



*Citizens working to preserve and enhance the state park system
for the benefit of the people of Texas and their guests.*

The Voice, Online – TfSP E-News

March, 2010

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From The President

The Governor's office has asked all agencies to cut 5% of their budget costs over the next two years. Texas Parks and Wildlife Executive Director, Carter Smith has released a statement that no jobs will be lost or Park hours curtailed.

Compared to other States, we are in pretty good condition with our budget. There are several States who are curtailing operations, including shutting down some Parks, where we are not.

We will need to make sure we get the message out about the improvements in our Texas State Parks and the need for funding. Especially we do not want to see cuts in our funding anymore than necessary under the current Budget restraints. This means we will have to get our message out to Members of the Texas Legislature, Service Clubs, and interested organizations state-wide. Texas Parks and Wildlife has had studies made on the impact of our Parks on the local economy in their areas. They bring in dollars that would be sorely missed by local businesses and would impact the pockets of everyone in those areas.

We have made good strides in the last couple of years and need to support our Texas State Parks through this current economy.

John Cobb, President
Texans for State Parks

Texans for State Parks Annual Meeting

Texans for State Parks held the 2010 Annual meeting February 6 at the TPWD Training at Center Airport Commerce Park.

Walt Dabney spoke to the group about the progress made toward repairs and equipment replacement as a result of the funding provided by the last legislature, and presented a slide program showing some of the accomplishments. The Parks Division also was able to hire staff in key positions and fill vacant positions. He reminded everyone that it's a good beginning, but much remains to be done. Some issues include the need for group facilities in many parks such as Garner that attract groups, but have no group hall where they can gather.

Walt reminded everyone that legislative hearings are beginning now for issues to be addressed in the 2011 session, and now is the time for Friends groups to begin working with their local officials and legislators to be sure they are informed on local issues regarding the needs of their parks, and the benefits those parks bring to the communities. Once the session begins, much will already be underway.

Representatives from parks friends groups had an opportunity to discuss possible facilities and other issues for their parks with Walt during his session.

Bob Armstrong presented a program on Big Bend Ranch, now open to public, and Jan DeVault talked about Friends of San Jacinto, and about their disagreement with Parks & Wildlife regarding the location of Battleship Texas.

Richard Solis, Treasurer, presented the financial report, and he and John brought the group up to date on the partnership with P&W during the summer when TfSP administered the hourly hire program. They pointed out that the process went very smoothly and indicated that TfSP would be interested in providing the same services in the coming summer if the opportunity is available.

The intention to develop a long range operating plan was discussed, and the board agreed to schedule a day to work on developing the plan along with a long range budget. Walt suggested that TfSP focus on expanding membership and visibility in order to become a strong advocacy group, and that point was expanded on by other members.

Those participating in the meeting included representatives of Friends Groups from Enchanted Rock, Garner, Galveston, Huntsville and Monument Hill; TfSP directors John Cobb, President/Friends of Lost Pines; VP Bob Armstrong/Big Bend Ranch; Ruth Jordan, Secretary/Friends of San Angelo SP; Jan DeVault/Friends of San Jacinto, John Gosdin with the LCRA and other members and guests not affiliated with park friends groups.

The annual meeting adjourned to an open board meeting and election of officers for the board of directors. The board re-elected the current officers by acclamation: John Cobb, President, Bob Armstrong, Vice President, Ruth Jordan, Secretary and Richard Solis Treasurer.

The annual meeting was followed by a conference call meeting February 9, when the directors finalized details for a planning meeting on March 20th. A facilitator was

discussed, and the board voted to hire Bob Ashcroft after reviewing a proposal from him.

Everyone is invited to submit your thoughts for discussion as the board determines the role of TfSP in the years ahead.

Who Uses Texas State Parks? 5-Year Texas State Parks Study Reveals Interesting User Insights

The typical visitor to a Texas state park is a middle-aged white non-Hispanic from out of town traveling with a spouse or other family member, but no children, to camp, hike, relax or just enjoy the scenery. Those are just some of the results from a comprehensive statewide visitor survey conducted between 2002 and 2007 at 70 state parks, and whose results were recently compiled and analyzed by Sam Houston University.

The visitor survey of 27,000 customers showed, too, that the vast majority of state park visitors are satisfied with their park experience and that Texas state parks are a major tourism draw to the local area. Two-thirds of the park visitors surveyed report coming to the area for the primary purpose of visiting the park and one-third also said they visit other attractions in the local area and stay overnight in local area accommodations other than the park. For the full article, see [5-Year Texas State Parks Study Reveals Interesting User Insights](#)

TPWD Submits Spending Reduction Plan

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) has submitted to the Governor's Office and the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) a proposed plan to reduce agency spending by 5% in the fiscal year 2010-2011 biennium. The total amount of TPW's proposed budget reduction comes to almost \$25 million over the biennium.

Executive Director Carter Smith said "This plan was requested of most all state agencies, including TPWD, by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker. The net financial effect to TPWD of the 5% reduction plan is approximately \$25 million over the biennium. Needless to say, that is not an inconsequential impact. Please know that your agency's staff and Commission leadership teams gave this plan the due consideration it deserved. Over the last three (3) weeks, we have analyzed alternatives proposed by the Divisions and vetted them with Division Directors in accordance with the stated mandates to ensure that core services were the least impacted. As a result, we did not propose closing parks, wildlife management areas or fish hatcheries, nor did we propose to eliminate any currently filled positions."

The plan can be viewed in full on the TPWD website. The complete proposal can be seen at http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/business/reduction_plan/.

Parks & Wildlife Reunion

The 2010 Parks & Wildlife Reunion will be held at Enchanted Rock State Natural Area April 17 beginning at 10 am. Retired, current and former employees are invited to another year of sharing fun, a BBQ lunch and visiting with friends. For several years the reunion has been held in different areas of the state, providing an opportunity for retirees to enjoy visiting with friends without the annual trip to Austin.

For more details and registration information, contact Linda Evans, leevans@texas.net, phone 512.444.8079.

San Angelo State Park Hosts Texas Challenge Weekend 2010

The West Texas Geocaching Association will hold their annual Texas Challenge geocaching event March 12–14, 2010 at San Angelo State Park. Some 300 statewide participants will compete, using hand held GPS devices to discover hidden geocaches.

Participants will enter through the South Shore Gatehouse.

Event times include: 2-9:30 PM Friday, 8:30 AM-9:30 PM Saturday and 8:30 AM-12:30 PM Sunday (325) 949-4757.

Garner State Park Adds Acreage with Land Purchase

One of Texas' most beloved outdoor recreation destinations — Garner State Park near Concan — will be adding a 177-acre tract that includes the iconic bluff known as Old Baldy as the result of a land deal struck with a willing, conservation-minded landowner.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission at its Jan. 28 meeting approved the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's acquisition of the tract owned by Barbara Muennink, whose family has owned the property for more than 80 years. She is selling the tract to TPWD at a bargain price to help keep the land in its natural state.

For more on the Garner acquisition, click on [Garner State Park to Add 177 Acres in Land Purchase](#) to see the story on the Parks and Wildlife website.

Goose Island State Park Completes Marsh Project

The Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) Texas recently completed a marsh planting project at Goose Island State Park in Aransas County designed to greatly minimize wetland loss and shoreline erosion. Park Superintendent Stormy Reeves said a \$25,000 donation by CCA Texas paid for the planting of 10,000 salt-tolerant plants native to Texas coastal marshes in a 12-acre restoration site on the southern shoreline of Goose Island that is exposed to wind-driven erosive waves on Aransas Bay. The marsh-planting effort further implements a larger shoreline stabilization and coastal marsh restoration project begun at the park in 2001.

New Web Site Tells Story of Texas Independence

The Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association is proud to announce the launch of www.txindependence.org/, a new Web site created in collaboration between Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Blinn College.

The new Web site highlights an important part of Texas history, the convention held at Washington-on-the Brazos in 1836 when 59 elected delegates met to sign the Texas Declaration of Independence from Mexico and create a new nation, The Republic of Texas. See story on TWP website, [New Web Site Tells Story of Texas Independence.](#)

TPWD Receives Grant for Hybrid Vehicles

The department has been awarded \$56,000 through the State Comptroller's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant program to help purchase 14 new hybrid, gasoline-electric vehicles. The grant will provide up to \$4,000 per vehicle toward cost of new hybrids. TPWD expects to buy the hybrid vehicles this month.

Eleven of the vehicles will go to the State Parks Division, which is purchasing hybrid Ford Escape small SUVs. The other three will go to the Infrastructure Division, including two hybrid Chevrolet Silverado crew cab pickup trucks for the headquarters motor pool. All divisions were given the option to participate in the program.

The department estimates the 14 new hybrid vehicles will eliminate an estimated 65.8 tons of greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere per year, the equivalent of removing 11 conventional vehicles from the road.

The department considered other alternative fuel sources but decided other alternative fuels are not as feasible for the agency due to its widespread, remote locations and volume of travel. Biodiesel options are being considered and may be implemented in coming years.

Selected news items from various sources are edited and forwarded by Texans for State Parks. If you have news or an event you would like to include, send it to leevans@texas.net.

More Parks & Wildlife news can be found on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/releases/.

Don't forget to send e-mail or other address changes to leevans@texas.net so you will continue to receive news and information about the State Park System.

TEXANS FOR STATE PARKS invites you to join with us in protecting our Texas treasures. 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. For information and a membership application, see www.texansforstateparks.org or e-mail leevans@texas.net.

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