

Watershed Detectives:

The Fish Kill Mystery



It is the summer of 1979 and you are staying with your grandmother who lives near Mabel Davis Park in southeast Austin. It has been raining all week and you are glad to finally get out to the park. Before you reach the park, you notice a dead fish in the creek that flows through the park. You decide to follow the creek to see if you find anything else unusual.

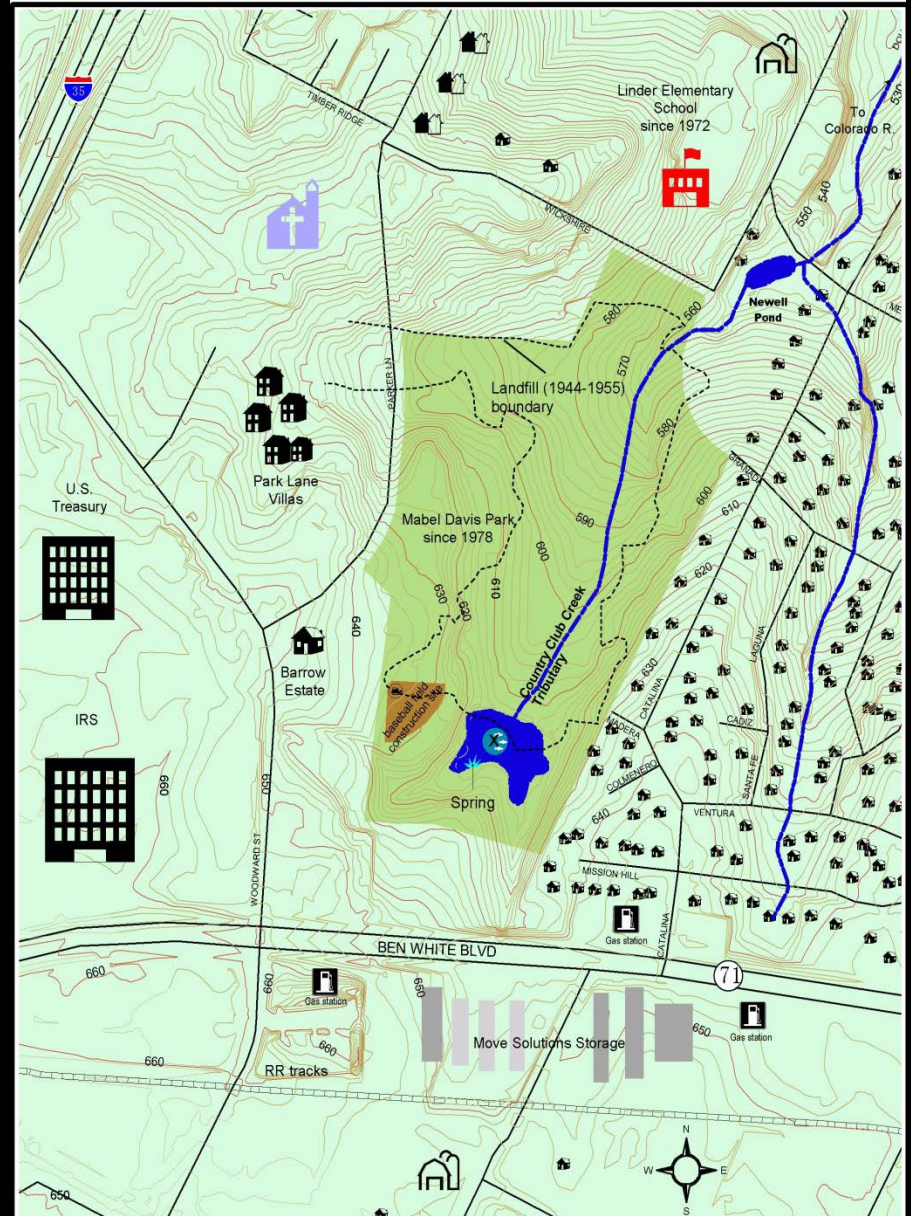


As you continue walking along the creek towards the park you see several more dead fish. Finally you reach the park pond and you are shocked to see about 200 fish floating belly up in the pond. You also notice a strong chemical odor. You've been studying water pollution at school and so you decide to investigate, but first you call the City Pollution Hotline to report what you found.





You begin by making a map to record what you observe. Much of the neighborhood has changed since you began staying with your grandma during the summer five years ago. There are many more houses and fewer farms. Linder Elementary and playing fields have replaced the old country school. The creek has been cleaned up since you and your friends used to make forts out of scraps of metal and wood you found there.





As you are finishing your map, one of your Grandma's neighbors, Mr. Newell, comes over to visit. He sees your map and tells you he has a pond downstream of the park. He has not seen any dead fish in his pond, but is concerned about the survival of the fish and about the possible harmful effects of eating the fish from his pond. While you are talking with Mr. Newell, city environmental staff drive into the park. You and Mr. Newell walk to the park with your map and tell them about your observations. Impressed with your careful investigations, they ask for your help to decide which sites to test to determine the source of the pollutant.