

San Marcos River State Scientific Area Information Sheet



Texas wild-rice (*Zizania texana*)

Texas wild-rice is a true native Texan, found nowhere else in the world except in the cool, clear spring-fed waters of the San Marcos River. This federally endangered aquatic grass forms large streaming clumps firmly rooted in shallow gravel beds in the river. This flow dependent species spends most of its life submerged, emerging only to flower.

Historically, Texas wild-rice was abundant in the San Marcos River, but its range is now reduced to an area that extends from just below Spring Lake Dam downstream to the City of San Marcos wastewater treatment plant. Reduced springflow, increased siltation, and pollution have all contributed to a decrease in plant population. High recreational use of the river and its banks have also impacted Texas wild-rice. Wading can damage or uproot plants, especially during low flow conditions.

San Marcos River State Scientific Area

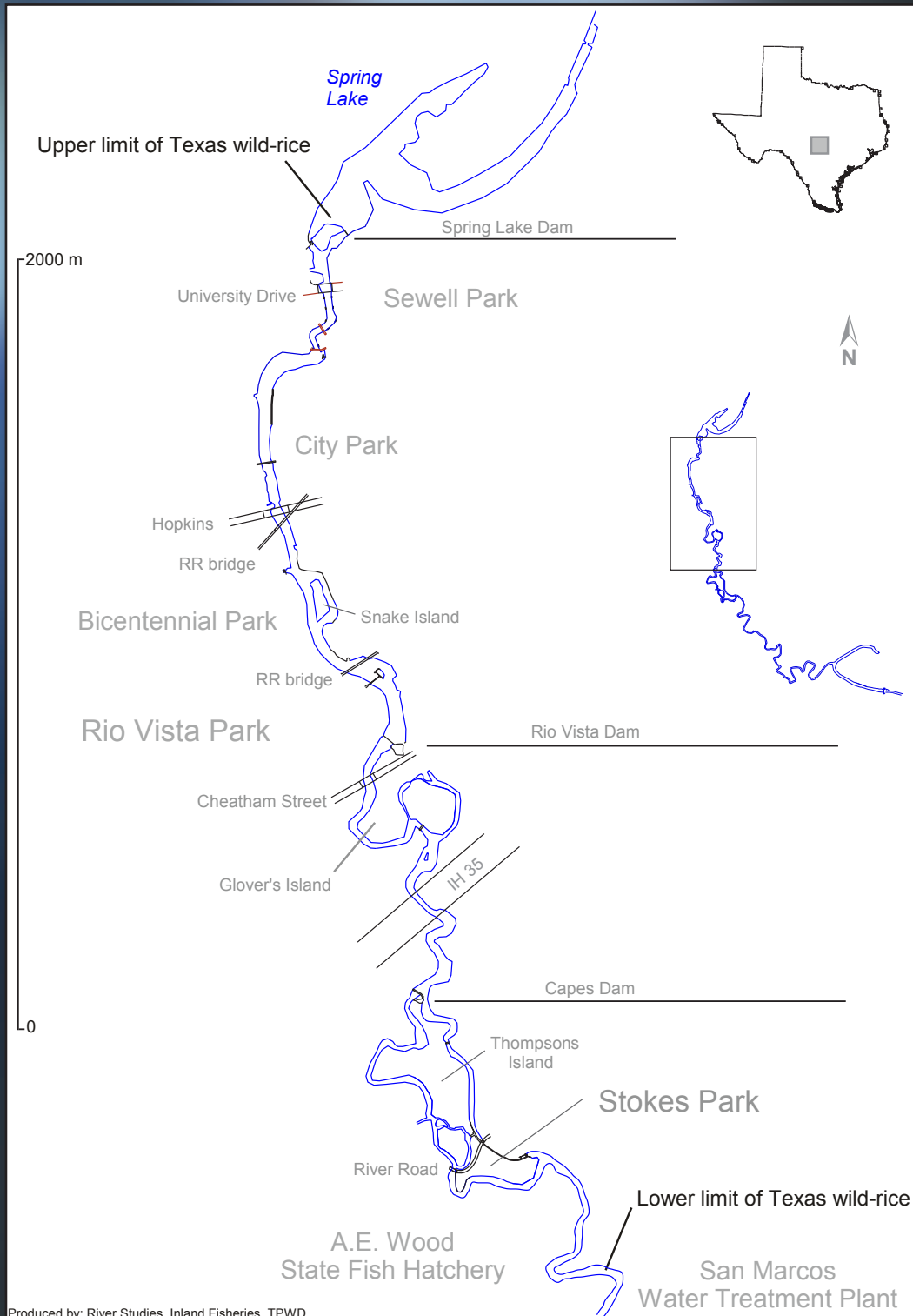
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), with support from regional constituents, has adopted a rule designating a portion of the San Marcos River as a State Scientific Area to protect Texas wild-rice and its habitat. Under state law, TPWD may establish a State Scientific Area for the purpose of education, scientific research, and preservation of flora and fauna of scientific or educational value. For the San Marcos River State Scientific Area, TPWD will conduct an awareness program to educate the public about the unique resources of the river and the need to protect Texas wild-rice.

Under the TPWD rule, persons are prohibited from uprooting Texas wild-rice within the State Scientific Area. Under low-flow conditions where the wild-rice is stressed, TPWD may limit access to some fragile areas inhabited by wild-rice, while continuing to allow recreational activities throughout the full length of the river. The San Marcos River State Scientific Area includes the public waters of the river starting below Spring Lake Dam and extending downstream to the wastewater treatment plant.

Part of a Bigger Plan

The idea of designating a segment of the San Marcos River as a State Scientific Area grew out of the larger Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program (EARIP) initiated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The EARIP brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to develop a Habitat Conservation Plan. The plan seeks to protect the San Marcos River and all of its endangered residents: Texas wild-rice, Texas blind salamanders, San Marcos gambusias, and fountain darters. In a two-pronged approach, the Habitat Conservation Plan provides restoration and mitigation measures for the survival and enhancement of the endangered species while the State Scientific Area designation provides a tool to physically protect the Texas wild-rice population.

A healthy San Marcos River ecosystem is good for the environment, people, and the local economy. As the state's population grows, demand for water increases along with competition for its many uses. With appropriate management and conservation, Texans can balance regional water supply needs with environmental needs and preserve the state's natural resources for the long term.



Additional Resources:

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department www.tpwd.state.tx.us

Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program (EARIP) <http://earip.org/>

The TPWD rule establishing the San Marcos River State Scientific Area, 30 Texas Administrative Code §57.910, may be found here: www.sos.state.tx.us/tac/

For more information, contact Cindy Loeffler at cindy.loeffler@tpwd.state.tx.us