

Big Thicket Reporter - #100

Jul-Aug 2009

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PRESERVE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The second phase of the GMP (public open houses) has just been completed. Meetings were held in Woodville, July 20; Silsbee, July 21; Beaumont, July 22; and Houston, July 23. Supt. Todd Brindle opened sessions by presenting data on national park history and mission, followed by a review of the planning process. The Denver Service Center Planning Team recorded comments and suggestions on flip charts. Preserve personnel registered participants and responded to questions.

The next phase in the schedule will be in Spring, 2010 with meetings to develop preliminary alternatives. Newsletter #2 should be out next spring with draft preliminary management alternatives, followed by public meetings. In Fall 2011, a draft GMP/EIS will be distributed with more public meetings. By Fall 2012 the Final GMP/EIS will be released, and implementation begins Spring 2013.



All Big Thicket supporters should share ideas, particularly on resource management and visitor experience. The GMP is a road map for the next 15-20 years, and deserves wide participation. The deadline is August 31. Please log-on to the BTNP website and complete the [form](#). Or you can mail your comments to Denver Service Center, National Park Service, P.O. Box 25287, Denver CO 80225-0287

NECHES RIVER N.W.R.



Excerpts from *Wall Street Journal*, July 15, 2009 by Ana Campoy

DALLAS -- ...Local officials, who say they need to nearly double their water supply in coming decades to keep up with a fast-growing population, want to build new reservoirs and buy water

from nearby Oklahoma. But these efforts are entangled in federal lawsuits as Dallas's neighbors see the city's love for emerald-green lawns and lush golf courses as rampant waste...

While other cities in drought-prone Texas started slashing water consumption decades ago, Dallas used increasing amounts until the late 1990s. From 1980 to 1999, per-capita water use in Dallas ballooned by 35%, even as Houston and Austin cut per-capita consumption by more than 15% and San Antonio by 32%, according to data from the Texas Water Development Board.

But, Ramon Miguez [Asst. City Manager] argues, Dallas residents have since changed their ways. In 2001, Dallas Water Utilities, the city's water provider, launched a conservation plan that reduced per-capita use 19% by 2008... His group's water plan proposes four new reservoirs, two of them outside the region's boundaries.

On another front, the city of Dallas is fighting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In 2006, the federal agency designated the bottomland hardwood forests along a 38-mile stretch of the Neches River as a refuge for mallards, otters, alligators and other critters. Dallas, which envisioned building a reservoir there, sued the agency, arguing it failed to conduct necessary environmental-impact studies. The U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas, as well as the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, ruled against Dallas. Last month the city filed a request for an appeal with the Supreme Court, which could accept or deny it as soon as October.

TCA news release: “Dallas has a number of cost-effective options for future water supply without building Fastrill or any other new reservoir,” explains Michael Banks, co-chair of Alliance member organization Friends of the Neches River. Janice Bezanson, TCA executive director, added. “No one is trying to keep Dallas from having the water it needs. We just want them to use water efficiently and are helping to identify existing economical sources they could tap.”

CONSERVATION OUTLOOK

BIG THICKET TRUST ACQUIRES LAND

The Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust now owns a lot located near Village Creek at Baby Galvez in Silsbee. It was donated in memory of Joe Brewton by members of the family, George and Joseph Brewton. Other lots have been acquired in the area and will be donated to the Big Thicket National Preserve.

The Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit and donations are tax

deductible. The contribution will help ensure the protection and preservation of the land, water, scenic beauty, plants and wildlife of the Big Thicket. For information on how to support the Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust, write Box 1049 Kountze, TX 77625 or call Mary C. Johnston, (409)287-3778 or email mathicket@aol.com. For a membership form check the BTA website at www.btatx.org/BTNHT.

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: The TNC Big Thicket program now has a herbarium collection-533 voucher specimens of the original plant inventory completed by Jennifer Matos and D. Craig Rudolph in 1982. In addition David Rosen, former botanist with the USFWS added several new species of sedges for the Sandyland Preserve. The collection also contains specimens identified by Dr. Paul Harcombe and Dr. Larry Brown in association with Rice University's investigations on fire ecology and vegetation community response.

TPWD LAND AND WATER PLAN: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) invites public participation in a major revision of its 2005 Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan. The Plan is the blueprint for how TPWD will fulfill its mission of managing and conserving the natural and cultural resources of Texas and providing hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The draft plan is available on the TPWD Web site for public comments. TPWD welcomes public feedback and will accept comments through Sept. 18.

NPCA SUPPORTS APPOINTMENT: Jonathan Jarvis has been nominated to be Director of the National Park Service. NPCA's President Thomas C. Kieran commented on the nomination in a letter to Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chair, Senator Jeff Bingaman as follows:

"We agree with Secretary Salazar that there is no substitute for experience, and with a 30-year record of leadership and achievement within the NPS, he [Jarvis] is a very capable candidate. His assignments have included work in both large and small, natural and cultural park units--from Washington's Mount Rainier and North Cascades National Parks, Idahos' Craters of the Moon National Monument, and Wrangell-St Elias National Park in Alaska, to Hawaii's USS Arizona Memorial. As regional director of the agency's Pacific West Region, whose 54 park units include some of the most well-known parks in the NPS, he has for the past seven years managed some 3,000 employees and an annual budget of over \$350 million... Perhaps the strongest statement that can be made in his behalf is that he has earned tremendous respect among his Park Service colleagues.

HANCOCK LAND SALE: The Hancock Forest Management Group represents a client that is

marketing a land sale package of 45,000 acres in Texas, probably including one or more sites that area conservationists would like to have preserved. Possibly, another TIMO will purchase the tracts. TNC and TCF are reviewing the package.

PYRAMID MAGNOLIA TRACT (MAPY): On May 16, a BTA field trip visited a 300-acre tract in Newton County that contains several populations of the rare pyramid magnolia.. The tract was once harvested and planted with slash pine, but the pyramids have regenerated on favorable soils and probably constitute the best remaining populations. Some harvesting is scheduled in the area soon.

A few other sites occur in Newton and Jasper counties. A distribution map found on the Flora of North America website (www.efloras.org) show additional locations in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina, but the site notes that Magnolia pyramidata "is very local and nowhere abundant."

EAST TEXAS MISCELLANY

SOUTHEAST TEXAS AREA REGIONAL TOURISM (START) met at the Field Research Station in Saratoga on July 16th. The meeting was co-hosted by BTA and the Kountze Chamber of Commerce. Co-chairs Patti Salter and Kathy Hughes presided. Representatives from the Beaumont, Orange, Hardin, Jasper counties shared information about upcoming activities and promoted tourism in their area. Over 30 participants attended the meeting!

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST / SABINE-NECHES CHAPTER: Texas Master Naturalist, Sabine-Neches Chapter has a tentative training schedule for prospective Master Naturalists, Sept. 8, 2009 through Jan. 23, 2009. Sixteen sessions will be held at various locations: Village Creek State Park, Shangri-La, J.D. Murphee Wildlife Management, Larsen Sanctuary, Big Thicket National Preserve, Lamar University, Rogers Visitor Center, and other locations. Check the website for the dates / subjects / location.

LAMAR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES ANNUAL WORKSHOP, conducted by Dr. James Westgate, again attracted area teachers for a series of lectures, field trips, and projects. On July 14, the group canoed from the salt water barrier to Pine Island Bayou through Cooks Lake and a swamp into Scatterman Lake then down the Neches to the barrier. En route they lunched on the Bayou, tested the water then swam in it. Representatives from Village Creek SP, Nature Conservancy and BTA participated.



B.T.A. NEWS

The BTA directors met July 11 at the BTNP Field Research Station in Saratoga. Among action items was the Nominating Committee report for officers/directors in 2010-11. Half of the board are incumbents (two-year terms, 2009-10. The 2010-11 slate includes Fred Allen, Treasurer; Elaine Allums, Secretary; and directors Gilbert Adams, Judy Allen Michael Back, Marion Holt, Maxine Johnston, Wendy Ledbetter, Joe Liggio, Kathryn Walker, and James Cacioppo. Ballots will be mailed to members in August. Vice-President Cathy Johnston chaired the Committee, with Ken Pelt and Marion Holt as members.

The Awards Committee, chaired by Rose Ann Jordan, [Judy Allen, Rosalie Rogers, Don Blanton, and Marion Holt] reported and the board approved nominees for the Thomas Lubbert Superior Achievement Award (BTNP employee), the R. E. Jackson Conservation Award, and a Distinguished Service Award. The recipients are being notified and will be announced in the next issue of the Reporter.

Jan Ruppel and her Audit Committee (Gilbert Adams, Fred Allen, James Cacioppo, Wendy Ledbetter, and Ken Pelt) reported on their audit June 16. They reviewed bank reconciliations, receipts, check registers, payroll tax reports, etc. The committee report was favorable with some recommendations to enhance procedures.

SIERRA / LSC AWARD: The Chapter Conservation Award for 2009 recognizes Brandt Mannchen, who became the first person to receive the award twice, a testament to his over 30

years of activity as a volunteer activist with the Sierra Club. During that period of time he has worked on an infinite number of issues, especially forestry, endangered species, clean air, public lands, coastal resources, and transportation issues. [Mannchen also serves on the BTA Conservation / Legislation Committee.]

Footnote: Mannchen recently applied and was awarded membership in the exclusive Big Thicket Alligator Snapping Turtles. Applicants must be over 50 years and have logged at least 20 years of active work for protection of the Big Thicket. No dues -- no officers -- no meetings -- no bylaws -- but LOTS of strong opinions!

BIG THICKET POWERPOINTS: BTA has several powerpoint that can be made available for group programs. Probably, BTA has an officer or member near you who could present a program Just ask.

Big Thicket Expansion: describes present units and factual data on proposed legislation

BTA Strategic Plan for the BTNP: explores present status and future goals for land acquisition, resource management, visitor use / public awareness, and administration

Big Thicket Tourism: concentrates on opportunities for recreation in the Preserve and in the Big Thicket region

Big Thicket Cast of Characters: recognizes 12 people who made a difference

Big Thicket National Preserve Legislative History

Parks Are Forever: the National Preserve's first 35 years, 1974-2009

BTA History, 1964-2009

DIVERSITY DISPATCH

by Linda Brindle, Executive Director, BTA

The Thicket of Diversity Executive Council met Friday July 10 at the Field Research Station with President Dale Kruse presiding. TWiG funding was approved for: Vascular Plants, Dr. Stephen Hatch, and Freshwater Fishes, Dr. Chad Hargrave. The council approved funding for Mycological Review publication costs, requested by David Lewis. Announcements included receipt of grant funds from the Brown Foundation (\$40,000 for 2010)) and from T.L.L. Temple Foundation (\$40,000 for 2010-11).

BIODIVERSITY FIELD TRIPS: In June the Eastfield College students and faculty

conducted their summer institute at the Field Research Station, Big Thicket National Preserve. Their field inventory work with principal investigators, Dale Kruse, David Lewis, Paul Crump, and Michael Black was followed by daily afternoon seminars. The public was invited to the mini-bioblitz on Saturday, June 13, and approximately 50 participants joined the activities. Activities included a demonstration using the high definition monitor and microscope to view live tardigrades by Drs. Hinton and Meyers, a photography workshop, a “bats of the Big Thicket” presentation by Leigh Stuemke, a “mushroom walk” with David Lewis, and a field trip to collect bryophytes with Dale Kruse and Paul Roling. Collections include specimens new to science, as well as new to the Preserve and State!



OTHER NEWS

Leigh Stuemke, graduate student from Stephen F. Austin State University and her assistant, Kristina Hammond from the University of Wyoming are conducting rare bat surveys and roost surveys in the Preserve, Larsen Sandyland Preserve, and other selected locations in Southeast Texas. Using mist nests they capture bats that roost in hollowed out water tupelo trees in hardwood bottomlands. The Rafinesque's big-eared bat and Southeastern myotis are listed as rare in Texas. They dine on insects. Some trees identified from previous TPWD field work as roost trees were heavily damaged during hurricanes Rita and Ike.

Intern Katy Gallagher of the Chicago Botanical Museum will work with the ATBI through November. Amongst other duties, Katy will set up the “Facebook” account for the Thicket of

Diversity and will organize the FRS laboratory.

Dr. Rodham E. Tulloss, leading taxonomist (specializing in the genus *Amanita*) visited the Big Thicket in early July. He worked with David Lewis to help confirm identification of fungi specimens. Dr. Tulloss was impressed with Big Thicket resources and plans to return this fall.

Dr. Robert Egan presented a poster at the "Botany and Mycology 2009" conference in Snowbird, Utah held July 25-29. The poster presentation was titled, "Microlichens of the Big Thicket National Preserve and Environs" by Lacey LeGrand and Robert Egan, University of Nebraska at Omaha. A copy of the poster will be displayed at the FRS.

PRESERVE OVERVIEW

by Ann Roberts

PERSONNEL: Leslie Dubey has been promoted to the position of Chief of Interpretation (replaces Matt Fagan). Mary Kay Manning accepted a lateral transfer from Big Bend NP effective Aug 2 (replaces Merle King). Brian Lockhart accepted the Biologist position (replaces Dusty Pate); Lockhart comes from the Washita National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS). Daniel Seifert, Park Ranger at Everglades NP, accepted the District Ranger position (replaces Keith Flanery).

HEADQUARTERS OFFICES: The Preserve employees are again "displaced persons." While new offices are being constructed within several bays of the Maintenance complex, the staff moved into the annex of the former Beaumont rental headquarters (wiped out by Rita). Work is progressing rapidly and should be ready for occupancy in September-- in time to dedicate the facility and celebrate anniversaries with the Big Thicket Association on October 10.

FIELD RESEARCH STATION NEWS: The Field Research Station/Brammer House reservations continue to increase with usage especially heavy on weekends. In 2007, one hundred forty-one people spent sixty plus nights in the Field research station and the Brammer House. Long term reservations were issued to John Arvin and assistants, with the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Lake Jackson,. Shoshanna Everett, Allison Stamatis, and Theron Palmer, Texas A & M University. Groups included Dr. Carl Knight, staff and students, Eastfield College.

The 2008 reservations increased to two hundred fifty-six people and one hundred ten nights.

Large groups included Dr. Robert Puckett, Texas A & M University, Dr. James Westgate, Lamar University, and Dr. Gary Hightshoe, Iowa State University. The current year to-date one hundred twenty-eight people have stayed seventy-two nights with on-going reservations.

Texas Christian University: Dr. Tony Burgess and Peter McKone are teaching a new class on Wetlands Assessment and will visit Big Thicket August 8-13 to give their students experience in wetland and riparian habitats throughout Texas. They will conduct simple field descriptions and assessments in diverse sites, including Cypress-Tupelo swamp, Baygall, Palmetto hardwood riparian, Trinity River bottom forest, and pitcher plant bogs. Dr. Burgess and nine Environmental Sciences students will do field work in several Preserve Units and Trinity River NWR.

KID'S CAMP – Jr. Rangers in the Big Thicket: Big Thicket National Preserve will present free programs open to everyone this summer. and will share fun facts about nature and the wonders of the Big Thicket. All programs are free and open to the public. Call 409-951-6701 for further information.

Night Hikes, Canoe Trips, Map and Compass, and Kid's Wilderness Survival are just a few of the exciting programs offered by Park Rangers. A special three day KID'S CAMP will be held for children ages 6-12, July 20- 22 from 9:00 AM-12:00 noon at the Visitor Center. Go to www.nps.gov/bith for a list of activities, dates, and times.

EVENTS

Saturdays: Cardinal Cruises on the Neches River, conducted by Environmental Learning and Research, Lamar University

Aug. 14 - Forestry Environmental Issues Seminar, Arthur Temple School of Forestry & Agriculture, Stephen F. Austin State University, 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Sept. 26 -Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge and the Friends of Trinity River Refuge / National Public Lands Day trash cleanup at the SH 105 Trinity River bridge, Saturday, 9:00-11:00 Stuart Marcus at 936/336-9786.

Sept. 26 - Ghosts of Texas Past, Heritage Village, Woodville, 7:00-9:00 PM

Oct. 1 - Houston Audubon, fundraising gala honors TCA, Ellen & Buddy Temple, former Cong. Charles Wilson and The Conservation Fund

Oct 10 - BTNP and BTA Anniversaries / Big Thicket Day / Headquarters Dedication, 9:00-4:30

Oct. 16 - East Texas Folklife Festival, Heritage Village, Woodville, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM Music / Dance / Artisans / Etc.

Oct. 23-25 - Sierra Celebration @ Martin Dies, Jr. State Park

Nov. 7 - Texas Conservation Alliance Annual Meeting, Trinity River Audubon Center, Dallas