

## COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION VALUE TO TPWD'S CORE MISSION

User fees contribute to 50% of state park operations and almost 70% of wildlife, fisheries and game warden operations. The Communications Division's efforts are critical to driving that revenue, along with increasing awareness of the importance of conserving the natural and cultural resources of Texas, increasing participation in outdoor recreational activities and encouraging safe, legal and ethical behavior among resource users.

### **C.2.3 Provide Communications Products and Services:**

- Texas has higher levels of participation in both hunting and fishing than the national average, due in part to effective communications efforts over the last 15 years. In Texas, hunting participation has increased 21% versus the national decline of 10% and fishing is down 3% versus the national decline of 15% since 1996. The division promotes fishing and hunting licenses in news releases, on the website, in advertising, direct mail, email marketing, and in our magazine, television, radio show and social media efforts.
- Communications Division staff designs, produces, develops and manages the agency's website. As the number one communication and informational tool, the main **TPWD website** receives over 8 million visitors each year and contains over 50,000 pages.
  - 36% of state park reservations are made through our website, and that figure continues to grow.
  - Close to **\$3 million in hunting and fishing license revenue** came in through our website last year, and we've seen a 27% increase in internet sales so far this year.
  - **16% of all boat registrations and renewals** go through the website and that is also trending up
  - Online website sales of Big Time Texas Hunts entries, which were marketed with email and online advertising totaled nearly \$250,000, which was 41% of total sales.
- **News media relations** is the department's most basic function to communicate proposed hunting and fishing regulations changes, TPW Commission actions and other vital news. Wide benefits here come at low cost by reaching the public through print, broadcast and online news outlets. In addition, staff provides direct support to game wardens and other departmental personnel during high profile events, freeing up game wardens and biologists to perform their duties without the distraction of dealing with news media.
- Produces the **State Park Guide**, which is fully paid for with sponsorship and advertising dollars. The website and the state park guide are the top two ways Texans find out about state parks, other than word of mouth.
- In 2010, marketing staff generated more than \$437,000 in net revenue from Big Time Texas Hunts which was used to increase public hunting opportunities and fund conservation and habitat management. The staff also generated more than \$424,000 million FY 2010 from the sale of conservation license plates, which is used to fund numerous state parks operations as well as wildlife and fisheries related efforts. To date, \$4.8 million has been generated from successfully marketing of the license plates.
- Designs, produces and manages over 3,000 electronic and printed publications such as park visitation material, **state park facility maps**, State Park Guide, **hunting and fishing regulations**, wildlife information and law enforcement support materials. Produces e-newsletters and email blasts reaching more than a hundred thousand subscribers at almost no cost to the state.
- Partnerships with private landowners, communities and organizations provide **economic development to rural communities** and increase the public access to outdoor recreation at almost **no cost to the state**. Texas Parks & Wildlife's Great Texas Wildlife Trails program resulted in the development of a nature tourism platform that includes 950 wildlife-viewing sites, about a third of these on private ranches and properties.

- The Texas Paddling Trails currently has 26 paddling trails and 300 miles of waterway recreational access, with more than 40 trails projected by the end of this year. This program serves more than a million paddlers in Texas and is providing greater opportunities for kayaking, which is growing faster than any other recreational activity.
- Communications staff is responsible for developing sponsorships and managing sponsor relationships and providing guidance to the field and other divisions about sponsorship development. In fiscal year 2011 they have already helped secure \$250,000 in Toyota sponsorship dollars to fund a variety of programs and \$135,000 to help fund “Texas: The State of Water” conservation education initiative.

#### **C.2.4 Outreach and Education Programs:**

- Outreach and Education recruits and trains the next generation in conservation and outdoor recreation to be safe, healthy, responsible, license- and equipment-buying participants, all of which pays for management of our natural resources. The bulk of these functions occur at no cost to the state since they are federally funded and matched by volunteer labor. We have thousands of people who volunteer their time for TPWD under these programs, providing them to Texas citizens at no cost to the state.
- Aquatic Education - provides training in fishing skills, laws, safety, ethics; source of food and healthy eating; gateway to other outdoor participation; virtually no cost to state. (over 40,000 people/yr; demand is growing)
- Project WILD – provides professional development and resources for educators; this also supports the lack of curriculum on natural resources; transitioning to a user-pay model. (over 4,500 educators/yr; demand is growing)
- Outreach – primary recruitment tool for new users; primary support for community partner organizations and events including skill training and loaner equipment; introduces safe, responsible outdoor skills; introduces families to low-to-no cost recreation; benefits include overall physical and developmental well-being that occurs with nature-based activities; helps fight childhood obesity; first step toward conservation. (over 27,000 people /yr)

#### **TPW magazine notes:**

- With a half-million monthly readers, the magazine reaches a core TPWD constituency not served by any other communications tool. Even in today’s tough economic times, paid subscriptions grew by more than 20 percent in 2010.
- TP&W magazine recovers almost two thirds of its operating expenses from subscriptions, advertising, and newsstand sales. Sixty-five percent of the magazine’s budget is appropriated receipts. FY10 revenue was nearly \$1.7 million, and so far we are on track to exceed that this year.
- Other U.S. states have eliminated similar magazines in the past only to relaunch them (at considerable start-up expense) due to public demand.
- If we stop production of the magazine, the monetary liability will exceed \$1 million in subscription refunds.