

OUR SPRINGS AND RIVERS OF COMAL: PRECIOUS, ESSENTIAL, AND SACRED

By Frank Dietz

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It is fascinating and impressive to note among long tenured citizens and newcomers the appreciation for key attractions and benefits of our springs and watershed gifts here in Comal County. The springs and rivers provide livelihoods and essential water sources for much more than the popular recreational venues of Comal County. How is it for you and yours as well as your circle of friends and neighbors?

Historical geologists date the activities found in dinosaur footprints and relics at about 108 million years or more. The rise of the seabed and perimeters known as the Balcones fault is the escarpment that gives us the Texas Hill Country and its many features. At the base of the escarpment, we have the springs that can be found from San Antonio to Austin and key points in between. Our Comal Springs present us with the shortest of rivers and welcomes the generous flowing of the Guadalupe as it makes its way to the Gulf of Mexico. These features provide the abundant settings for what have welcomed people for settling and developing communities so vigorous and lively. The same historic features that were important to the Tonkawa Native Americans and early Spaniards and Canary Islanders remain celebrated draws for folks settling in our own decades.

One ambitious current endeavor is to connect the Escarpment Springs from San Antonio to Austin's Barton Springs along protected trail space. Other bold efforts recognizing the fragile sources of the aquifers (Edwards and Trinity) that feed the springs are even more noteworthy. They are joined by a growing alliance of folks long tenured and newcomers to protect stretches of land still undeveloped for replenishment of subsurface water sources and green space for Comal's wild to thrive and remain healthy. Those allied in our county are the Comal County Conservation Alliance (CCCA). Partner groups in the Hill Country are important allies for voicing promotion of conservation practices.

The CCCA's 10 January program at 6 p.m. at the McKenna Center will treat us to some images and descriptions of the "White Shaman" mural tucked deep inside a Pecos River canyon. The twenty-six wide and thirteen feet high pictograph may be the earliest recording of the "Four Fountain Springs" of San Antonio, Comal, San Marcos and Austin's Barton Springs. Our presenter, Gary Perez, is a member of the Coahuilteca/Pakajua "Painted Peoples" of Coahuila Mexico and Texas. Well versed in the culture and traditions of our indigenous ancestors pre-dating the Spaniards' explorations, he will have a rich array of information to share. Bring a pen and notebook.

Every time I have an opportunity to introduce to the young and not so young inquirers about the heritage ranch and surrounding area that make this space so precious, I love seeing the expressions of interest and fascination that follow. Whether the first prompts are water adventures, observations of the variations of terrain, search for ancient evidence, finding a

fossil here or there along a trail or in a creek bed, photographing the natural beauty, celebrating the early Spring blooms and more, it deepens one's awe for where we are and what we are given. Shouldn't the valuing of all this precious locale inform smart and careful planning? Isn't it a public responsibility to undergird and strengthen efforts to protect and preserve rather than "sell off" to the highest bidders all this natural legacy?

A variety of informative resources can be found in our Comal County libraries and prompts for a deeper dive are located at www.comalconservation.org. You'll be pleased you launched such pursuits.