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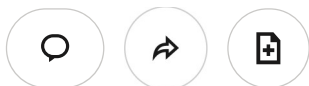
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Researchers studying aquifer to gauge future of popular swimming hole

Kristen Currie

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This story is part of our series, [Where's the Water?](#) — an in-depth look at the health of Central Texas' most popular swimming holes, springs and aquifers. Join the First Warning Weather team all this week as they report live from across the area.

SPICEWOOD (KXAN) — It's a community hotspot for swimming in the hot summer months, but what does the future of [Krause Springs](#) look like? Although the spring has never run dry, will it continue to stay healthy despite drought and increased pumping?

Meteorologist Kristen Currie spoke with Mitchell Sodek with the Central Texas Groundwater Conservation District to discuss the current studies being done to understand the geology and environment that surrounds Krause Springs.

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Where's the Water?

Below is a transcript of their conversation. Edits have been made for clarity.

Kristen Currie, KXAN Meteorologist: As part of our summer series, "[Where's the Water?](#)" the First Warning Weather Team is highlighting different watering holes here in Central Texas and asking — where's the water coming from and what is the health of these swimming holes. So joining me today is Mitchell Sodek, the general manager of the Central Texas Groundwater Conservation District. Mitchell, thank you so much for joining us today.

Mitchell Sodek, Central Texas Groundwater Conservation District: Thank you for having me, Kristen. Pleasure to be here.

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Currie: Krause Springs, definitely a popular swimming hole here in Central Texas. And from my understanding, this has been a focus, at least the area, for you guys as well. Talk to me more about it.

Sodek: Krause Springs is in the Spicewood area in southern Burnet County, and it's unique because Spicewood is known to be a groundwater-poor area. There's very little groundwater in the general area surrounding there, and many people have drilled dry wells and have not encountered groundwater. And yet, you have the springs that flow out of the ground and have always flowed out of the ground. They have flowed during every severe drought that we've had from the 1950s to the 2011 through 2015 drought, and they continue to flow today.

It's a very unique system. There's some unique geology that drives the water flow underground, and it's something we don't fully understand yet, so we

continue to study it to get a better grasp of it.

Currie: That's so interesting, especially because there are other swimming holes that do struggle with getting the water there and the springs being healthy. So talk to me a little bit more about what you guys study — how you're working to find out why Krause Springs is healthy compared to other swimming holes nearby.

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Sodek: We try to start with the underlying geology — the geology layers that comprise the aquifer. There are multiple ones in this general area, and there's actually multiple aquifers. So we start there. We start with the structure, and then we try to work backwards from the structure by identifying wells and wells that are in those various aquifers and how that water is moving through the aquifer. Where is it originating from, and then where is it going to? Those are largely natural systems, but they can be influenced by people. We can influence them by drilling wells and pumping wells, and that can change the flow of groundwater.

Currie: As far as the aquifer goes, we're talking about the Trinity Aquifer, correct? What makes that aquifer so unique, maybe compared to others?

Sodek: The Trinity Aquifer is a multi-layered aquifer. So in this particular area, we're talking about the Lower Trinity Aquifer, and particularly the Sycamore layer, which is different from other areas that are in the same aquifer but they may be producing out of different layers within that aquifer. And so the Sycamore is a layer that is comprised of sands and gravels. In some cases, they're cemented together. In other cases, they're loose sands that water is able to percolate through.

Currie: And as far as how an aquifer works and how water can get into Krause Springs for others to enjoy recreationally, how does that work? Because I think for a lot of people, it's counterintuitive. You think, wait, gravity should pull it down.

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Sodek: Gravity does pull it down. It pulls it down into the aquifer generally at higher elevations. And then that water is going to flow downhill. And if it comes out as a spring, it's coming out generally at a lower elevation, a lower point. So water is going to flow from high elevation to low elevation. In this particular spring complex, the water and the flow, we think, is very localized. We think it's within just a few miles of the springs itself is where it enters the aquifer. But that is something we're trying to further study — what is the expanse of the spring shed? Where does and how far away does the water originate from?

Currie: Are there any sort of projections y'all can make as far as the future of Krause Springs? Is there anything you're seeing that maybe is worrisome or something to watch for as far as the health of that spring goes?

Sodek: So far, we've not seen any negative influences from pumping on the springs itself. We see the springs do vary through climate cycles, which is very normal. But because of this, we're taking a more proactive approach. So we're trying to get the science in place so that we fully understand the makeup of the springs so that we can better manage them. We're trying to manage them before they go dry. And hopefully we can accomplish that goal. But we don't have all the answers today. It's something we still have to find and do the science for to be able to fully understand the entire complex of the spring makeup.

Currie: And who's involved in this study that y'all are doing?

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Sodek: We've done a number of studies. The Central Texas Groundwater Conservation District, we are the spearhead of those, and we've partnered with the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment with Texas State University. We've partnered with the United States Geological Survey and the Bureau of Economic Geology at University of Texas. So those are three really prominent organizations with some really top tier hydrogeologists and other folks that have been helping us to further study this

been helping us to further study this.

Currie: And are y'all going out quarterly, monthly, doing some drilling to check aquifer levels? Or how does that look?

Sodek: All of the above. We've drilled test wells. We've drilled coring samples for wells. We have wells that are equipped with transducers that are recording water levels daily. We have just recently installed some gauges to measure the surface flow out of the springs. There's a number of things that we are measuring and they're quite complex because the spring side is not a single spring. It's a complex of springs that are coming out of the hillside and so it makes it a little bit challenging to measure total spring flow, and it's scattered out all over the place in different channels.

Currie: Is there any way the public can help you or get involved?

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Sodek: Absolutely. We are calling right now for volunteers in the Spicewood area to volunteer their wells for a water level measurement. And so this will help us identify what other areas that are farther away from the springs, what are those areas doing as far as their groundwater levels and where is the flow coming and going to. So yes, we're calling on anybody within the general Spicewood area, southern Burnet County, western Travis County and northern Blanco County to call us up and maybe participate with our studies.

Currie: What do you think makes Krause Springs stand out, maybe for good or for worse, as far as the groundwater and the springs interacting together?

Sodek: Well, in my opinion, it's special because it's so beautiful. There are giant cypress trees that have been growing for hundreds of years at the spring sites. The family that owns the springs has done a fabulous job of creating a welcoming swimming area and swimming pool and the natural pool below. And then finally, the water is really cold. So it feels fantastic on a hot summer day. It's quite the community hotspot.

Currie: I couldn't agree more. Mitchell, the general manager of Central Texas

Groundwater Conservation District, thank you so much for joining us today.

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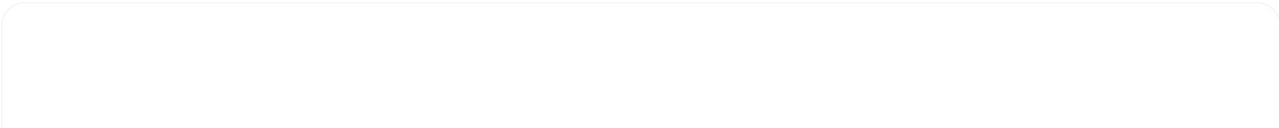
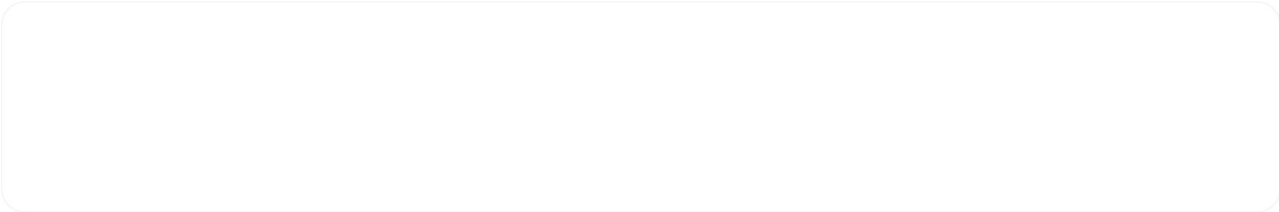
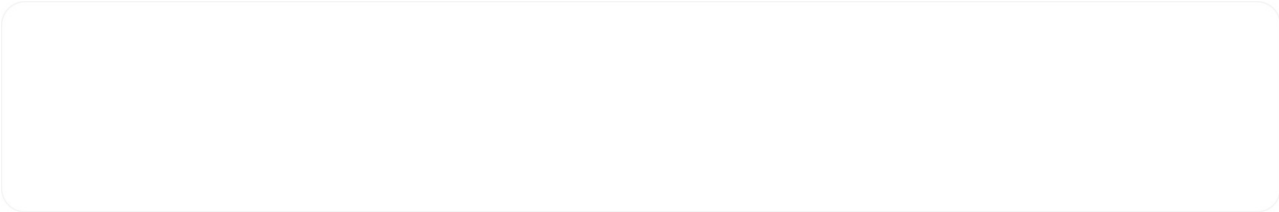
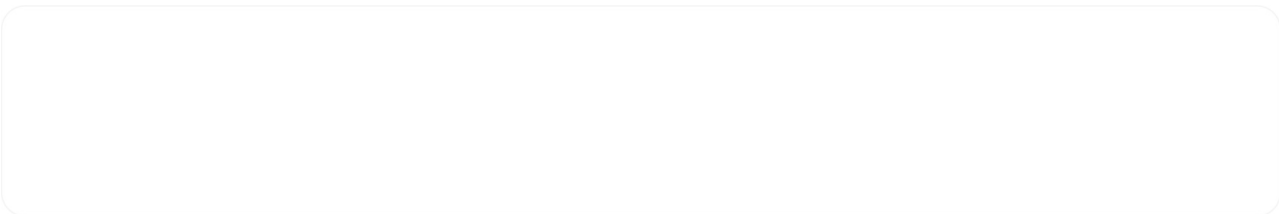
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