

Citizens working to preserve and enhance the state park system for the benefit of the people of Texas and their guests.

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NEWS BULLETIN

PARKS&WILDLIFE SUMMARY
OF

IMPACT OF 2011 LEGISLATION ON
PROGRAMS AND STAFF



We have received the cuts in State Parks from Texas Parks and Wildlife. The loss of personnel is disturbing, but it could have been a lot worse if the original budget had been approved.

State Parks management struggled with these decisions, as you can tell from their attached memo, and have been as fair and equal as possible under these conditions. We need to thank them for their long hours and hard decisions they had to make.

To our employees who have been lost, we need to keep them in our thoughts and thank them for their service to the State Parks system.

This shows us where we need to work on the next legislative session and let us all hope the economy improves.

In the meanwhile, we will all need to support our Parks in any manner we can.

John Cobb, President

With the close of the 82nd Legislature and passage of the Appropriations Act for the next two years of state government operation, it was immediately apparent that significant reductions in state park operations would have to be made. The state parks division will move into FY2012 with a budget that has been reduced by more than \$8.35 Million from current levels and with over 60 fewer full time equivalent (FTE) positions. These reductions were made through a process of evaluation and prioritization to ensure that impacts to the public and the mission of State Parks were minimized as much as possible.

Summary Of The Process

First, the state parks senior management team began with these principles in mind:

- Utilize the Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan as a strategic guide
- Preserve our ability to achieve each of the core elements of the State Park mission
- Consider all ideas for reorganization in an effort to gain efficiency
- Assess various aspects of parks that would help us to establish priority in budget decisions
- Preserve sources of revenue generation to the greatest extent possible
- Operate parks at a reasonably high level with minimal reduction in visitor services or resource stewardship responsibilities
- Pursue a balance in the reductions that will maximize operations, and provide sufficient support programs for those operations to function well

One reduction directive required the closing of two regional offices. The senior management team explored many alternatives to what eventually became the six regions we have today.

The regional realignment was the first phase of reductions to state parks in May, 2011. The reorganization was completed in advance of further cuts to aid in leadership transition for what was expected to be further significant funding reduction. Over \$559,000 savings was realized in the reorganization of our park regions.

Determining where and how the cuts would be made in the parks required careful analysis. Senior management undertook a comprehensive assessment of each park in the system to help guide us in these decisions. The major areas of analysis for each park included:

- **Natural Resources**
 - A number of factors were considered relative to the natural resources of a park, such as ecological type representation and the presence of rare, endangered or threatened flora and fauna.
- **Cultural Resources**
 - Considerations relating to cultural resources included unique site or archeological features that have international significance; nationally recognized resources worthy of distinction; and sites that commemorate significant events in U.S. and Texas history

- **Recreational Resources**
 - Evaluation of the diversity and quality of recreational activities and the assessment of public demand for these activities expressed in visitation.
- **Educational Considerations**
 - Number and quality of static exhibits; waysides; nature trails; live interpretive and/or educational programming.
- **Business Factors**
 - Cost recovery expressed as a percentage of revenue and annual operating cost
 - Capital repair investments
- **Detracting Factors**
 - An assessment and acknowledgement of factors that detract from the quality of the visitor experience such as: view-shed impacts; loss of night skies; diminished air quality; sound pollution; etc.

Reductions were made using a compilation of these assessments as a general guide.

Through this lengthy process, a prioritized reduction strategy was implemented that met state park goals to preserve park operations to the greatest extent possible and maintain the ability to achieve the very core elements of the state park mission.

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

State Park Operations

- 23 of 94 state parks received some type of reduction in staff, operations, or both (76% of parks had no reduction). One park was identified to be transferred to a local community and one state park complex office was identified for closure.

Specific reductions in park operations include:

- Sebastopol State Historic Site- Expected transfer to the city of Seguin effective September 1, 2011. 2.5 FTE lost
- Wyler Aerial Tramway- Reduced to 3 days of operation per week. 4.5 FTE lost
- Resaca de la Palma SP- Reduced days of operation seasonally. Limit tram operations. 5.5 FTE lost
- Lake Arrowhead SP- Reduced days of office staffing. 0.51 FTE lost

- Devils Sinkhole SNA- Reduced staff and complex with Kickapoo Cavern. 1.0 FTE lost, 1.0 transferred
- Llano Grande SP- Reduced days of operation seasonally. 1.0 FTE lost
- Sheldon Lake SP- Reorganized resource management staff. 1.0 FTE lost
- Fanthorp Inn SHS- Reduced days of operation utilizing volunteers and oversight from Washington-on-the-Brazos. 2.8 FTE lost
- Big Spring SP- Partnered with the city for continued operation. 1.0 FTE lost
- Kickapoo Cavern SP- Complex operations with Devils Sinkhole. Reduced days of operations. 1.75 FTE lost
- Parrie Haynes Ranch- Reduced operation to include C5 foundation summer use of the park and special event use throughout the year. 3.0 FTE lost
- Lake Colorado City SP- Reduced days of office staffing and interpretive programming. 1.5 FTE lost
- Fort Boggy SP- Reduced to weekend operations only. 2.0 FTE lost
- Bentsen Rio Grande Valley SP- Reduced days of operation seasonally. Limit tram operations. 2.0 FTE lost
- Martin Dies Jr SP- Reduced staff by 1.0 FTE
- Copper Breaks SP- Reduced days of office staffing. 0.38 FTE lost
- San Jacinto Battleground- Reduced administrative staff by 1.0 FTE
- Lake Livingston SP- Reduced staff by 0.26 FTE
- Battleship Texas- Reduced staff by 3.0 FTE
- Government Canyon SNA- Reduce staff by 3.61 FTE and maintain 4 day/week operation.
- Goliad SHP- Reduced administrative staff by 0.5 FTE
- Brazos Bend SP- Reorganize resource management staff. 1.0 FTE lost
- Bastrop SP- Transfer swimming pool operations to partnering organizations. 2.37 FTE lost

- El Paso Complex Administrative Office- closed state park complex administrative office. 2.27 FTE lost

State Park Support Programs

Like the parks, division support programs received reductions in both staff and operating funds.

- Business Management- approximately 31% reduction in overall operating budget to include a 25% reduction to staff operated concessions. FTE loss of 1.5
- Interpretive Services- approximately 10% reduction in overall operating budget. FTE loss of 8.0
- Law Enforcement- approximately 10% reduction in overall operating budget. FTE loss of 1.0
- Natural Resources- approximately 30% reduction in overall operating budget. Net FTE loss of 1.0
- Cultural Resources- approximately 52% reduction in overall operating budget. FTE loss of 2.0
- Historic Sites- approximately 66% reduction in overall operating budget
- Training- approximately 9% reduction in overall operating budget. FTE loss of 1.3

Recreation Grants Program

No state funding for local park grants in 2012-2013. FTE loss of 6.0

Looking Forward

There are two very important pieces of legislation that affect state parks looking forward. Each relate in some way to the park systems future budget. They are:

HB 1301

This legislation established a \$5 voluntary “opt-in” donation opportunity for Texans when they register their vehicles. The Comptroller of Public Accounts projects this new source of funding for parks will generate \$1.6 Million. The projected \$1.6 million is built into the division’s budget from the outset. TPWD will be working to promote this opportunity for Texans to support parks through this new funding source.

Rider 27

This rider, also commonly known as the “entrepreneurial rider”, establishes that revenue generated over and above the comptroller’s certified projected revenue for the agency, be made available to the agency for operations. A \$3 million cap has been established for the amount available to state parks. This allows for the recovery of 60 FTE to state parks provided parks successfully reach the \$3 million revenue goal. The ability to generate revenue in state parks will be critically important to our operations in the next biennium. The \$3 million is already factored into the divisions FY2012 operating budget.

In Summary

Although the State Park system is facing significant financial reductions, thanks to the efforts of park supporters and advocates, the core of the system remains strong and parks will remain open and available to the public. It will be important to inform those who care about state parks of the opportunities that will be available to contribute to ensure that further park reductions are not necessary.

State Parks play an important role in the economic development, public health and our quality of life of our state. Texans for State Parks can help ensure that the park system remains vibrant by continuing to inform the public and our elected officials of these contributions!