

# LCRA finds less pollution in western Travis creek

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The embattled developer of the West Cypress Hills subdivision got a bit of good news Friday as an inspector from the Lower Colorado River Authority confirmed that damage to a dam's silt filter had been repaired and, with other recent improvements, had drastically reduced pollution entering Lick Creek in western Travis County.

A stop-work order for the development remained in effect pending completion of modifications to the dam and pond. The LCRA issued the order last month after floods destroyed a silt-filtering drain pipe, worsening pollution downstream.

Residents along Lick Creek, whose once-pristine waters have been choked with silt from the development's illegally built dam for much of the past year, agreed that the creek was relatively clear on Friday.

However, residents said that on Saturday, as crews resumed work on the stormwater detention pond behind the dam, a surge of murky brown water

flowed downstream toward the Pedernales River. It's unclear whether such work — or several new homes that an LCRA inspector reported are now under construction — might violate the stop-work order.

Documentation of other problems with the development has come to light recently, including a finding by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that the initial site development work, done without consulting appropriate authorities, destroyed two of the three prehistoric Native American camp sites on the property.

"The Corps officials have said no mitigation is necessary," said Ed Moore, the project engineer. "The sites are not what you or I would have recognized as archaeological sites."

Corps officials could not be reached for comment.

Also, documents provided by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality say the contractor building the project's sewage treatment plant twice was caught with the toxic chemical methyl ethyl ketone, stored in the open near the

creek.

The contractor had not registered its use of the chemical in the site's anti-pollution plan, as required, and was issued an oral warning on April 15 after promising to keep the chemical off the site, environmental commission documents say.

When commission inspectors returned on May 21 in response to a complaint, they found an open container of the solvent hidden in a clump of trees, adjacent a tributary of Lick Creek, state documents say.

The state agency issued a violation notice the second time. Rather than pursuing an enforcement case and possible fine, the case was declared resolved after the contractor filed a plan to keep the material stored inside, records say.

The commission issued a violation notice for illegal silt discharges into Lick Creek based on the April 15 inspection. But on May 25, the agency declared that violation resolved after an inspector, visiting on May 21, found no polluted runoff entering the creek that day, records say.