



2010



Land and Water

RESOURCES CONSERVATION AND RECREATION PLAN

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January 1, 2010

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT



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Letter to the People of Texas

Since 2002 the *Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan* (known as the Land and Water Plan, or “the Plan”) has served as the strategic visionary document guiding the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) in achieving its mission to conserve land and water resources and to provide outdoor recreation opportunities for all Texans.

This is the second revision of the Plan, originally developed in 2002 and later updated in 2005. It was developed with extensive input from our constituents and partners, state leaders and agency staff. As such, it encompasses the collective vision of conservation and outdoor recreation in Texas. It will guide the operational plans that we develop at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to ensure the long-term health of Texas’ fish, wildlife, rivers, bays and estuaries, parks and open spaces.

Together, we face many challenges in the years ahead. As we write this, the landscape around us is changing. More Texans are moving to urban areas. Farm, ranch and timber land held in families for generations is being subdivided and sold in smaller parcels. Land fragmentation can result in long-term impacts to ecosystems and native habitats, compelling us to work together for the conservation of what is left.

In addition, as our population grows, so will the impacts and pressures on our lands and waters. The growing number of Texans seeking outdoor experiences will call for new recreational opportunities. Emerging energy technologies will require us to balance new energy sources with their potential impacts on wildlife habitat. As we tackle these many challenges, we will continue to utilize the best available science-based research and staff expertise and will rely on the input of state leaders and our public and private partners.

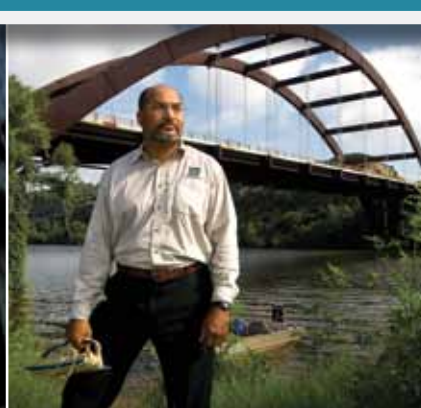
We are fortunate that so many Texans are passionate about the outdoors, whether it’s through hunting, fishing, camping, kayaking or just enjoying nature. Simply put, we could not do our conservation work alone. In this ecologically diverse state with so much to care for, everyone’s participation and effort counts. Thank you for your interest in the Land and Water Plan and for your care and concern for Texas’ wild places and wild things.

PETER M. HOLT
CHAIRMAN

CARTER P. SMITH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The mission of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is to manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.



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The Rich Resources of Texas

Texas holds a special place in the hearts and minds of its citizens. The sheer size of the state and its richly varied landscape and history are among the reasons that Texans feel an incredibly strong sense of place and connection to the land, water and wildlife.

Texas is blessed with amazing biodiversity—home to nearly 800 species of fish, 425 species of butterflies, 634 species of birds, and over 4,600 species of native plants. With 12 distinct ecoregions covering approximately 268,500 square miles, Texas has an astounding array of climates, soils and habitats. High plains, wetlands, mountains, deserts, forests and coastal marshes provide habitat for the fish and wildlife resources that help define the landscape.

Today, Texas is facing unprecedented conservation challenges. Several species of birds and mammals have already vanished from Texas, and many more are in danger. Fortunately, Texans have long recognized the need for stewardship of the state's land, water, fish and wildlife and took action generations ago to protect the state's natural heritage.

The first game and fish laws in Texas were passed in the late 19th century, and the first game warden began protecting the state's resources in 1895. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department was formed in 1963 when the Texas Game and Fish Commission and the Texas State Parks Board were united into a single agency. For over a hundred years, this agency has worked to ensure that present and future generations continue to enjoy the great natural and cultural heritage of Texas.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department manages over 800,000 acres of wildlife management areas and 600,000 acres of state parks, natural areas and state historic sites.

Connecticut
5,544 square miles

Massachusetts
10,555 square miles

South Carolina
32,007 square miles

Texas Ecoregions

At approximately 120 miles long, 20 miles wide and 800 feet deep, Palo Duro Canyon is the second-largest canyon in the nation.

Arizona/New Mexico Mountains

Chihuahuan Desert

High Plains

Southwestern Tablelands

Central Great Plains

Cross Timbers

Texas Blackland Prairies

East Central Texas Plains

Western Gulf Coastal Plain

Edwards Plateau

Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes

Southern Texas Plains

Padre Island National Seashore, stretching more than 70 miles, is the largest stretch of undeveloped barrier island beach in the world.





The People of Texas

Not only does Texas support some of the greatest diversity of animal and plant life in the nation, but it also supports a diversity of people and cultures. With a population of over 24 million, Texas has three cities with over 1 million people, more than any other state. These cities are increasingly diverse, and the face of Texas continues to change.

Demographers predict that by 2040, more than 53 percent of the Texas population will be Hispanic and 32 percent will be Anglo. Engaging diverse audiences will become even more important in the years to come.


Involving Texans in outdoor recreation is a critical component of conservation. Numerous studies have confirmed that outdoor recreation leads to caring for natural resources. Studies have also confirmed the importance of connecting children to nature. Providing nature-based experiences for the children of Texas is important to their health, education and well-being.

A century ago, most Texans lived in rural areas and were closer to nature. Today, the vast majority of the population lives in large cities. As the population increases, so does the demand for more and better access to outdoor recreational opportunities. As more Texans seek outdoor experiences, it is more important than ever to ensure that lands and waters are set aside and managed for fish, wildlife and recreation. Our quality of life and sense of place depend on it. That's what the Land and Water Plan is all about.






Hunting and Fishing Heritage of Texas



Hunting and fishing have been part of the fabric of Texas for as long as humans have lived here. Thousands of years ago, native hunters and gatherers settled in Texas to take advantage of its abundant fish and game. Today, people still flock to Texas to enjoy the rich traditions of hunting and fishing in the state's bountiful forests, prairies and waters. These activities speak deeply to those who seek connection with the wild places and heritage of our state. Generations of parents have passed on to their children a passion and respect for nature, an understanding of where food and water really come from, and the lessons of patience and perseverance. Few activities teach as much about the daily rhythms of nature as effectively as hunting and fishing.



Historically hunters and fishermen were at the forefront of the conservation movement, providing the impetus for sustainable use of our natural resources, and the concept of wildlife preserves and parks. Even today, 1.1 million hunters and 2.5 million anglers put their money behind their passion, purchasing over 3.2 million hunting and fishing licenses each year in Texas, more than in any other state; and spending an estimated \$5.5 billion in pursuit of these traditions. Of these expenditures, tens of millions of dollars find their way back into conservation through acquisitions, research, habitat restoration, conservation law enforcement and site operations. Millions more are spent locally on other hunting and fishing related purchases, thereby providing a boost to rural economies and local communities around the state.




Texas game wardens rescued more than 5,000 victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, and rendered aid to more than 6,000 Texas evacuees of Hurricane Ike.



Law Enforcement Off the Pavement

Caring deeply about the people and natural resources of Texas comes naturally to Texas game wardens. As commissioned peace officers, they lead the way in conservation enforcement, patrolling the lands and waterways of their communities and enforcing fishing, hunting and boating safety laws.



Texas game wardens also assist other law enforcement agencies with apprehending criminals; patrolling the Texas-Mexico border as part of the state's homeland security initiative; investigating environmental crimes; and conducting search-and-rescue operations in the state's bays, lakes and rivers. When disasters strike, such as hurricanes and floods, wardens are at the forefront of rendering aid.

Texas game wardens approach law enforcement as a partnership with the public, through the long-established philosophy of Community Oriented Policing (COP). This philosophy promotes and supports organizational strategies to address the causes of unlawful activity through problem-solving tactics and officer-community partnerships. The COP partnership engenders support for the protection of the state's fish and wildlife resources and for public safety on our Texas waterways. Furthermore, game wardens engage with and educate the public through extensive outreach programs.





Outdoor Recreation and Conservation

Every child should have the opportunity to climb a tree, catch a fish or roast marshmallows over a campfire. Direct experience with nature is vital to physical, emotional and spiritual well-being and leads to a healthy understanding of our place in the world. Yet, as the population becomes more urbanized and once-vast expanses of open space continue to be fragmented and developed, more children today are growing up without these experiences.

TPWD currently operates 93 state parks and natural areas, 50 wildlife management areas and eight fish hatcheries, comprising 1.4 million acres that are managed in the public trust for recreation and conservation. State parks and wildlife management areas offer a remarkable variety of opportunities to experience the outdoors. From the desert mountain sky islands of Big Bend Ranch State Park to the cypress swamps of Caddo Lake Wildlife Management Area, TPWD maintains and provides outdoor experiences ranging from peaceful to exhilarating, and from suburban oases to backcountry wilderness.

Protecting, enhancing and increasing recreational opportunities throughout the state is an important component of the agency's mission. TPWD will continue working to ensure that all Texans have access to the outdoors for education, recreation and rejuvenation.



“In Texas, there is no more important natural resource than water. The conservation of our water resources and the preservation of flowing rivers are critical for both the people and the environment of our state.”

– Ken Kramer, Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club



Sustaining Healthy Water and Ecosystems

From spring-fed rivers flowing past towering cypress trees to coastal bays and wetlands teeming with plants, fish and wildlife, Texas waters are a source of beauty and wonder, and an essential life-supporting resource for animals, plants and humans alike. With over 191,000 miles of rivers and streams, seven major estuaries and approximately 200 major springs, Texas is blessed with a bounty of aquatic resources. The abundance and high quality of fishing opportunities within these waters is a major reason why Texas ranks second in the nation in the amount of money and number of days spent fishing.

Healthy ecosystems depend on careful and effective water management. The population of Texas is expanding rapidly, bringing incredible pressure to bear on all of the state's natural resources, especially water.

Integrated watershed-based planning and conservation are key to the future health of Texas' aquatic ecosystems. Although the agency has limited regulatory authority over the use of state waters, TPWD is committed to working with stakeholders to develop environmental flow and water-quality management strategies, increase knowledge about spring habitats, help recover threatened and endangered species, control the spread of invasive species, and address other challenges confronting the future of Texas' aquatic habitats. TPWD has a long track record of communicating with the public about water-related issues. An informed and involved citizenry is vital to the conservation of abundant water and healthy aquatic habitats.

THE PLAN

The Land and Water Plan is a guiding document which describes how the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) will accomplish its mission in the years ahead. It is a living document that will be updated periodically as conditions change. It is a vision of how TPWD will strive to conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas for future generations. Consistent with direction from the Texas Legislature and Sunset Commission, TPWD will base its decisions regarding the state's conservation and recreation needs on the criteria developed in this plan.

The Plan is arranged into four goals. The goals and objectives are intended to promote stewardship on public and private lands and waters; protect our unique natural and cultural resources; encourage partnerships with all stakeholders; utilize science as the backbone of decision-making; promote participation in the outdoors; instill appreciation of nature in our citizens, young and old; and promote business approaches that leverage industry standards and best practices to support our mission.

This plan will direct the agency's division operating plans. Each TPWD division will create specific goals and objectives that are supported by its annual budget, program plans and individual performance plans. Progress toward these goals and objectives will be regularly reported to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission.



A photograph of two men in cowboy hats standing in a field of tall grass at sunset. The man on the left is wearing a grey and white checkered shirt and blue jeans, and the man on the right is wearing a white shirt and blue jeans. They are both looking down at something in the man on the left's hands. The background shows a line of trees under a sky with soft, colorful clouds.

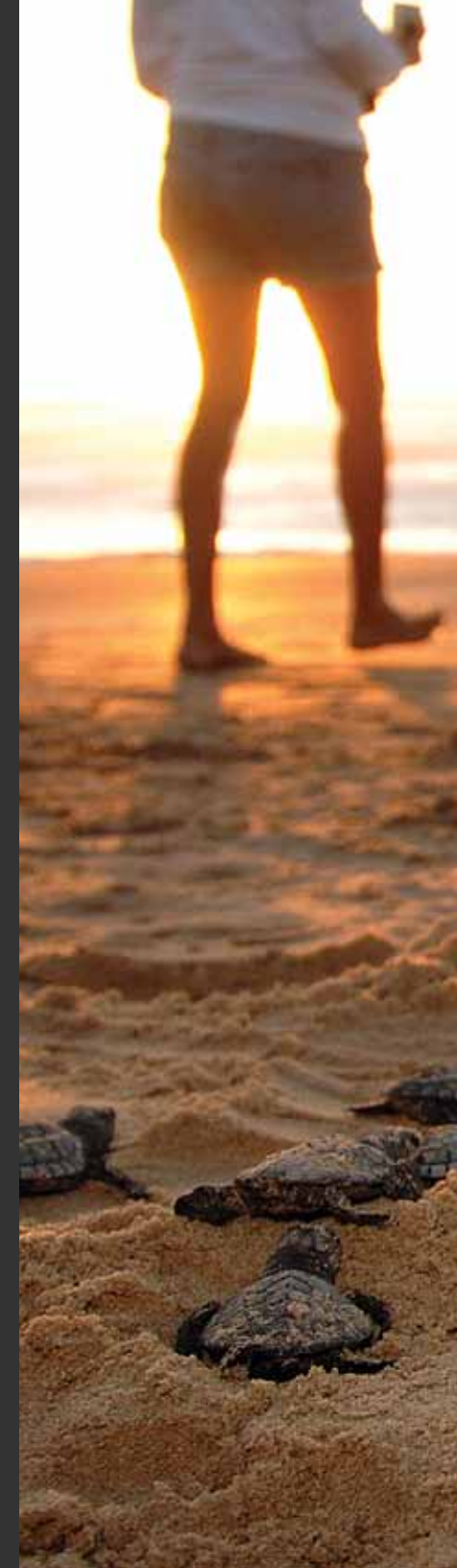
“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”

– Aldo Leopold, ecologist and “father” of wildlife management

1

PRACTICE, ENCOURAGE AND ENABLE SCIENCE-BASED STEWARDSHIP OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Texans should strive to conserve, manage and restore terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, and to protect the rich natural and cultural legacy of Texas. Science and experience foster understanding of natural systems and help TPWD anticipate changes and address emerging issues that impact plants, fish and wildlife resources. Relevant science informs the TPW Commission and focuses the actions of staff, constituents and partners.





Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Release | South Padre Island



Desert bighorn sheep were extirpated in Texas by the early 1960s. The Texas Bighorn Society has raised approximately \$2 million for on-the-ground conservation of bighorn sheep, which has supported the restoration of population levels to that of the late 1800s.

① Practice, encourage and enable science-based stewardship of natural and cultural resources

TPWD will be an exemplary steward of the public's lands and waters by using the best available science for ecosystem-based management

- » Protect native plants, fish and wildlife and their habitats
- » Conduct strategic research on species, habitats and ecosystems
- » Manage landscapes and watersheds holistically, in cooperation with public and private landowners, to foster biodiversity of plants, fish and wildlife
- » Manage lands and waters for sustainable use and enjoyment compatible with ecosystem goals
- » Establish protocols to address invasive species, wildlife diseases and other threats to plants, fish and wildlife
- » Optimize visitation and visitor experience while protecting natural and cultural resources
- » Maintain a level of compliance that meets or exceeds federal, state, county and local environmental regulations

ACTION

Regional best watershed management practices will be developed and distributed by December 2011.



① **Practice, encourage and enable science-based stewardship of natural and cultural resources**

TPWD will provide leadership for the promotion and protection of healthy aquatic ecosystems

- » Provide technical expertise and data to federal, state and local agencies to help ensure sufficient water quality and quantity for plants, fish and wildlife
- » Work with public and private entities to integrate planning and management of groundwater, spring, stream, wetland, estuarine and marine ecosystems
- » Refine scientific tools to further the understanding of groundwater and surface water interactions
- » Protect, maintain or restore appropriate watershed and hydrologic conditions to support healthy aquatic ecosystems
- » Establish and maintain cooperative strategies to incorporate long-term plant, fish and wildlife needs in all statewide, regional and local watershed planning, management, and permitting processes

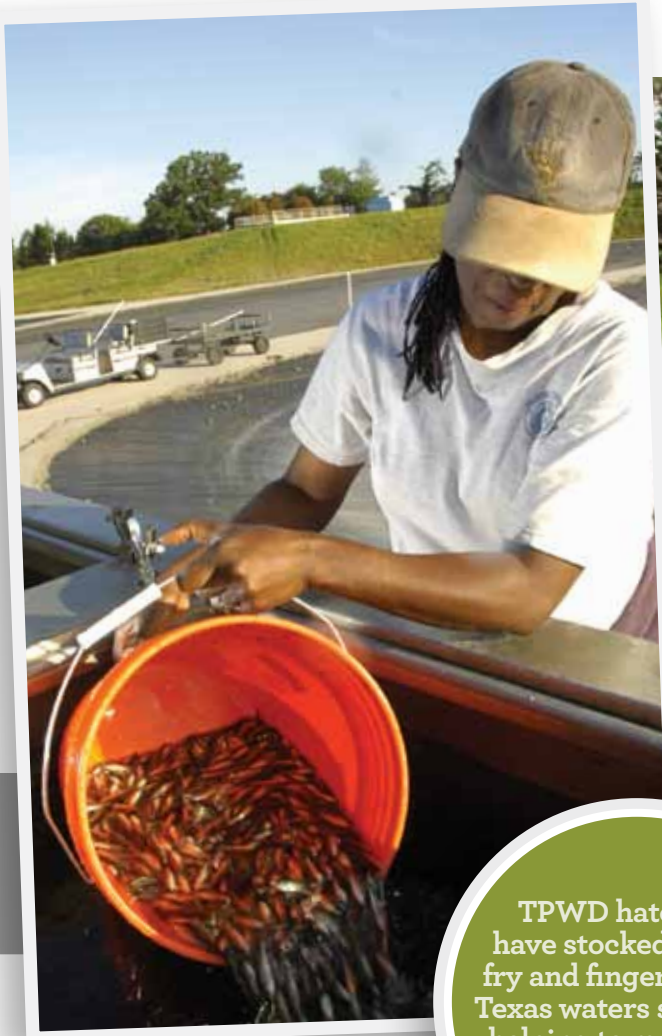
- » Develop and implement strategies to prevent the introduction and spread of nuisance aquatic species
- » Work with stakeholders to ensure that the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards increasingly incorporate biological data to protect the health and productivity of Texas waters
- » Encourage the voluntary transfer of water rights to the Texas Water Trust or appropriate nonprofit water trusts
- » Work with stakeholders and scientists to identify instream flow and freshwater inflow regimes adequate to support fish and wildlife resources

ACTION

On an annual basis, 39 million fingerlings will be stocked in Texas waters, 24 million in Texas bays and 15 million in rivers, lakes and reservoirs.

“Saving the water and the soil must start where the first raindrop falls.”

– Lyndon B. Johnson, 1947



TPWD hatcheries have stocked 3 billion fry and fingerlings into Texas waters since 1941, helping to make Texas a world-class fisheries destination.



ACTION

To effectively assess populations of finfish and shellfish, agency staff will collect 8,000 saltwater and 3,100 freshwater biological and harvest samples each year.

① Practice, encourage and enable science-based stewardship of natural and cultural resources

TPWD will maintain, restore and protect healthy terrestrial ecosystems on public lands

- » Concentrate on-the-ground conservation efforts on landscapes of high biological value, such as watersheds, recharge zones, wildlife corridors and migratory bird flyways
- » Publish, disseminate and promote guidelines and protocols for habitat restoration and management
- » Inventory conservation, recreation and historic properties to identify gaps in representation and protection
- » Pursue funding for acquisition of land, conservation easements, and the purchase of development rights from willing sellers
- » Acquire additional wildlife management areas in underrepresented ecological regions for habitat conservation, demonstration and public hunting
- » Manage exotic and feral species populations on TPWD lands to minimize impacts



ACTION

Agency division operating plans will incorporate specific objectives to minimize and control invasive species by December 2010.



ACTION

Fire is critically important to the management of natural resources. Prescribed burns will be conducted on 25,000 acres of agency managed land, and landowner fire co-ops will be organized in each ecoregion by December 2010.

An FAQ sheet on the purpose and benefits of prescribed burning will be developed and distributed by December 2010.



“With three times more privately owned land than any other state, Texas leads the nation in private property ownership.”

– Greg Abbott, Texas Attorney General

La Golondrina Ranch | 2004 Lone Star Land Steward Winner | LaSalle County



① Practice, encourage and enable science-based stewardship of natural and cultural resources

TPWD will foster conservation of healthy ecosystems on private lands

- » Promote voluntary incentive-based management options
- » Increase the number of wildlife cooperatives, with a focus on habitat restoration
- » Incorporate watershed management goals into all Wildlife Management Plans (WMPs)
- » Educate landowners, wildlife cooperatives and nongovernmental organizations about management options, funding opportunities and TPWD programs to help achieve habitat management goals
- » Encourage landowners to cooperatively establish conservation agreements to preserve contiguous habitat
- » Provide technical guidance on wildlife and habitat management, watershed management, and control of invasive and feral species

ACTION

The number of acres under TPWD Wildlife Management Plans will increase from 23.5 million to 26 million acres by December 2011 .

① Practice, encourage and enable science-based stewardship of natural and cultural resources

TPWD will maintain the highest level of scientific validity and credibility

- » Collaborate with other science-based conservation organizations to expand research efforts and improve scientific methodologies
- » Encourage TPWD scientists to pursue rigorous scientific studies and to disseminate findings in peer-reviewed publications and journals
- » Conduct periodic reviews to ensure internal use of the best science methodologies
- » Develop position papers explaining the scientific basis for the agency's positions and perspectives

ACTION

By December 2010, the Department will develop an approved list of exotic aquatic plant species that may be imported and possessed without a permit.

TPWD will protect and assist in the recovery of threatened, endangered and high-priority species

- » Use the *Texas Wildlife Action Plan* as the guiding document for prioritizing agency actions to address species of greatest conservation need
- » Review current knowledge, identify gaps and update the status of high-priority species
- » Manage biotic communities to protect, recover and prevent species from becoming threatened or endangered
- » Provide technical advice and coordination for activities of universities, conservation organizations and landowners regarding declining species populations and their habitats
- » Include conservation actions for high-priority and rare species in appropriate division operating plans
- » Cultivate relationships with private landowners and the general public to better assess the status of and to protect, conserve and manage sensitive species and habitats
- » Partner with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other stakeholders to assemble large-scale protected areas that support grassland birds such as bobwhite quail and the lesser prairie-chicken



ACTION

A strategic plan for Texas game birds will be published by December 2010. Strategies stated in the plan will be incorporated into division operating plans by December 2010.

① Practice, encourage and enable science-based stewardship of natural and cultural resources

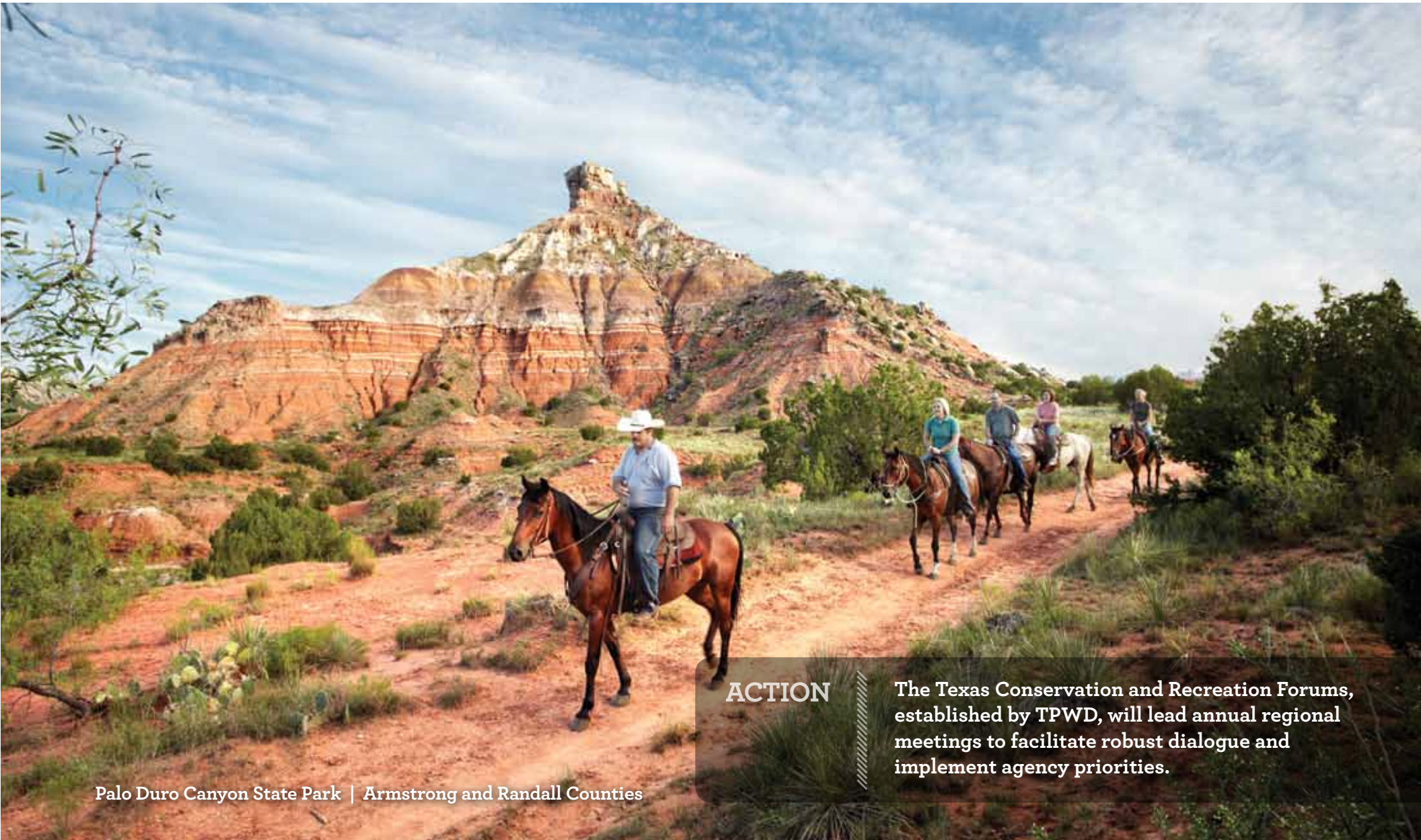
TPWD will cultivate partnerships that result in tangible conservation benefits

- » Work with international, federal, state, local and private organizations and the public to generate creative ways to achieve landscape-scale habitat management
- » Use joint ventures as a model to identify large-scale habitat recovery goals and the tools needed to accomplish those goals
- » Provide site managers with the skills and tools to work with neighboring landowners
- » Foster regional and statewide dialogue about conservation priorities through the Texas Conservation and Recreation Forums (TxCRF)
- » Provide Web links to other conservation and recreation organizations
- » Utilize annual TxCRF to analyze the state's existing and future land and water conservation and recreation needs; identify threatened land and water resources; and establish the relative importance of identified needs

ACTION

The agency will collaborate with partners to identify environmental flow regimes to support a healthy environment for the Sabine, Neches, San Jacinto and Trinity River basins by December 2011.





Palo Duro Canyon State Park | Armstrong and Randall Counties

ACTION

The Texas Conservation and Recreation Forums, established by TPWD, will lead annual regional meetings to facilitate robust dialogue and implement agency priorities.





① Practice, encourage and enable science-based stewardship of natural and cultural resources

TPWD will establish and enforce regulatory actions to protect native habitats

- » Provide a comprehensive law enforcement program that increases the public's understanding and support of TPWD's mission
- » Utilize the best available science and human dimensions data to provide recommendations to policymakers to encourage legal, sustainable and ethical use of natural resources
- » Coordinate with federal, state and local agencies to combat environmental crimes
- » Educate and work collaboratively with businesses and industries regarding compliance with natural resource regulations
- » Promote Operation Game Thief to curb illegal exploitation of fish and wildlife resources
- » Raise the level of voluntary compliance by increasing the number of contacts with hunters, anglers and other stakeholders
- » Implement, strengthen and enforce regulations that prevent the introduction of, and control the proliferation of, harmful exotic or invasive species

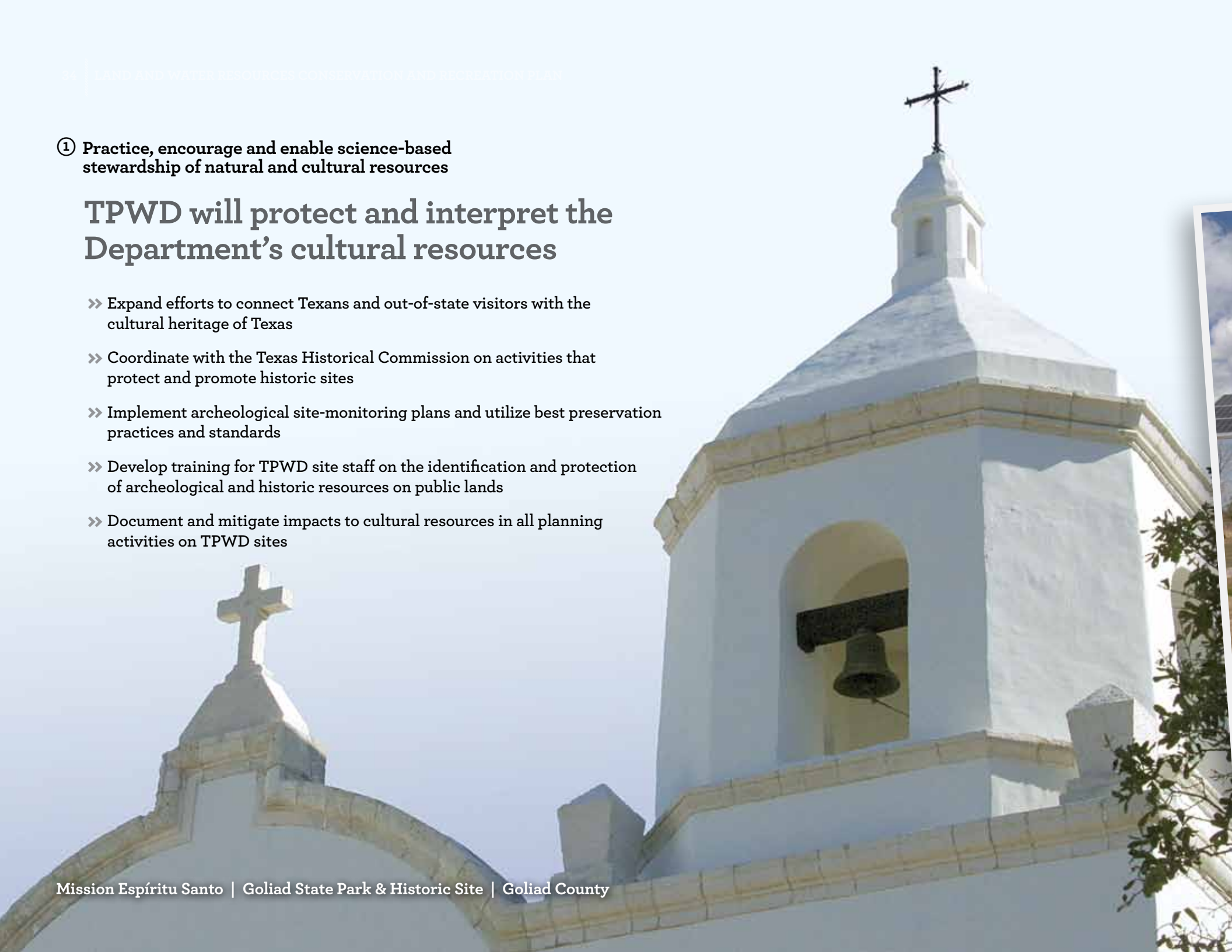
ACTION

Commercial fishermen will be educated regarding gear, regulation changes and fisheries impacts through annual training programs.

① Practice, encourage and enable science-based stewardship of natural and cultural resources

TPWD will protect and interpret the Department's cultural resources

- » Expand efforts to connect Texans and out-of-state visitors with the cultural heritage of Texas
- » Coordinate with the Texas Historical Commission on activities that protect and promote historic sites
- » Implement archeological site-monitoring plans and utilize best preservation practices and standards
- » Develop training for TPWD site staff on the identification and protection of archeological and historic resources on public lands
- » Document and mitigate impacts to cultural resources in all planning activities on TPWD sites





① Practice, encourage and enable science-based stewardship of natural and cultural resources

TPWD will anticipate and plan for emerging conservation issues

- » Participate in international, national, state and regional scientific forums to identify and address emerging issues
- » Support conservation actions that mitigate anticipated climate change impacts to plants, fish and wildlife
- » Evaluate the environmental advantages and disadvantages of emerging energy, utility and fuel technologies
- » Encourage the development of renewable energy projects which do not adversely affect plant, fish and wildlife communities

ACTION

Solar panel units will be installed at 15 agency sites by December 2011.

“Like the resource it seeks to protect, wildlife conservation must be dynamic, changing as conditions change, seeking always to become more effective.”

– Rachel Carson, biologist, ecologist and writer

2

INCREASE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION IN THE OUTDOORS

Access to a variety of outdoor experiences is critical for human health and quality of life. Since the vast majority of Texans reside in urban areas, there is a great need to ensure the availability of affordable and accessible outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. Charged with this task, TPWD must engage citizens from all places and all walks of life while maximizing the use of limited public lands and incentivizing public access to private lands.





② Increase access to and participation in the outdoors

TPWD will provide a variety of high-quality, nature-friendly outdoor recreational opportunities on TPWD sites

- » Increase public fishing and hunting opportunities
- » Provide diverse outdoor recreational opportunities, from urban programs to paddling trails to wilderness backcountry camping
- » Make the development of outdoor programs for Texas youth a priority
- » Expand and enhance agency sites by acquiring inholdings and adjacent tracts from willing donors and sellers
- » Construct facilities and amenities to broaden access to the outdoors, protect natural resources, and enhance the quality of experience for people of all ages, abilities and interests
- » Increase public awareness of recreational opportunities at agency sites
- » Increase compatible recreational opportunities and programs at wildlife management areas
- » Seek opportunities to create new state parks of high biological and recreational value near metropolitan centers
- » Post information at each site regarding its acquisition, mission, purpose, rules and recreational opportunities

TPWD will increase and facilitate access to public and private lands and waters for recreation

- » Partner with federal, state and local agencies to provide increased access to public lands and waters
- » Encourage private landowners to provide additional public recreation access to lands and waters
- » Encourage collaboration among adjacent landowners to link recreational venues
- » Encourage wildlife cooperatives to organize recreational activities and events
- » Collaborate with private landowners to increase public hunting opportunities
- » Promote paddling trails, recreational fishing and other forms of aquatic-based recreation in and around urban areas
- » Improve the quality and distribution of boat ramps statewide
- » Work with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to evaluate the feasibility of public access to public waters at TxDOT bridges
- » Provide proactive law enforcement to protect the public waterways and the people of Texas

ACTION

TPWD will partner with the Texas Wildlife Association to increase participation in the Texas Youth Hunting Program from 1,000 to 1,200 youth hunters by February 2011.



ACTION

The agency will increase the number of acres of public hunting land from 1.4 million to 1.5 million by December 2011.

② Increase access to and participation in the outdoors

TPWD will encourage people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to experience the outdoors

- » Promote the enjoyable, responsible and ethical use of natural, cultural and recreational resources
- » Conduct outreach activities and events targeted specifically for underrepresented communities
- » Expand the Texas Outdoor Family program on public and private lands
- » Explore new ways to involve youth and urban residents in outdoor activities
- » Engage underserved populations through multilingual programs
- » Offer recreational workshops that physically engage participants in outdoor activities
- » Continue to provide certification programs such as Aquatic, Hunter and Boater Education



ACTION

Host 650 families at Texas Outdoor Family camping workshops in 2010.

In the past 30 years, the Recreation Grants Program has awarded local communities more than \$500 million in state and federal funds for over 2,000 recreation facilities, boating access and trails projects.

Big Bend Ranch State Park | Brewster and Presidio Counties



ACTION

4,000 acres of land will be added to state parks by December 2011.



Lyndon B. Johnson State Park & Historic Site



San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site



Resaca de la Palma State Park

② Increase access to and participation in the outdoors

TPWD will encourage nature and heritage tourism

- » Work with international, federal, state, local and private parties to identify creative ways of promoting nature and heritage tourism
- » Assist local communities and private landowners in developing economically viable recreational venues for activities such as wildlife-watching, stargazing, photo safaris, camping and other nature-based recreation
- » Partner with public and private organizations to establish and promote natural and cultural areas and trails
- » Partner with the Texas Nature Tourism Council and others to increase visitation at nature and heritage tourism sites
- » Market agency sites as nature and heritage tourism destinations

ACTION

TPWD will identify property for a new state park in the DFW area using proceeds from the sale of Eagle Mountain Lake by December 2010.

3

EDUCATE, INFORM & ENGAGE TEXAS CITIZENS IN SUPPORT OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

Texas has a vast diversity of ecosystems and natural resources, many of which are unique to Texas. These landscapes transcend political and ownership boundaries. As a result, wide-ranging awareness and cooperation are critical for effective stewardship of natural and cultural resources. It is essential to develop an array of public and private strategies that build broad-based support for successful and adaptive management, restoration and conservation.





③ Educate, inform and engage Texas citizens in support of conservation and recreation

TPWD will promote and provide outdoor education

- » Team with classroom educators, and health and physical education instructors, to advocate for a lifelong interest in outdoor recreational activities
- » Expand the availability of training and curriculum tools to teachers
- » Develop and implement programs that encourage children's involvement in nature
- » Educate Texans on how land use, water use and water quality affect the lives and health of people, plants, fish and wildlife
- » Educate citizens on the importance of riparian zones, habitat connectivity, mountain sky islands, wildlife corridors and other sensitive habitats
- » Expand interpretation by volunteers at agency sites
- » Educate outdoor users on how to minimize their impacts on nature
- » Promote water safety on public waters



The Texas Brigades is an intensive, multi-partner leadership development program that empowers youth through knowledge of fisheries, wildlife, land stewardship, team-building and communication.



ACTION

A plan aimed at increasing outdoor opportunities and natural resource literacy in Texas schools will be produced by the Texas Partnership for Children in Nature under the leadership of TPWD by December 2010.

③ Educate, inform and engage Texas citizens
in support of conservation and recreation

TPWD will cultivate support for the conservation of natural and cultural resources

- » Lead efforts to encourage Texans to protect natural and cultural resources
- » Advance public awareness and understanding of the significance and benefits of well-managed lands and waters
- » Promote land- and water-management practices that benefit plants, fish and wildlife
- » Increase public awareness of the contributions made by hunters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts through user fees and license purchases
- » Promote the benefits of restoring sustainable native habitats by conducting demonstration projects



Llano Springs Ranch | 2008 Lone Star Land Steward Winner | Edwards County



③ Educate, inform and engage Texas citizens in support of conservation and recreation

TPWD will increase conservation awareness on private lands

- » Utilize wildlife management areas as research and demonstration sites to help expose landowners to the best conservation management practices
- » Educate private landowners on the economic benefits of conservation
- » Promote watershed and range management practices that improve ground and surface water quality and quantity
- » Provide technical guidance, including incentive-based strategies, for protecting and managing habitats for rare and priority species
- » Share information with landowners on the value of historical and cultural resources

ACTION

Forty undocumented springs will be identified and characterized annually through cooperation with private landowners.

“We believe if fate or fortune places you in a stewardship position for any natural resources, it is your duty to humankind to be the very best steward you can be.”

– David Langford, Vice-President Emeritus, Texas Wildlife Association

③ Educate, inform and engage Texas citizens in support of conservation and recreation

TPWD will promote citizen participation in hands-on conservation

- » Encourage participation in the Texas Master Naturalist program
- » Expand and support Texas Nature Trackers programs
- » Encourage volunteerism in support of conservation and outdoor recreation
- » Collaborate with other agencies, organizations and schools to engage youth in conservation programs
- » Demonstrate the benefits of rainwater harvesting, renewable energy and other green technologies

ACTION

By December 2010, TPWD will have a significant presence in four regional events that maximize our ability to introduce new audiences to our mission.



③ **Educate, inform and engage Texas citizens in support of conservation and recreation**

TPWD will increase awareness of the value of urban and suburban ecosystems

- » Provide technical guidance to municipalities, developers and local citizens regarding urban conservation issues
- » Provide recommendations and assistance to local governments regarding the importance of green space, watersheds, aquifer recharge zones and park lands
- » Contribute to national and state urban wildlife discussions
- » Support staff professional development to address conservation and recreation issues specific to urban audiences
- » Provide technical guidance and materials on coexisting with wildlife

ACTION

The TPWD comprehensive inventory of all land and water resources in the state that are owned by governmental or nonprofit entities and offer public access will be updated by December 2011.

4

EMPLOY EFFICIENT, SUSTAINABLE, AND SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES

Efficient and effective management of people, finances and assets is critical for the success of any organization. Responsiveness, transparency and accountability are cornerstones of TPWD's commitment to the public. In addition, the agency will strive to leverage its resources by employing a cross-divisional, multidisciplinary and skilled workforce.





④ Employ efficient, sustainable and sound business practices

TPWD will continuously improve business management systems, business practices and technologies

- » Maintain financial and information technology procedures and safeguards that meet or exceed industry standards and best practices, as well as government requirements
- » Improve agencywide coordination of information technology services
- » Improve the accuracy and timeliness of business processes and financial data
- » Increase staff's and stakeholders' understanding of agency business practices and budgets
- » Conduct audits to ensure public funds are spent in a responsible manner
- » Enhance internal business systems to improve, integrate and protect agency information
- » Develop a tool to prioritize opportunistic land acquisitions that are biologically, recreationally and/or culturally significant
- » Develop branding strategies for products and services

TPWD will provide excellent customer service with integrity and professionalism

- » Use established and emerging technologies to remain current with the changing marketplace and to better serve customers
- » Maximize accessibility of all programs, facilities and services
- » Involve Texans through expanded social media tools, public meetings, public forums, one-on-one conversations and customer surveys
- » Expand Internet-based opportunities to provide fast, secure, one-stop services
- » Ensure that the public can easily identify and contact appropriate program areas and responsible parties
- » Make it easier to obtain TPWD licenses and permits
- » Improve permitting processes by clarifying regulations for customers and enhancing automated systems and processes

ACTION

The number of TPWD sites with wireless technologies will increase to 70 by December 2011.

TPWD will seek and leverage financial resources

- » Seek sustainable state funding for TPWD operations
- » Identify and leverage new and existing revenue streams to maximize recreation and conservation efforts
- » Pursue dedicated state revenue funding for land and water acquisitions, conservation easements and purchase of development rights from willing sellers
- » Maximize federal aid reimbursement through appropriate allocation of funds to approved projects
- » Seek additional grant opportunities

TPWD parks generate an estimated \$793 million in retail sales, have a \$456 million impact on residents' incomes and sustain 12,000 jobs each year.



④ Employ efficient, sustainable and sound business practices

TPWD will ensure regulations and publications are balanced, effective and easy to understand

- » Evaluate regulations periodically to determine their usefulness and effectiveness
- » Simplify regulations
- » Ensure that key publications, such as the *Texas Parks and Wildlife Outdoor Annual* and *Texas State Park Guide*, are readable, accessible, easy to use and available online
- » Implement regulations that protect fish and wildlife resources and are consistent with statutory requirements
- » Ensure that regulations are structured so that compliance is achievable, measurable and enforceable

ACTION

The agency will review rules every four years to determine their ongoing appropriateness.

TPWD will develop effective communication processes and tools

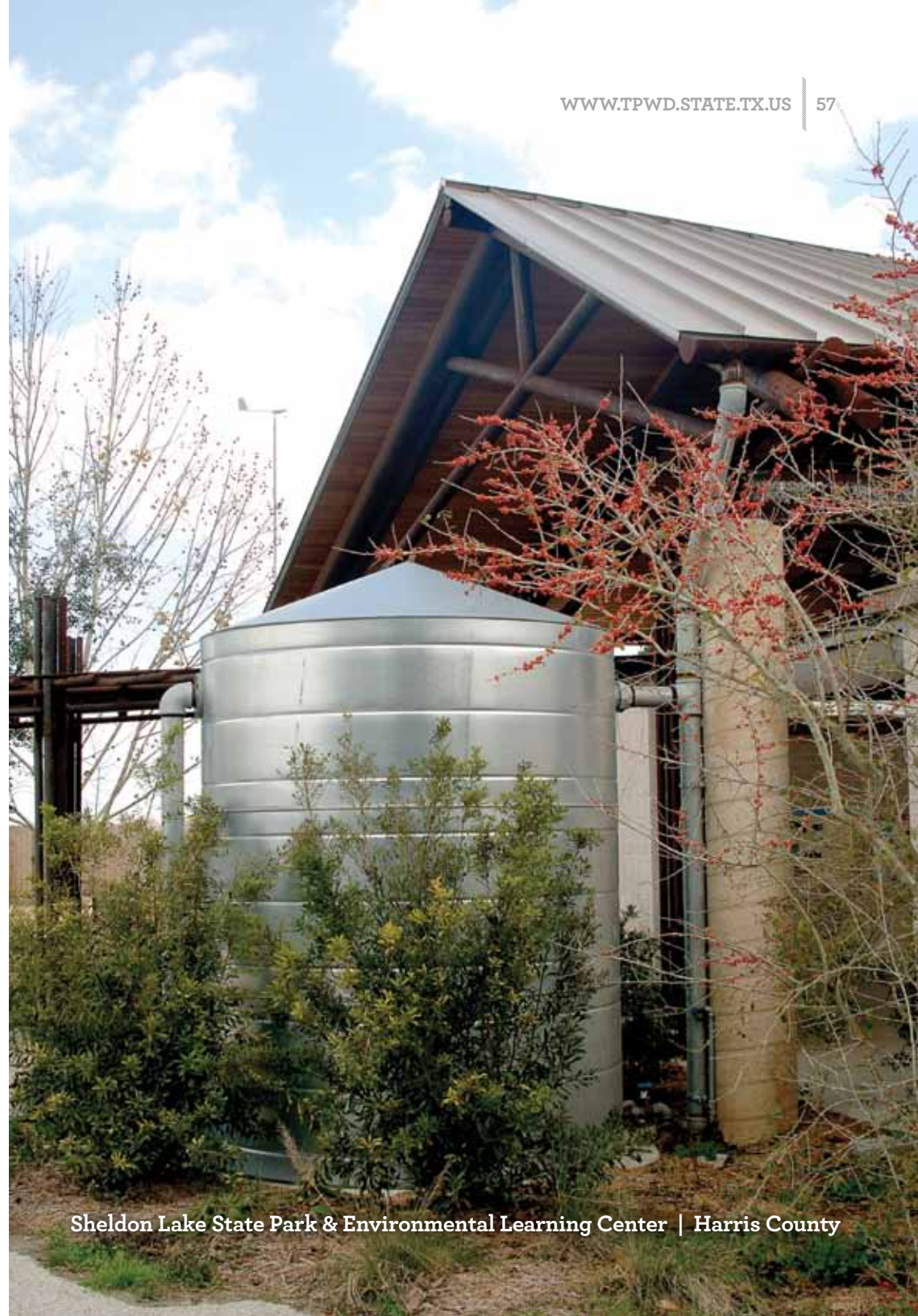
- » Advance the internal and external exchange of information through existing venues and expanded social networking tools
- » Review all agency communication strategies in order to maximize efficiencies and minimize duplicative efforts
- » Ensure that staff has electronic access to resources, applications, services and each other
- » Implement relevant recommendations from the Survey of Organizational Excellence
- » Improve dialogue with regulatory and oversight agencies and the public

ACTION

Interactions with the public will increase by 30% annually through the use of emerging social media tools.

TPWD will efficiently manage its lands and facilities for sustainable public use

- » Balance sustainable customer use with resulting ecosystem impacts when planning site acquisitions, developments or operations
- » Implement plans for environmentally-friendly maintenance of agency equipment and preservation of agency facilities
- » Take advantage of regulatory tools such as compensatory mitigation and Natural Resource Damage Assessment to expand acreage in conservation
- » Transfer or close agency sites that do not contribute to the TPWD mission
- » Assess the cost and benefits of appropriate re-use of existing and historic buildings versus new construction
- » Implement practices that promote green construction, maintenance, water conservation and transportation
- » Adopt best practices to increase recycling and reduce use of utilities, fuel, water and consumables



④ Employ efficient, sustainable and sound business practices

TPWD will promote an organizational culture which is informed, adaptive and innovative

- » Encourage and reward creativity and outside-the-box thinking
- » Keep agency policies, procedures, plans and programs relevant through periodic review
- » Regularly gauge the success of the *Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan* and make results available
- » Advance employees' understanding of their individual contributions to the agency mission
- » Encourage employees to participate in outdoor recreation and conservation activities
- » Promote a work culture that fosters a team approach to problem-solving

TPWD will recruit and retain a professional and diverse workforce

- » Develop competitive, performance-based employee compensation and retention strategies
- » Provide professional development and training to improve employees' knowledge, skills and abilities
- » Implement a recruitment strategy that positions the agency to find and retain the best and brightest employees
- » Support division efforts to develop and sustain effective internship programs

167 TPWD employees have graduated from the Natural Leaders program, which was started in 2000 to build leadership strength and support succession planning at the agency.



CALL TO ACTION

Texas is blessed with a rich natural and cultural heritage. Holding on to this rich heritage will require concerted effort in the face of immense challenges. As the state's population increases, so do land fragmentation, loss of open space, genetic isolation, habitat degradation, and the impacts to our lands and waters. Invasive species are disrupting ecosystems and reducing biodiversity. We face daunting global conservation issues, such as climate change and the need to develop new forms of clean renewable energy.

Yet, conservation success stories such as the recovery of endangered brown pelicans and the reintroduction of peregrine falcons and bighorn sheep provide reason for hope. Polls and surveys consistently show that Texas citizens strongly support land and water conservation and outdoor recreation, and they are willing to pay for these services.

Resources to address these conservation challenges are limited, so we must work together to ensure that our state's wildlife, habitat and recreational areas are protected into the future. No single organization or government entity alone can do what is needed. Individual action is important, and when we work together, the results can be powerful, widespread and lasting. Read the Land and Water Plan, understand the pressing issues in your community and in Texas as a whole, and then take action. Volunteer at a state park, plant a native plant garden, join the Texas Stream Team, or become a Master Naturalist. Join us! Get informed, get involved and conserve the best of Texas.





Davis Mountains | Jeff Davis County

Glossary of Terms

Compensatory mitigation

creation, restoration, enhancement, or in certain circumstances, preservation of natural resources or ecosystem functions for the purpose of offsetting those lost or degraded

Ecosystem

the active, changing and interrelated mosaic of plant and animal communities and their associated habitats, environment and processes. Examples: saltwater marsh, oak savanna, tall grass prairie

Environmental flows

flowing waters in a stream that provide aquatic and riparian habitat, water quality protection and freshwater inflows to bays and estuaries

Exotic

plants and animals which did not historically or naturally occur in a location, and which now occur as a result of human action; i.e., imported red fire ant, aoudad sheep, Chinese tallow tree

Feral

domesticated animals that have escaped or are descended from escaped animals, and are living in a wild state; i.e., wild hogs

Freshwater inflows

flowing fresh water that reaches coastal estuaries and mixes with saltwater from the sea; important to sediment and nutrient transport and estuarine species and habitats

Instream flows

the amount of flowing water in a river, usually measured by the volume moving down the channel in a specified amount of time and required to maintain a healthy river

Invasive

a plant or animal that typically does not naturally occur in a specific area, but becomes dominant as a result of a competitive advantage over other species

Landscape scale

a holistic approach to land management that considers biological, physical, environmental, cultural and social parameters, occurring over a large area defined by geographic features as opposed to biological or political boundaries

Natural Resource Damage Assessment

a process established by federal and state law for evaluating and recovering compensation for injuries to natural resources on behalf of the public

Species of concern

a species that might be in need of conservation action but for which there is little data or research available to support listing as threatened or endangered

Stakeholder

person or organization that may have an interest in or be affected by the implementation or completion of a project

Survey of Organizational Excellence

a survey of staff that solicits feedback to inform management of key issues that impact organizational success

Technical guidance

specific recommendations regarding the management of land and water for the benefit of fish and wildlife

Texas Conservation and Recreation Forum

regional meetings that include Texas Parks and Wildlife employees and other stakeholders to promote ongoing dialogue about conservation and recreation needs and priorities

Texas Master Naturalist Program

a program which certifies volunteer naturalists following an intensive program of training in a range of natural resource management topics; continuing education is required to maintain this certification

Texas Nature Trackers

a citizen science monitoring program designed to involve volunteers of all ages and interests in gathering scientific data on species of concern

Texas Outdoor Family

a program that introduces families to camping and outdoor experiences through direct participation with outdoor enthusiasts

Texas Surface Water Quality Standards

state-adopted, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved standards that establish explicit goals for protecting the water quality of streams, lakes and bays throughout the state

Texas Water Trust

a program administered by the Texas Water Development Board that enables surface-water right holders to dedicate their water rights to the protection of environmental flows

Texas Wildlife Action Plan

a comprehensive statewide plan that identifies specific actions that promote conservation of wildlife and habitat. Taken as a whole, states' wildlife action plans reflect a national initiative for preventing wildlife from becoming threatened or endangered

Threatened (species)

animal or plant species likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range

Wildlife cooperative

a local organization formed by a group of landowners with common goals for enhancement and/or protection of wildlife habitat and associated wildlife populations

Wildlife Management Areas (WMA)

sites managed by TPWD to perform wildlife and habitat research, conduct resource management education, and provide public hunting, hiking, camping, bird-watching and other outdoor recreation opportunities

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If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any TPWD program, activity or event, you may contact the Human Resources Director, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas, 78744, (512) 389-4808 (telephone), al.bingham@tpwd.state.tx.us (e-mail). Alternatively, you may contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Federal Assistance, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Mail Stop: MBSP-4020, Arlington, VA 22203, Attention: Civil Rights Coordinator for Public Access.





“If there is anything left here of a golden age, varmints and nonvarmints and trees and shrubs and grasses and waters and soils and rocks have everything to do with it. They make the place work, sometimes for me but mainly for its own sake and the world’s. They were here before me and will be here when I’m gone.”

– John Graves, Texas author and naturalist