

Ann-Margaret Gonzalez

210.222.2204

210.383.3315

agonzalez@edwardsaquifer.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



EAA Education Outreach Center Only Place in San Antonio to View Endangered Texas Blind Salamander

San Antonio, Texas - The EAA Education Outreach Center (EAA EOC), which is open to the public and free of charge, marks the next generation of water education for the communities the EAA serves. The Center recently welcomed its first endangered Texas Blind Salamander, which is featured in a special aquarium and on display for people to see up close – the only place San Antonio that offers a rare look at this species for free! The Texas blind salamander is an endangered species of aquatic salamander that is found only within the Edwards Aquifer in Central Texas. This species is *troglobitic*, or cave dwelling, which has resulted in it being both blind and eyeless. These lungless salamanders breathe through their gills and are characterized by their lack of eyes, external red gills, slender limbs, a broad head, transparent-pale color, and grow to about 4-5 inches as adults. The Texas Blind Salamander joins another endangered species, the Fountain Darter, to be on display at the EAA EOC.

Since 1996 The Edwards Aquifer Authority has successfully implemented a landmark permitting system for regulating withdrawals from the aquifer and is administering the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP), ensuring protection of threatened and endangered species reliant on waters from the aquifer. "The EOC's newest endangered species aquaria exhibit that house the endangered Texas Blind Salamander and Fountain Darters are great educational tools for the center to teach the community and students about the mission of the EAHCP. The addition of the ArcGIS *StoryMaps*

touch screen provides supplementary interactive and engaging information on all the Edwards Aquifer threatened and endangered species protected by the EAHCP,” states Scott Stormont, EAA Executive Director for Threatened and Endangered Species.

The Education Outreach Center is also hosting a “Name that Texas Blind Salamander” contest for the public to help it name its newest endangered salamander. Participants can submit their entries online at the following link, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EOCTXBlindSalamander> thru Monday, December 19th. The EAA EOC is free and open to the public, Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. People can schedule a visit to the center at www.eaaeoc.org

About The EAA

The EAA regulates the portion of the Balcones Fault Zone Edwards Aquifer – a jurisdictional area that provides water to two-and-one-half million people and covers more than 8,000 square miles across eight counties. These include all of Uvalde, Medina, and Bexar counties as well as parts of Atascosa, Caldwell, Guadalupe, Comal, and Hays counties. The Edwards Aquifer Authority’s 25+ years of managing, enhancing, and protecting the Edwards Aquifer is a continued commitment to the community as the agency embarks the next 10 years of its strategic plan, known as the ‘Next Generation and Beyond’, with an emphasis on a legacy of sustainability and credibility. For more information, please visit www.edwardsaquifer.org

About The EAHCP

The Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP) defines how we protect federally listed species that live in the Edwards Aquifer and the Comal and San Marcos springs. The program’s Incidental Take Permit was granted to the Edwards Aquifer

Authority, City of San Marcos, City of New Braunfels, Texas State University, and the City of San Antonio acting by and through the San Antonio Water System (collectively known as the EAHCP Permittees) to protect federally listed species from specific activities, Covered Activities, like groundwater pumping. For more information, please visit <https://www.edwardsaquifer.org/habitat-conservation-plan/>

About The EOC

The EAA Education Outreach Center (EAA EOC) represents a major step in the advancement of the EAA's mission. Free and open to all, the EAA EOC offers a variety of interactive exhibits and displays, including a Karst Theater, an endangered species exhibit, a one-of-a-kind Global Perspective Display, a Cloud Caster, a Demonstration Garden, and many more STEAM opportunities for visitors. Situated on the EAA Recharge zone, on the grounds of Morgan's Wonderland Camp, the EAA EOC is rooted in inclusion and an adventure for all. For more information, please visit www.eaaeoc.org