

BIG THICKET BULLETIN

ISSUE 128

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PROPOSED 105 TURNPIKE CHALLENGES

Letter from Jan Ruppel, president of the Big Thicket Association

A proposal for a ten-mile toll road from north Beaumont to Vidor has brought up many concerns over economic feasibility, natural resource protection, and impacts on local community. There are many unanswered questions, according to civic groups opposing the project.

As proposed, the controversial 105 Toll Road would stretch from the intersection of US 96/69 and Texas Hwy 105 to Vidor. This would entail crossing a portion of the Big Thicket National Preserve and would require a new bridge over the Neches River, proposed near Colliers' Ferry Park and the Beaumont Country Club.

According to information and materials presented to the Jefferson County Commissioners Court by Creative Development Services, LLC, representing the Texas Turnpike Corporation, the 105 Toll Road would be owned by a private limited partnership. New private toll road corporations are no longer allowed under Texas law, but the Texas Toll Road Corporation was "grandfathered" when the laws against private toll road corporations were passed. The Texas Turnpike Corporation is owned by the principals of Public Works, Inc. If built, the 105 Toll Road would be the only privately-owned toll road in Texas.

"The projection of \$9 billion in revenues over 50 years is a red flag," added Janice Bezanson, executive director of Texas Conservation Alliance, a 45-year-old statewide organization which looks at the economics of public projects as well as their environmental impacts.

"That's \$180,000 million per year return on a \$150,000 million investment. At the \$2.00 to \$2.50 per car toll that's being suggested, it would take 8,000 to 10,000 cars per hour, 24 hours a day for five decades to produce those revenues. That's totally implausible."

Jefferson County Judge Jeff Branick tabled a county resolution on Monday in support of the 105 Toll Road after receiving a number of emails in opposition, saying he wanted to hear how the Texas Department of Transportation responded to the concerns expressed.

The issues posed in the emails included impacts on wetlands, impacts on neighborhoods, and condemnation of property. After citizens in the area northeast of Dallas vociferously opposed a toll road proposed by the Texas Turnpike Authority for that region in 2014, State Representative Cindy Burkett sponsored a bill in the Texas Legislature to take away the power of private toll road corporations to condemn land under eminent domain. HB 565 was signed into law by the governor in June, 2015, removing the Texas Turnpike Corporation's authority to force people to sell their property for a toll road. Under current law, any acquisition through eminent domain would have to be done by a city, county, or state governmental entity.

Texas Turnpike Corporation presented their proposal on the 105 Turnpike to Beaumont and Vidor City Councils the second week of November. Concerned citizens of the Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust, and the Golden Triangle Chapter of the Sierra Club joined Big Thicket Association and The Texas Conservation Alliance in opposing the toll road.



VIDOR CONCERNED ABOUT TOLL: NEW TOLL ROAD COULD TAKE ON COMMUNITY

Excerpt from The Examiner by Sharon Brooks on December 3, 2015

The mayor of Vidor says he has “trust issues” with a private company attempting to garner local support for a 10-mile toll road between Vidor and Beaumont after the corporation altered its projections from \$9 billion in profits over 50 years, later changing the timeline to 75 years.

The Texas Turnpike Corporation is not only facing tough questions from local government officials, including Vidor’s Mayor Robert Viator Jr. and Jefferson County Judge Jeff Branick, but also opposition from environmental groups concerned about wetlands and fragile ecosystems that would be impacted within and adjacent to the Big Thicket National Preserve.

And then there’s the question of eminent domain. Some city leaders worry the language of recent state legislation could force residents from their homes through the power of eminent domain via a partnership with a public entity, in this case TxDOT.

Representatives of the Texas Turnpike Corporation had already made presentations to Orange County commissioners, Jefferson County commissioners and the Beaumont City Council before presenting to Vidor City Council on Nov. 12, receiving a single resolution of support from the Orange County Commissioners Court.

THE TOLL ROAD

A map of the 10-mile stretch of road suggests the proposed tollway would run from Texas 105 at Eastex Freeway to Interstate 10 east of Vidor, passing near or possibly through Collier’s Ferry Park in Jefferson County, going over a portion of the Beaumont Country Club, leading down West Tram in Vidor, a residential neighborhood where Smith Lake Water Park is located, and crossing the Neches River between Jefferson and Orange counties, right through approximately 1.8 miles of the Big Thicket National Preserve.

Scott Young of Strategic Planning and Project Development, consultant Duane Gordy, and John Crew, president and founder of Public Werks, the holding company for Texas Turnpike Corporation, made their pitch to the Vidor City Council for the 105 toll road project.

Young told Vidor City Council the proposed toll road would save travelers utilizing the tollway rather than Interstate 10 approximately 10 minutes and would encourage development in the area. He also asserted that he believes travelers would be willing to pay a toll to save that time.

Consultant Duane Gordy said the toll road was a project first considered by TxDOT in the 1970s. He said the road would alleviate heavy traffic on Interstate 10, reducing hydrocarbon emissions from vehicles and thereby benefiting the environment.

“(TxDOT) saw a need (for the road) but were financially restrained,” Gordy told the council.

He also asserted the environmental impact on the Jefferson County side of the toll road would be “minimal,” and estimated that the road would go through 1.8 miles of the Big Thicket National Preserve on the Orange County side.

Crew said the one-way toll for the road would be \$2 to \$2.50 based on current market conditions. A handout provided to the City Council in advance of the meeting indicated that, based on a “Level One Traffic and Revenue study” initiated with Stantec Consulting, “estimated total revenue projections show almost \$9 billion in revenues over 50 years.” An amended handout provided to the Vidor City Council at the beginning of the meeting changed the timeline and text of the new packet to “over 75 years” after the estimate was challenged.

“The projection of \$9 billion in revenues over 50 years is a red flag,” asserted Janice Bezanson after hearing the corporation’s initial projections. Bezanson is the executive director of the Texas Conservation Alliance, a 45-year-old statewide organization that looks at the economics of public projects as well as their environmental impacts. “That’s \$180 million per year. At the \$2 to \$2.50 per car toll that’s being suggested, it would take 8,000 to 10,000 cars per hour, 24 hours a day for five decades to produce those revenues. That’s totally implausible.”

Q&A

After hearing Texas Turnpike’s presentation, Vidor City Councilmember Jason Woodard brought up the fact the corporation has never successfully completed a toll road project, including the Blacklands Tollway-Northeast Gateway corridor from Garland to Greenville east of Dallas, which initially received approval from local government there but was later halted due to huge public outcry against the project, primarily over the issue of eminent domain.

Crew said the project was ended due to “politics” but offered little more explanation.

Viator said the road would take away property on the city’s tax roll, directly impacting city revenues, and that the toll road would allow people to bypass the city and shop in Orange or Beaumont, also reducing the amount of sales tax the city would collect. He said ultimately, businesses would likely choose to relocate, and the city could lose even more revenue. He asked the corporation to address those concerns.

Crew told The Examiner he believes the road would increase development and population, bringing in more money to the area in the long run, and expressed a similar sentiment during the meeting.

Mayor Viator also expressed concern over the lack of completed projects.

“You have not built a road,” he told the company representatives.

Viator says he’s not convinced the toll road would benefit the city, in spite of the company’s claims and the county’s support through resolution. During the Vidor City Council meeting, he called out Orange County Pct. 4 Commissioner Jody Crump, whose precinct includes Vidor and who has publicly supported the project. Crump has said he has heard support from the community and knows a lot of people who would “like to get to the mall in 10 minutes.” Viator and City Manager Mike Kunst say that although Crump is the county

rep, the city does not share his enthusiasm about the project.

“Jody Crump does not necessarily represent the City of Vidor,” Kunst asserted. “The mayor had some tough questions. Typically, he wants those questions answered before taking action in the council.”

“I will not be placing the item on the agenda, at least until the tough questions are answered,” Viator told The Examiner. “It’s a major project, and there are a lot of issues – effects on the environment, noise pollution, the exact location, elevation. They haven’t done any studies. If they had, they would be able to answer these questions. ... The lack of information makes it difficult to move forward.”

EMINENT DOMAIN

Viator asked company representatives at the City Council meeting if they could or would exercise the power of eminent domain, which could allow them to condemn and purchase land from owners for “just compensation” – a number generally dependent on current market value – whether or not the landowners wish to sell.

Crew attempted to assuage fears of eminent domain by saying the corporation no longer has that power due to recent state legislation, citing House Bill 565 (HB 565).

“People think we are just going to come in and take their land,” Crew said in an interview after the meeting. “It’s not like I’m Yosemite Sam coming in with my guns out and saying, ‘I’m gonna take your land.’ We can’t legally do that. That’s not what we’re trying to do.”

In spite of Crew’s assurances, eminent domain is still a concern for many because of language included in the bill and because it is relatively new and untested.

Texas House Rep. Cindy Burkett of Garland, a destination point of the Blacklands Tollway-Northeast Gateway corridor toll road project proposed by Texas Turnpike that was shot down, was a joint author of HB 565 passed in June. The bill targeted private toll road and turnpike companies, taking away the corporations’ power of eminent domain.

Texas Turnpike was one of eight private toll road companies grandfathered in 1991 when legislation stripped private toll road companies of the power of eminent domain. In fact, it was incorporated just in the nick of time, the day before the measure took effect, something consultant Gordy called “happenstance” during the Vidor meeting. Of the eight companies grandfathered in then, according to the Foundation Appraisers Coalition of Texas, the Texas Turnpike Corporation was the only one that reapplied for eminent domain authority.

The problem that could arise with HB 565, according to Viator and Kunst, comes with the language of the new

legislation, which was meant to take away a private toll road or turnpike company's power of eminent domain; HB 565 might not cover the "public-private partnership" Crew has deemed the new road project to be. He has said that TxDOT, an entity that does still wield the power of eminent domain, will own the land. Now, Viator and others want to know if that means once the corporation receives the "public support" required by HB 565 to move forward with the project, would TxDOT exercise the power of eminent domain on the private company's behalf since the agency would own the land? So far, Kunst says, no one has answered that question.

"Due to recent legislation, the toll road company has to wait for public input before moving forward with the project," Kunst explained. "It's not clear yet whether or not the resolution would imply public approval, and if that would exempt them from HB 565. I reached out to Sen. (Robert) Nichols' staff; he is on the Transportation Committee. I called and tried to get a straight answer and didn't."

"My biggest concern is what are they doing with these resolutions?" Viator queried. "They wanted us to sign a three-page resolution to say, in general, that Vidor doesn't have a problem with toll roads. ... The corporation says they need 'specific wording' in the resolution. Why? That is a major issue."

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Members of the Big Thicket Association spoke against the proposed tollway during public comments at the Vidor City Council meeting.

Jan Ruppel, president of the Big Thicket Association, said the road would plow through delicate ecosystems and impact wetlands in and around the Big Thicket National Preserve. Wetlands are important in mitigating floodwaters, which are a common threat in Southeast Texas. She said the toll road company's claim that the road could positively impact the environment is without merit.

"The claim that the project would protect and improve the environment by reducing drive time and engine idling doesn't begin to (abrogate) other environmental concerns," she told the council.

Dr. Michael Hoke, a volunteer with the Big Thicket Association and a former director at Shangri La Botanical Gardens, said the assertion that the road could help the environment by reducing emission was "out there" and did not alleviate his concerns.

"Mr. Crew is speculating about things that are simply not known," said Hoke. "As a terrestrial ecologist who has spent a significant portion of my life trying to save wetlands, I can assure that destroying this area of the Big Thicket is not

speculation but fact. His contentions are unsubstantiated and designed to sell a project that at the least is unwise and at the most ridiculous.

"Mr. Crew and the group of investors from Dallas do not have any data that supports their speculation. They are a fishing expedition trying to make money by building a toll road without any concern for the ecosystems they will be destroying."

PRIOR MEETINGS

Orange County Commissioners unanimously approved a resolution showing their support for the Texas Turnpike on Oct. 27, prior to outcry from opponents of the project.

The Beaumont City Council heard a presentation on the proposed toll road Nov. 10. The city is still considering putting a resolution supporting the project up for vote at a future meeting, according to Beaumont Community Development Director Chris Boone.

"I think we got a clear consensus that there is support (from the council) to consider the resolution," Boone said Nov. 18.

He said the city is looking at changing some of the language of the resolution to express their support for studies to provide more information on the proposed toll road. Whether or not that would allow for the "specific wording" the company has requested is yet to be determined. According to him, he believes the city would support the studies, but that does not mean they would ultimately support the toll road.

"There are still a lot of unknowns," he said.

Jefferson County commissioners tabled the Nov. 9 agenda item to provide a resolution in support of the Texas Turnpike project. Judge Jeff Branick said he would need more input and information before placing the item back on a future agenda.

"I had a number of e-mails that were against the resolution by the Commissioners Court to resolve to support the 105 toll road," Branick said Nov. 9. "I forwarded those to Mr. Gordy (Duane Gordy, consultant for the Texas Turnpike Corporation) and wanted his response. I also wanted to talk to representatives of TxDOT, and I think the members of the court agree we are going to table this until we do have responses to the concerns that are expressed in that e-mail."

The Beaumont City Council did not meet this week, and no item supporting the resolution in favor of the project was placed on the agenda at the Jefferson County Commissioners Court on Nov. 30.

SUMMER 2015 – BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE FIELD RESEARCH STATION

Submitted by: Mary Catherine Johnston

Summer 2015 activities at the Big Thicket National Preserve Field Research Station began with a flurry of activities and ended with a General Membership Meeting of the East Texas Black Bear Task Force.

On May 26-28 Alison Pollard of the Houston Zoo brought ExxonMobil sponsored 2015 Collegiate Conservation Program interns to the Big Thicket to learn about the piney woods habitat and to practice conservation field techniques.

In June researchers from near and far convened at the station to participate in a MiniBioblitz and to conduct species inventories through the Thicket of Diversity All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory. The Field Research Station provides a classroom, small lab, dormitory space, laundry equipment and a kitchen. Individual or small groups may be housed at the site if their work is Big Thicket education related.

Dr. Thomas Powers, University of Nebraska- Lincoln, gave a Big Thicket Nematode Workshop and continued roundworm inventory with his team of researchers. Edward Realzola, a Sam Houston State University gyrid researcher, assisted. David Lewis, President of the Gulf States Mycological Society, hosted a biannual fungi collecting trip in the Lance Rosier Unit and a Fungi Blitz and workshop, and Lijin Zeng of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory worked on Breeding Bird Monitoring surveys.

In July Shawn Benedict of The Nature Conservancy and his fire crew utilized the facility to house a crew for prescribed burning, a practice necessary for healthy ecosystem management. Evelyn Anemaet of the National Wetlands Research Center conducted fieldwork at bald cypress swamps in the Beaumont, Big Sandy Creek and Lance Rosier Units.

In August, Edward Realzola returned to continue his gyrid research and to survey sites for bryophytes.

Ashley Lovell of Texas Land Conservancy delivered an educational presentation at the East Texas Black Bear Task Force summer meeting. Black bears are slowly and naturally returning to the forests of East Texas.

The Field Research Station was also used for meetings of the Big Thicket Association, the Thicket of Diversity and Big Thicket National Preserve staff for planning and management purposes.

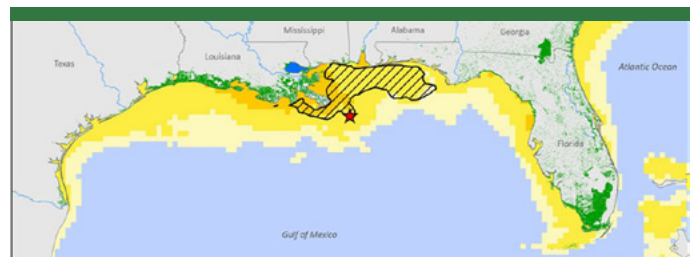
The Big Thicket National Preserve Field Research Station is hidden in the small town of Saratoga. The facility serves as a hub of activity for exciting science and environmental research, projects all worthy of expansion and support.

THE BIG THICKET NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST

The BTNHT currently has a 43.42 acre tract in Orange County under contract for purchase. The property is located adjacent to the Preserve and the Neches River and contains wetlands, tupelo-cypress swamps, large cypress trees and other beautiful hardwoods. This acquisition will provide a buffer for the Neches River, the Preserve and wildlife corridors and will keep stilted houses and concrete out.

The Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust conserves land for the public good. We are a charitable organization whose mission is land and water conservation. We are Texans working together to conserve the land we grew up with and the water we depend on.

Your support is essential to our success. Our goal is to raise \$100,000 to acquire the 43.42 acre property in Orange County and to make offers on two properties on Village Creek east of the Visitor Center. Donate today to support our established goal of conserving our land, protecting our drinking water and keeping the Big Thicket and Texas, Texas.



SETTLEMENT OF DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL SPILL BENEFITS TEXAS

Recently the Gulf Coast states announced a final settlement was reached with BP and the U.S. Department of Justice. BP damages stemming from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill will total \$20.8 billion, the largest settlement with a single entity in American history, which includes the largest civic penalty ever stemming from environmental laws. Of that, Texas will receive more than \$800 million.

Earlier in the process, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department had received funds committed for restoration projects like the purchase of the exceptional coastal ecosystem found in Powderhorn Ranch. Including these funds, Texas will receive more than \$1 Billion for restoration of environmental projects and to settle economic claims cause by the 2010 oil spill.



BIG THICKET ASSOCIATION'S 51ST ANNUAL MEETING

Beaumont Country Club hosted Big Thicket Association's (BTA) 51st Annual Meeting. At the board meeting President Ruppel gave a year-end report on Neches River Adventures expansion in two short years. The program has developed into three programs:

1. Environmental Education underwritten by area industry to see that students have the opportunity to learn about the Neches River and the Big Thicket National Preserve while applying classroom learning with field experience. This is under the management of Committee Chair, Michael Hoke, and an Environmental Educator, Kathy Barrios.
2. BTA offers tours from 10 to noon on Saturdays during the spring through fall
3. Private Charters. We've gone from 2 boat captains to 13 in 2 years. In 2014, our first complete year, we had over 2,300 passengers, while in 2015, even with 18 tours cancelled due to spring and fall rains and flooding we have taken over 3,700 passengers. Our biggest challenge is garnering volunteers for these programs. Call us, +1.409.651.5326, if this type of volunteering appeals to you.

A new development occurred this spring as NPS apprised BTA during our cooperative agreement discussion that they will expand the dormitory space in the FRS to accommodate sponsors for younger age groups they will be hosting. They offered to renovate the Brammer House for us to house our office. September began the renovation process with the exterior and interior painting of the house, new roof, and new linoleum. We have kept the antique furniture housed there to enhance the ambiance along with well-known pictures and artifacts. Clearing of

undergrowth trees which block a visual of the house from the FRS entry is in process. A Big Thicket Association sign will be placed near the Brammer House to inform people of our new locale. TOD had the option of staying in the FRS but with the limited office space available after renovation, Mona determined the most efficient thing to do was join the staff at the Brammer House. Much of the TOD equipment will be housed at the FRS.

The Executive Director reported the 2015 Neches River Rally statistics:

YEAR-TO-YEAR NUMBERS OF INTEREST

2014. 92 Vessels and 102 Participants;
\$3,515 paid registration fees

2015. 143 Vessels and 186 Participants;
\$5,476 paid registrations fees

Neches River Rally is averaging over \$15,000 per year in sponsorships, cash donations, and in-kind donations.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Past president, Dr. Bruce Drury began the meeting with pledge of allegiance while member Phoebe Dishman gave the invocation. Our outstanding awardees for 2015 were presented by Wendy Ledbetter. This year's awardees included Mike Hughes, a fifteen year veteran of NPS and 25 year veteran of Law Enforcement, he received the Thomas E. Lubbert Superior Achievement Award; recipient Janice Bezanson, executive director of Texas

Conservation Alliance (TCA), accepted the R.E. Jackson Conservation Award for her 30 years of experience protecting rivers, forests and water resources; and Dr. Ken Kramer received the Maxine Johnston Distinguished Service Award for his outstanding service as Director of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, and now volunteer Water Resources Chair and Legislative Advisor.

Superintendent Wayne Prokopetz and Ranger Josh Stringer informed BTA members of next year's upcoming 2016 Centennial Celebration programs for the National Park Service. Our keynote speaker, Jim Blackburn, an Environmental Lawyer and Rice University professor, spoke about the practical and spiritual aspects of the Big Thicket, a place of mystery and delight, a place of plants and nature, a place not unlike the bottomlands of central Louisiana where he learned to hunt and fish, and find comfort in the quiet and solitude of the forest. Declaring, "Whatever I am today has much to do with that time and place in my life."

BIG THICKET DAY

The excitement of Kayaking was experienced the weekend of Big Thicket Days at Collier's Ferry Park. Big Thicket Outfitters provided demonstrations for all ages allowing each the experience of paddling independently on the Neches. How exhilarating that was! The Ivory Bill provided tours to 10 Mile Bayou. Fishing gear was available down on the dock and everyone used their skill to catch a fish!

Bar B Que sandwiches and drinks were provided by the ExxonMobil Environmental Awareness Committee to approximately 200 participants and desserts were provided by BTA BOD. As guests ate they were entertained by Blue Grass musicians Steve and Sheryl Hartz from Nacogdoches or the raucous Big Thicket Outlaws as they defended ladies in distress in their shoot'um up battles against the bad guys.

Land activities included Spirit Stable horses which were available to pet and learn about the program these gentle animals provide for individuals.

Booths were available for scouting out information about organizations. Big Thicket National Preserve was promoting 2016's Centennial Celebration upcoming projects, Western National Parks Association sold T-shirts and nature books. Conservation organizations along with area exhibitors provided children's activities such as owl pellets for all to explore and dissect, or animal

pellets to examine and touch, or you could purchase honey from a local vendor.

Blue skies with fluffy white clouds, some good cookin' by Rock'in A, and the variety of activities that were provided this 51st Big Thicket Day, all added to the ambiance and pleasure of the day.

NOTICE

BTA moved our offices into the Brammer House in November 2015.

Late November Testified at Jefferson County Commissioners Court, Beaumont and Vidor City Council Meetings concerning proposed 105 Turnpike going through Big Thicket National Preserve in Orange County



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Upcoming Events

January 2, 2016

Guided walk on the Kirby Nature Trail and Sandhill Loop Trail

January 16, 2016

Board of Directors meeting will take place the 3rd weekend of the month, January 16, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. at the FRS.

January 18, 2016

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - Longleaf Pine Planting

2015-2016

ART WORKS "Imagine Your Parks!"

*Watch throughout the year for
Centennial Celebration Activities*



Big Thicket National Preserve
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Thicket National Preserve
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

WPS. Centennial 2016
August 13-15, 2016

Celebrate With Us!

The National Park Service is celebrating 100 years of service to America and the world. Here, right in your backyard, Big Thicket National Preserve protects and preserves the unique ecosystems and cultural history of Southeast Texas. We are proud to serve & invite you to join us throughout the year in recognition of our Centennial.

2016
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
FIND YOUR PARK

GENERAL INFORMATION
409-855-1000

FIND US ON THE WEB
WWW.NPS.GOV



BIG THICKET ASSOCIATION
Preservation for generations yet to come



BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE

Announces

CENTENNIAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

HELP PLANT THE CENTENNIAL FOREST

The National Park Service (NPS) is turning 100 years old in August 2016! The keystone activity for the NPS Centennial at Big Thicket National Preserve will be the planting of a “Centennial Forest” of longleaf pine trees using the help of volunteers and school students who can watch their forest develop over the next century. You too can help us plant 100,000 longleaf pine seedlings in the Big Sandy Creek Unit of the preserve. We are inviting people of all ages to participate in one of the following planting events. We hope to plant over 100,000 longleaf pine seedlings by the end of 2016 and to have created a 300 acre “Centennial Forest” adjacent to an existing 100+ year old longleaf and loblolly pine forest.

We are currently seeking volunteers to assist with the following planting dates:

PLANTING DATES

January 18, 2016 at 9 a.m.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - Longleaf Pine Planting at 9:00 a.m. Meet at the Dallardsville's Big Sandy High School Parking Lot 9180 FM 1276, Dallardsville, TX 77332

Saturday, January 23rd at 9 a.m.

Saturday, February 6th at 9 a.m.

Saturday, February 20th at 9 a.m.

Saturday, March 5th at 9 a.m.

The Centennial Forest area is located north of Dallardsville, Texas in the Big Sandy Creek Unit of the preserve. People interested in volunteering are asked to sign-up for this opportunity by calling the Visitor Center at +1.409.951.6700. Details about the planting events, including directions to the planting site will be provided during the sign-up process.

Each day's planting will begin at 9 a.m. and start with a volunteer sign-up, a safety briefing, and a demonstration of how-to-plant the longleaf pine seedlings. All tools and planting bags, along with water for refilling water bottles will be provided. Volunteers are asked to bring a lunch, gloves, good boots, and clothing appropriate for that day's expected weather.

The goal is to plant around 7,000 to 10,000 trees during each planting event. Planting will wrap up at around 2 p.m. Park staff will offer a short ½ mile walking tour through the nearby 100 year old longleaf and loblolly pine forest at the end of the planting day. The National Park Service would like to thank the numerous local conservation groups, garden clubs and community organizations have generously offered to sponsor these planting events.

Big Thicket National Preserve is offering special Centennial programming and community involvement opportunities throughout the year to enhance participation in activities, education, and stewardship of our unique natural resources in Southeast Texas. Complete program descriptions, including dates, locations and topics for each program are can be found on the [preserve's website](#), and on our [Facebook page](#). Check back often for updated lists of activities, as new opportunities are added frequently.

THANK YOU

FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO
HELP WITH THE REFORESTATION
OF LONGLEAF PINE IN THE BIG
THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE.



The longleaf was a predominant, upland forest species that has been practically eliminated in East Texas. It is one of the parks goals, working with partners, to restore the longleaf forest.

January 18, 2016 at 9 a.m.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - Longleaf Pine Planting

Meet at:

Dallardsville's Big Sandy High School Parking Lot
9180 FM 1276
Dallardsville, TX 77332

After a brief safety orientation we will carpool to the staging area where the seedlings are to be planted. There is very little parking at the planting site so please try and carpool if possible from the parking area to the staging area. Volunteers must wear long pants and closed toe shoes, preferably mud, hiking or work boots. If you would like, bring a water bottle that can be refilled. We will be providing water, snacks, lunch and if it is cold we will make sure there is something warm to drink!

RSVP or Questions?

Erika Pelletier, epelletier@npca.org or +1.214.370.9735 ext. 14
or +1.214.354.2904 (cell)

Make sure to dress for the weather, this is a rain or shine event!

Please note: the meeting location is different. We will leave the parking area promptly at 9:45 a.m. for the planting area. Please make every effort to arrive in time to carpool over.



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BIG THICKET BULLETIN

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noted above**

WEB SITES

Big Thicket Association
www.bigthicket.org

Big Thicket National Preserve
www.nps.gov/bith

East Texas Black Bear Task Force
www.bbcc.org

Conservation Fund
www.conservationfund.org

Gulf States Mycological Society
www.gsmyco.org

National Audubon Society
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org
www.houstonaudubon.org

National Parks Conservation Association
www.npca.org

Native Plant Society of Texas
www.npsot.org

Nature Conservancy
www.nature.org/texas

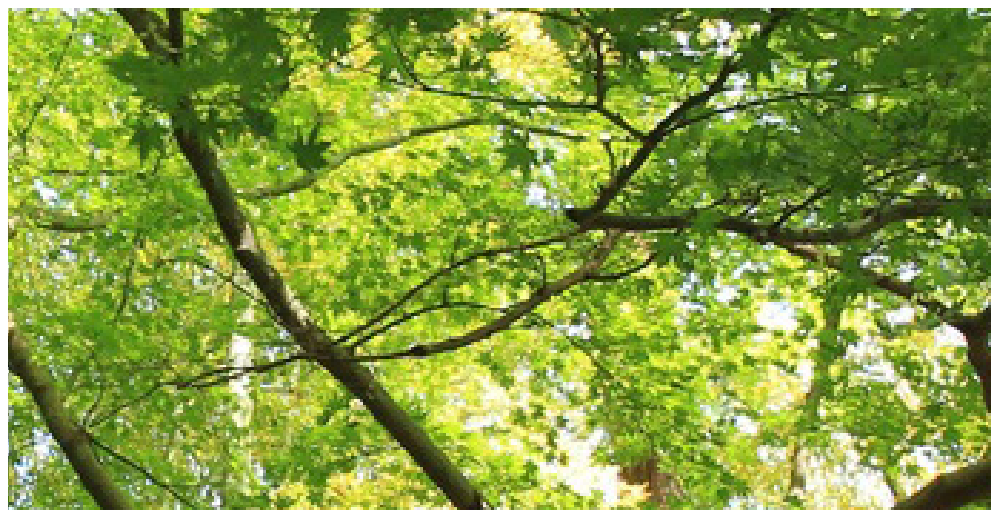
Outdoor Nature Club, Houston
www.outdoornatureclub.org

Sierra Club Golden Triangle Group
www.texas.sierraclub.org/triangle

Texas Conservation Alliance
www.TCAtexas.org

Village Creek State Park
www.tpwd.state.tx.us.park

FOLLOW US



BIG THICKET ASSOCIATION MISSION

The purposes for which the Big Thicket Association is organized are

- » To work for the preservation of the flora, fauna and historical culture of the Big Thicket area
- » To promote the conservation of natural resources and natural history of the Big Thicket area, and education for same
- » To maintain and perpetuate, so far as possible, the many species of trees, plants and animals found in the Big Thicket area, and to do whatever else may be done to preserve for posterity the abundance of flora and fauna and natural beauty with which this area has been endowed
- » To promote and to fund research contributing to knowledge of the Big Thicket area
- » To publish or support publication of cultural and scientific Big Thicket literature
- » To promote the welfare of the Big Thicket National Preserve

For more information about the Big Thicket Association and upcoming events, please **click here** to visit us online.

