



Friends of Barton Springs Pool

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Frequently Asked Questions About the Gravel Bar

What is the gravel bar?

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How does the gravel bar affect the water quality of the pool?

Does the gravel bar affect the flow of water in the pool?

Why should we remove the gravel bar now?

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WHAT IS THE GRAVEL BAR?

The gravel bar is an accumulation of debris and silty sediment in what was once known as the deep end of the pool behind the downstream dam. The debris ranges from pebbles to softball sized stones to boulders bigger than babies.

WHERE DID THE GRAVEL BAR COME FROM?

Barton Springs sits at the downstream end of a 115 sq mile river drainage whose natural course carries water and debris into the river. The dams built to create Barton Springs also created a barrier that traps debris from every large flood (those that top the upstream dam of the pool). The current gravel bar is an accumulation of almost 20 years of debris.

HOW DOES THE GRAVEL BAR AFFECT THE WATER QUALITY OF THE POOL?

The flood debris traps an extraordinary amount of sediment in the pool which is easily disturbed by swimmers and bathers which in turn makes the water more murky more often.

DOES THE GRAVEL BAR AFFECT THE FLOW OF WATER IN THE POOL?

Flow in Barton Springs is determined by the output of the springs. However, the gravel bar impedes the natural flow of the pool as it has completely filled in the original creekbed channel. If left unattended, the accumulating debris would eventually convert our swimming pool into a wading pool.

IS THE GRAVEL BAR RELATED TO THE BYPASS TUNNEL?

No. The bypass tunnel is separated from the gravel bar to be removed by approximately thirty feet. The city is considering



working on the bypass and the gravel bar simultaneously to minimize the time the pool will be closed.

WHY SHOULD WE REMOVE THE GRAVEL BAR NOW?

Removing the gravel bar will have immediate benefits to your Barton Springs experience, (such as improved water clarity and a return of the deep end) and open the path to further studies to improve the quality of our pool. Historically, the gravel bars have been effectively removed approximately every ten years using front-end loaders, trucks, and/or cranes. We are now approaching 20 years since the last thorough removal, and the degrading effects of this neglect are all too obvious as each day goes by.

WHAT IS THE ECOLOGICAL IMPACT OF REMOVING THE GRAVEL BAR?

The city and citizens' input have shown a very high level of respect for the aquatic and terrestrial environments in the extensive planning to prevent, mitigate, and repair any ecological impact.

A coffer dam will isolate the area inside the pool itself; any equipment operating in the pool will be using environmentally friendly fuels and oils; and the staff biologists plans to replant native species in the submerged area once the debris has been removed. Above ground, all heavy equipment will be kept a safe distance from the pool and a temporary transport path made from a thick layer of mulch and timbers will be used to avoid any soil compaction and damaging of tree roots.

WILL THIS FIX THE GRAVEL BAR PROBLEM?

Currently, this is a periodic maintenance issue as gravel accumulates every time Barton Creek has a large flood. However, removing the gravel bar will allow for complete and thorough study of the pool to find ways we can best address the issues affecting our pool for the generations of the 21st century.

DOES MY OPINION MATTER?

Of course! Concerned citizens like yourself have moved the city to address this issue. The city needs direction, impetus, and guidance from its citizens and the gravel bar removal is a public process open to all. Please participate.

For more information please visit

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/bartonspringsmp.htm>, or <http://friendsofbartonspringspool.org/>.