN WATERSHED PROTECTION DEPARTMENT RECOGNIZED BY SERVICE'S SOUTHWEST REGION AS 2016 RECOVERY CHAMPIONS

For over 20 years, the City of Austin's Watershed Protection Department has taken a leadership role in the conservation of the Barton Springs salamander, as well as the recently listed Austin blind salamander. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest Region is honoring the tireless conservation efforts of the City of Austin's Watershed Protection Department by awarding them the 2016 Recovery Champion Award.

"The City of Austin's Watershed Protection Department's efforts have contributed significantly to the conservation of two of Texas' endangered salamanders," said Benjamin N. Tuggle, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southwest Regional Director. "Not only have they improved the status of the salamanders, they have protected areas critically important to the health of the Edwards Aquifer. I am pleased to see their hard work and dedication recognized through the Recovery Champion Award."

Each year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Endangered Species Program recognizes outstanding employees and partners through the Recovery Champions Awards. This annual award highlights the contributions of Service personnel and partner organizations for the recovery of endangered and threatened species. The Recovery Champion Award recognizes efforts that may prevent species' extinction, conserve and restore habitat and resources critical to a species' survival and recovery, scientific research, and public education and outreach. Nominations were solicited from several Southwest Regional Programs including Ecological Services, Refuges, Fisheries and partner groups. Nominations were based on leadership competencies, length of time working on the issues, scope and significance of efforts, and measurable results.

Through significant habitat restoration efforts, the City's Watershed Protection Department has improved the population of Barton Spring salamanders in Eliza Springs. They have spearheaded educational outreach programs at the City's beloved and legendary swimming hole, Barton Springs, as well as throughout the Edwards Aquifer region. Over one million people a year visit Zilker Park home to the famous Barton Springs and the salamanders. Their efforts include the "Splash!" exhibit that educates pool visitors on the importance of the Edwards Aquifer ecosystem. They have also

significantly improved our understanding of the Barton Springs salamander and the Austin blind salamander through their extensive research efforts that employ photography, captive breeding, and mark-recapture sampling. In addition, the City has taken a leadership role in management and protection of critical recharge areas surrounding the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer, implementation of a Habitat Conservation Plan for the Barton Springs Pool and a recovery plan for both species.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. The Service is working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/>. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [YouTube Channel](#) and download photos from our [Flickr page](#).

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