



San Marcos River Task Force Meeting
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Commission Hearing Room
May 2, 2016

Task Force Charge

To bring together a broad spectrum of stakeholders to provide perspective to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Commission regarding the issues associated with recreational river use on the San Marcos River from the bridge at County Road 101 to Scull Crossing. This 3.6 mile river segment flows through Hays, Caldwell, and Guadalupe Counties. Specifically, the task force is charged with studying and making recommendations concerning how to control illegal behavior, improve public safety, safeguard private property rights, and conserve environmental quality and the natural state in this segment of the San Marcos River.

2:00 p.m.	Welcome and Introductions	Bill Jones, Chairman
2:15 p.m.	Updates Since our Last Meeting	Bill Jones
	1) San Marcos River Foundation River Traffic Study	
	2) Educational Video-	
2:30 p.m.	Overview of Study Area- Review Map & Obtain Stakeholder Input	Bill Jones/Staff
	1) Notation of "shotgun beaches" & law enforcement access to them	
	a. Trespass onto private lands from these beaches	
	i. Notice of private land	
	ii. Education pertaining to private land	
	iii. Trash, noise, lewd behavior on beaches spilling over to private land	
	2) Law enforcement access to recreationists in between "beach" areas	
	a. Problematic due to sheer numbers of tubers, tubes tied together, water current/depth	
2:45 p.m.	Further Identify Stakeholder Issues and Suggested Solutions/Options	Stakeholders
3:55 p.m.	Wrap Up Assignments/Action Items for Next Meeting	Bill Jones, Chairman

San Marcos River Task Force March 7, 2016 Meeting Summary, Next Meeting Date, and Expectations for Next Meeting

Bill Jones, Texas Parks & Wildlife Commissioner and Chairman of the San Marcos River Task Force, called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. After welcoming the group, introductions of Task Force Members were conducted (list of members in attendance is included at the end of this meeting summary).

A Google Earth map of the 3.5 mile study area was reviewed and left on the screens for the group to use when discussing related items.

Chairman Jones then provided updates of events that occurred after our last meeting, which were:

- 1) San Marcos River Foundation (SMRF) River Traffic Study- Dianne Wassenich (SMRF) explained that this citizen-science study is planned again for this summer and will provide helpful data related to recreational traffic on the San Marcos River in both the upper and lower sections. Recreational traffic, or devices, counted will include: inflatables, ice chests/coolers, canoes, kayaks, and paddle boards. This data will be used to report the percentage of recreational devices being used on the river, and to graph the number of devices encountered each minute by time of day. SMRF has hired an intern and is in the process of actively recruiting volunteers for this study. They need about \$2000 dollars, and are working with TPWD to obtain this money.
- 2) Educational Video- The tubing outfitters have committed to developing a video about tubing and regulations on littering and trespassing. Rocco Moses (Texas State Tubes explained that this video has three parts: 1) legalities- trespassing, noise; 2) environmental significance of the river, and 3) the threat of ending tubing if behavior isn't modified. This video is being produced by the same company that did the video for WORD in Comal County. It will be played in a loop at the ticket counter and will be posted on Texas State Tubes website- others can link to the video from their website as well. They have talked with Texas State University to engage the Greek organizations to make this video part of the rush process and are trading cleanups for tubing days with Greek and sports organizations.

When asked if they could add alcohol awareness to this video, the answer was that will be a part of the legalities section of the video.

John Johnson (Texas State University) mentioned he could help make this video be a part of the Freshman Orientation process.

Overview of the Study Area:

The "shotgun beaches" were noted on the Google Earth map, and it was noted that law enforcement had access to these beaches. There was quite a bit of discussion about the beaches and where the private/public land begins and ends. While law enforcement believed it would be helpful to mark private property with either signs or purple paint, others felt that these signs would be a hazard for floods, taken down by the tubers, distract from the natural beauty of the river, and would add to the trash in the river every time the river flooded. Biodegradable signs were brought up as a way to mark property for those landowners who desired to do so. It was mentioned that perhaps there would not be as much trespassing if tubers knew what was public/private- but the problem is that that line changes and is not practical to mark. A point was made that if folks were to keep moving and not congregate- less problems would incur. Potential solutions brought forward were providing notice of private land and more law enforcement at these beaches encouraging tubers to move on. It was asked if TPWD could assist with surveys for marking public/private land, for which Commissioner Jones said TPWD could look into whether this would be possible.

While showing the study area map, TPWD mentioned that we have completed some aquatic sampling within the study area and had the fish assemblages included on the map. TPWD will share these results and findings at the next meeting.

Education:

It was mentioned that the video may help with the improper behavior that is occurring on the river and spilling out onto private land from the beaches. More law enforcement and control is needed, especially when law enforcement has to leave to take violators in for booking. Noise and drunken behavior continue to be a problem. It is believed that alcohol abuse is at the root of the improper behavior and violations.

Another idea for education was creating kiosks such as the one's located at boat ramps at the put in and take outs educating folks on proper behavior. It was also mentioned that these educational signs could be placed at HEB and other places that offer free air for tubes and at places where tubes are sold.

It was mentioned that if perhaps there were landowners who would want to lease their land to the tubing companies for tubing stops (with restrooms and law enforcement)- perhaps the tubers could be encouraged to stop at these lease sites and keep moving otherwise. This was just thrown out as a way to have designated stops rather than folks stopping at every "beach" as they are currently doing.

Law enforcement:

Law enforcement access to be able to reach violators and to offer assistance for safety purposes continues to be problematic- the "rafts" of tubers tied together and their sheer numbers makes it almost impossible to navigate through them. The idea of having tubers not tie themselves together was proposed, but a con to that was brought up in that sometimes that is the only way some of the tubers are able to account for one another. Perhaps limiting the number of tubes tied together to 3-5 tubes is something to explore. Commissioner Jones asked that the law enforcement members of the task force come up with ways to assist with officers still having a presence when holes in coverage are produced as folks have to be transported to jail and that the officers be prepared to report back to the task force at the next meeting.

At 4:00 p.m., Chairman Jones wrapped up the meeting by explaining that the problems being faced have been clearly outlined, and that at our next meeting, we will drill down to solutions. He explained that there will be a real challenge to producing solutions as some of the issues may be able to be worked out, but others may need to go to another level. He thanked everyone for attending, for their time, and excellent comments- which are all very much appreciated. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Next San Marcos River Task Force Meeting:

August 1, 2016 at TPWD Headquarters. Exact time to be determined, but it will be an afternoon meeting.

Important Note:

An outline of issues and potential options, offered either in the previous meetings or by verbal or written communication with task force members, will be disseminated in early- to mid-July. This outline will help facilitate productive dialog at the August meeting in identifying the list of options that we are charged with providing to the TPW Commission and ultimately to the Legislature per the San Marcos River Task Force Charge, which states:

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