

*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***

**December 2014**

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#### **From the President:**

As 2014 comes to a close, there are a lot of reasons to celebrate recent accomplishments for Texas State Parks. One major victory was the acquisition of the historic Powderhorn Ranch on the Gulf Coast in Calhoun County. A coalition that included TPWD, Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, and several other public and private partners, had contemplated securing this natural treasure for conservation preservation and recreational use for over thirty years. Funds from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill provided a major portion of the stimulus needed to seal the deal.

With 2015 rapidly approaching and the next legislative session is right around the corner, I wanted to invite you to join us at our annual Texans for State Parks Annual Meeting. It will be in Austin at McKinney Falls State Park on January 23 and 24<sup>th</sup>. We plan to have several timely presentations along with a preview of Legislative Session ahead. Of course, we will have our traditional "Brag Night and Pot Luck Campfire" buffet on Friday night before the meeting on Saturday.

I look forward to seeing you there!

John M. Gosdin, President



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#### **Texans for State Parks Activities**

**October Board Meeting:** Texans for State Parks awarded the third and last cycle of grants to State Parks Friends Group for 2014 during their late October board meeting. The recipients this quarter are Friends of Cleburne State Park and Friends of Lake Colorado City State Park. Both of these are new groups and will use the funds for organizational expenses. The Development Grant Program, total costs and the future of the program will be reviewed during the 2015 budget development process.

Other business included a presentation from Chris Beckcom, Program Director for Park Planning and Geographic Resources, Master Planning about current TPWD work on Palo Pinto Mountains and other new State Parks as well as current and future parkland acquisition possibilities.

## **2015 Annual Members Meeting January 24 at McKinney Falls State Park**

Planning is now underway for the 2015 TfSP Annual Meeting scheduled for Saturday January 24 at McKinney Falls SP. Watch your email for activities and the agenda in the coming weeks. The agenda will include representatives from TPWD with information about legislative issues affecting the Texas State Park System. Bills have recently



been filed to again direct all of the tax on the sale of specific sporting goods to parks instead of only appropriating a small percentage of the amount collected.

An item of special interest to volunteer groups will be the issue of insurance coverage for State Park Volunteers. This bill was defeated 2 years ago but will be resubmitted in the 2015 legislative session.

Please let us know what other topics you would like to include on the annual meeting agenda.

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### **Goliad State Park Presents “Los Pastores – A Shepherd’s Play”**



Mission Espiritu Santo, photo <http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks>

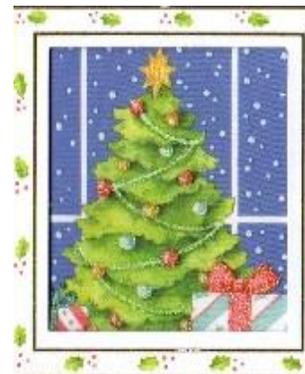
Goliad State Park is pleased to announce a presentation of “Los Pastores – A Shepherd’s Play” at 2:00 pm on Saturday, December 20, 2014. Franciscan priests created shepherd’s plays (which depict the shepherd’s journey to see Baby Jesus) in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century as a way to share the Spanish culture and religion with Meso-American Indians. Familiar cultural tools such as music, dance, action, and costumes were used to communicate the meanings of the plays to non-Spanish speaking Native Americans.

It is very likely that shepherd’s plays were performed at the Spanish Colonial site of Mission Espiritu Santo during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Come to Mission Espiritu Santo and gain a first hand perspective of what it must have been like for Native Americans getting their first look at the Spanish way of life!

Mission Espiritu Santo is located in Goliad State Park, approximately ½ mile south of Goliad on Highway 183. For more information, please call Goliad State Park at 361/645-3405. Fees are \$3.00 per adult. Children 12 years and under are free.

### **Other Holiday Events in State Parks**

Many State Parks are hosting holiday events including with light displays and some more unusual events. Take an exhilarating hike to the summit of Enchanted Rock with a reading of Dr. Seuss's classic "How the Grinch Stole Christmas!", at the top; Enjoy old-time refreshments and observe “ghosts” of cavalry soldiers and their families as they celebrate Christmas at an 1870’s U.S. military post at Ft. Richardson; Dutch oven cooking, children’s crafts and Victorian-era games, hayrides and more, plus a visit from a “Southern Santa” At Brazos Bend State Park. and Lyndon B. Johnson State Park & Historic Site continues the Texas Hill Country community’s special tradition started 45 years ago by President and Mrs. Johnson. Click <http://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/holidays> to see the full list of parks with dates of their special activities.



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### **Hit the Trail on New Year's Day**



Make a New Year's Resolution to spend more time outside in 2015 - and then take a hike! Texas State Parks will be hosting First Day Hikes on Jan. 1, for the fourth year in a row. Go hike, bike, run or paddle at a park near you. Discover for yourself that life's better outside!

See [http://tpwd.texas.gov/spdest/parkinfor/first\\_day\\_hikes/](http://tpwd.texas.gov/spdest/parkinfor/first_day_hikes/) for parks with special first day activities.

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## **Powderhorn Ranch – New Addition to Texas State Parks**

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, on August 21, Carter Smith announced that the state had accepted the donation of the historic Powderhorn Ranch along the Texas coast in Calhoun County. This acquisition, which was completed through the efforts of a multi-partner coalition, will conserve a spectacular piece of property that is one of the largest remaining tracts of unspoiled coastal prairie in the state. At \$37.7 million it is believed to be the largest dollar amount ever raised for a conservation land purchase in the state. In years to come, Powderhorn Ranch is expected to become a state park and wildlife management area.

The real estate transaction has been more than two years in the making. Powderhorn Ranch was previously owned by Cumberland & Western Resources, LLC, whose primary investors are conservation-minded citizens who sold the property below its market value to ensure its permanent safekeeping.

“The acquisition of Powderhorn Ranch will help define the next generation of conservation in Texas,” said TPW Commission Chairman Dan Allen Hughes, Jr. “We are most grateful to the owners for affording us both the time to put this project together, as well as a discount on the purchase price in order to facilitate this transaction.”



Powderhorn Ranch photo <http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks>

A significant portion of the funding for the project is being provided by NFWF’s Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, which was created with dollars paid by BP in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. NFWF has committed \$34.5 million over the next three years, making this the biggest land acquisition in the nation so far using BP spill restoration dollars.



Powderhorn Ranch [\\_http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks](http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks).

Safeguarding this natural treasure has been contemplated for more than 30 years by several conservation organizations and wildlife agencies including The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Along with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, these organizations are playing a critical role in the acquisition and long-term conservation of this property. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation is spearheading the fundraising for the \$50 million project, which includes the purchase of the property, habitat restoration and management, as well as a long-term endowment.

The Conservation Fund and The Nature Conservancy of Texas are each providing \$10 million in interim funding so the Powderhorn Ranch can be purchased in 2014. The two organizations will be reimbursed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, who will hold title on the property by the end of 2016, and will ultimately turn it over to TPWD. The project exemplifies a new model of funding conservation projects in Texas and is a demonstration of both public and private entities working together for the long-term benefit of Texas and its citizens.

From the 1950s to the early 1990s Texas lost more than 200,000 acres of coastal wetlands. The Powderhorn acquisition helps combat this trend, protecting local economies, people and property as well as wildlife. The ranch includes more than eleven miles of tidal bay front on Matagorda Bay and provides habitat for hundreds of species of birds and animals, including the endangered whooping crane.

**Late Breaking News:** A second round of grants from the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (criminal settlement funds from the BP oil spill) was announced on November 17, 2014. About \$13.2 million in

grants for eight projects in Texas will be used to add land to coastal wildlife refuges, restore threatened marshes, and protect vital habitat from erosion. These projects were developed in conjunction with TPWD, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the General Land Office, and federal resource agencies and are designed to remedy harm or reduce the risk of future harm to natural resources affected by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. For more information, see <http://nfwf.org/gulf/Pages/GEBF-Texas.aspx>.

**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. Find a membership form at [www.Texansstateparks.org](http://www.Texansstateparks.org) or respond to this email.

***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.

For information and a membership application, see [www.texansstateparks.org](http://www.texansstateparks.org) or e-mail [leevans@texas.net](mailto:leevans@texas.net).

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

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

*Have a Merry Christmas and  
a Happy New Year!*

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