

***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  
August – September 2013***

- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department marks its 50th anniversary
- Carter Smith Speaks to Texas Parks and Wildlife Partners
- Mother Neff State Park Redevelopment Kicks Off
- Davis Mountains State Park Begins Major Renovations
- Art Becomes a New Feature at Texas State Parks

**From the President:**

The “dog days of summer” are certainly here! But, unlike the unrelenting heat and continuing drought conditions all across the state, there are several positive actions affecting state parks to be reported.

The annual Public Hearing of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission was held on August 21<sup>st</sup>. The input of TPWD stakeholders, partners and constituents was generally favorable and lacking in controversial issues. One person commented on equestrian users’ interest in public use being available as soon as possible on a limited basis at the newly acquired Palo Pinto Mountains State Park. Everyone seemed to be generally satisfied with the Texas Legislature’s decisions on state park appropriations and other issues.

TfSP was invited to make comments and I commended the Department on its longstanding record of partnering with “friends groups”. This partnership began in 1955 with the Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association, which was formed to help the “Birthplace of Texas Independence”. Today, more than 50 friends groups partner with state parks and historic sites. Further emphasizing the positive contributions of these partnerships, the Commission at this meeting approved the addition of 11 acres of land to Palmetto State Park. The acquisition of this property near the entrance to the campgrounds was a joint venture using TPWD land acquisition funds and a donation from the Friends of Palmetto Bend State Park.

I know that we are looking forward to cooler weather – and hopefully – lots of gentle rains in the fall months  
John Gosdin, President

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**Parks & Wildlife Celebrates 50 Years**

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department marks its 50th anniversary this summer with a special issue of Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine. The magazine tips a figurative Stetson to the various partners who helped further the agency’s conservation mission over the last five decades, and looks ahead to the next half century. Click on [Special Issue of Texas Parks & Wildlife Magazine Focuses on Agency’s Past and Future as it Turns 50](#) to request a copy. [News Images](#)

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**Carter Smith Speaks to Partners:**

Dear Partners:

In honor of our [50th anniversary](#), we would like to thank all the partners like you that have helped us make life better outside for generations of Texans. Since the creation of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in 1963, hundreds, if not thousands, of conservation groups, private landowners, universities, corporations, government organizations and communities have worked beside us. Because of you, we have been able to help fish and wildlife survive and thrive, preserve and fund state parks where all Texans can play and explore, and support opportunities to experience the great outdoors for generations to come. We could have never done it alone.

For this reason, the special [50th anniversary issue of the Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine](#) focuses on partnerships. This special July 2013 issue highlights how we’ve worked together for five decades to get kids to the outdoors, promote our proud hunting and angling traditions, enhance park experiences, build land and water conservation and nature tourism and establish conservation as an indispensable economic and natural asset for Texans’ long-term health, well-being and vitality. Thanks to your help, people across the state now enjoy an outdoor experience that is second to none. To share in the celebrations and look back on our work together, we invite you to view the [50th anniversary issue online](#) or to request a complimentary copy of the issue, by contacting Ana Kirk at (512) 389-8702 or [ana.kirk@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:ana.kirk@tpwd.texas.gov).

With burgeoning pressures on our wildlife populations and their habitats and an increasingly disconnected urban population, our work together to steward the state’s lands, waters, fish, wildlife and parks and to promote outdoor recreation for all Texans is every bit as compelling today as it was 50 years ago. The challenges of conservation are too big, too overwhelming, and too important to face alone. As Texas Parks and Wildlife looks toward the next 50 years, the future health of our lands and the wildlife they sustain depends on your support.

Thank you for caring about our wild things and wild places; they need you now more than ever.  
Sincerely,



Carter Smith, Executive Director

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### **New Deputy Director for State Parks**

Russell Fishbeck assumed the position of State Parks Deputy Director on September 1. Russell began his career with Texas State Parks at Blanco SP in his home town of Blanco. Later he worked as a ranger at Brazos Bend and Cedar Hill, then moved to Lake Somerville as Superintendent. He moved to Lake Ray Roberts as Superintendent, then to the position of Regional Director in the Rockport regional office where he served for 10 years. As Deputy Director, Russell will be responsible for the daily operations of the park system, including leading division program directors and regional directors, and overseeing personnel management.

### **Two New Regional Directors Join the Senior Leadership Team in State Parks September 1.**

According to Parks Director Brent Leisure, the regional director role in parks is one of the most challenging and rewarding within the division of parks. They typically will supervise 15-20 parks representing great diversity and site-specific challenges. They are responsible for a large field-based workforce that includes tremendous variety in job duties and expertise. They lead hundreds of employees to establish outstanding customer service and park experiences for literally millions of visitors. They must be mission focused leaders that are capable of strategically adapting our operations to meet the ever changing and dynamic conditions and environments in which we operate. They must be staunch defenders of park resources and compassionate leaders for our dedicated workforce. In short, their job is big and demanding.

Rick Meyers will become the new director for region 2 parks in Rockport following Russell Fishbeck's move to Deputy Parks Director. Rick is a long tenured and experienced leader in Texas State Parks. His more than 16 years of state park experience at 5 different parks includes stints as Superintendent at three of the most heavily visited and challenging operations, Garner, Inks Lake and Tyler State Parks. Rick says that he is eager to apply that vast operational experience to support our south Texas parks in region 2.

Adam Jarrett will become the new director for region 6 parks in Tyler following the retirement of Ellen Buchanan. Adam is a very strong and highly motivated leader whose experience includes work in three Texas State Parks and serving as Operations Manager of Lake Bryan, as well past work for the Bureau of Land Management and at a Texas Agriculture Experiment Station. Adam was most recently the Superintendent at Lake Livingston State Park. His broad knowledge of resource issues will serve him and parks in the piney woods of northeast Texas very well.

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### **Friends of Palmetto State Park Contribute to Purchase of Park Addition**



The Friends of Palmetto State Park "FOP" recently donated \$20,000.00 towards the purchase of 11 acres of land adjacent to the park entrance and HWY 2091. The property will be used to extend the hike and bike trails and hopefully builds some primitive campsite in the near future. This acquisition will also provide an extended buffer to the park entrance from future private development.

This is not the first time the FOP has provided a significant donation to the park; in 2010 the same group donated enough money to build a cabin for rental purposes. The cabin this has produced \$15,353 in revenue for the park this FY and has helped increase visitation overall.

FOP generates the majority of their funding from a two week summer camp, first two weeks of June, Monday-Thursday only, which hosts 36 kids per week. The camp gives children 8-12 years old the opportunity to learn how to fish, canoe or kayak, cook on an open fire, hike, do arts and crafts, make ice cream, archery, the camp also provides a herpetologist who brings a menagerie of snakes, lizards, and bugs. On the last day of each week a water slide is rented for a final fun day. In 2014 there is talk about going to a three week schedule because of the public outcry to run more kids through the program.

The Friends of Palmetto has done outstanding work for Palmetto, helping the park increase revenue and visitation significantly. Park staff is looking



forward to many more years with this group contributing to the success of Palmetto State Park.

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### **Mother Neff State Park Redevelopment Kicks Off**

Construction has begun on the \$6.5 million redevelopment project at Mother Neff State Park, the first official Texas State Park. The park was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s in Coryell County 15 miles northwest of Temple. The improvements will help address the recurring flooding of the Leon River that has occurred along the park's lower reaches, inundating the recreation hall, headquarters and park entrance.

In addition to the new headquarters building and new campground with 20 full hookup campsites, the redevelopment will include a new park entrance, maintenance area, restroom with showers and new roads. The project should be completed no later than August 2015.

The 400-acre park, which opened in 1937, draws many of its visitors from Fort Hood, Killeen, Temple and Waco, who come to camp, hike, picnic and fish from the riverside.

Mother Neff State Park is named for Mrs. Isabella Eleanor (Mother) Neff, who donated six acres of land for a park along the Leon River in 1916. After her death in 1921, her son, Texas Gov. Pat M. Neff created the Mother Neff Memorial Park, which later became an early unit of the Texas State Park System. In 1934, former Gov. Neff deeded 250 acres and Frank Smith added three acres to the existing memorial park. The state park opened to the public in 1937.

For information about the state park, call (254) 853-2389 or visit online: [/state-parks/mother-neff](http://state-parks/mother-neff). [TPWD News: <http://tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/>].

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### **Davis Mountains State Park Begins Major Renovations**

Starting Sept. 3, Davis Mountains State Park at Fort Davis will be temporarily closed while Texas Parks and Wildlife staff undertakes a major upgrade of the park's utility system. The closure will last through March 1, 2014.

Many of the park's amenities, including the campgrounds, trails, and Interpretive Center, will be unavailable to visitors.

In addition to completing much needed utility projects, an extensive new trail system will be put into place in the Limpia Canyon primitive area. The current system, which consists of 6.5 miles of trail, will be improved and an additional 6 miles will be added to the existing route. The park's new bird viewing area, which began construction in May will be completed, as well.

These improvements will add a new dimension to the park and provide additional opportunities for outdoor recreation for visitors.

Indian Lodge and Black Bear Restaurant are unaffected by this closure and will remain open during standard business hours. The Indian Lodge office is open 24 hours a day and can be reached at (432) 426-3254. The Black Bear Restaurant is open Tuesday through Sunday from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., extending hours until 9 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Advanced reservations for the Indian Lodge can be made by calling (512) 389-8900.

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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 [lee@texas.net](mailto:lee@texas.net).

**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.texasstateparks.org](http://www.texasstateparks.org).

**Texans for State Parks – P. O. Box 41480 - Austin, TX 78704-0025**

[www.Texasstateparks.org](http://www.Texasstateparks.org)

**Texans for State Parks Board Members**

**John M. Gosdin, President**, Austin, Texas 512/219-6737

[jmgosdin@aol.com](mailto:jmgosdin@aol.com)

**Bob Armstrong, Vice President**, Austin, Texas, 512/413-6891

[landmanbob@aol.com](mailto:landmanbob@aol.com)

Big Bend Ranch State Park Advisory Board

**Barbara McKnight, Secretary**

Stephenville, Texas, 254/968-4357

[bmcknight3276@msn.com](mailto:bmcknight3276@msn.com)

Texas Equestrian Trail Riders Association

**Richard Solis, Treasurer**, Canyon Lake, Texas 830/935-4011

[Rsolis@GVTC.com](mailto:Rsolis@GVTC.com)

Friends of Guadalupe River & Honey Creek State Parks  
Solis Surveying Co.

**John P. Brooks**, Dallas, Texas  
[jpbrooks01@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jpbrooks01@sbcglobal.net)

**John Cobb**, Bastrop, Texas, 512/332-0371  
[cobbfarm@airmail.net](mailto:cobbfarm@airmail.net)

Friends of the Lost Pines State Parks

**Ruth Jordan**, San Angelo, Texas, 325/651-7346  
[RuthJordan@suddenlink.net](mailto:RuthJordan@suddenlink.net)

Friends of San Angelo State Park

**Evelyn L. Merz**, Houston, Texas, 713/644-8228  
[elmerz@hal-pc.org](mailto:elmerz@hal-pc.org)

Wildlife Diversity Advisory Committee, TPWD  
Executive Committee Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club

**Jamie McNally**, Austin, Texas, 512/495-8827  
[jfm@ctw.com](mailto:jfm@ctw.com)

Friends of Enchanted Rock State Natural Area; Friends of McKinney Falls State Park

**Tom Rhodes**, Frankston, Texas, 903/584-3232; 903/279-3232  
[Tfrhodes42@gmail.com](mailto:Tfrhodes42@gmail.com)

**Sally Scott**, Austin, Texas, 512/217-9780  
[sallylscott@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sallylscott@sbcglobal.net)

**Beth McDonald**, President Emeritus, Austin, TX, 512/721-3321  
Friends of Lost Pines State Parks

**Linda Evans, News & Administration**, Austin, TX 512/444-8079, [leevans@texas.net](mailto:leevans@texas.net)