



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

February, 2011

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From the President:

The hearings before the Appropriations Committee in the House took place on February 15th on the funding for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and our State Parks. Several points were brought up by Carter Smith, the Executive Director of TPWD. One of the most important points was **“Temporary suspension of programs and staff lay-offs is highly disruptive to business operations and results in programmatic and cost inefficiencies as programs are re-implemented and new staff are hired or re-hired”**.

With that in mind, understanding there will be cuts in the budget, we need to ask our that Administrative Staff in Austin decide how the cuts will be made so there will be a minimum of disruption to our State Parks programs.

There are several other points of interest in the HB-1 bill (House Budget Bill) and SB-1 (Senate Budget Bill) that you will find in this edition of the Texans for State Parks newsletter.

We need you to contact your Member of the House and your Senator as soon as possible. Things are moving

very fast in this year's budget and we don't have much time.

You will find Legislative information on our website. Take time to look at some of this. It's important to all of our Parks. **We need your help now!**

Thank you,
John Cobb, President

Texans for State Parks Annual Meeting Enjoyable and Informative

The meeting began Friday evening with power point programs and other information from Park Friends groups. Some were members of long time groups and some were from groups in various formative stages. This provided a great opportunity for everyone to share ideas and learn from each other. In addition to seeing a sample of some of the great projects we had a chance to see some often overlooked treasures such as Gorman Falls frozen solid and unexpected small oasis's tucked away in otherwise semi-arid areas.

Saturday, Scott Boruff, Parks & Wildlife Deputy Executive Director, and Brent Leisure, State Parks Director provided an extensive review of the

legislative proposal for the parks budget and how it would impact the agency's mission:

"To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations".

They shared with the audience the requests that Parks & Wildlife officials are making in response to the first markup of the HB1 recommendations, noting that we all understand parks will take significant reductions because of the current financial situation, but asking that the agency

1) Be given flexibility to take a holistic look at the park system to determine where to cut funds and still maintain the resource and continue to serve the public.

2) Approval of the Entrepreneurial Rider (formerly Rider 27) so parks will continue to have the ability to use the revenue earned for operations. [60% of Parks & Wildlife's budget is funded from program earnings; only 40% is from state funding].

3) Capital Authority. This will require no additional funds, but is critical in order to continue funding for construction, maintenance and repair projects funded with bond money, grants and in-kind payment such as volunteer efforts.

Although transfer of some parks to local entities has been recommended, it's questionable whether any other entities are in a position to operate them at this time. Parks and Wildlife officials will continue to work on alternatives to park transfers and closures, as well as the impact on programs and staff reductions. The Parks Division has been in a hiring freeze for

some time in anticipation of the loss of positions. The hope is that much of the reduction in salaries can be achieved from the elimination of vacant positions, with as little impact on current employees as possible.

TfSP Directors provided handouts and other helpful information about working with legislators, and as the legislative process moves forward, TfSP will send out e-mails and post information on the website, www.texansforstateparks.org.

Chris Holmes, Parks & Wildlife, provided an overview of the Outdoor Family Program. This is a relatively new program in Parks & Wildlife that encourages families to enjoy the parks by teaching basic skills to those new to camping.

Texas Outdoor Family (TOF) workshops are hosted at state parks where families receive hands-on experience learning basic skills including:

- o How to set up and break down camp
- o Fire starting & Outdoor Cooking
- o Geocaching
- o How to use a GPS

Participants will also enjoy guided walks and nature activities and introductions to a wide range of outdoor activities (such as fishing, kayaking, wildlife watching) depending on the site location, facilities and the season of the year.

Best of all, no experience is necessary and highly skilled outdoor specialists and trained volunteers provide all the help and advice needed!

For more information about the program and scheduled workshops, see <http://beta-www.tpwd.state.tx.us/outdoor-learning/texas-outdoor-family/>

Board of Directors Meeting

Directors Bob Armstrong, Scott Chase, Evelyn Merz, Jamie McNally were re-elected in December. The board of directors addressed some items briefly during the public board meeting at the end of the Annual meeting, and followed up with a telephone conference meeting February 21. During the conference call officers were elected by acclamation with the current officers continuing to serve in their positions. (See Directors' names and contact information at the end of this newsletter)

The board also approved a grant program for park friends groups. The board will accept requests for funding assistance from any friends group up to a maximum of \$300. Requests to the board can be made by mail to Texans for State Parks, P. O. Box 41480, Austin, TX 78704-0025 or e-mail to lee@texas.net or John Cobb, cobbfarm@airmail.net. The request should include a description of the project or items to be funded and the amount requested.

TPWD Addresses House Appropriations Subcommittee

TPWD Executive Director Carter Smith presented the department's exceptional item request to a House Appropriations Committee (HAC) sub-committee last week. Developed in response to the base budget proposed in House Bill (HB) 1, the request, if approved, would mitigate budget impacts on TPWD.

The FY 2012-2013 budget for TPWD proposed in HB 1 recommends a 25 percent reduction totaling \$162 million

dollars over the biennium. Smith briefly discussed TPW's highest priority budget requests and answered questions from lawmakers.

The House Appropriations Committee met on the Parks & Wildlife budget this morning (Friday, February 25, and at first glance appears to have basically adopted the LBB's budget recommendations with the exception of a few items requested by Parks & Wildlife. Today's committee markup will give TPWD its first look at the House version of a revised budget. As more details become available on the complete markup we will follow up with the information.

Once the full committee has approved an amended bill, it will go to the full House for approval. The same process is under way in the Senate, with the first TPWD hearing scheduled in early March. Once the House and Senate have final bills approved, a conference committee will be appointed to hammer out any differences. This process will take months, and it won't be final until the full Legislature approves the final budget and the Governor signs the bill.

Toast to Texas at Sebastopol House to Honor Texas Founders

The Sebastopol House State Historic Site at Seguin will host its 17th annual Toast to Texas on Wednesday, March 2, to pay tribute to the 59 men who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence 175 years ago on that date in 1836 in the tiny Brazos River town of Washington. For more information, click on [Toast to Texas at Sebastopol House to Honor Texas Founders](#).

Colorado Bend State Park Celebrates Earth Day April 23

Colorado Bend State Park will host a full range of activities on Earth Day to include:

1) Easter Egg Hunt: Children ages 12 years and under are invited to bring their own Easter Baskets and join in the hunt. (\$5 donation per child) Eggs will include candy, toys, and money (\$1 and \$5) inside a hard egg exterior. The Easter Bunny will be there and all paid egg hunters can have their picture taken (by a parent/guardian) with the Easter Bunny for free! Others can have their picture taken (by a parent/guardian) with the Easter Bunny for a small donation.

2) Crawling Cave Tours: Get in on a crawling cave tour with a REAL CAVER! Tours of 10 persons each begin at 9:00 am and 1:00 pm. If you would like to reserve a slot for a cave tour, call the park office at 325-628-3240. If the tours are full, there will be a waiting list in case of a cancellation. Most on the waiting list should be able to get in on a cave tour.

3) Mountain Bike Rides: There are about 20 miles (and growing) of mountain bike trails available to keep the beginner as well as the experienced rider happy. Mountain bike trail builders will be available to lead a guided tour of the trails, and there will also be someone there to teach mountain biking on request. You must provide your own bike, helmet, and water.

4) Sign up for a chance to win a poster of Gorman Falls called "On The Rocks", shown 2nd down on the page at <http://scottiqphotography.com/store.html>. The poster sells for \$45 if purchased.

Entrance Fees to the park are \$4 for those 13 and up, free for those 12 and under.

Donations for tours and other activities will be appreciated.

The park is west of Lampasas, southeast of San Saba. From the intersection of US Highways 281 and 183 in Lampasas, take FM 580 west 24 miles to Bend and follow the signs 4 miles to the park entrance. From San Saba, take US Highway 190 about 4 miles to FM 580 and follow the signs 13 miles to Bend; follow the signs 4 miles to the park entrance (2 miles of dirt road). The headquarters and main camping are 6 miles past the entrance on the dirt road (unmarked County Road 442; road subject to flooding.) Note: Gasoline service is not available in Bend.

P&W Receives Gift of Acreage near Bourne

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission has voted to accept a gift of more than 37-hundred acres of land that sits just west of Boerne. That land will eventually be developed into either a state park or natural area. The gift is courtesy of the 3K Ranch which is part of the estate of Albert and Bessie Kronkosky, who also are responsible for the Kronkosky Foundation, which gives grants to non-profit agencies in Bandera, Bexar, Comal, and Kendall counties.

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 Parks.

If you have news or an event you would like to include, send it to leevans@texas.net.