



Mission

The Mission of Texans for State Parks is to preserve and enhance the State Park System for the benefit of the people of Texas and their guests.

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Texans for State Parks

Citizens working to preserve and enhance our great state park system

The Voice

November-December, 2010

- Grants available for Friends Groups
- New Proposal for Devils River Acquisition
- Inks Lake State Park Golf Course to Close
- Texas Old Missions and Forts Restoration Association
- Battleship Texas Dry Berth Design Contract Signed

From the President:

As we get closer to our February Annual Meeting, you should make plans to attend to learn how you can help with not only your Park, but all our Park system funding. We all know there will be major cuts in the budget this coming Legislative Session and need to help insure our Parks will not be burdened any more than necessary. We are planning to have Members of the Legislature on hand as well as TPWD leaders to advise us where we stand and what we can do to help.

We also would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! If you are traveling, take care and stay safe.

Hope to see you at McKinney Falls S.P. in February...

John Cobb, President

TfSP's Featured Park for the next three months is Lake Arrowhead State Park. See www.texansstateparks.org for information and photos.

The "Featured Volunteer Group" this quarter is the First Texas Volunteers of the Battleship Texas State Historic Site. Meet this group at <http://www.texansstateparks.org/>.

Every Day Grants -Helping our Public Lands by helping their Friends

Our nation's public lands need our support every day. With stretched budgets and limited staff, land managers at federal, state, city and local public lands need all the help they can get. That help comes from volunteers, often in the form of "Friends Groups" who partner with local parks and green spaces to support, promote and help maintain public lands.

These volunteer organizations, while dedicated and passionate, are often under funded and understaffed. The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), with generous support from Toyota Motor Sales USA, Inc., seeks to strengthen these organizations and unleash their potential to serve their public lands. NEEF's Every Day Grants will strengthen the stewardship of public lands by strengthening Friends Groups through funding for organizational capacity building.

Twenty (20) Every Day Grants of up to \$5,000 each will be awarded to those groups who make the best case for how the funds will build their capacity to better serve the lands they love.

Capacity building strengthens a nonprofit's ability to operate more effectively at an organizational level. To understand capacity building, a nonprofit must think about how it operates, not about a program or initiative. Capacity building is strategic and requires reflection on organizational strengths and weaknesses.

Capacity building can take many forms, including, but not limited to: strategic planning, marketing and communications, leadership capacity (board or executive), improved fundraising, assessments or staff training. In thinking about needs, an organization may ask:

- Does this activity allow my whole organization to operate more effectively, or does it have a limited affect on a program or initiative?

Improving fundraising skills affects the entire organization over a long period. But having a fundraising dinner for a program only affects that program for that fiscal year.

- What are the major operational areas that need attention and will help the organization grow and achieve its mission?

There may be a need for financial management software, a donor database and upgraded communications materials. Not being able to do them all, an organization must select one that is going to move them forward strategically.

[Apply now! Applications are due January 30, 2011 Click Find out more about Every Day Grants for more information.](#)

New Proposal for Devils River Acquisition

P&W Commission to Meet Dec. 20 in Austin. Devils River, TFFC

Land Acquisitions on Special Meeting Agenda

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission will hold a special meeting Dec. 20 at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Austin headquarters to consider two land acquisitions, one on the Devils River in Val Verde County and another near the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens.

Earlier this year P&W was considering a proposal that would result in the exchange of the existing Devils River State Natural Area as partial payment for a privately owned ranch downriver, which would become a new state park or natural area.

TPWD is now proposing to acquire the 17,638-acre Devils River Ranch in Val Verde County and manage it as part of the existing Devils River State Natural Area. Previously, the agency had proposed exchanging the natural area as partial payment for the ranch about 13 miles downriver.

The agency will host a local constituent briefing in Del Rio to explain the new Devils River proposal. Anyone is welcome to attend that meeting, which will take place from 6-8 p.m. Dec. 9 at the Del Rio Civic Center, Kennedy Room, 1915 Veterans Blvd.

The Devils River Ranch owner has agreed to sell the ranch to TPWD for \$13 million, significantly below the \$15,875,000 fair market value calculated earlier this year by a certified appraiser. To fund the purchase, TPWD would use \$2.7 million in state funds allocated for park land acquisition. This would be matched with \$1.3 million in federal Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars. But the bulk of the purchase would be

made with \$9 million in private donations.

A proposal to exchange the natural area for the ranch was pulled from the Nov. 4 commission agenda after TPWD heard concerns from paddlers, some environmentalists and others. Kayak and canoe clubs expressed concern that loss of the state natural area would disrupt opportunities to paddle the upper river. The new proposal maintains that opportunity while opening the way for the department to work collaboratively with landowners and paddlers to resolve longstanding disputes surrounding the river's use, as well as improve the existing state natural area.

If the acquisition is approved by the commission, the two sites would likely be operated under one superintendent as a state natural area complex. Public access to the new site would come after creation of a master plan as well as a public use plan for both units of the natural area, a process estimated to take about two years. Private donations would fund the first 2.5 years of operating expenses for the new site.

TPWD also plans to bring together a working group to include landowners, paddlers, businesses, elected officials, non-profit partners and others to work together and seek solutions to address the recreational interests of Devils River users as well as the property rights of adjacent landowners.

The department has compiled maps, photos, questions and answers, conservation easement documents and other resources in a **Devils River Land Acquisition News Roundup** on its website.

Public testimony may be made at the Dec. 20 commission meeting. Questions or comments about the Devils River proposal can be sent by email to

ted.hollingsworth@tpwd.state.tx.us

or by regular mail to Ted Hollingsworth, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744. http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/news/media/releases/news_roundup/devils_river_land_acquisition/

Inks Lake State Park Golf Course to Close

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has decided not to renew the contract for the leaseholder who operates the nine-hole Highland Lakes Golf Club at Inks Lake State Park.

With the number of players at the park's golf course static in recent years Texas State Parks leadership has decided the roughly 60 acres of lakeside property at the increasingly popular park could be put to better use.

The Highland Lakes Golf Course, which has been operated by Michael Ocel since 2008, averages 16 players per day. "Visitation to the state park continues to grow," says park superintendent Terry Rodgers.

"We are looking for better ways to use that land, perhaps for additional hiking trails, interpretive programs and additional camping. In recent years, play at the golf course has been declining, but overall park attendance has been growing." Inks Lake State Park visitation hit 170,000 in fiscal year 2010.

The golf course originally was leased in 1958 under a 50-year contract. When the lease expired in 2008, it was extended for two more years. The current contract expires Nov. 30.

The Texas Old Missions and Forts Restoration Association

Texas Old Missions and Forts Restoration Association's new **website** has now been launched!

TOMFRA is a statewide organization of historians and early architecture enthusiasts joined in our interest in preserving the mission and fort heritage of Texas. TOMFRA's purpose is to encourage continued study of our missions and forts as well as to support the restoration of sites significant to our Texas frontier heritage. TOMFRA's emphasis on appropriating funds for education and preservation projects extends to support of other organizations, agencies and individuals with similar aims. Please visit TOMFRA at www.tomfra.org.

Battleship Texas Dry Berth Design Contract Signed

In a major step toward long-term preservation of the Battleship Texas, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has signed a contract with AECOM USA Group, Inc. – a globally recognized architectural and engineering firm – to design a permanent dry berth for the historic vessel before time and the elements scuttle the ship.

The 1914-vintage battleship, a veteran of both world wars, is the last of its kind. She's been moored at the San Jacinto Battleground since 1948. Her hull was last repaired in the late 1980s and has since become dangerously weakened from years of exposure to the brackish water of the Houston Ship Channel.

"The dry berthing of the Texas is the most complex project ever undertaken by this department," said TPWD project manager Neil Thomas. "The design and

construction will be a very large civil engineering project. And the age and condition of the ship, which is a National Historic Landmark, adds a challenging naval architectural component as well. All these factors combine to make the project absolutely unique."

In 2007, as part of Proposition 4, voters approved a bond package that included \$25 million to dry-berth the battleship. After TPWD conducted engineering studies and developed a project plan as directed by the 80th Legislature, the Legislative Budget Board approved sale of bonds "contingent on the ship being dry berthed in its current location." Funding for the project includes a \$4 million contribution from the Battleship Texas Foundation.

Earlier this year, TPWD selected AECOM – a company with 40,000 employees world-wide – as the most qualified architectural-engineering firm to design the dry berth. Since that time the department has been in negotiations with the firm, a process which included developing the scope of work to be done and the products to be delivered. The contract was signed Oct. 26.

"AECOM is a highly qualified internationally recognized firm with offices in the Houston area and was the winning designer among a number of exceptional entries," said Andy Smith, manager of the Battleship Texas State Historic Site. "TPWD looks forward to working with AECOM over the coming years to devise a long term solution that combines preservation and proper stewardship with a world class display of this historic ship."

Smith said the goal is to save the historic ship, save the taxpayers money and provide a first class

experience for the visiting public that is fitting of Texas and her namesake state.

Last June, a rag and a backup pump kept the storied battleship Texas from sinking in its mooring. When park staff noticed the ship resting more than two feet lower in the water than normal, a leak

was discovered on the starboard side of the ship near the waterline. A rag was stuffed into the leak until the water could be pumped out.

The just-signed contract calls for AECOM to have its preliminary design completed by spring 2011. Following a federally mandated

environmental assessment expected to take about two years, the bidding process for construction of the dry berth and temporary mooring of the Texas is expected to begin in mid-2014 with construction complete by the summer of 2017.

Texans for State Parks invites you to join in protecting Texas treasures.

Texans for State Parks is a statewide, not-for-profit organization that works exclusively in support of the preservation and enhancement of the state parks, state historic sites, and state natural areas of Texas.

Whether you are an individual, organization, school group or represent a small business or a major corporation, membership categories provide a way for you to become involved.

Your tax deductible dues help fund advocacy and education efforts, and contributions to special parks activities as funds are available.

Please *Join Today* if you aren't already a member!

[Click Here for Membership Application](#), print, complete and mail to Texans for State Parks, P. O. Box 41480, Austin, TX 7804-0025.