



Save Medina Lake's

March 2025 Update

WHO IS SAVE MEDINA LAKE?

12 years ago, a group of concerned citizens formed the Save Medina Lake committee (SML).

In 2013, the fundamental question of the committee was:

Why was Medina Lake drained from 2009 to 2012, while all comparable lakes in Central Texas were not?

The state of Texas including BMA (a state water district agency) obviously didn't learn anything from this disaster, and the lake was drained again from 2019 - 2022.

Today the SML committee has > 15,000 followers on Facebook and receives over 100,000 views on many of our posts.

We have gathered over 11,500 signatures on two petitions supporting our efforts for water conservation and improved management of Medina Lake.

SML is fully dependent on volunteers and there are no paid



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Save Medina Lake is a data and fact driven organization. Research and data analysis drives all of our work.
2. The tremendous population growth in our area combined with significant economic and environmental changes requires political solutions in Austin to meet tomorrow's realities and demands.
3. All stakeholders interests must be considered when deciding the future of water usage in our semi-arid environment.
4. **Draining the lake TWICE in 10 YEARS** has elevated our challenge to Save Our Lake to a new level which requires significant, active support from the local community including San Antonio.



TOPICS

1. History
2. Problem Statement
3. Issues
 - TCEQ permit & plans
 - BMA is heavily subsidized
 - Water Distribution System
 - Demographic Changes
4. Solution & Next Steps





A brief History of Medina Lake

- Medina Lake was designed to hold 254,000 Acre Feet (AF) of water and the construction of the Medina Lake dam, Diversion Lake dam, and Canal System was completed in 1912.
- The total cost was around \$6 million primarily raised from British investors.
- The main driver and designer of the project was Engineer Frederick Pearson who died on his way to Europe to secure additional funding for the project when RMS Lusitania was torpedoed in 1915.
- After years of economic struggle and going through receivership **all assets were sold for \$10** and “other valuable considerations” to Bexar-Medina-Atascosa Counties Water Improvement District No. 1 in 1950. The district was established by the State of Texas.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Why is history repeating itself with BMA draining the lake twice in 10 years?

- 2009 - 2012
- 2019 - 2022



THERE ARE SEVERAL FACTORS FOR THE “WHY”

- **BMA is heavily subsidized by SAWS.** Water delivered in BMA's district is essentially free to the property owners. SAWS customers pay ~30 times the price BMA charges their customers for water.
- **BMA's Canal (i.e. Water Distribution) System has a flawed design wasting >75% of the water released from Medina Lake.** It takes >4 gallons of water to deliver 1 gallon of water to farmers/property owners using BMA's 312 miles of mostly **dirt-lined** ditch canal system.
- **BMA's TCEQ permit is antiquated** with no requirements to conserve water. **BMA's Drought Contingency and Water Conservation plans are MEANINGLESS** since there is absolutely NO CONSEQUENCE when BMA violates the plan and drains the lake dry despite **TCEQ (i.e. the State of Texas)** approving the plan.



THERE ARE SEVERAL FACTORS FOR THE “WHY”

- **ONLY BMA and TCEQ have a say on how Medina Lake dam and canal system are operated and managed. Other stakeholders** such as Medina River & Lake property owners, SAWS, SARA do NOT have a say.
- **Central Texas in general has received less rain fall** this past decade than previous decades. In contrast, Central Texas and San Antonio have seen dramatic increases in population and therefore the need for water has increased.





Several Issues involving San
Antonio is
Contributing to these FACTORS

BMA IS HEAVILY SUBSIDIZED BY SAWS

- BMA and Bexar Metropolitan Water District ("BexarMet") entered into their latest agreement in 2007. BexarMet had the right to purchase up to 19,974 AF annually for municipal purposes in San Antonio. BMA and BexarMet had previous agreements as early as 1991.
- SAWS inherited the agreement in 2012 through the Texas Legislature when BexarMet was dissolved after its general manager and several officers were indicted on charges of racketeering, extortion and obstruction of justice.
- The current agreement is for 40 years and will end on January 1, 2049. BexarMet and now SAWS will have paid BMA approximately ***\$165,000,000** once the agreement ends.
- Prior to SAWS (1991 – 2012), BexarMet paid BMA >\$16,000,000.
- SAWS pays BMA approximately 75% (2021 - \$3,000,000 out of \$4,000,000) of their annual income. Making water BMA sells to property owners essentially FREE.
- SAWS has NOT taken any water since 2013. **The annual payments from SAWS rate payers allow BMA to continue their mismanagement, thus DRAINING THE LAKE.**

QUESTION FOR SAWS customers – Should SAWS water users subsidize other Districts (i.e. BMA) water-users?

*SAWS rate of increase from 2022 to 2049 is estimated based on their rate increase from 2019 to 2020.



BMA'S 2021 FINANCIAL STATEMENT, REVENUE SECTION

FINANCIAL STATEMENT STUDY PERIOD 1995 - 2021

BEXAR-MEDINA-ATASCOSA COUNTIES WATER CONTROL AND IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO. 1

Management's Discussion and Analysis
December 31, 2021

COPY

The District's net position increased during the current year. The increase is attributable to activities as shown in the following table:

	2021	2020	(Increase) (Decrease)
Revenue			
Municipal water sales	\$ 3,016,074	\$ 3,016,076	\$ (2)
Fixed water assessments	347,687	349,449	(1,762)
Irrigation water sales	244,321	395,933	(151,612)
Investment earnings	30,138	60,443	(30,305)
Other	237,792	188,479	49,313
Total revenue	3,876,012	4,010,380	(134,368)

Page 9 of BMA's Audited Financial Statements

In 2021 77.8% of all BMA's revenue came from SAWS despite the fact that SAWS has NOT taken water since 2013.

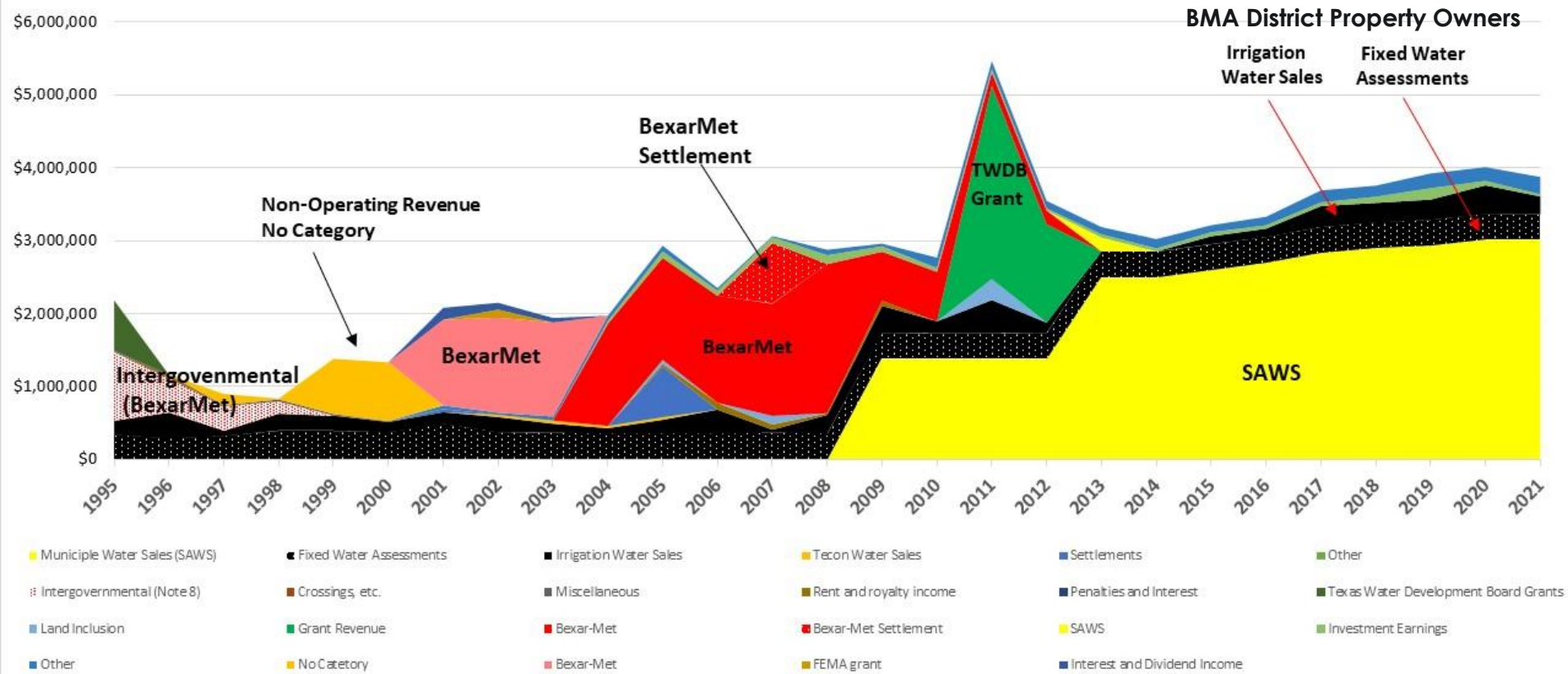
- In 2021, all property owners (3213) in BMA's district paid \$347,687 for the right to purchase water + \$244,321 for purchasing water
- The total contribution from irrigation was only \$592,008 (15%) out of \$3,876,012.



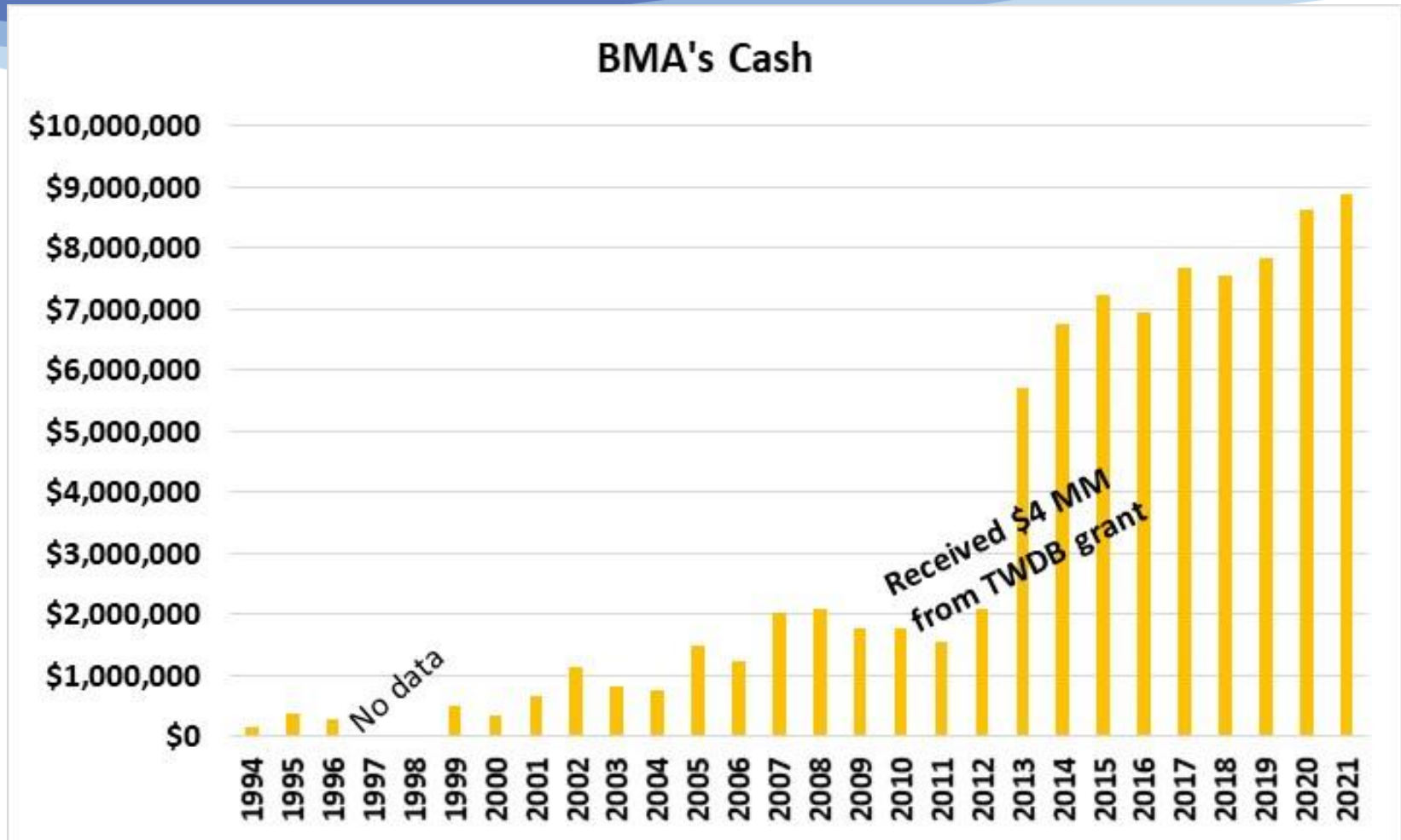
BEXARMET AND NOW SAWS HAVE PROVIDED BMA 75% OF THEIR INCOME FOR 4 DECADES

FINANCIAL STATEMENT STUDY PERIOD 1995 - 2021

BMA's Revenue 1995 - 2021



AS BMA RECEIVES MONEY FROM SAWS EACH YEAR, **THEIR CASH IN THE BANK CONTINUES TO INCREASE.**
FINANCIAL STATEMENT STUDY PERIOD 1995 - 2021



BMA's cash increased \$2.7MM from 2012 to 2013. This is the same timing in which they received 2 TWDB grants - \$2.7MM in 2011, \$1.3MM in 2012

WHERE DID ALL OF THE TWDB GRANT MONEY GO?



BMA'S 2023 FINANCIAL STATEMENT, ASSETS

FINANCIAL STATEMENT STUDY PERIOD 1995 - 2021

COPY

BEXAR-MEDINA-ATASCOSA COUNTIES WATER CONTROL AND IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO. 1

Statement of Net Position

December 31, 2021

Assets

Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$ 8,873,155
Receivables:	
Fixed water assessments - net	91,130
Other	87,954
Inventory	24,280
Prepaid expenses	122,789
Net pension asset	15,767
Capital assets	19,261,554
Total assets	<u>28,476,629</u>

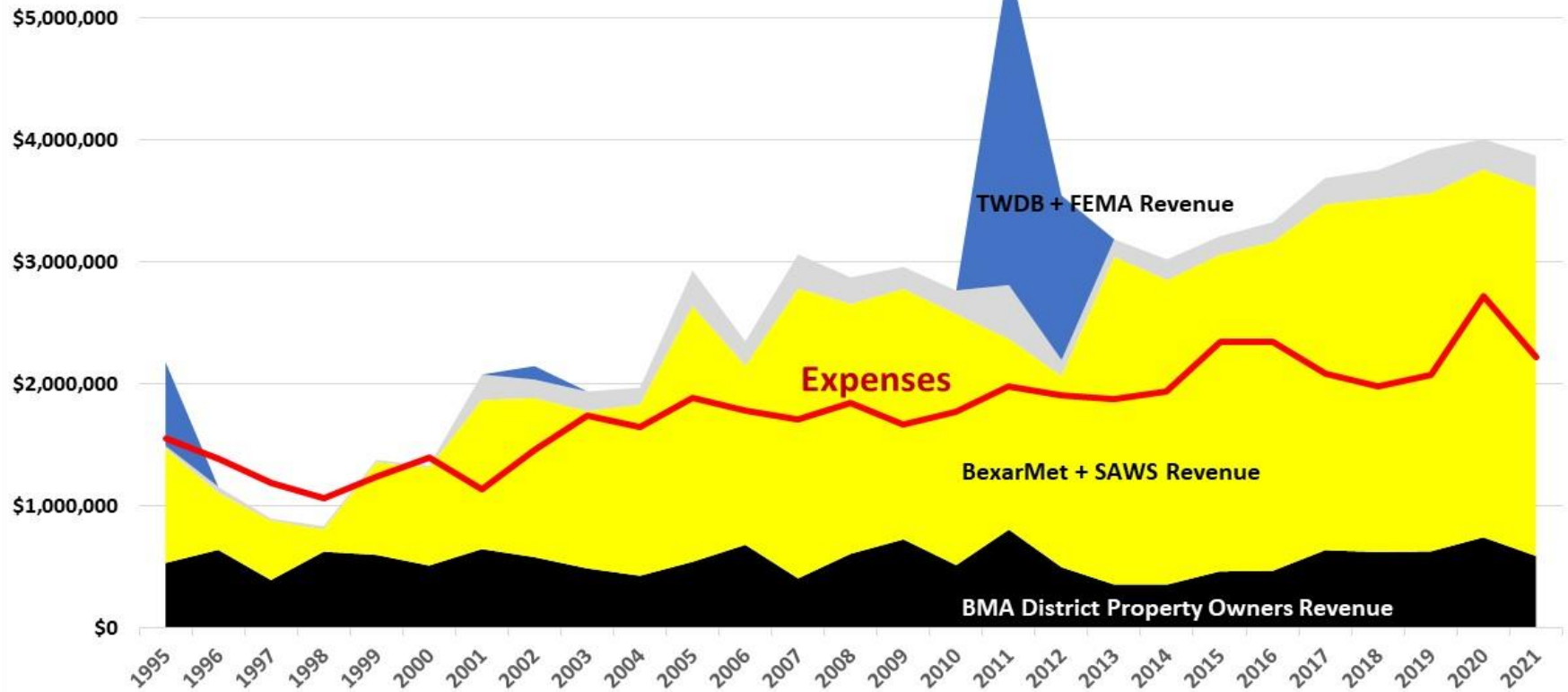
At the end of 2021, BMA had \$8.9MM in the bank!



WITHOUT SAW'S SUBSIDY, BMA'S WATER SALES INCOME DOES NOT COME CLOSE TO COVERING THEIR EXPENSES.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT STUDY PERIOD 1995 - 2021

BMA's Expenses vs. Revenue



Fixed Water Assessments + Fixed Water Assessments
(Property Owners in BMA's district)

All other Categories

BexarMet+BexarMet Settlement+ SAWs

TWDB+FEMA

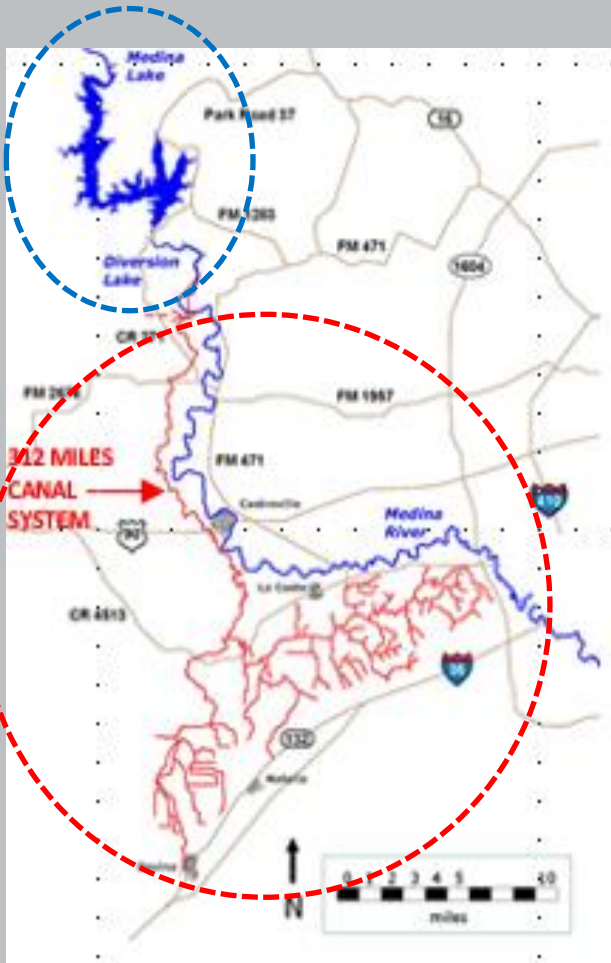


ALONG WITH BMA'S FLAWED BUSINESS MODEL, THEIR WATER DISTRIBUTION IS ALSO FLAWED

- BMA fills 312 miles of mostly dirt lined ditch canals to distribute water.
- ONLY 10 – 15% of property owners (300 to 500 out of 3200) in their district buys water
- Less than half of the 33,000 Acres in their district is irrigated.
- 75% - 80% of water released from Medina Lake is wasted by seeping into the ground and evaporating into the air from the 110 year old canal system.

It takes >4 gallons of water to deliver 1 gallon of water to farmers/property owners because the entire canal must be filled to deliver water, regardless of the # of water sales.

SAWS money could be used for long term, reliable solutions vs. an unreliable, wasteful solution.



THE BMA PERMIT ISSUED BY TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY (TCEQ)

- BMA is allowed to divert up to 66,750 AF water per year as follows:
 - Not to exceed 20,144 AF for Municipal purposes, including 19,974 AF earmarked for Bexar Met (SAWS).
 - Not to exceed 45,856 AF for Agricultural Purposes.
 - Not to exceed 750 AF for domestic and livestock purposes.
- BMA is to allowed to irrigate the maximum of 33,000 acres
- The permit is one of the oldest water permits in the State of Texas, known as a “Senior Water Right”, and it is complicated to challenge Senior Water Rights.
- Only BMA and TCEQ are parties to the permit (i.e. agreement) driving the operations of the dam and irrigation system and how much water is released from the lake.

ONLY BMA and TCEQ are parties to the permit. No other parties INCLUDING SAWS has a “SAY” in the permit and its execution.



ALL STAKEHOLDERS SHOULD HAVE A “SAY” IN MEDINA LAKE AND ITS OPERATION

STAKEHOLDERS of Medina Lake

- ✓ Property and Business owners –
 - ✓ in BMA’s district,
 - ✓ around Medina Lake & its community,
 - ✓ Medina River upstream & downstream
- ✓ SARA (San Antonio River Authority)
- ✓ BCragd (Bandera County River Authority and Groundwater District)
- ✓ SAWS (San Antonio Water Systems)
- ✓ Recreational users

Change BMA’s enabling act to require representation of all interest on their board.

TODAY, ONLY BMA and TCEQ have a say on how Medina Lake dam and canal system is operated and managed.



DRAMATIC CHANGES IN DEMOGRAPHICS AND NEED FOR WATER

We have seen dramatic changes in San Antonio's population and water usage since the Permit to Divert Water from Medina River was issued 113 years ago.

San Antonio population:	1910:	96,614
	2021:	1,451,853
SAWS water users:	2021:	>2,000,000

- In 2020 57% of the water distributed by SAWS came from the Edwards Aquifer and a study in the 1990s concluded that Medina Lake is a significant recharge feature to the Edwards Aquifer.
- The way Medina Lake currently is managed, the recharge is “0” during severe drought conditions when recharge is needed the most.
- SAWS and USGS are currently conducting a new study to understand the amount of water Medina Lake recharges to the Edwards Aquifer.





The Solution and Next Steps

THE SOLUTION IS TO:

1. Close the valves on the Medina Lake dam. Only open the valves during flooding conditions and to maintain down river flow.
2. Replace the canal system with wells strategically placed to efficiently deliver water.
3. Where needed, grant qualified farmers water permits in BMA's district to receive water from the wells.
4. Enable all stakeholders to have a “say” in Medina Lake and its operation.
- 5. Change BMA's enabling legislation and TCEQ permit to implement the above.**



NEXT STEPS

Save Medina Lake is currently engaged with Bandera, Bexar, and Medina County Officials and State Legislators to raise awareness of Medina Lake's problem statement and the vision on how to solve the problem. Solving the problem will require the State of Texas to work with all stakeholders to implement the solution to the benefit of all with the following considerations.

1. Provide adequate water supply for agricultural purposes in the BMA district.
2. Maintain down river flow from Medina Lake.
3. Keep Medina Lake as full as possible to ensure it is a recharge feature for the Edwards and Trinity Aquifers during all weather conditions including drought.
4. Ensure Medina Lake ONCE AGAIN becomes a favorite recreational location for citizens in the surrounding area including San Antonio as well as all of Texas!





THANK YOU!