

TRACKS & TRAILS

A monthly newsletter for employees of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

"To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations."

February 2010

New employees get the "red carpet" treatment

In February 2009, a cross-divisional team began work to revamp the agency's new hire process and reestablish a new employee orientation. The culmination of many months of work, the redesigned New Employee Orientation (NEO) program helps incoming employees become better acclimated with the agency's mission, culture and diverse activities. The program session covers 1.5 days, including a welcome from the executive director and senior leaders, short overviews describing each division, reviews of key personnel policies, and a sampling of angling, shooting, or other mission-related outdoor activities. The NEO is held quarterly at headquarters in Austin.

In this initial stage, the NEO is being offered to classified regular employees (both full and part-time) only; other employee groups (i.e., temporary, seasonal, intern) may be included at a later date. All full-time and part-time regular employees are required to attend.

"NEO gave me a much-needed perspective on TPWD and the scope of its work," says Angé McCrary, a new training specialist in the Administrative Resources Division. "As a result of my attendance, I have a better understanding of and an appreciation for this multifaceted agency."

RedCarpet is the agency's new Web application designed to automate and manage the entire onboarding process, plus NEO. RedCarpet allows incoming employees to start learning about TPWD before they start work, and to reduce some of the paperwork awaiting them when they arrive on the job.

"When I got hired here, I was pleasantly surprised by the new online RedCarpet program," says Mike Cox, news team lead in the Communications Division. "TPWD ... has no shortage of forms for new hires to complete, but it's a lot easier to do them bit by bit from home rather than all at once on the first day at work. The welcoming letter and list of perks are also nice touches."

— Leslie Sanders and Connie Hofmann



Game warden cadets Steven Cantu (right) and Benjamin Bailey (left) walk across the grounds of the new Game Warden Training Center.

CHASE A. FOUNTAIN

55th cadet class begins training at new facility

They wear department-issue black cargo pants and gray polo shirts, but that's about all the 45 members of the 55th game warden cadet class have in common other than a desire to be Texas game wardens. Only the second class to attend the new 220-acre Game Warden Training Center in Hamilton County, 37 men and eight women began their 30-week training regimen January 4. A woman with a new conservation agency for the Mexican state of Nuevo Leon also is receiving the training, which includes 618 hours for basic peace officer certification and nearly 800 hours of instruction in conservation issues.

Everyone has a story, but here are just a few that reflect the class's diversity of experience:

- On Oct. 29, 1994, attending a seminar on workplace violence in Washington, D.C., San Antonio native Harry Rakosky happened to be walking down Pennsylvania Ave. when he heard what he thought were firecrackers. But then he saw a man with a SKS rifle shooting

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER



Dear Colleagues:

The directive many of us were anxiously awaiting finally came. In mid-January, the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker sent instructions to all state agencies, save and except for a very small few, to develop a plan to reduce spending over the current biennium by 5 percent. That element of the mandate was unambiguous, and we will do our part to meet their expectations.

The underpinnings behind the directive are certainly no surprise to anyone reading this letter. Collection of sales tax receipts, the principal source of revenue for the state of Texas, is lower than expected, as are projected revenues from property taxes and other funding streams. The bottom line is that our state government has finally gotten to a place where almost all other states, as well as most private-sector enterprises, have already been for some time. Reducing expenditures to account for the clear economic realities of our state is now a necessity.

So, what does that mean in real terms for those of us at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department? First, I think it is instructive to understand the fiscal impact of a 5 percent budget cut, which in percentage terms may appear modest. In actual dollar terms, the 5 percent goal represents approximately 25 million dollars in total reduced spending for the agency over the current biennium. The Legislative Budget Board has left it to the agency, for now, as to how we approach our reduction in both our general revenue funding (i.e., operations supported by sporting goods sales tax revenue) and general revenue-dedicated funding (i.e., operations supported by hunting and fishing license and stamp related purchases).

So, how will we get there and what will be proposed to cut? In short, we will approach it in the same manner we handled the proposed 2.5 percent reduction in spending that was requested of us, but never acted upon, last fiscal year. Division directors and the senior leadership team have been asked to identify planned and future expenditures that can be reduced without adversely impacting core services provided by the agency. To the absolute extent possible, we will try to achieve this goal by minimizing the impacts on direct staffing and operational priorities. Ultimately, a plan will be approved for submission to the Legislative Budget Board by your executive team, as well as Chairman Holt and Commissioner Falcon, who leads the Commission's Finance Committee.

Although times such as these are always challenging, I think it would be improvident if we were not also planning for additional possible expense reductions requested by the legislature for the next biennium. If we don't plan for it, we won't be prepared for it. As such, now is the time to reinforce the core and highest priorities of the agency, particularly as they relate to our statutory mandates and our newly revised and approved Land and Water Plan. Your help in this regard will be essential.

As we move forward in this climate, I will be communicating with you, largely via e-mail, about our plans. For better or worse, and whether you agree or disagree with all of our recommendations, you will hear from me and your leadership team on this matter, and you will be given every opportunity to be kept informed on important decisions that affect us all.

Our state's lands, waters, fish, wildlife and parks deserve the very best from us all, in good times and in bad. I have no doubt we'll give them all we can with whatever resources we are granted.

Thanks for all you do for Texas' wild things and wild places. They need you more than ever.

Carter Smith

TRACKS & TRAILS

Published on the Web by Texas Parks and Wildlife's Communications Division for employees and retirees throughout the state. We welcome submissions for publication, but reserve the right to edit or screen materials according to newsletter policy. All submissions for the newsletter are due by the last working day of each month. Address submissions to **Karen Blizzard, Communications Division, 4200 Smith School Rd., Austin, TX 78744; E-mail karen.blizzard@tpwd.state.tx.us.**

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KUDOS

TPWD Region 2 State Parks Director Russell Fishbeck displays a 2009 Phoenix Award presented by the Society of American Travel Writers to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for leading a 10-year initiative to establish the Rio Grande Valley's World Birding Center, which promotes eco-friendly travel. Joining Fishbeck at the Dec. 16 award presentation at Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park were five WBC site managers.



Pictured from left to right are: Pablo de Yturbe, Resaca de la Palma SP; Martha Martinez-Garcia, Estero Llano Grande SP; Colleen Hook, Quinta Mazatlan; and Cate Ball, South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center.

ROB MCCORKLE

Recognize your colleagues!

As a reminder, nominations for this year's Employee Recognition and Awards Program opened on Feb. 1. For forms and instructions, go to the WILDnet and look under Spotlight. Recognize your colleagues for their outstanding contributions in the areas of Natural Quality Service, Partnership, Conservation, Leadership, Innovation, Customer Service, Community Outreach, Special Achievements, and Outstanding Teams (two). Early submissions are encouraged. There will be no extension of the April 7 submission deadline.

HR POLICY CORNER

Employee Investigations

Department employees are subject to internal investigations for alleged violations of state/federal law and/or agency policy. Prior to initiating any "undercover" surveillance activity or investigation, department managers must first inform the Internal Affairs section of the suspected criminal misconduct or penal code violation. Internal Affairs investigators will coordinate and/or conduct investigations of all suspected cases of criminal wrongdoing. Human Resources will conduct investigations regarding discrimination complaints, harassment and/or retaliation. An employee under internal investigation may be temporarily suspended from duty (usually with pay) pending the outcome of the investigation. All management requests to search electronic data files located in an employee's assigned personal computer, or other telecommunications equipment, must be coordinated through the Director of Human Resources.



And the 2009 Pack Rat Day winner is ...

TPWD Executive Director Carter Smith presented the Pack Rat Recycling Awards at the Town Hall meeting at Austin HQ on Jan. 14. Five awards were presented to participating sites, including the A.E. Wood Fish Hatchery, Lubbock Law Enforcement Office, Sea Center, Tyler Nature Center, and Austin HQ. Each site received a Golden Trash Can Award for their participation. The Infrastructure Division won the Pack Rat title – and the largest of the Golden Trash Can Awards – by turning in 5,172 pounds of paper and cardboard to be recycled!

Deputy Director of Operations Scott Boruff (left) was on hand when Executive Director Carter Smith presented the Golden Trash Can Award to Rich McMonagle, director of the Infrastructure Division. This makes us wonder if the real reason that one of Building A's "eyebrows" was being recently repaired was due in part to slab shifting from the release of all the recycled weight.



CHASE A. FOUNTAIN

Land and Water Plan discussed at Town Hall Meeting

TPWD employees had the chance to comment on the newly revised Land and Water Plan at the Town Hall Meeting on Jan. 14. TPWD Executive Director Carter Smith held a Q&A session for a standing-room-only crowd in the CHR, and staff from the field were able to e-mail in their questions and have them answered during the meeting. The Land and Water Plan is the strategic guiding document of the agency that serves as the roadmap for how we want to achieve our mission.



CHASE A. FOUNTAIN

Wildlife Diversity meeting

Wildlife diversity managers from across the U.S. gathered in Texas Jan. 19-22, from as far away as Connecticut, Washington state, Alaska and many other states. A key conference focus was exploring dedicated federal funding for nongame programs and state wildlife action plans. The group heard updates on the national Teaming With Wildlife grassroots coalition, which is organizing a fly-in to Washington, D.C. in February, and also learned about the emerging National Fish Habitat Action Plan.



JOHN DAVIS

Gorman Falls winterscape

Texas state parkgoer Jim Hudson and his family recently paid a wintery visit to Gorman Falls SP and sent the following trip account and photos to his friend Mark Mehrens, a TPWD project manager in the IT Division. ...

"It was dark and cold when Brenda and I left our car, beginning the hike to our latest favorite hangout, the fabled Gorman Falls. It was Saturday, Jan. 9, 2010, and as predicted, the coldest morning the Hill Country had seen in the last 10 to 12 years. 'How cold was it?' you ask. ... It was 6 degrees Fahrenheit, that's how cold it was. We left our car at 6:31, while sunup was to be about 7:30. The march through the dark was cold and really not much fun, but then ..."



JIM HUDSON

MILESTONES



55th cadet class...

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NEW EMPLOYEES

ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES

Adrienne Jaramillo
Accountant IV, Austin

STATE PARKS

John Ellinger
Custodian I, Edna
Rafael De La Cruz, Jr.
Park Rgr. II, Falcon Heights
Jasper Pino, Jr.
Park Rgr. I, Goliad
Monica Narvaez
Admin. Asst. I, Laredo
Tyson Brussel
Park Rgr. II, Spring Branch
Eugene Bonds, Jr.
Park Spec. III, Stonewall
Christopher Bishop
Park Spec. III, Needville

UP THE LADDER

INLAND FISHERIES

Robert Laca
Maint. Tech. V to
Prog. Supervisor II

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Traci Alexander
PCO I to PCO II

STATE PARKS

Gary Coker
Park Spec. III to
Prog. Supervisor II
David England, Jr.
Park Spec. III to
Prog. Supervisor II
Marjorie Ferguson
Clerk I to Clerk II
Jamie Hackett
Park Spec. III to Mgr. I
Julia Hamilton
Admin. Asst. I to
Admin. Asst. III

Heather Heatherly

Park Spec. II to
Park Spec. III

Adam Jarrett

Park Spec. III to
Mgr. II

Esteban Macedo

Park Rgr. III to
Maint. Tech. IV

Melissa Moody

Clerk I to Admin. Asst. I

Monty Terral

Park Rgr. III to
Park Rgr. V

Jeffery Titus

Park Rgr. IV to
Park Spec. I

SERVICE AWARDS

5 YEARS

Stephen Baethge, SP
Cynthia Baker, SP
Jewel Bridges, SP
Gary Brown, SP
Francisco Camacho, SP
Rita Carleton, SP
Pablo De Yturbe, SP
Mark Fields, Inf.
Marni Francell, SP
Melanie Gunn, SP
Marvin Hart, SP
Laura Kiely, AR

Jeanne Kitchens, SP
Bethany Martin, SP
Christopher McCord, SP
Chad McNiel, SP
Arturo Mendiola, SP
Doyle Mosier, IF
Douglas Noren, AR
Jeffrey Orsak, SP
Rudy Paclik, SP
Brad Porter, Wild.
Tammie Posey, SP
Bradley Smith, SP
Cody Talley, IF
Reynaldo Trevino, Jr., SP
Gerald Vaughan, SP
David Vaughn, SP

10 YEARS

Kimberly Bode, SP
Peggy Breshers, SP
Eileen Galvan, SP
Gloria Garza, Wild.
Linda McMurry, Wild.
Jeff Raasch, Wild.
Carrell Wendt, SP

15 YEARS

Kirk Blood, CF
Rodney Gamez, CF
Mandy Holcomb, Inf.
Mary Mitschke, SP
Robert McCorkle, Comm.
Susan Newby, SP
William Thornhill, Jr., SP
Vickie Young, LE

20 YEARS

Gayle Hannum, Wild.
Cedric Hardeman, Comm.
Jesus Ibarra, Jr., IF
George Templin, SP

25 YEARS

Shirley Monagas, LE
Eric Young, CF

30 YEARS

Steven Medford, LE
Audie Nelson, LE
Robert Norman, LE
Alfonso Vielma, LE

RETIREMENTS

Roy Alexander, Wild.,
23 years
William Broyles, SP,
15 years
Alfonso Campos, LE,
25 years
Nancy Dinnes, SP,
12 years
Philip Durocher, IF,
35 years
Myron Welgehausen, SP,
27 years

toward the White House. Taking cover, Rakosky waited for the right moment before tackling the shooter as he tried to reload after firing 29 rounds. Rakosky and two other men who helped subdue the shooter were hailed as heroes.

- Robin Elizabeth Pugh already has four and a half years' experience serving as a state game warden—in Oklahoma. Born in Gainesville, Texas, Pugh decided she'd sooner turn in her badge and return to her Texas roots to join TPWD. "The training here is much more intense and thorough than we received in Oklahoma," she says.
- Minnesota native Crystal Hoppe came to Texas via West Africa, where she was involved in training Liberian soldiers as an employee of DynCorp International. When her boyfriend moved to Georgetown, she decided to join him and got a job with the Texas Department of Public Safety's crime lab. "But I've always been interested in being a game warden, so I applied," she says.
- Sam Smith played professional baseball for a half-dozen Colorado Rockies farm clubs from 1997 to 2003 before deciding to hang up his glove and go back to college to finish his undergraduate degree. After graduating, he decided to take a swing at being a game warden.
- Chelsea Estrada grew up in Flatonia. With a degree in criminal justice from Texas State University, she worked as a 911 operator in Austin and later as a Williamson County jailer before TPWD hired her. Talking to someone from TPWD at a career fair at Texas State is what got her interested in being a game warden.
- Originally from West Palm, Florida, but living in Dallas before hired by TPWD, Gerald Bailey spent 20 years in the Army—including 16 years in the Special Forces with combat missions in Haiti and Iraq. "I am here ... because this is a proud and elite profession," he says. "Texas game wardens are quiet professionals, just like soldiers."

While these men and women and their colleagues in the 55th cadet class are the second group to receive training at the Hamilton County facility, they are the first to use the newly completed education building. The new administration building is also open, and the new gymnasium will be ready soon.

—Mike Cox

Employee survey closes Feb. 9

All TPWD employees are being asked to complete the Survey of Employee Engagement (SEE), formerly called the Survey of Organizational Excellence. The purpose of the survey is to gauge employees' feelings and perceptions of the organization. Survey results have been consistently used over the years to plan for improvements in our work environment and the services we provide to our customers. For example, the two recent salary equity increases are a result of employee survey feedback. As soon as they are available and analyzed, survey results will be shared with all TPWD employees. Employees are asked to complete the survey no later than Feb. 9. **Your opinion will make a difference!**

TRAINING CALENDAR

Check the current training schedule online at <https://WILDnet.tpwd.state.tx.us/ir/cs/train/calendar.phtml> or contact Andra Clark, technical trainer, at (512) 389-4782 for more information.