

## THE LOST PINES ARE IN YOUR HANDS

The Lost Pines area continues to draw people and has become a major tourist destination. You can help TPWD conserve the resources of Bastrop and Buescher state parks. Here's how:

Protect the integrity of historic CCC structures; they are part of our heritage, so please use them respectfully.

Learn more about both parks with available literature at the park headquarters.

Tread lightly on the natural resources by staying on the trails and not littering.

Take advantage of the interpretive activities including historic tours of the CCC structures, evening presentations and guided nature hikes.



Become an active supporter by joining the Friends of the Lost Pines State Parks, or make a donation to the park.

Respecting the resources of the Lost Pines is necessary for your grandchildren to experience the natural beauty you enjoy today. Please join us in this effort.

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*Interpretive Guide to:*

# BASTROP AND BUESCHER STATE PARKS



# LOST PINES

WELCOME TO THE LOST PINES OF TEXAS, THE HOME OF BASTROP AND BUESCHER STATE PARKS. THE UNIQUE SETTING OF BOTH PARKS



EVOKES A SENSE OF MYSTERY, AS THE ISOLATED FOREST OF LOBLOLLY PINES SEEMS OUT OF PLACE. WHILE GREATLY IMPACTED BY A 2011 WILDFIRE, BASTROP STATE PARK IS RECOVERING WITH POCKETS OF LOBLOLLY PINES SEEN THROUGHOUT THE PARK. BEAUTIFUL STRUCTURES SUCH AS HISTORIC STONE CABINS AND BRIDGES BUILT BY THE CCC DOT THE LANDSCAPE. STUNNING CRAFTSMANSHIP BRINGS THESE HISTORIC TREASURES TO LIFE.



Bastrop and Buescher State Parks were acquired from the cities of Bastrop and Smithville and from private land donations. In the 1930s the Buescher (pronounced 'Bisher') family donated 636 acres toward a state park. Since its dedication in 1937, Bastrop State Park has grown to over 6,600 acres of rolling hills while Buescher complements this preserve with an a little over 1,000 acres.

Through time people have recognized the value of this abundant natural resource. In addition to the presence of critical resources, a convenient river crossing made Bastrop County a likely place for early settlement. The important Spanish travel route known as El Camino Real traversed through the area and aided in the early colonization of Texas. The town of Bastrop, known as Mina when established in 1832, is believed to be one of the oldest towns in Texas. The natural resources of the area were important to regional development; timber harvest of the loblolly pines fueled construction in nearby Austin and San Antonio. Some of the Bastrop timber was exported as far as northern Mexico. Later, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) came and constructed Bastrop and Buescher State Parks.

## ROOSEVELT'S FOREST ARMY



Imagine being 20 years old and without enough money to buy your next meal. This was reality for many young men in the early 1930s during the Great Depression. President Franklin D.

Roosevelt created a public works organization known as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in an effort to put young men to work, to conserve the nation's natural resources, create public recreational areas, and to help boost the economy.

In 1933 companies #1805 and #1811 arrived at Bastrop and Buescher State Parks to transform the over-cut pine forest into a scenic wonder by seeding, transplanting and clearing the tangle of brush and fallen timber. These recruits enrolled for a six-month period and were paid \$30 per month, with \$25 of the monthly wage being sent back home to the CCC worker's family.

## GROWING FROM THE GROUND



In 1933, the National Park Service (NPS), the CCC and the Texas State Parks Board (now the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department)

joined forces to design and construct buildings and facilities in many Texas parks. The architect of Bastrop State Park, Arthur Fehr, followed National Park Service design principles that suggested harmony with the surrounding landscape of rolling hills and pine forests and use of native materials for construction. The stone cabins at Bastrop appear to grow out of the ground like a natural outcrop. The same non-intrusive design elements were followed for dams, culverts, bridges and fences. Similar design concepts can be seen in other parks around the nation. Bastrop's refectory is a showplace of CCC craftsmanship. Cedar, oak, walnut and pine indigenous to the park and red sandstone quarried nearby come together in an attractive stone structure featuring carved mantles, roof beams and handmade furniture.

In 1997, Bastrop State Park was awarded National Historic Landmark status, due largely to the enduring craftsmanship and landscape work done in the park by the CCC. It is one of only five CCC parks in the nation with this recognition.



## THE "LOST PINES" ARE NOT LOST

Prior to the 2011 wildfire, most of Bastrop State Park was covered in loblolly pines. Because this pine pocket was separated from the East Texas Pineywoods by over 100 miles, this area is known as the "Lost Pines." How did they get here? Pollen records indicate that pines have persisted in this area for over 18,000 years. Scientists believe that glaciers long ago carved the land to separate the Bastrop area loblolly stand from East Texas. Over time, the area's climate became drier and the region covered by pines shrank. The local sandy aquifer-laced soils provided conditions for these "Lost Pines" to survive. In fact, the pines have become genetically unique, having adapted to 30% less rainfall than loblollies from East Texas and adjacent states. The Lost Pines loblollies represent the westernmost stand of loblolly pine trees in the United States.



### The Bastrop County Complex Fire

In 2011, Texas had the warmest summer for any U.S. state since 1895 when instruments started collecting data, even surpassing the 1930s Dust Bowl. Bastrop had three months of 100°-plus days, quickly drying the area. On September 4, high winds from Tropical Storm Lee knocked over brittle, drought-stressed trees into power lines, igniting the most destructive wildfire in Texas history. The fiery monster burned for days, ultimately devouring 32,400 acres in Bastrop County, killing two people and destroying 1,696 residential and commercial structures.

Hundreds of defenders, including more than 140 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) employees, commercial partners and firefighters from all over the country, battled the blaze. Over 90% of Bastrop State Park was affected, significantly impacting the Lost Pines ecosystem. However, because of the firefighters' efforts, only the roofs of two CCC overlook structures burned. And while it came close, the fire didn't enter Buescher State Park.



### An Uncertain Future

Bastrop and Buescher state parks lie within the ecological region known as the Post Oak Savannah. The seasonally moist sandy soils provide critical habitat for the endangered Houston toad. While historic habitat loss due to intensive agriculture severely reduced the Houston toad's range in Texas, the 2011 wildfire dealt a devastating blow by reducing their habitat even more.



### Recovery Efforts

You don't have to look far to see that the loblolly pines are making a comeback at Bastrop State Park. Natural regeneration along with volunteer planting efforts is helping the park return to its previous glory.

Even though over 90% of the park was damaged by the wildfire, only 30% was heavily burned. Previous prescribed fires reduced the litter load, reducing the intensity of the wildfire in these areas. Prescribed fire continues to be utilized to reduce fuel loads and restore habitat for wildlife.



### The Lost Pines Today

While it will take decades for significant stands of loblolly pines to regrow, you will see exciting changes each time you visit. This living laboratory is regularly visited by students and scientists as they study the fire's effects on birds, mammals and vegetation. This recorded research will be valuable for years to come. You can make your own discoveries by visiting the park and seeing how the landscape changes over time.

