

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
November 2011*

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- 2012 Statewide Land Conservation Conference Feb. 22, Hilton Austin

From the President:

Texans for State Parks hopes you have had a fun and safe Thanksgiving and wish you the same for the Christmas holidays this month. If you haven't had a chance to get out to the Parks this year, the leaf colors have been bright and wide-spread. This is a perfect time to go out to a Park for a picnic or visit and make sure to take your camera.

In this issue of the Voice, you will see Bastrop State Park is finally getting to reopen. It's the first step in many to restore the Park. Don't forget our other Parks that were hurt this year by fires, Possum Kingdom and Davis Mountains. They need your support as well.

We are getting close to our annual meeting for TfSP and this year will be at Lockhart State Park. Please keep this in mind. Even though it is an off-year for the Legislature, we still need to let our folks in Austin know we want funding and leadership in keeping our Parks and Historic Sites open and operating fully. We will need your help! Make sure you can come and get the latest news.

Once again, Merry Christmas and the Board of Directors of Texans from State Parks hope to see you in our Parks!

John Cobb, President

Finally – A new State Park in Dallas/Fort Worth Area

After several years of searching and one false start, Parks and Wildlife closed on the purchase of 3,333 acres of Cross Timbers region ranch land from several different owners in early November for property that straddles the Palo Pinto and Stephens county line near the town of Strawn.

The land acquired sits just a few miles north of Interstate 20, and will be used for a future state park site after TPWD spent the last few years exploring land in Johnson, Bosque, Erath, Hood, Parker, Palo Pinto and Tarrant counties. The state purchased three contiguous tracts composed of two ranches, and a 42-acre in-holding, located roughly an hour's drive west of downtown Fort Worth.

Funds for the purchase come from the \$9.2 million netted from sale in 2008 of the former Eagle Mountain Lake State Park, which was purchased by an array of private and public donors and is now a local park. The sale of the Eagle Mountain Lake site was done with the explicit understanding that the proceeds would be used to acquire another state park within 90 miles of downtown Fort Worth. The Legislative Budget Board also had signed off on the use of the Eagle Mountain property sales proceeds to purchase land for a new north Texas state park.

"By any measure, this property was worth the wait" says TPWD Executive Director Carter Smith. "We are excited about its diversity and the many recreational opportunities it will ultimately provide to the

citizens and park enthusiasts of north Texas. The acquisition of the new park site never would have happened without the extraordinary generosity of so many private and public donors from the Ft. Worth area. All of us who care about the future of our state parks owe these entities a great debt of gratitude.”

The department says that it will take some time to complete a master plan to guide public use and development of the site, which due to limited resources to staff and operate the park, might take several years to open. When the gates of Texas’ newest state park do swing open, Smith believes the state’s investment “will pay recreational and conservation dividends for generations to come.”

The future state park property is rich in natural resources, fronting two miles on the north fork of Palo Pinto Creek and consisting of diverse topography ranging from hilltop vistas to riparian forests. The land is home to plentiful wildlife, including the endangered golden-cheeked warbler.

Holidays in the Parks - Christmas at Mission Espiritu Santo

Cap off your ‘*Christmas in Goliad*’ activities at 8:00 pm on Saturday December 3rd, by coming to Mission Espiritu Santo at Goliad State Park to enjoy a Christmas concert by the Beeville Community Chorus! Under the direction of Dr. James Lee, the Chorus will present a selection of sacred and secular Christmas music inside the old mission chapel. Flickering candlelight, phenomenal acoustics, and voices raised in song create a visual and auditory Christmas experience like no other.

During the first half of the program the choir will perform five Christmas sacred anthems that tell the story of the true meaning of Christmas. Several anthems will be directed by Mr. Jeff Brewer, assistant director of the choir. The second half of the program will be a Celtic Christmas Celebration entitled Tapestry of Light. The piece is filled with the music of grace and incorporated scripture reading, the lighting of candles, and expressive vocal singing. The composer, Joseph Martin, richly tells the Christmas story using familiar carols and folk songs. Sharon Lee will be the narrator and Nona Schorp will be accompanist.

Goliad State Park is located approximately ½ mile south of Goliad on Highway 183. There will be a park entrance fee of \$3.00 person. For more information, please call 361/645-3405.



Photo from <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/>

In addition to Goliad SP, many Texas state parks and historic sites are hosting holiday events for all ages.

Park passes, tree ornaments and park donations make great holiday gifts!

To find an event near you, or shop for gift ideas, click on the following links, or see Holidays in the parks on the TP&W website, www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

[Find a holiday event at a park near you.](#)

[Shop the outdoors for gift ideas.](#)

[Make a holiday donation.](#)

Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site Offers Look at Early Postal System

In the program ‘Carrying the News: The Postal System of the Republic,’ the Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site invites you to stop and take a rest from the trail and join them for a look at communications and the early postal system of the Republic of Texas Dec. 17. Park staff will bring this oft-overlooked part of our history to life through firsthand accounts and reproduction props. Try your hand at using a quill pen and handmade walnut ink, just like our forefathers did over one hundred and seventy years ago. You may come to appreciate the dangerous and solitary life of the frontier mail courier, as well as the convenience of today’s communication systems. For more information visit the state historical site’s site at <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/calendar/history/carrying-the-news-communication-and-the-postal-system-in-the-republic>.

Airstream RV Club Makes Donation to Bastrop Park Employees

The Texas Highland Lakes Unit of the Wally Byam Caravan Club International, a club of Airstream RV's had a rally at Bastrop State Park with 12 trailers present that had to be evacuated when the fire hit. A lot of the people present were new members with brand new trailers. We were very proud that all but one of the rigs got packed up in record time and were evacuated without mishap. One of the members was away from the park but was able to get their trailer and car out the next morning successfully. This last member issued a challenge to our club that they would match donations made by club members to benefit the park employees who lost their homes up to \$1000. I am proud to say we collected \$2700. So glad we could be of some small assistance. This was a scary event for our group but devastating to so many others. [Submitted by Jean Beebe, Austin, TX]

Volunteer to Help Restore Bastrop State Park

Volunteers can get their hands dirty this winter at Bastrop State Park. Beginning in December, the park will host four all-ages volunteer events to work on erosion control. Volunteers will be able to participate in at least two projects: spreading mulch around Houston toad ponds and installing straw logs or wattles on hillsides. Both of these projects are important steps in the land's recovery.

"As much as we need rain, too much at one time could prove to be catastrophic," Park Superintendent Todd McClanahan said. "The sooner we can get these erosion control devices in place, the better off we will be in regards to potential erosion."

Without plants and their roots to hold onto the soil, the ground is unstable and can wash away easily. It is only when the erosion is under control that the park can begin to plant trees – probably beginning in 2013 -- to replace those lost in the wildfire.

"Volunteers provide the park with a valuable work force," park interpreter and volunteer coordinator Katie Raney said. "They have the unique opportunity to be closely involved with Bastrop State Park's recovery."

The erosion control projects are easy to moderate difficulty, and may involve bending, carrying buckets of mulch and walking long distances. Volunteers should plan to wear long pants, closed-toed shoes and long-sleeved shirts. They should also bring gloves, but hard hats will be provided. The erosion control workdays will take place on the following Saturdays: Dec. 10, Jan. 14, Jan. 28 and Feb. 11 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Reservations are required by 5 p.m. on the Friday before the workday. Contact Katie Raney at 512-718-0211 or by email at katie.raney@tpwd.state.tx.us.

Restoring the park's historic Lost Pines will be a long process, and volunteers can be involved on many steps along the way. Bastrop State Park is also soliciting donations for these projects, including erosion control. If you are interested in donating to this cause, visit Bastrop State Park's website at <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/bastrop/> or the Friends of Lost Pines State Parks website at <http://www.friendsoflostpines.org/>. Donations and these work days are the first of many opportunities for the public to be involved in the park's recovery efforts. Contact: Katie Raney, (512) 718-0211

Drought, Fire Damage Impacts of 95% of Bastrop Area Trees, Houston Toad Habitat

Continuing drought has furthered tree death following the recent wildfires in Bastrop County. Areas classified as moderately burned still experienced 95 percent tree loss due to drought conditions currently gripping the region. Texas Forestry Service field reports show trees in the area before the fire had the lowest level of water stored to still be alive. The Houston toad was also hit by the fires, losing an estimated 40 percent of its habitat. TPWD firefighters Jeff Sparks and Greg Creacy spoke at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission meeting Nov. 3 on the status of Bastrop State Park. More than 140 TPWD employees including 55 certified wildland firefighters, law enforcement staff, and incident command personnel worked tirelessly to contain the fire on Bastrop State Park land. The wildfire was started by downed power lines on Sept. 4. Fire affected 96 percent of the park, but most of the park's historic structures were saved. Various experts spoke at the meeting about the

importance of prescribed fire to control bigger blazes as well as developing a recovery plan for the area's natural resources.

REMINDER: Bastrop State Park will reopen on Friday, December 2nd...It will be a limited area that will be open to the public, but it will be open for the first time in three months. They have worked really hard to get this far and it's the first step on the long road back! Come out and support our Park!

2012 Statewide Land Conservation Conference

The Texas Land Trust Council (TLTC) was formed in 1999 in partnership with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to serve as a support association for all land trusts in Texas. Today, TLTC is an independent nonprofit organization that continues to promote and sustain the conservation efforts of Texas land trusts. Currently, there are more than 25 land trusts working throughout Texas. To date, the member land trusts have helped to conserve more than 1.4 Million acres of land!

The 2012 Statewide Land Conservation Conference will be held February 22-24 at the Hilton Austin Airport. For conference program and registration information, see www.texaslandtrustcouncil.org/.

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.

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.

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

PLEASE JOIN TODAY!

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.texansstateparks.org or e-mail leevans@texas.net.

As a member, you will ---

- ✓ Add your voice in support of the Texas State Park System.
- ✓ Receive “The Voice” – E-news keeping you informed of issues and events.
- ✓ Contribute toward activities, events and projects not possible in park budgets.
- ✓ Receive information about legislation and other issues impacting Texas parks.

Individuals

___\$25 Regular
 ___\$50 Family
 ___\$100 Supporting
 ___\$1,000 Benefactor
 ___\$5,000 Life

Organizations

___\$50 Bronze
 ___\$100 Silver
 ___\$250 Gold
 ___\$1,000 Platinum
 ___\$25 Youth Groups under age 18

Business

___\$100 Bronze
 ___\$500 Silver
 ___\$1,000 Gold
 ___\$5,000 Platinum

\$_____ **Additional Donation**

\$_____ **Total Amount Enclosed**

Please note: New member _____

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Fax _____ **E-mail** _____

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I don't have e-mail. Please put me on a list to receive e-news items by mail. _____

Texans for State Parks is a 501(c)(3) organization; membership dues are tax deductible.

Mail your check today to: Texans for State Parks, P. O. Box 41480, Austin, TX 78704-0025

Goals

- *Provide a united, state-wide voice for users of state parks and related groups on park matters of shared concerns.*
- *Serve as an information resource for interested persons on state park matters.*
- *Educate park users, legislators and the general public about state park matters.*
- *Support stable and adequate financing for the state park system.*
- *Work in partnership with local state park support groups and other interested groups on state park matters.*
- *Advise the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Commission on State-wide matters of importance to state park users and related groups.*