

Hays County Parks & Open Space Master Plan

Updated: July 20, 2006

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I INTRODUCTION

This plan is intended to provide Hays County with an information base to help guide decisions related to parks, recreation, and open space. The plan will assist in the implementation of those decisions and set guidelines for future park and open space development that are feasible for the county in accordance with the desires of its citizens.

This plan covers the unincorporated areas of the county, although the parks and open spaces currently within the cities and villages in the county have been considered in the formation of the plan. The plan provides parks and open space project recommendations through 2012, with more emphasis and detailed cost projections provided for projects recommended for implementation during the first five years.



Blanco River near Little Arkansas

The following pages contain goals and objectives for the county's park and open space system, the methodology used in developing the plan, and an inventory of existing facilities. Also included is an analysis of local needs, the adopted parks, recreation and open space priorities, and an implementation program developed to guide the county in accomplishing the proposed projects within the plan's time frame. The plan also includes potential funding sources that may assist with the implementation of the proposed projects.

The following people were instrumental in the development of this plan and without their

continued involvement, the vision painted for parks and open space in Hays County would not have been complete.

Hays County Parks & Open Space Advisory Board

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| David Baker | Bill Johnson | Chris North |
| Lindell Bollinger | David Jones | Jackie Schafer |
| Curt Busk | Susan Lefler | John Sanford |
| Joe Cox | John McNicholl | Sally P. Simmers |
| Jackie Craig | Paul Mendoza | Eileen Trainor |
| Kris Cusack | Pat Moore | Carolyn Vogel |
| Paula Hamilton | Jack Mynier | Scott Wilson |
| Carolyn Holesovsky | Kathryn Nichols | Steve Windhager |

Hays County Commissioners Court

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Com. Debbie Ingalsbe - Precinct 1
Com. Susie Carter - Precinct 2
Com. Bill Burnett - Precinct 3
Com. Russ Molenaar - Precinct 4

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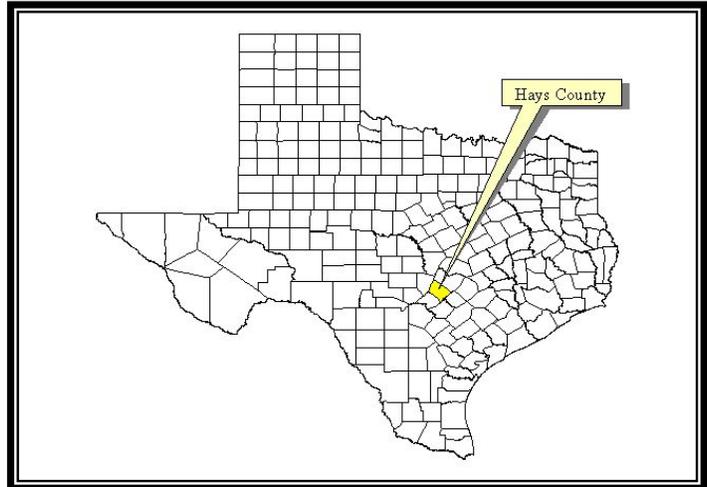
George Coffey

Land & Greenspace Committee

Community Profile

Hays County occupies an area of 679.8 square miles in south central Texas. San Marcos, the county seat is twenty-six miles southwest of downtown Austin. The county is located on the border between the Edwards Plateau and the southern Blackland Prairie region. The Balcones

Escarpment divides it into hilly, tree-covered ranch country in the northwest three-quarters and grassy, agricultural plains in the southeast quarter. The principal natural grasses are sideoats grama, buffalograss and other shortgrass in heavily grazed areas, and little bluestem and tall dropseed in the better managed areas. Significant portions of the remaining open pasture (without ashe juniper) in the county has been converted to non-native grasses such as bermudagrass, King Ranch bluestem and kleingrass. Trees commonly associated with Central Texas include live oak, ashe juniper, and pecan. In Hays County the co-dominant trees are live oak and ashe juniper.¹ The elevation rises from east to west, varying from 600 to over



1,400 feet. The county's numerous streams generally flow in an easterly direction; the principal waterways are Bear, Cypress, and Onion creeks and the Blanco, Pedernales and San Marcos rivers. The Edwards Aquifer underlies the entire eastern half of the County. The Trinity Aquifer underlies the northern and western portions of the county.² San Marcos Springs, the second largest in Texas, delivers over 102 million gallons of water daily. (See Appendix A - Major Aquifers Within the Southern Edwards and Winter Garden Regions.)

¹ Steve Windhager, PhD, Director, Landscape Restoration Program, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

² Texas Water Development Board - Aquifer Maps

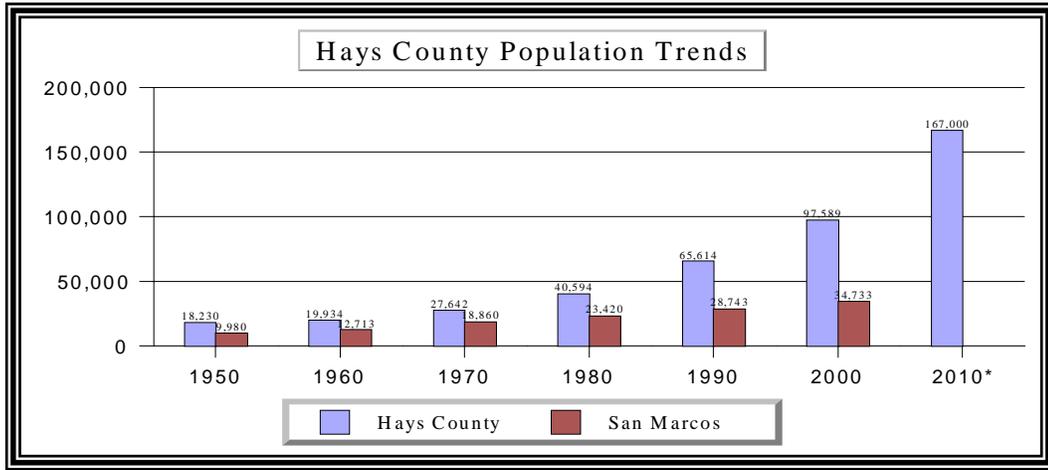
Note: Portions of the Community Profile were reprinted with permission from the Handbook of Texas Online (<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu>)

The many springs in Hays County have attracted numerous visitors. Archeological findings indicate the presence of Paleo-Indian people near San Marcos Springs at least 8,000 years ago, and excavations at the Timmeron Site, west of Wimberley, reveal that Tonkawa Indians practiced farming in the area around A.D. 1200. Many nomadic hunters pursued deer and other game, foraged for wild nuts and berries, hunted buffalo along the prairies, and made general use of this area=s abundant natural resources; all the while living in semi-permanent encampments along the County=s waterways. For a more detailed account of the history of the area see Ricklis/Collins *Human Ecology in the Middle Onion Creek Valley Hays County, Texas*.

Since early in the century, Hays County has enjoyed a steady influx of tourists attracted by the caves, springs, and spas of Wimberley and San Marcos. Camp Ben McCullough, near Driftwood, was organized in 1896 as a site for reunions of the United Confederate Veterans; their descendents continue the annual tradition.

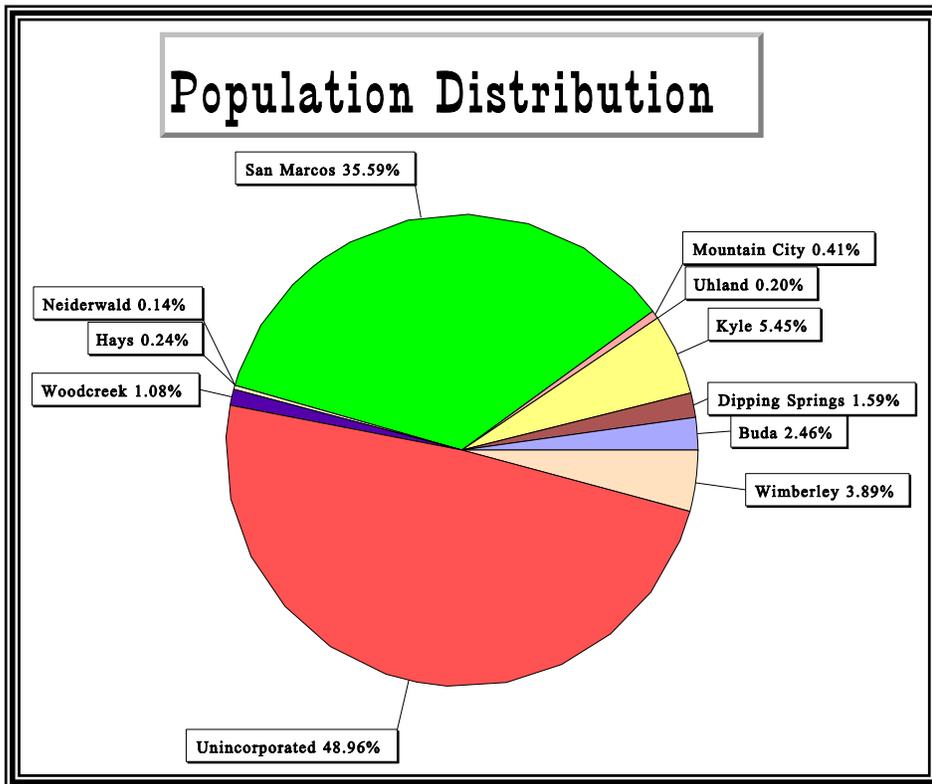
During the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's growth in the northern and eastern parts of the county was influenced by the expanding Austin metropolitan area and the Austin-San Antonio urban strip along Interstate Highway 35. In 1973 Hays County became part of the Austin Metropolitan Statistical Area. In addition to the county seat, San Marcos, which had a population of 34,733 in 2000, other county population centers are Wimberley (3,797) Kyle (5,314), Buda (2,404), Dripping Springs (1,548), and Hays (233).³ The population of the county is anticipated to grow to 167,000 by the year 2010 as can be seen in the following graph.

³ Source: Census 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau – Population Totals 1950-2000 / *Texas State Data Center Texas A&M – 2002

Based on Census 2000 results, the current ethnic breakdown for Hays County is 64% Caucasian, 30% Hispanic, 4% African American, 1% Native American, 1% Asian, and 1% Other. Income data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that approximately 32% of households in Hays County make less than \$15,000. At the time of printing, Census 2000 income figures had not been released. Therefore, the income analysis was performed utilizing



1990 income data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The following graph depicts the population distribution for Hays County. It is important to note that nearly half of Hays County residents do not

reside in an incorporated city. County parks would therefore serve as primary opportunities for recreation for a large segment of the population.

II PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS / METHODOLOGY

In April of 2001, the Hays County Commissioners Court selected MHS Planning & Design to assist in the development of a Parks and Open Space Master Plan for the County. The Hays County Commissioners Court prompted the development of this Parks and Open Space Master Plan to provide recreational opportunities and open space for its citizens, as well as to plan for the growing population's potential impact on the County's natural resources. In recent years county residents have seen the positive and negative aspects of rapid growth. Concern over the loss of natural habitat, lack of public spaces, and the changing character of the county was expressed in the citizens survey conducted in the Summer of 2000. The results of the survey are included in various portions of the plan and in Appendix B.

Early in the planning process it was determined that the 25 member Hays County Parks & Open Space Advisory Board would coordinate the development of the plan and serve as the local sounding board responsible for decisions necessary to guide the planning. The Parks & Open Space Advisory Board periodically updated the County Judge and Commissioners Court on the process and progress of the planning effort.

The initial step in evaluating the parks and open space system was to inventory the existing parks, open spaces and other recreational resources within the county.

Since the desired outcome of the plan was to provide a well balanced network of parks and open spaces and not to duplicate the efforts of others, all county-owned facilities as well as parks and open spaces in the cities, towns and

village within the county were inventoried. It should be noted that although school and privately owned recreational facilities were not inventoried, they were considered as a contributing factor in the overall recreational scheme.



Public hearing in San Marcos

Of the three accepted methods of recreation/open space planning - resource based, demand based, and standards based; the two methods used to develop the Hays County plan were the resource and demand based approaches.

The resource based approach was utilized to insure that the final plan reflected and took full advantage of the incredible natural resources found in the local landscape. To this end, the key natural resources, such as rivers, aquifer recharge areas, springs and summits within the county were comprehensively inventoried, visited, and photographed. Other features that have an impact on the resource based planning approach include:

- Floodways and floodplains
- Wetlands and buffers
- Topography
- Moderate and steep slopes
- Ridgelines and watersheds
- Habitat
- Soils and geology
- Scenic vistas from public roads and other public areas

The final aspect considered in the resource based approach was the compatibility of the resource for use as a public recreation space.

The demand based approach was used to make sure that the recommendations contained in the plan reflected the needs and desires of the citizens of the county. Initially, demand was measured by a citizen's survey, which was conducted in the Summer of 2000. Five open forum meetings were also held. The open forum meetings were well advertised, open to the general public and held in five different locations throughout the county. Each meeting was well attended and involved dialog constructive to the planning of the park and open space network. The open forum meetings were also used to verify the key



Students in Dripping Springs participate in the process

findings of the citizen's survey on park and open space issues.

Focus Group meetings were conducted with over twenty different special interest groups to further analyze the park and open space needs in the county. The focus group meetings also served as a mechanism to gather information concerning ongoing plans by others that could influence the overall park and open space system proposed by Hays County. Focus group meetings were held with:

- Resource Agency Managers
- Conservation/Environmental Organizations
- Student Groups (two meetings)
- Educators (two meetings)
- Major Land Owners
- Foundations, Civic and Non-Profit Groups
- Senior Citizens
- Youth Recreation Associations
- Property Owners Associations, and
- Elected Officials

Through the public meetings and focus group meetings the role of the proposed county park and open space system in the overall recreational scheme was defined. The methodology used to define the county park and open space system involved analyzing the facilities and recreational desires from the citizen's survey and comparing this list of facilities with existing facilities in the Hays County area which are available for public use. These results were supported by input from the Hays County Parks & Open Space Advisory Board, based on their ranking of a list of park and open space facilities and the role the county should play in providing those facilities.

Once all of this information was assimilated, the Parks & Open Space Advisory Board prioritized the desired recreational facilities, which will be included in county parks. With these facilities in mind, definitions for the different types of parks for the county park system were developed.

Based on the citizen input, existing inventory and available resources, potential park projects were developed that included additional parks, open spaces and recreational facilities. Once the master project list was developed and refined, members of the Parks Advisory Committee prioritized the potential projects based on demand, the role of the county system, and their perception of needs. The projects on the list were then analyzed for their partnership potential and existing mechanisms for funding the projects were identified.

Updates to the plan as part of the July 20, 2006 revision are highlighted in blue Times Roman font.

In the spring of 2006, the County of Hays contracted with Land Design Partners to assist in the County of Hays Parks & Open Space Master Plan Update. Substantial sections updated in the plan included, Section II - Plan Development Process/Methodology, Section V – Inventory, Section VIII – Priorities and Recommendations, Section IX – Existing & Available Mechanisms – Implementation Schedule, and Section X – Conclusions.

As part of this update, the County of Hays held a public hearing on June 8, 2006 to ask for citizen input in the update of the master plan. Those in attendance overwhelming supported the direction that the County was preceding in regards to parks and open space within the County, and encouraged the County to continue in the implementation of the Hays County & Open Space Master Plan.

Appendix “F” has been added to this plan to document the public hearing input process, including letters submitted to the County as a follow-up to the public hearing.

III GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The following Goals and Objectives are provided to give direction for future county decisions regarding the parks and open space system. These goals and objectives were established based on input from public meetings, focus group interviews, a citizens survey conducted in the summer of 2000, the Hays County Parks & Open Space Advisory Board, and elected officials.

General Goal:

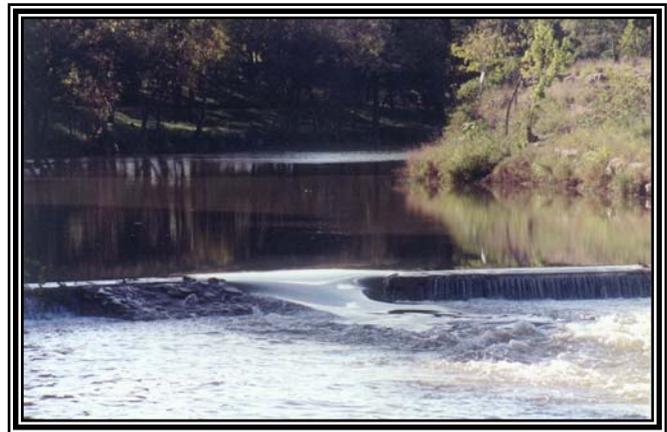
To provide a network of county parks and open spaces tailored to meet the recreational needs of county residents, while preserving and enhancing the unique environmental attributes and the visual character of the county.

County Parks Goal:

To create a county park system that satisfies the passive and semi-passive recreational needs of county residents without duplicating the recreational facilities provided by the towns, villages, cities, youth sports organizations, and private entities within the county.

County Parks Objectives:

- To provide public access to small lakes and ponds for water based recreation.
- To provide river access to the Blanco River, the San Marcos River, and other major tributaries in strategic locations for public access.
- To create a river trail for canoeing, kayaking, tubing, and other forms of non-motorized recreational river travel.
- To work cooperatively with the towns, villages, and cities within the county on park and open space projects that satisfy recreational needs of county residents and to inform residents about park, recreation and open space opportunities in the county.
- To form partnerships with private entities on major park and open space projects in order to stretch the available funds devoted to parks and open space.



Blanco River near Little Arkansas Campground

- To actively work with the residential development community to provide parks and open spaces in large master planned developments.
- To develop a cost effective method of maintaining parks and open spaces within the county park network.
- To ensure that all park facilities and open spaces meet the current standards for safety and accessibility.
- To actively seek and utilize Texas Parks and Wildlife Department grant funding and other grant programs for park land acquisition and development.
- To coordinate all park development and programming with the county Sheriff's Department in order to insure an acceptable level of safety in county parks.

County Open Space Goal:

To realize and appreciate that the natural environment and ecosystems represent a significant contribution to the economic base and character of the county, and should be conserved, protected and further integrated into the park and open space system through land acquisitions, conservation easements and other tools for private land conservation.

County Open Space Objectives:

- To be pro-active in the protection and/or acquisition of unique natural open space for sustainable public use.
- To develop an education program that exposes park patrons to key environmental issues and land stewardship.
- To identify environmental/historical/archeological/cultural treasures within the county to be preserved for future generations.
- To cooperatively work with local municipalities, regional entities, river authorities, private landowners, developers and land trusts in the protection of critical lands within the Edwards and Trinity Aquifer recharge and contributing zones.

(NOTE: The Trinity Aquifer's recharge and contributing zones in Hays County have yet to be extensively scientifically studied and boundaries definitively identified.)

- To promote appropriate conservation approaches to willing landowners who seek to protect habitat, water quality and quantity, and Hays County's way of life and natural

heritage.

- To work with private landowners on their conservation objectives.

IV PARK & OPEN SPACE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM AND INVENTORY

Area and Facility Concepts and Standards

The county's park and open space classification system is broken down into six major categories. These park types are established to create a county park system that compliments, not competes with, those facilities provided by San Marcos, Wimberley, Dripping Springs, Kyle and Buda.

- 1) Area Park - An area park is between 40 and 160 acres in size. The park should contain facilities such as playgrounds, picnic facilities, ponds or lakes, multi-use open areas, trails, restrooms and parking lots. Natural open space should be a major component of each area park. In some instances, area parks should contain space set aside for the development of youth sports fields to be developed, operated and maintained through partnerships with local municipalities, organizations, river authorities, private landowners, and/or developers.
- 2) Regional County Park - A regional county park should contain between 150 and 1,000 acres and serve the entire county population. Facilities to be developed in this park type include multi-use open areas, lakes, campgrounds, hike/bike trails, bridle paths, restrooms, ample parking, interpretive center, picnic facilities, picnic pavilions, amphitheater, disc golf course, and playgrounds. The presence of significant natural features and river/creek access should be an important factor in the site selection for this park type. Based on the natural resources, the majority of the land in a regional county park should be left in a natural state. Any development should be concentrated in non-sensitive areas and only minor development; *i.e.* trail systems, should be allowed in ecologically sensitive areas.
- 3) River Park - A river park is a park located on a river or major creek that affords public access to recreational waters. River parks should be between 30 and 50 acres in size and be located on both sides of the river/creek where possible to minimize conflicts with

adjacent property owners. Facilities to be developed in a river park may include playgrounds, small campground, picnic facilities, picnic pavilions, trails, canoe/kayak launch, lawn areas, swimming area, bank fishing, natural open space and parking lots.

4) River Access Park - This park type should be between one and three acres in size and located on a river or major creek. The purpose of this style park is to provide access to recreational waters for the public. Facilities to be constructed in a river access park include a parking lot, canoe/kayak launch, restrooms, picnic area and some natural open space. River access parks should be strategically located along a river to allow for put-in and take-out of water craft. River access parks in tandem with river parks should be strategically located along a water course to form a water trail for river excursions of varying lengths.

5) Greenbelt Parks - Greenbelts or greenbelt parkways are linear parks usually developed around a natural resource such as a creek, river, utility easement, or lake shore. The potential benefits of a greenbelt system are numerous. Not only can a greenbelt system preserve valuable open space and natural habitat, it can provide a natural environment for walking, jogging, and bicycling trails, provide a transportation corridor linking neighborhoods to parks,

schools, and shopping areas and provide a variety of passive recreational opportunities free, or relatively free, from automobile interference. Greenbelts also serve as natural buffers between land uses, utility



Floodplain corridor along Onion Creek

(underground) easements, and

can usually be acquired at a relatively inexpensive price due to the restrictions on development. Greenbelts can offer significant habitat and serve as corridors for wildlife

movement. Design standards for greenbelts are relatively loose in order to allow the maximum use of the natural environment in the design. Greenbelt corridor widths are often determined by the existing topography, severity of flooding, and other unique natural features. Greenbelt corridors of less than fifty (50) "useable" feet should be avoided and narrow corridor sections kept to a minimum. One-hundred foot corridor widths and wider give flexibility in design and are encouraged wherever possible.

- 6) Natural Resource Park - A natural resource park is a park devoid of significant man-made improvements with preservation of the resources as the key function. The size and allowable uses of a natural resource park will vary from site to site depending on the resource. An example of a natural resource park in the county is a summit adjacent to a roadway that provides motorists with grand views of the landscape beyond. Natural resource parks should be established to preserve, enhance, and protect unique natural features that are irreplaceable. These parks can help preserve the character of the county for future generations.

V INVENTORY

County Owned Facilities:

Dudley Johnson Park is currently the only park in the Hays County Park System, as can be seen on the following map. The park encompasses 88.75 acres along the north bank of the Blanco River. The park is located approximately five miles north of San Marcos and provides users with both year round access to the waters and exceptional views of the Blanco River. Improvements include picnic stations, open areas, river swimming areas, bank fishing areas, parking and a boat ramp. The park was heavily damaged during the 1998 flood and the County has continued to make improvements since that time. Plans to construct trails and picnic facilities on the currently undeveloped portions of the park are nearing completion.



Dudley Johnson Park entrance sign

Map of Existing Inventory
Hays County Parks & Open Space Master Plan

Other Facilities:

The following table includes some of the facilities available to the public which may not be owned or maintained by the county.

This inventory was compiled utilizing information from:

- The Sub-Committee of The Hays County Parks & Open Space Advisory Board
- Village of Wimberley Master Plan Parks & Recreation - 2001
- City of Buda Comprehensive Plan, 2002-2012
- City of Dripping Springs Master Park Plan 1997
- City of San Marcos Parks & Recreation Department
- Hays County Grants Department

Hays County Parks & Open Space Inventory

| <u>Parks / Facility Name</u> | Acres | Baseball Fields | Basketball | Benches | Horseshoe Courts | Fishing Piers | Football | Gazebos, Shelters, Pavilions | Multi-use Trails | Picnic Tables | Playgrounds | Practice Fields | Recreation Centers | Restrooms | River Access | Soccer Fields | Softball Fields | Swimming Pools | Tennis Courts | Volleyball Courts |
|---|-------|-----------------|------------|---------|------------------|---------------|----------|------------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <u>County Maintained:</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5-Mile Dam Complex | 88.75 | | | X | | | | | | X | X | X | | | X | | | | | |
| (Formerly Dudley Johnson Park) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <u>Buda Area:</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Original City Park | 6.0 | X | X | | | | | X | | X | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Bradfield/Ashford Parks | 30 | | | X | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| City-Owned Undeveloped | 53 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rainbow Ranch ¹ | 107 | | X | X | | X | | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | | | X | | X |
| Bonita Vista Park | 2 | | | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | | | | | |
| <u>City of Hays Area:</u> <u>(City of Austin Water Quality Protection Lands)</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lower Bear Creek Watershed Management Unit | 1325 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Onion Creek Watershed Management Unit | 1730 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <u>Kyle Area:</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gregg-Clark Park | 29 | X | X | | | | X | X | X | X | X | | | | | X | | | X | |
| Steeplechase Park | 39 | | X | | | | | X | | X | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Optimist Sports Fields | 21 | X | X | X | | X | | | | X | | X | | X | | X | | | | |
| Hays Youth Sports Association Park | 20 | X | | X | | | | | | X | | X | | X | | X | | | | |
| Kyle 50- acre Park ² | 50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| <u>Parks / Facility Name</u> | Acres | Baseball Fields | Basketball | Benches | Horseshoe Courts | Fishing Piers | Football | Gazebos, Shelters, Pavilions | Multi-use Trails | Picnic Tables | Playgrounds | Practice Fields | Recreation Centers | Restrooms | River Access | Soccer Fields | Softball Fields | Swimming Pools | Tennis Courts | Volleyball Courts |
|---|-------|-----------------|------------|---------|------------------|---------------|----------|------------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <u>City of San Marcos Parks:</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Purgatory Creek Park | ±500 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bicentennial Park | 3 | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | X | | | | | | |
| City Park | 8 | | X | | | | X | X | X | X | | | X | X | X | | | | | X |
| Children's Park | 6 | | | | | | | X | X | X | X | | | X | | | | | | |
| San Marcos Riverwalk Park | 3 | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gary Park | 40 | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | | X | X | | | |
| HEB Park | 1 | | | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Hills of Hays Park | 3 | | X | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Stokes Park | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | |
| Lowman Park | 7.3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Memorial Park | 13 | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ramon Luci Park | 22 | | | | | | | X | X | X | | | | X | | X | | | | |
| Rio Vista Park | 14 | | X | | | | | X | X | X | | | | X | | | | X | X | X |
| River Ridge Park | 7 | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | |
| Wildlife Habitat #1 | 9 | | | | | | | | X | | | | | X | | | | | | |
| Wildlife Habitat #2 | 2 | | | | | | | | X | X | | | | X | | | | | | |
| Jaycees Park | 4 | | X | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Swift Memorial Park | 1 | | X | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | | | | | |

| <u>Parks / Facility Name</u> | Acres | Baseball Fields | Basketball | Benches | Horseshoe Courts | Fishing Piers | Football | Gazebos, Shelters, Pavilions | Multi-use Trails | Picnic Tables | Playgrounds | Practice Fields | Recreation Centers | Restrooms | River Access | Soccer Fields | Softball Fields | Swimming Pools | Tennis Courts | Volleyball Courts |
|--|-------|-----------------|------------|---------|------------------|---------------|----------|------------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <u>City of San Marcos Parks (Cont):</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Veramendi Plaza Park | 1 | | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| Veterans Park | 1 | | X | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| Victory Gardens Park | 1 | | X | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Dunbar Park | 7.3 | | X | | | | | X | | | X | | | | | | | | | |
| William & Eleanor Crook Park | 3.4 | | | | | | | | X | X | | | | X | | | | | | |
| <u>Dripping Springs Area Private or Non-Profit Owned Facilities</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dripping Springs Youth Sport Association Hope Hans Sportsplex | ±15 | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hidden Springs Ranch | 7.66 | X | | | | | | X | X | X | | | | | | X | | X | | |
| <u>City of Dripping Springs</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Founders Memorial Park | 25 | | | | | | | X | X | X | X | | | | | X | X | X | | |
| Dripping Springs Sports & Recreation Park | 37 | X | X | X | X | | | | X | X | X | | | | | X | X | | | X |
| Karhan Park | 18.7 | | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | X | | | |
| <u>WCID MUD (in Dripping Springs ETJ):</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Watershed Conservation Improvement Districts 1 & 2 | 900 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <u>Driftwood Area:</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Camp Ben McCullough ¹ | 37.5 | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | |

| <u>Parks / Facility Name</u> | Acres | Baseball Fields | Basketball | Benches | Horseshoe Courts | Fishing Piers | Football | Gazebos, Shelters, Pavilions | Multi-use Trails | Picnic Tables | Playgrounds | Practice Fields | Recreation Centers | Restrooms | River Access | Soccer Fields | Softball Fields | Swimming Pools | Tennis Courts | Volleyball Courts |
|--|-------|-----------------|------------|---------|------------------|---------------|----------|---------------------------------|------------------|--|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <u>Village of Wimberley Area</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cypress Creek Nature Preserve - Undeveloped | 7.24 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Blue Hole Campground ³ | 126 | | | | | X | | | | X | | | | X | X | | | X | | |
| VFW | 20 | | | | | | | X | | X | | | | | | | X | | | |
| Wimberley Community Center | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <u>Niederwald Area:</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Niederwald Community Park | 8.69 | X | X | | | | | | X | | | | | | | X | | | | |
| 1- Privately Owned Facility With Restricted Access | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2-Park acreage currently owned by the Hays County Parks Foundation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3- Currently in the planning stages with the Wildflower Center | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total – 5,366.54 Acres | | | | | | | | | | Total Developed Park Land Open to the Public – 454.96 Acres | | | | | | | | | | |

| Key Natural, Archeological, Historical and Cultural Resources in Hays County | |
|---|---|
| Aquifer Recharge Zones | Hays County plays an important role with regard to Aquifer Recharge for both the Trinity Aquifer and the Edwards Aquifer. Nearly all of the county is located in the Recharge Zone or the Contributing Zone for one of these two aquifers |
| Barton Creek | Scenic 40 mile long creek flowing east from Dripping Springs in Hays County to its mouth on the Colorado River at Town Lake in Austin. Barton Creek provides aquifer recharge, popular recreational opportunities such as Barton Springs Pool and contributes to the base flow of the Colorado River. |
| Blanco River | Scenic River which runs east/west through the county providing aquifer recharge and water based recreation. |
| Blue Hole | Privately owned campground, recreation area and popular swimming hole on Cypress Creek (near Wimberley). A daily fee is charged for admittance to the site. |
| Camp Ben McCullough | Campground with picnic facilities which is open to the public. |
| Cypress Creek | Scenic 14 mile creek in western Hays County which contributes to the base flow of the Blanco River. |
| Dead Man's Hole | Artesian spring in northern Hays County which is currently protected from development under a Conservation Easement. |
| Devil's Backbone | Although mostly located in Comal County, this ridge along S.H.32 provides scenic views of the Hill Country. |
| Ezell's Cave | Cave in San Marcos which provides aquifer recharge. |
| Freeman Ranch | 3,500 acre ranch near San Marcos which is owned by Southwest Texas State University. The site is used by the school for agricultural research. |
| Jacob's Well | Jacob's Well is an artesian spring headwaters of Cypress Creek located about 4 miles northwest of the Village of Wimberley. The free-flowing spring waters contribute to the community's character, attractiveness, ecological viability, and economic stability. |
| Little Twin Sister Peaks | Prominent hilltop near Wimberley which provides scenic views of the Hill Country |
| Little Arkansas - Fern Bank Springs | Privately owned campground located on the Blanco River providing scenic views and water access. Springs are located on the site which contribute to the base flow of the Blanco River. |
| | |

| Key Natural, Archeological, Historical and Cultural Resources in Hays County | |
|---|---|
| Lower Bear Creek Watershed Management Unit Water Quality Protection Land | City of Austin water quality protection land totaling 1325 acres located along Bear Creek. Property provides extensive open space and is located in the Lower Bear Creek Watershed. |
| Old Baldy | Prominent hilltop near Wimberley which provides scenic views of the Hill Country |
| Onion Creek Watershed Management Unit Water Quality Protection Land | City of Austin water quality protection land totaling nearly 1800 acres located along Onion Creek. Onion Creek contributes approximately 15% of the total recharge for the Barton Creek section of the Edwards Aquifer. Property provides extensive open space. |
| Onion Creek | Scenic 60 mile creek running northeast from Johnson City in Blanco County to its mouth on the Colorado River in Travis County. Onion Creek provides aquifer recharge and contributes to the base flow of the Colorado River. |
| Pedernales River | The Pedernales River flows 106 mile northeast from Kimble County to its mouth on Lake Travis in Travis County. The Pedernales contributes to the base flow of the Colorado River as well as providing white water rafting. Approximately two miles of this river is located in Hays County. |
| San Marcos River | Spring fed river which flows southeast from its San Marcos Springs headwaters to its mouth on the Guadalupe River, just west of Gonzales. The river is home to a number of endangered species including the Texas Blind Salamander and Texas Wild Rice. The San Marcos River provides extensive water based recreation opportunities and contributes to the base flow of the Guadalupe River. |
| San Marcos Springs | Headwaters of the San Marcos River which also contributes to the base flow of the Blanco River. |
| Storm Ranch (Onion & Cypress Creeks) | 6,000 acre cattle ranch in central Hays County which has a proposed conservation easement that preserves the Ranch=s character and protects open space. |
| The Narrows on the Blanco | Gorge along the Blanco River (near Wimberley) which is formed by a series of cliffs extending 1/4 of a mile. The Narrows is a popular white water rafting attraction. |

The following map depicts some of the key natural resources in Hays County.

**Map of Natural Resources
Hays County Parks & Open
Space Master Plan**

VI LEVEL OF SERVICE

Level of service is the term used to describe the importance of the role of a park and open space system in a community and is expressed in acres of useable park and open space lands per 1,000 persons.

Over the past 30 years, it has been the accepted practice within the park and recreation profession to adopt a uniform national land standard, such as 10 acres per 1,000 population. This was held to be the goal every community should strive for to have an exemplary park and recreation system. For many communities, achieving such a standard was impossible. Too often such a published standard was adopted as a policy upon which funding decisions and state mandated directives were based. A standard for parks and recreation cannot be universal, nor can one city be compared with another even though they are similar in many respects. The national facility standards found in the *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines* (1983, NRPA) reflected professional judgment, rather than an assessment of community needs.⁴

In recent years, the standard has been modified to more specifically reflect the unique characteristics of each community and a range of levels of service has been widely utilized. This method of planning is described in detail in *Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* by Mertes and Hall, published by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration.

Although the level of service concept is normally applied to towns and cities, there is some applicability to the Hays County Parks and Open Space System.

Currently the county owns and operates one 89-acre park -Dudley Johnson Park - sometimes

⁴ Source: *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*, James D. Mertes, Ph.D., CLP and James R. Hall, CLP

known as Five Mile Dam. There are currently approximately 55,000 people living in the unincorporated portions of the county. The current level of service of the park and open space system in the unincorporated portion of Hays County is therefore 0.59 acres per 1,000 people.

This calculation assumes that those residents of the county that live in the cities, towns, and villages have their recreational needs met by the respective park systems provided by the city in which they live.

On the other hand, if all public park land in Hays County is added to the level of service calculation, the ratio of park acres per 1,000 persons increases to 4.55.

The current level of service of 0.59 acres per 1,000 population is helpful in establishing base line data that will help in evaluating the progress made as additional parks and open spaces are acquired and developed throughout the planning period.

VII NEEDS ASSESSMENT & IDENTIFICATION

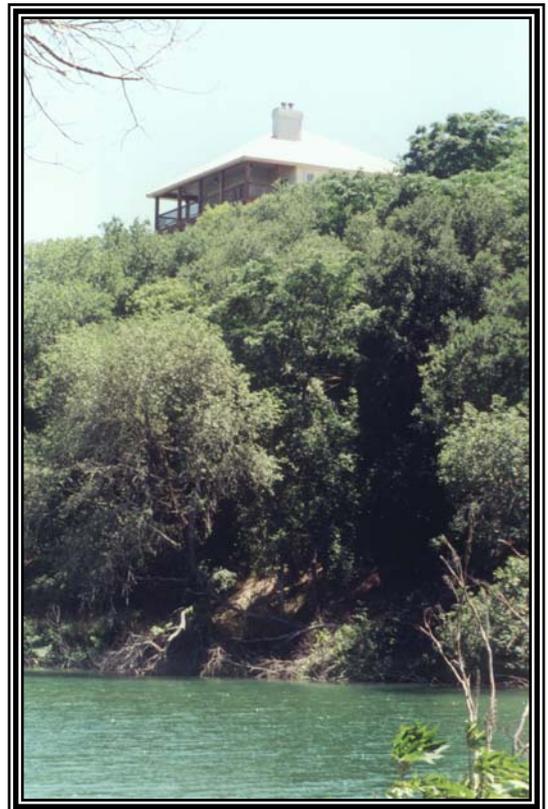
Based on the existing recreational facilities in Hays County, previously established goals and objectives, and extensive public input, the needs of the parks and open space network are herein identified.

In order to identify the needs of the county's park and open space system, it is important to understand the many area influences that affect the present and future recreational and open space needs. This is important since one of the primary goals of the county is to provide parks and open spaces that do not duplicate the city park systems currently in place. There are also some key environmental issues at work within the county that must be integrated into the needs assessment in order for an accurate assessment to be made.

Area Influences: The Hays County area currently represents a much sought after delicate balance of man-made improvements surrounded by pristine natural resources. The natural beauty of the area, geographic location of the county on the I-35 growth corridor, and recent population increases all point to continued and most likely accelerated growth in the near and certainly long-term future for Hays County.

With the inevitable future growth comes the challenge to retain the natural resources and character that make the area unique. One highly important strategy that can certainly help the area retain the existing balance between nature and man is the park and open space system.

In any community, the benefits of a good park and



Development overlooking the Blanco River near Dudley Johnson Park

open space system are far reaching. In Hays County the benefits may extend well beyond the norm. There is a need in Hays County to develop a park and open space system that addresses the recreational needs of the residents. There is also a need to develop an open space system that enhances and preserves as much of the community character as possible. The results of the Hays County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Survey, which was conducted by The Scripp's Howard Texas Poll service in the summer of 2000, help identify the needs of county residents. The results of the survey show that:

- A majority of residents - 55 percent - say it is extremely important for the county to acquire land to protect aquifer recharge areas. Twenty-three percent see that as very important, five percent not important, and two percent have no opinion.
- Forty-four percent of residents say it is extremely important for the county to acquire buffer land along streams to provide flood protection, protect habitat, natural environment and water quality. Twenty-seven percent say that is very important, 14 percent moderately important, five percent slightly important, seven percent not important and three percent have no opinion.
- Thirty-eight percent say it is extremely important for the county to acquire park land along rivers and creeks, compared with 30 percent who say it is very important, 19 percent moderately important, five percent slightly important, six percent not important and two percent have no opinion.
- Twenty-six percent of Hays County residents say it is extremely important and 29 percent say it is very important for the county to acquire land along scenic roadways to preserve the view. Acquiring land along roadways is moderately important to 23 percent, slightly important to 10 percent, not important to eight percent and four percent have no opinion.
- Meanwhile, 25 percent of residents say it is extremely important for the county to acquire very large parks to be left mostly natural and 22 percent say it is very important. Twenty-one percent say acquiring very large parks is moderately important, 10 percent slightly important, 16 percent not important and six percent have no opinion.
- Nineteen percent of residents say it is extremely important for the county to acquire large parks to be developed with various recreation facilities. Thirty-one percent say it is very important to develop large parks, 27 percent say moderately important, nine percent slightly important, 10 percent not important and four

percent have no opinion.

- Less important to residents is having the county acquire parks in existing cities. Thirteen percent see that as extremely important, compared with 21 percent very important, 25 percent moderately important, 15 percent slightly important, 19 percent not important and seven percent have no opinion.
- Residents also are lukewarm to the idea of the county acquiring land for parks near the newly developing neighborhoods. Eleven percent see that as extremely important, 19 percent very important, 26 percent moderately important, 18 percent slightly important, 20 percent not important and six percent have no opinion.
- Also less important for residents is the county acquiring parkland to be developed with athletic field complexes for softball, soccer and other team sports. Twelve percent say that is extremely important, 19 percent very important, 23 percent moderately important, 19 percent slightly important, 23 percent not important and four percent have no opinion.
- Meanwhile, the survey asked residents why they do not go to parks as often as they may like. The top response - 40 percent - was that they spend their leisure time doing other things. Thirty-three percent say the parks are too crowded, 27 percent say the parks are too far away and 21 percent don't know where parks are located.
- Eleven percent of Hays County residents do not go to parks as often as they like because they don't feel safe at them. Eight percent say their age limits their visits, seven percent don't have anyone to go with and five percent have disabilities that prohibit them from visiting parks. Two percent of residents don't visit parks because they don't enjoy outdoor recreation and one percent don't have transportation to get there.⁵

The cities of San Marcos, Niederwald, Buda, Hays, Kyle, Wimberley, and Dripping Springs each have park and open space resources that are available for public use. The total developed park

⁵ Source: Hays County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Survey, conducted by The Scripp's Howard Texas Poll Service - July, 2000

and open spaces provided by these communities is approximately 312-acres. An additional 143 acres of parks are provided by civic organizations, the YMCA, and private entities. The vast majority of the existing park land provided by the cities and quasi-public organizations is devoted to active play and organized youth sports. It should be noted that the City of San Marcos has recently acquired almost 500-acres of park land which will have a significant amount of the site devoted to natural open space and passive forms of recreation.

An external influence on the park and open space needs that must be considered is the City of Austin's recent acquisition of lands in the aquifer recharge zones in the north central portion of the county. Under its Proposition II initiative, Austin has purchased two tracts in Hays County totaling 3,055 acres. The

primary purpose of these water quality protection lands is the preservation of water quality and quantity in the aquifer. Although many forms of recreation are to be specifically disallowed on the water quality protection lands, there is a possibility that the



City of Austin Onion Creek Watershed Management Unit

development of recreational trails, especially trails with an educational component related to water quality, could be accomplished on these lands.

The City of Austin lands, coupled with the needs of the county residents, presents a potential partnership that could prove very beneficial for both entities. Therefore, there is a need for the County Commissioner's Court to continue dialogue with the City of Austin regarding limited recreational use on the City of Austin Water Quality Protection Lands.

Another significant external influence on the area's park and open space network involves conservation easements. The Hill Country Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy of Texas, Wimberley Valley Watershed, and Natural Area Preservation Association among others are

diligently working with county land owners to obtain various forms of conservation easements. A conservation easement is a restriction landowners voluntarily place on specified areas of their property to protect natural, productive, or cultural features. With a conservation easement, the landowner retains legal title to the property and determines the types of land uses to continue and those to restrict.⁶

Existing and future conservation easements somewhat reduce the need for the county to acquire lands to be set aside as natural open space. It should be noted that in most instances,



Trail sign at Hamilton's Pool

conservation easements do not provide for access upon the lands by the general public. Under these conditions, conservation easements assist in retaining the rural character of the county and provide significant environmental benefits yet can not be solely relied on to satisfy many recreational needs due to the limited access afforded the general public.

Recreational Needs

Water Based Recreation - The largest leisure based need in Hays County is for access to recreational waters. Some of the finest, if not the finest, rivers, creeks and streams in the State of Texas are located in the county. The Blanco River, San Marcos



San Marcos River in San Marcos

⁶ Conservation Easements: A guide for Texas Landowners by Texas Parks and Wildlife



Trespassing sign near Martindale

River, Onion Creek and Cypress Creek each offer a sparkling oasis for swimmers, canoers, kayakers, and tubers. Access to these waters however is currently quite limited. With the exception of Dudley Johnson Park located on the north shore of the Blanco River, private campgrounds, and locations where roadways cross the rivers and creeks, public access to the aquatic assets is not available in the unincorporated portions of the county.

Throughout the citizens survey the primary recreational desire of those polled was for additional access to rivers and creeks for recreational purposes. For example, the survey revealed that a resounding 92% support additional county park land along rivers and creeks.

The input from the public meetings helped define the need for public access to recreational waters. One aspect is for activities such as boating and swimming where the participant is actively recreating in the water. The second aspect is for activities “in proximity” of the water where the water provides the soothing atmosphere and views from picnic areas, lawn areas, campgrounds, trails and other recreational elements.

In concert with this demand for access to rivers and creeks, there is a need for the public to be educated on the existing laws of the State regarding public access to rivers and streams and the rights of adjacent land owners. The current laws regarding river access are included in Appendix C.



Blanco River

In portions of the county without perennial rivers and creeks, such as the area east of I-35, there is still a need for access to recreational waters. In these areas, the need is for access to ponds and small lakes that afford opportunities to fish, feed

the ducks and recreate in proximity to water.

Passive and Semi-Passive Recreation - There are significant needs in the county for passive and semi-passive forms of recreational opportunities.

In the citizens survey trails, picnic areas, tent camp sites, nature study/wildlife viewing areas and fishing lakes, all passive and semi-passive forms of recreation, ranked high with the survey respondents. Conversely, facilities such as baseball fields, soccer fields, basketball courts and tennis courts ranked very low in the hierarchy of facilities desired. Once again, these results were echoed by the comments received in the public input meetings and focus group interviews.



Relaxing at Dudley Johnson Park

Based on the inventory of public recreational facilities currently available in the area, the need for more passive forms of recreation becomes clear. The vast majority of the parks in San Marcos, Dripping Springs, Wimberley, Kyle and Buda area almost totally devoted to active recreational uses. Therefore, the provision of passive and semi-passive recreational opportunities will not only serve the needs of those residents of the county living outside of the cities, but will serve those county residents within the cities, towns and villages as well.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails - There is a need in the county to provide bicycle and pedestrian trails for recreational outings. There are currently no designated bicycle or pedestrian trails within the unincorporated portions of the county. Trails were a high priority with the respondents of the citizen's survey. Additional public input received throughout the planning process revealed strong support for bicycle trails that connect parks and other major areas of activity, as well as for nature trails. Public input also revealed that bicycle trails along roadways should be separated from traffic lanes as much as possible to reduce auto-bicycle conflicts and to make the cycling experience more enjoyable.

The following map depicts a logical county-wide trail system. In addition to the potential bicycle/pedestrian trail routes depicted, there is a need for trails within the future parks and open spaces in the county.

Potential Trails Map
Hays County Parks & Open Space
Master Plan

Active Recreation - The needs of county residents in the area of active recreation are, to a large degree, currently being satisfied through the parks provided by the cities, youth sports associations, and facilities provided by school districts.



In the citizens survey conducted in 2000 for

Baseball fields near Kyle

Hays County, the need for active recreation facilities ranked very low. When asked what recreational facilities should be provided by Hays County, baseball fields, softball fields, soccer fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, and volleyball courts ranked the lowest of all facilities listed as selections.

These findings were verified in the public meetings held throughout the county, as well as through focus group interviews. The public meetings also brought to light that the future need for active recreational facilities, such as youth sports fields, will be the highest in the Kyle and Buda area - the I-35 corridor. Due to the proximity to the interstate and the availability of lower cost land and housing, it is projected that much of the future growth in the Kyle and Buda area will be comprised of young families with youth sports-aged children. With this in mind, the future demand for active recreational facilities in the Kyle-Buda area will be proportionately higher than the Wimberley area. Within the ten year plan time frame there will be a growing need in the southeastern portion of the county for active recreational facilities and opportunities.

Natural Open Space Needs

There is a need to set aside open spaces to preserve significant portions of the major natural resources found in the county. Based on citizen input, the major resources within the county to be preserved include springs, rivers, creeks, and major summits that provide broad vistas and environmental elements that effect water quality *i.e.* the aquifer recharge zones.

Once again, this need was underscored by the results of the citizen's survey. The survey showed that 88% felt it was important for the county to be involved in preserving views along roadways. A resounding 93% felt it was important for the county to acquire land to protect the aquifer recharge areas. As pointed out in

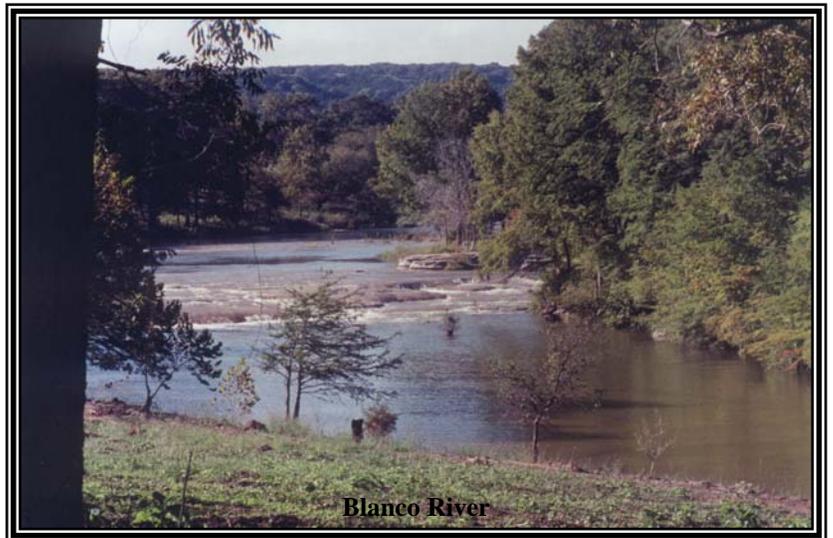


Scenic Hill Country Vista

the public input meetings, unless the aquifers remain healthy, the beautiful rivers, springs and creeks that people long to recreate near will gradually degrade as water flows are reduced.

The natural environment of Hays County is a complex topic that deserves more thorough analysis and planning than can be devoted to the subject in this Parks and Open Space Master Plan. There is a need for the county to

consider the development of a county-wide natural resource plan. The plan should focus not only on the natural environment as it relates to the parks and open space system, but as it relates to residential, commercial and industrial development, water usage,



Blanco River

wildlife, aquifers, etc. The natural resource plan should integrate the parks and open space recommendations of this plan with other important environmental issues to provide a cohesive system.

VIII PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Facility Priorities

Based on the needs analysis, facility priorities were established for the Hays County Parks and Open Space Master Plan. These facility priorities help define the county park system and were compiled using all data previously gathered.

| Hays County Parks & Open Space Master Plan | | | | |
|---|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| FACILITY PRIORITY SUMMARY | | | | |
| Recommended Facility | Rank | High Priority | Moderate Priority | Low Priority |
| Water Access - Rivers, Creeks, Ponds & Lakes | 1 | X | | |
| Multi-Use Trails (soft) | 2 | X | | |
| Tent Camp Sites | 3 | X | | |
| Picnic Grounds | 4 | X | | |
| Natural Open Space/Nature Study/Wildlife Viewing | 5 | X | | |
| Multi-Use Pavilions | 6 | X | | |
| Playgrounds | 7 | X | | |
| Water Trails (for canoes, kayaks, etc.) | 8 | X | | |
| Fresh Water Swimming Areas | 9 | X | | |
| Open Play Areas | 10 | X | | |
| Fishing Stations/Piers | 11 | X | | |
| Dedicated Bicycle Trails/Lanes | 12 | X | | |

| Recommended Facility | Rank | High Priority | Moderate Priority | Low Priority |
|--|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Multi-Use Trails (hard) | 13 | X | | |
| Water Craft Launch Sites | 14 | X | | |
| Birding/Environmental Education Center | 15 | | X | |
| Disc Golf | 16 | | X | |
| Horseshoe Courts | 17 | | X | |
| Volleyball Courts | 18 | | X | |
| Amphitheater | 19 | | X | |
| Outdoor Arenas | 20 | | | X |
| Youth Softball Fields | 21 | | | X |
| Adult Softball Fields | 22 | | | X |
| Soccer Fields | 23 | | | X |
| Baseball Fields | 24 | | | X |
| Indoor Arenas | 25 | | | X |

Project Recommendations

Based on the results of the needs assessment and the defined role of the county as a parks and open space provider, the following project recommendations are made. The recommendations are listed in the order in which they should be pursued. It should be noted however, that several projects could be implemented simultaneously and the order of implementation could change based on new circumstances not known at the time the plan was printed.

The original project recommendations are shown below in black Times Roman font. Updates to the plan as part of the July 20, 2006 revision are highlighted below each item in blue Times Roman font.

2002-2005

1. Acquire +/-100 acres of parkland east of I-35 for the development of an Area Park.

(Market Value)

Hays County has accomplished this item in several ways.

In 2004, the County acquired fifty-acres of land for the City of Kyle to use in the development of the Kyle 50-acre Park. The City of Kyle has added \$280,000 dollars of confirmed matching donations to this County acquisition.

In the spring of 2005, Hays County also assisted the North Hays Optimist Club (NHOC) with \$325,000 of park improvements on 21-acres of land. The NHOC has added \$325,000 dollars of confirmed matching donations to these County improvements.

Hays County has additionally assisted the City of Kyle in the completion of \$150,000 worth of improvements at Steeplechase Park. This total represents approximately 80% of the \$225,000 that the County will assist in this parks improvement project. The City of Kyle is anticipated to add an additional \$350,000 of matching dollars to this project.

2. Acquire +/-30 acres of parkland on the Blanco River for the development of a Natural Resource Park and River Park. **(Market Value)**

In 2003 and 2004, Hays County assisted the City of Wimberley with the acquisition of 126-acres for the preservation of Blue Hole Park. The City of Wimberley matched this \$700,000 park investment by the County with an additional \$5,280,000 in confirmed donations. It is anticipated that the City will add an additional \$1,220,000 to this project.

3. Acquire +/-150 acres of parkland adjacent to the City of Austin Water Quality Protection Lands and/or Hill Country Conservancy land for the development of a Regional Park. This project is contingent upon entering into a long-term agreement with the above referenced entities regarding public access. **(Market Value)**

The Hill Country Conservancy purchased this land through private donations without any County assistance.

4. Acquire additional land and expand Dudley Johnson Park. **(\$350,000 - 450,000)**

Hays County purchased an additional 45-acres of land for this project and with private donations, this County Park has increased in size from 14-acres to 89-acres. Currently, the park is completing the master planning stage with construction documents slated for completion in the early spring of 2007.

As part of the land acquisition, Hays County invested \$279,500 at the park, which had been matched with a confirmed amount of \$1,200,000 from other sources.

5. Develop Phase I of the +/-100 acres of park land east of I-35 as an Area Park to possibly include:

- Playground
- Picnic Stations/Pavilion
- Pond / small lake with fishing pier
- Open areas
- Restrooms
- Multi-use trail - appx. 1 mile
- Roads and parking improvements
- Miscellaneous
- Professional Fees
- Project Contingency

Total - \$1,500,000 - 2,000,000

(See Item #1, paragraph 2 for improvements at this park.)

6. Establish County funded grant program to fund projects consistent with the goals and objectives of the County for parkland acquisition and development. **(\$500,000)**

Residents of Hays County authorized the use of \$3,500,000 in General Obligation Bonds for use in open space preservation and parks development. To date, the County has leveraged \$3,460,000 of these bond monies for a confirmed match of \$12,417,656 for a total of \$15,877,656 in grants and matching funds. It is further anticipated that the \$3,460,000 will be ultimately leveraged for \$20,946,078 in anticipated matching funds for total of \$24,406,078 in grants and matching funds. This is a projected match of 6.05x the initial General Obligation Bonds investment by Hays County residents.

7. Develop Phase I of the +/-150 acres adjacent to the City of Austin Water Quality Protection Lands and/or Hill Country Conservancy land as a Regional Park to possibly include:

- Open areas
 - River / lake improvements
 - Camping facilities
 - Multi-use trails - appx. 2 miles
 - Restrooms
 - Picnic stations/Pavilion
 - Interpretive educational center
 - Amphitheater
 - Disc golf course
 - Playground
 - Roads & Parking
 - Professional Fees
 - Miscellaneous Equipment
 - Project Contingency
- Total - \$2,000,000 - 2,500,000**

NOTE: Costs are preliminary estimates only and prepared without the benefit of site information or detailed engineering data. All costs shown are based on 2002 dollars. Final construction costs will vary.

As stated in item #3 above, the Hill Country Conservancy purchased this land through private donations with the intent that the land remains as open space. The improvements as noted above will not be developed on this site.

Projects 2005 – 2012

8. Acquire land for a Natural Resources park in the vicinity of Jacob's Well.

The Wimberley Valley Watershed Association purchased this land through private donations without any County assistance. The approximate location of this land is at the beginning of Cypress Creek.

9. Acquire +/-60 to 160-acres on Onion Creek south of Dripping Springs for development of an Area Park

Land for this "Project Recommendation" could not be reasonably found and located along Onion Creek; in lieu of this item, the County is assisting the City of Dripping Springs with the expansion of one of its parks south of Highway 12. The County has vested \$133,000 in improvement monies at this park to be matched by the City of Dripping Springs.

10. Acquire +/-30-50 acres on the Blanco River for the development of a River Park and western trailhead for the Blanco River Trail.

Hays County is currently partnering with the City of San Marcos to identify properties to achieve this "Project Recommendation".

11. Develop +/-30-50 acres on the Blanco River as a River Park and western trail head for the Blanco River Trail.

Hays County is currently partnering with the City of San Marcos to identify properties to achieve this "Project Recommendation".

12. Develop +/-30-50 acres on the Blanco River as a Natural Resource Park and River Park. (acquired under item #2 above).

This action item is currently underway with the assistance of the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center.

13. Develop +/-60 to 160-acres on Onion Creek south of Dripping Springs as an Area Park.

See item #9.

14. Acquire +/-30-50 acres on the Blanco River for the development of a River Park and eastern trailhead for the Blanco River Trail.

See item #12.

Note: In addition to the original “Project Recommendations” stated above in the County of Hays Parks and Open Space Master Plan approved by the Commissioner’s Court in September of 2002, three additional “Project Recommendations” have been added to the County’s plan. These three additions are listed below:

15. Assist in the development of +/-900-acres of parkland in the Watershed Conservation Improvement Districts 1 & 2. The County has initially supported this park effort with \$100,000 in improvements that currently has a confirmed match of \$100,000 and an anticipated match of \$800,000.

16. Assist the City of San Marcos in the acquisition, preservation and limited development of the San Marcos Springs Recharge Park. The County has initially supported this

park effort with \$700,000 in acquisitions/improvement dollars and currently has a confirmed match of \$2,000,000. The anticipated match of is expected to be around \$6,800,000.

17. Assist the City of Wimberley in the development of the Wimberley Bike Project, which will be a hike and bike trail located on one side of the proposed bypass around the City of Wimberley. The County has initially supported this effort with \$100,000 in improvements and currently has a confirmed match of \$50,000 from the City and another \$50,000 from private developers. These combined monies will be applied to a TX DOT enhancement grant.

IX IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE - EXISTING & AVAILABLE MECHANISMS

Funding Mechanisms

In order to implement this park and open space plan, there are a variety of funding mechanisms and tools available for use by Hays County. These include:

TEXAS RECREATION & PARKS ACCOUNT PROGRAM - This program, administered by Texas Parks and Wildlife, is a matching grant program that may be used to aid communities in acquisition and development of parks and open space (see Appendix “E” for additional information). This grant program includes the Outdoor Recreation Acquisition and Development Program and the Texas Recreation & Parks Account Indoor Recreation Program. The Texas Recreation & Parks Account Small Grants Program is a matching grant program that may be used to aid communities with a population less than 50,000 in the development of parks and open space (see Appendix E for additional information).

TEXAS RECREATIONAL TRAILS FUND - The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department administers the National Recreational Trail Fund through a provision in the Federal Highway Bill. The National Recreational Trail Grant provides 80% matching funds (maximum \$100,000) for both motorized and non-motorized trail projects in local communities for hikers, cyclists, horseback riders, off-road motor vehicles, and nature enthusiasts. Funds can be utilized to construct new recreational trails, improve/maintain existing trails, develop/improve trailheads or trailside facilities, and acquire trail corridors. Eligible sponsors include city and county governments, state agencies, river authorities, water districts, MUDs, school districts, federal land managers, non-profit organizations, and other private organizations.

PAY AS YOU GO - This method of financing park improvements involves budgeting for land acquisition, development, and maintenance of park facilities through the county's annual budget process. Allocations for park improvements are made and spent annually through the standard budget process.

GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS - These bonds are issued by the county following an election in which the voters authorize their issuance for specific stated purposes, as well as the necessary tax increases to support them. These bonds pledge the property or ad valorem taxing power of the county.

USER FEES - This method of financing requires the user of each park to pay a fee for the use of certain facilities. Fees to be charged users can be established to pay for debt service, maintenance, and operation of the park system.

PRIVATE OR CORPORATE DONATIONS - Donations from foundations, corporations, and/or private individuals are often used to acquire and develop parks. The county should constantly identify and pursue opportunities to receive such funding for parks. One avenue for receiving donations is through the use of the Texas Parks & Recreation Foundation. This foundation has been developed to help all communities in the State of Texas to maximize the benefits of donations of land, property, and money.

Other potential funding sources include:

- Texas Department of Transportation - Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program: This program will assist with up to 80% of the cost of projects that enhance the statewide transportation system. Pedestrian/Bicycle trails that provide an alternate form of transportation are an eligible expense under the current guidelines.
- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Grant Program
- Lower Colorado River Authority
 - Partnerships in Parks Program
 - Community Development Partnership Program

- The Burdine Johnson Foundation
- The Meadows Foundation
- Austin Community Foundation
- The Trull Foundation
- Houston Endowment, Inc.
- The Conservation Fund, Kodak American Greenway Grant Program
- National Tree Trust, Community Tree Planting Program
- The James R. Dougherty, Jr. Foundation
- Theodore P. Davis Charitable Trust
- Wal-Mart Foundation
- Ultramar Diamond Shamrock Corporation
- Abbott Laboratories Fund
- PACCAR Foundation
- EarthShare of Texas

Implementation Schedule

The following implementation schedule was adopted by the Parks Advisory Board after evaluating the results from the citizen survey, the adopted facility priorities, input from the focus group meetings and public hearings and finally the fiscal impact on County resources. More detailed project information is included for the first five years of the plan because cost estimates become less accurate the further out they are projected. It is important to note that the following schedule is intended to be a flexible guide for the development of parks and recreational facilities over the next ten years for Hays County.

By utilizing the potential funding sources listed above, it is conceivable that the county can complete the first group of projects through leveraging existing bond funds and beneficial partnerships. The County should evaluate and take advantage of any unforeseen opportunities that may arise that are not identified in the schedule or change the order of implementation as necessary.

Updates to the plan as part of the July 20, 2006 revision are highlighted below each item in blue Times Roman font. Items #3, #7, and #8 are shown with strikethroughs because those items, as indicated on previous pages, have been accomplished by entities other than Hays County. As such, they are no longer in the County's Implementation Schedule.

Implementation Schedule

| | Project | Date | Estimated Cost* | Potential Funding Source |
|--------------|---|--|-------------------------|--|
| 1 | Acquire +/-100 acres of park land east of I-35 for the development on an Area Park | Completed 2004; Development underway. | \$827,500 | TP&W Grant (outdoor) General Obligation Bond Land Donation |
| 2 | Acquire +/-30 acres of park land on the Blanco River for a Natural Resource Park and River Park | Completed 2004 | \$700,000 | TP&W Grant (outdoor) General Obligation Bond Land Donation |
| 3 | Acquire +/-150 acres of park land adjacent to the City of Austin Prop 2 land and/or Hill Country Conservancy land for the development of a Regional Park—This project is contingent upon entering into a long term agreement with the above referenced entities regarding public access. | 2003 | Market Value | TP&W Grant (regional) General Obligation Bond Land Donation Private Foundations |
| 4 | Acquire additional land & expand Dudley Johnson Park | Completed 2004; Development underway | \$279,000 | TP&W Grant (outdoor) General Obligation Bond County In-kind Services Land Donation |
| 5 | Develop Phase I of the +/-100 acres east of I-35 as an Area Park | Development underway in 2005 | Approx. \$280,000 | TP&W Grant (outdoor) General Obligation Bond |
| 6 | Establish County Funded Grant Program | Established in 2002 | \$3,500,000 | General Obligation Bond |

| | Project | Date | Estimated Cost* | Potential Funding Source |
|----|---|----------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 7 | Develop Phase I of the +/-150 acres adjacent to the City of Austin Prop 2 land and/or Hill Country Conservancy land as a Regional Park | 2003-2005 | \$2,000,000-2,500,000 | TP&W Grant (Regional Grant) General Obligation Bond Private Foundations |
| 8 | Acquire land for a Natural Resource park in the vicinity of Jacob's Well | 2005-2012 | | |
| 9 | Acquire +/-60-160 acres on Onion Creek south of Dripping Springs for development of an Area Park | 2006-2008 | \$133,000 | General Obligation Bond |
| 10 | Acquire +/-30-50 acres on the Blanco River for the development of a River Park and western trailhead for the Blanco River Trail. | 2007-2012 | TBD | General Obligation Bond |
| 11 | Develop +/-30-50 acres on the Blanco River as a River Park and western trail head for the Blanco River Trail. | 2007-2012 | TBD | General Obligation Bond |
| 12 | Develop +/-30-50 acres on the Blanco River as a Natural Resource Park and River Park. (acquired under item #2 above) | 2005-2009 | TBD | General Obligation Bond |
| 13 | Develop +/-60-160 acres on Onion Creek south of Dripping Springs as an Area Park | 2006-2008 | See Item #9 | General Obligation Bond |
| 14 | Acquire +/-30-50 acres on the Blanco River for the development of a River Park and eastern trailhead for the Blanco River Trail. | 2007-2012 | See Item #11 | General Obligation Bond |
| 15 | Assist in the development of +/-900 acres of parkland in the Watershed Conservation | 2005-2009 | \$100,000 | General Obligation Bond |

| | Project | Date | Estimated Cost* | Potential Funding Source |
|-----------|--|------------------|------------------------|--|
| | Improvement Districts 1&2. | | | |
| 16 | Assist the City of San Marcos in the acquisition, preservation and limited development of the San Marcos Springs Recharge Park. | 2006-2009 | TBD | General Obligation Bond |
| 17 | Assist the City of Wimberley in the development of the Wimberley Bike Project. | 2007-2012 | TBD | General Obligation Bond TX DOT Private Developers City of Wimberley |

*Note: Costs are preliminary estimates only and prepared without the benefit of detailed engineering data. The costs are also only reflective of County commitments or assistance for these projects. All costs shown are based on 2002 dollars and may not include fees associated with planning, engineering and/or architectural work that may be required. Final construction costs will vary.

The following map shows the distribution of the proposed parks and open space projects through 2012.

Parks & Open Space Projects Map
Hays County Parks & Open Space Master Plan

X CONCLUSIONS

The recommendations in this plan outline approximately 500 acres of park and open space lands to be acquired over the next ten years. With the projected population increases, the county parks and open space level of service will be 3.18 acres per thousand people. This county level of service represents a 430% increase over the next ten years. The impact of these acquisitions can be significantly greater if the county works cooperatively with other like-minded agencies such as the City of Austin, the Hill Country Conservancy, Texas Parks and Wildlife and the cities of Hays County.

Through partnerships with these and similar agencies, the parks and open spaces outlined in this plan can be woven together with other projects to create a network of parks and open spaces that mirror the needs and desires of the citizens.

With the proposed additions to the park and open space system that are

outlined in this plan will come additional maintenance and operational needs in order to best utilize, manage and care for the new facilities as well as those that exist today.

The proposed county park system is to contain a significant amount of natural open space. Although the term “natural open space” tends to give a connotation of “maintenance free”, an active land management program is imperative to the ecological cycle of the parkland in order to provide users with the desired “natural” environment. The importance of a site-specific management program cannot be overstated. A management approach should be taken that closely resembles the *Recommended Land Management for the Water Quality Protection Lands Austin, Texas*. In this study, site-specific recommendations were made after conducting a thorough survey of existing vegetation and wildlife while analyzing climatic conditions and other external influences. If the County utilizes the same



Dripping Springs Sports & Recreation Park Plaque

approach, the needs of the specific sites should be properly identified and addressed shortly after the land is acquired.

With the increased parkland also comes increased maintenance and costs associated with park improvements. Currently, Hays County allocates approximately \$62,800 per year for maintenance at Dudley Johnson Park. While it is hard to make a direct correlation of maintenance costs, increases should be expected as land is added to the system. High intensity and manicured areas of the parks will tend to require more regular maintenance resources and subsequent costs than the areas which are left in a more natural state. Additionally, while the desire for parks along rivers and creeks in the county is clearly evident, the potential for flooding and costs associated with the clean up after intense storms tends to increase operation and maintenance expenditures. The cost to clean up and rebuild portions of Dudley Johnson Park after the November 2001 flood was estimated to be \$111,280. Because of the extensive damage resulting from the 1998 flood, the park was closed to the public for approximately a year and a half. Flood prone areas can provide exceptional recreation opportunities for county residents as long as the flooding potential is addressed during design and development.



Since the County adopted the original version of this County of Hays Parks and Open Space Master Plan in September of 2002, numerous changes to the parks infrastructure have occurred. County residents authorized the County to issue \$3,500,000 in General Obligation Bonds for the acquisition, preservation, and development of parks and open space throughout Hays County.

[To date, these monies have been leveraged through grants and partnerships with other public and](#)

private entities for an additional confirmed amount of \$12,417,656, for a total of \$15,877,656 to be used for parks and open space. It is further anticipated that the \$3,460,000 will be ultimately leveraged for \$20,946,078 in anticipated matching funds for total of \$24,406,078 to be used for parks and open space. This is a projected match of 6.05x the initial General Obligations Bonds investment by Hays County residents.

The results of these investments in park and open space infrastructure have significantly fast-forwarded the time frame for implementation of the “Project Recommendations” of this plan. It is further anticipated that the County might approach residents in the near future with plans to expand the County’s bonding capacity for further acquisition, preservation, and development of parks and open space throughout Hays County.

The proposed improvements contained in this plan will enhance the quality of life in the area and help ensure that the county is able to keep pace with the growing recreational needs and desires for open spaces of its citizens.

This plan is intended to be a fluid document that changes as circumstances dictate and opportunities arise. The plan should be reviewed annually and updated every two years in order to continually identify and address the evolving recreational needs and trends of Hays County residents.

Appendix A

Major Aquifers within the Southern Edwards & Winter Garden Regions

Appendix B

Citizen Survey

Appendix C

Texas Stream Navigation Law

Appendix D

Trail Surface Analysis

Trail Surface Synopsis

| Surface Material | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Soil cement | Uses natural materials, more durable than native soils, smoother surface, low cost. | Surface wears unevenly, not a stable all-weather surface, erodes, difficult to achieve correct mix. |
| Granular stone | Soft but firm surface, natural material, moderate cost, smooth surface, accommodates multiple uses. | Surface can rut or erode with heavy rainfall, regular maintenance to keep consistent surface, replenishing stones may be a long term expense, not for steep slopes. |
| Asphalt | Hard surface, supports most types of use, all weather, does not erode, accommodates most users simultaneously, low maintenance. | High installation cost, costly to repair, not a natural surface, freeze thaw can crack surface, heavy construction vehicles need access. |
| Concrete | Hardest surface, easy to form to site conditions, supports multiple use, lowest maintenance, resists freeze/thaw, best cold weather surface. | High installation cost, costly to repair, not a natural looking surface, construction vehicles will need access to the trail corridor. |
| Native soil | Natural material, lowest cost, low maintenance, can be altered for future improvements, easiest for volunteers to build and maintain. | Dusty, ruts when wet, not an all-weather surface, can be uneven and bumpy, limited use, not accessible. |
| Wood chips | Soft, spongy surface - good for walking, moderate cost, natural material. | Decomposes under high temperature and moisture, requires constant replenishment, not typically accessible, limited availability. |
| Recycled materials | Good use of recyclable materials, surface can vary depending on materials. | High purchase and installation cost, life expectancy unknown. |

* Source: *Trails for the Twenty First Century*, Edited by Karen-Lee Ryan, *Rails to Trails Conservancy*

Appendix E

Texas Recreation & Parks Account Program

Appendix F

Public Hearing Documentation

June 8, 2006