

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
September 2011

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Presidents Message

This has been quite the month for our Texas State Parks. We have had a disastrous fire at Bastrop State Park that has destroyed almost 99% of the site according to TPWD and lost the homes of 14 of our Texas Parks and Wildlife employees. The response from everyone has been great so far and it is appreciated by everyone involved in our State Parks.

We have also been able to take part in the Caprock Canyons State Park's release of our Texas State Bison Herd to their natural home. This is a great move, allowing visitors to see the "Buffalo" in their native land. This gives the visitors to the Park a "Yellowstone" experience. Texans for State Parks was able to take part in the planning and implementation of the release event. Caprock Canyons State Park is our "featured park" this quarter and we encourage everyone to visit our website and see what this gem of a Park has to offer.

We have other Parks that are trying to start up Friends groups and Texans for State Parks is giving assistance where we can. We will keep you updated on the progress of this over the next few months.

As our Board of Directors fan out over the State Parks system, we hope to see you enjoying our Parks and Sites.

John Cobb, President

Friends of the Lost Pines State Parks Host "Picnic in the Park" October 8

The Friends of the Lost Pines State Parks, a volunteer friends group working on behalf of Bastrop and Buescher State Parks, will host a **Picnic in the Park** October 8th. This is an annual event open to the public. The Friends will serve hotdogs and other foods for anyone who would like to visit our Parks. At this event, State Parks Staff will bring us up to date on the damage to Bastrop State Park where most of the damage occurred, and the needs they have for restoring the site. The Friends of the Lost Pines is currently taking donations for restoration projects.

The picnic and meeting will be held on October 8th (Saturday) starting at noon **at Buescher State Park's Picnic Pavilion** and lasting until everyone has eaten and our questions answered. There is no charge to anyone to attend this event. There will be a donation box if visitors are so inclined and we will have membership applications on hand.

Friends of Lost Pines is a 503(c) group and **100% of the funds raised will go only to the restoration**. Donations are tax deductible.

More information can be found on our Facebook Page (Friends of the Lost Pines State Parks) and our website: www.friendsoflostpines.org

John Cobb, Friends of the Lost Pines
Director and Webmaster

A MESSAGE FROM STATE PARKS DIRECTOR BRENT LEISURE

These are extraordinary and historic times in Texas. Together, we have faced adversity in many ways, and at each turn, our state parks and TPW team continue to rise up and meet the challenge. The past days have been no different. Last Sunday, [September 4] I received a call from Bastrop State Park Superintendent Todd McClanahan that a fire had just jumped highway 21 (a 4 lane divided highway) and was in the park headed south. The fire was on a course that would take it to our state park regional office located a few miles south. All staff was quickly summoned to evacuate the park, something they were well prepared to do with speed and precision. Todd's call to me was in part to inform me of the significant threat to the park and regional office, but more than anything, he was warning me that my house and family appeared to also be in the path of this fire. Thanks to his notification, I had time to gather my family and lead them to safety. My intent was to then get to the regional office and attempt to salvage some of the equipment stored there. Within 5 minutes of his call, the fire had closed the gap and was too close to the regional office to do any good at all. My attention turned back to my home as the fire jumped Highway 71 (another 4 lane divided highway). I was unsuccessful in escaping the fire which would eventually go down as one of the most destructive fires in US history. The fire ultimately spanned over 34,000 acres and nearly 1,600 homes to include many of our very own TPW friends and colleagues were destroyed.

It's true that as a result of this fire, Bastrop State Park and the "Lost Pines" will not be the same in our lifetimes, but I want us to take time to consider what could have been. Like so many of our parks, Bastrop State Park has a rich and storied history. In addition to its critical importance as a unique and special ecosystem, in 1997, the park received the rare designation as a National Historic Landmark for its unique features built via a public works project in the early 1930's, a very difficult time in our nation's history. Bastrop, like many other parks in our system was built by the hands of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) workers that tackled conservation and development projects across a hurting nation. These important works helped to establish a park system that has since been enjoyed by millions of Americans every year. One of the reasons for Bastrop being specially recognized along with only a handful of other state parks across the country, is the style and number of CCC features that were developed and the fact that the project remained largely intact after all these many years. A fire the size and intensity of this past week was a major threat to the historic landscape and developments. I had the privilege to witness the bravery and resolve of our firefighter's first-hand this week. You see, with each passing day for many years now, we have been preparing ourselves to be more effective guardians and stewards of special places like Bastrop and every other state park, state natural area and historic site. The defensive stand our firefighters and their supporting crews made was extraordinary but predictable. Now that the smoke has begun to clear and hot spots begin to cool, it is very apparent that despite the impacts to our beloved "Lost Pines", the efforts of our staff have saved an irreplaceable resource. It will take a very long time, but with considerable work and careful stewardship, our natural resources will renew.....cultural resources however do not. The entire team of firefighters, incident managers, supply chains and planners has worked just as designed and I thank them all for their incredible efforts. Generations of Texans will always be grateful for what took place this week and I can't help but think about the CCC boys that must also be thankful for the efforts to preserve this iconic park.

And more important than all of these great accomplishments, our staff that worked the incident and those colleagues that live in the community can celebrate that they and their families are safe and unharmed. Like so many times before, the character of this agencies employee's and our partners has been revealed once again. The relief effort to support so many victims has been equally impressive. Community comes in many forms.... a town, a state, a nation and even an organization. TPW has exemplified 'community' and it's impressive to see. On behalf of all those that suffered personal losses this past week, we owe this agency, its employees and leadership our greatest respect and most sincere thanks. We truly have much to be thankful for. Now the post fire work begins as we embark on a road to recover and restore an important natural resource and symbol for our park system.

This photo does not capture them all, but the staff pictured represents the boots on the ground that defended our park and made the week so memorable.

The picture appropriately includes State Park division staff, Wildlife division staff, volunteers and donated equipment. I only wish that the entire agency and our many valued partners could also be included, because this has been and continues to be an absolute team effort.

State parks will continue to be strong despite what comes our way because of your dedication and resolve.

Onward!

Brent Leisure, *State Park Director*



Wildfire had significant impact on Bastrop State Park: How the public can help

Beyond the loss of lives and property, the still-smoldering Bastrop Complex Fire has had a significant impact not only on the iconic and highly-popular Bastrop State Park but much of the entire Lost Pines ecosystem.

The fire, which began north of the park on Sept. 4, claimed two lives, destroyed more than 1,500 homes, and changed the lives of thousands in Bastrop County.

“Texas Parks and Wildlife has been experiencing an outpouring of concern from citizens, conservationists and nature enthusiasts worried about the ecological impact on the park and the ecosystem it anchors,” said Todd McClanahan, park superintendent. “People have been offering money, trees, and wildflowers – even wildlife. We’d like to ask the public to be patient while we assess the impact of this disaster and determine what TPWD needs to do, but we have set up a system for the public to offer assistance.”

While few areas within the park escaped the fire, most of the Civilian Conservation Corps-constructed buildings and other park infrastructure were saved. Even so, TPWD officials know that the fire has had a profound impact on the Lost Pines vegetation and wildlife habitats, though neither was totally lost.

“There will be remarkable changes in the landscape,” Greg Creacy, Natural Resources and Regional Wildland Fire Coordinator for State Parks said. “TPWD staff and cooperating scientists are focusing on assessing and documenting these effects.”

On the short term, however, TPWD personnel are still mopping up after the fire – dealing with smoldering stumps and yet-unburned fuel. Flare-ups are still a threat, especially with the continuing drought and red flag fire conditions. Additionally, there are many hazardous trees to deal with—hundreds of which will continue to smolder and fall over the coming months.

The Lost Pines are among the more unique ecosystems in the nation and Bastrop and Buescher State Parks contain one of the best examples of the southwest-most extent of the loblolly pine.

“The genetics of these pines are unique,” said David Riskind, Director of Natural Resources for State Parks. “To provide for the long-term recovery and restoration of this plant community we need to use only the genetic stock from this area. Unfortunately no seedlings of this type are available at this moment so we do not want to introduce plants foreign to Bastrop. The same goes for grasses and wild flowers.”

Creacy said TPWD will be assessing fire effects to determine the most seriously impacted sites and

the best strategies are to bring about maximum stabilization and recovery. This will involve mapping areas where erosion potential is greatest and working to install environmental fabrics.

“Another focus will be protecting especially sensitive habitats like the Houston Toad breeding ponds,” he said. “All our study sites and transects will be monitored to determine effects on insects, wildlife, and vegetation.”

The Lost Pines are considered the last stronghold of the endangered amphibian, which once could be found in 14 Texas counties. Here’s how the public can help:

-- If you are interested in the ecological restoration of Bastrop State Park and want to donate to habitat restoration or research please send your donations to:

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
Attn: Cashiers
4200 Smith School Rd.
Austin, TX 78744

On the memo line note: Bastrop Recover Project-Habitat Restoration

-- If you would like to donate your time or specialty items for both the short and long-term restoration and stewardship of the park, please provide your contact information and area of interest to: david.riskind@tpwd.state.tx.us

-- If you have suggestions or want to comment on the restoration and stewardship effort, please e-mail your remarks to: david.riskind@tpwd.state.tx.us

-- If you want to contribute to the TPWD employees who lost their homes and possessions to the Bastrop Complex Fire may send a check payable to: Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation and be sure to put: **TPW Employee Relief on the memo line.** That notation will assure that 100% of your donation will go to the designated purpose.

Daingerfield State Park Celebrates Grand Re-Opening

After being closed almost one year for renovations, the Daingerfield State Park invites you to their grand reopening on October 15, 2011. Various activities including volleyball, horseshoes, interpretive programming, geo caching, and CCC historical presentations will begin at 10am and continue until 3pm. There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony in the pavilion from 1pm to 130pm.

After the ceremony, feel free to have a picnic, play some volleyball, take a walk on the nature trail, or just sit and enjoy the beauty that the Daingerfield State Park has to offer.

Please invite your family and friends to be welcomed guests on such a special day. Admission fees to the park will be waived on that day.

The Park is located at 455 Park Rd 17, Daingerfield, Texas. For more information, you may call John Thomas or any of the friendly staff at 903 645 2921.

TfSP Assists Caprock Canyons S.P. with the Bison Release

September 16-17, Texans for State Parks took part in the planning and implementation of the “Bison Release” program at Caprock Canyons State Park. Director Barbara McKnight, shown with her horse, organized a trail ride for guests and visitors to the site. Saturday and Sunday the park was open to the public with displays and a Barbeque hosted by the Caprock Partners Foundation.



An official ribbon cutting was held Saturday with Brent Leisure and a number of dignitaries from Texas Parks and Wildlife, the Stark family, and the Chairman of the Comanche Nation taking part. The “ribbon” used was a piece of the original Goodnight ranch barbed wire. Charles and Mary Ann Goodnight rescued the herd in 1879 and they have now been returned to their native land thanks to Texas Parks and Wildlife. Visitors can now drive through the area and view these animals in their native range.



TfSP President John Cobb organized and oversaw the Living History encampment, and Director Ken Pollard was in charge of cooking and feeding the participants over the weekend. Education Day brought 274 local students out to learn about the Park and the Official Texas State Bison Herd.

In Memory of Caprock Canyons State Park Ranger Clyde Dudley

Complex Manager Donald Beard accepts a plaque honoring Lead Ranger Clyde Dudley who passed away in June from TfSP President John Cobb at Caprock Canyons. Clyde fell ill suddenly after returning home at the end of the workday. He was transported to Lubbock where he passed away 2 days later. Clyde worked with John Cobb and other TfSP members on several regional events and worked with TfSP to form Caprock Partners Foundation, the park friends group. Clyde loved his Park and community, also serving as the Mayor of Quitaque.



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.

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. ***PLEASE JOIN TODAY!***

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

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

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.*

