



L.I.P. Bulletin

TEXAS
PARKS &
WILDLIFE

A N N U A L N E W S L E T T E R

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In 2008 the LIP program completed seven projects. Here are their stories.

HEMPHILL COUNTY

JEFF BONNER & HEATHER WHITLAW, TPWD

Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat

In February of 2008, TPWD biologists Jeff Bonner and Heather Whitlaw assisted a Hemphill County landowner to secure a LIP grant for the purpose of improving habitat on portions of his approximately 22,836-acre ranch for the benefit of lesser prairie-chickens (LPC), black-tailed prairie dogs, Texas horned lizards (all occurring on the property) and associated wildlife communities.

This ranch has been an LPC cooperator with TPWD since the mid-1950s and has been surveyed for LPCs by TPWD since the mid-1940s. Portions of this ranch are currently established as one of six official TPWD LPC Study Areas. Observed bird numbers on the ranch have declined over time, likely in response to brush encroachment and reduced grass and forb cover and availability.

The goal of this LIP project was to control sand sage (using 2,4-D via aerial application) in select portions of four pastures on the ranch so that a three-herd, four-pasture Merrill rotation livestock system could be implemented to allow proper grazing management. Instituting a Merrill grazing system will improve nesting and brood rearing habitat for lesser prairie-chickens (through the presence of residual grasses). All treated pastures are being rested for one growing season post-spraying. Brush control for sand sage will directly improve nesting and brood-rearing habitats by allowing for improved grass and forb resources.

Treatment effects will be evaluated through annual LPC surveys on the ranch, and it is expected that current LPC populations on the ranch will expand into treated areas. Treatment effects will be sustained and monitored through landowner participation in, and implementation of, a TPWD Wildlife Management Plan. In addition, the ranch is currently enrolled in the USDA-NRCS EQIP Lesser Prairie-Chicken (LPC) Special Resource Concern Area and is implementing brush work in other separate pastures, completing water improvement, and receiving deferment incentive payments.



Treated (left side of fence) and non-treated (right). Note green and healthy plum thickets in background at left. This truck shows the extent of the grass production compared with the non-treated area behind it.

GOLIAD/REFUGIO COUNTIES

BRENT ORTEGO, TPWD

Coastal Prairie Restoration

In 2004, with the assistance of TPWD biologist Brent Ortego, a 24,000-acre South Texas ranch began a LIP project covering 3,870 acres in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Grazing Land Conservation Initiative, The Nature Conservancy and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Actions were taken to reduce dense mesquite and huisache communities that were isolating two large blocks of open Coastal Prairie in Goliad and Refugio counties in preparation for Attwater's greater prairie-chicken reintroduction. Brush was treated with a variety of methods depending on the density of the woody vegetation. Warm and cool season controlled burns were typically used in combination with IPT (individual plant treatment) herbicide applications on the pastures with lighter brush densities. These treatments, in addition to roller-chopping, were used in the denser brush communities. Water facilities were added in a number of pastures to better distribute livestock grazing.

A Ph.D. research project was initiated on this ranch to investigate avian response to various brush treatments using different funding sources. The ranch was used for various ranch management educational tours during the course of the contract.

Presence of white-tailed hawk was noted during field inspections of completed work over the life of this contract. A standard breeding bird survey was conducted on a public highway adjoining this and several other ranches under a cooperative management effort from the Coastal Prairie Conservation Initiative, and on a nearby parallel public road that crossed former Coastal Prairie that was allowed to succeed to brush. White-tailed hawk populations have remained low, but stable along this route. Attwater's greater prairie-chicken has been stocked on Coastal Prairie in Goliad County at ranches within 5 miles of this project area in 2007 and 2008. One of the ranch family members is active in the Attwater's prairie-chicken recovery team and this ranch has recently been approved as a release site.

Great headway has been made in reducing brush densities on pastures treated, but much more work is still needed to restore the site to open Coastal Prairie.

Attwater's greater prairie-chicken



Post-treatment results and immediate post-burn landscape (inset)

CHEROKEE COUNTY

RUSTY WOOD, TPWD

Longleaf Pine Restoration

In the winter of 2007, TPWD biologist Rusty Wood began work on a longleaf restoration project utilizing LIP funds. The 656-acre property straddles the Angelina River in Cherokee and Nacogdoches counties with 2.5 miles of river frontage and three slough lakes.

The property consists of 70 percent hardwood bottoms and 30 percent upland pine. Most of the upland pine stands are loblolly pine that are being managed on a long rotation basis with thinning and burning to approximate natural historic stands. In 1999, 66 acres on the highest ridge were harvested and replanted to longleaf pine.

The longleaf pine-little bluestem vegetation series, which was native to this part of Texas, was identified as a series that was globally threatened throughout its range (G2), extremely rare throughout the state, and vulnerable to extirpation (S1) by the Texas Natural Heritage Program (1993). As a result, this vegetation series along with its associated wildlife have been designated as a high priority for conservation. Existing longleaf forests and savannahs are threatened by midstory overgrowth and a lack of natural fire or fire management.

In February 2007, LIP funds were used to cost-share a prescribed fire on this property in an attempt to control midstory competition including hardwoods and naturally regenerating loblolly pines, allowing for the return of the longleaf savannah and its associated species. The prescribed fire went well and was largely successful in completing the project objectives. After a final assessment was made by the project biologist, it was determined that a followup treatment fire would be necessary to complement the initial work done.

10-year-old longleaf pine stand with hardwood competition



Longleaf pine stand after prescribed fire



BURNET COUNTY

ARLENE KALMBACH, TPWD

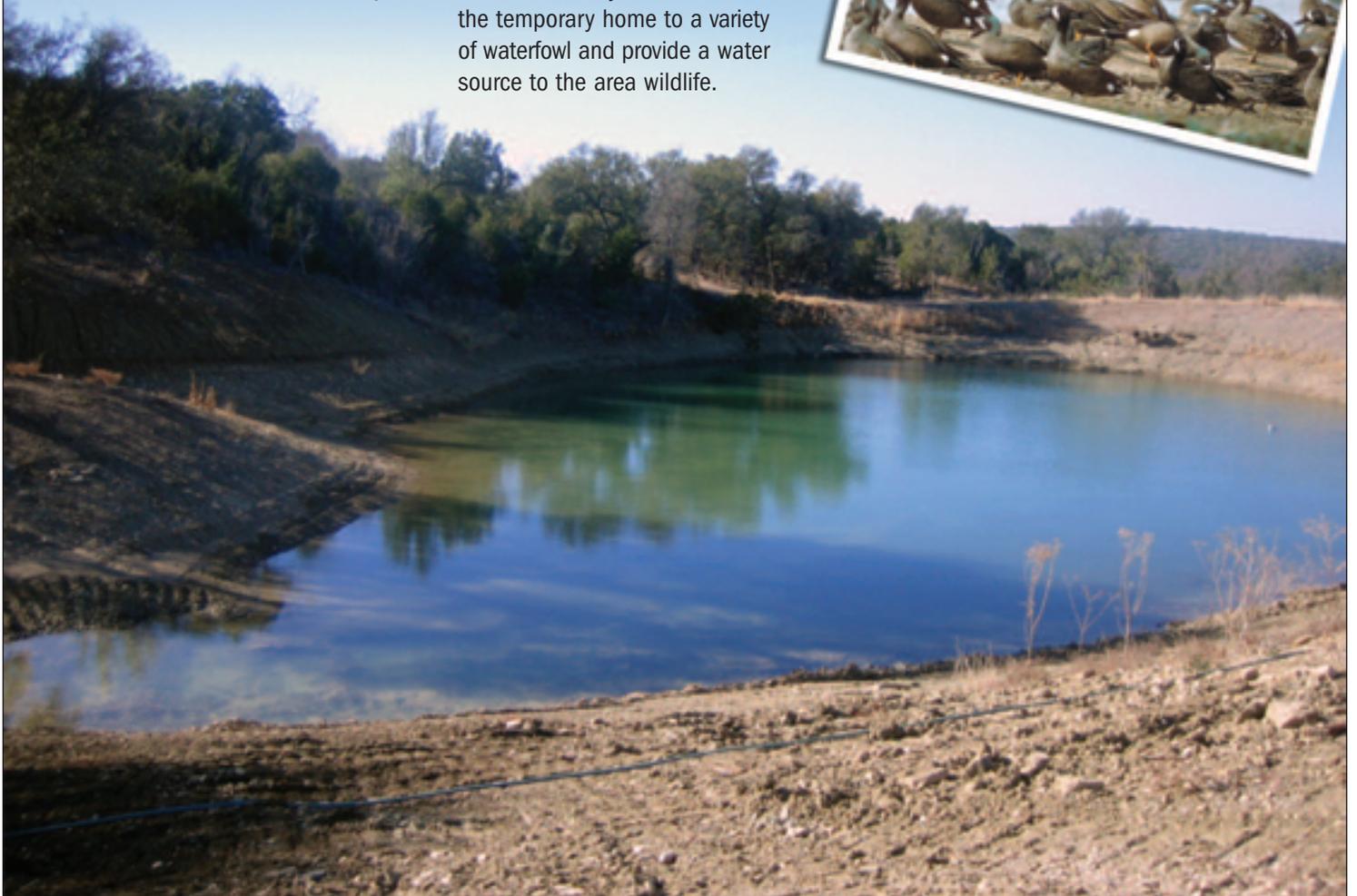
Wetland Creation Project

At a time when the Texas LIP program was in its infancy, a Hill Country landowner and a TPWD biologist were hard at work envisioning a restoration project and enlisting partners. Their goal? An approximately 12-acre wetland habitat established for the benefit of migrant and resident waterfowl in the Hill Country landscape of Burnet County.

Through the next few years the project experienced periods of great progress offset by long periods of tribulation. Over the course of this project's lifetime, its funding source, the LIP program, changed drastically as it went from a start-up state program to successful launch on a national level. Delays from program policy shifts to weather events had the partners invested in this project anxiously watching diesel, labor and material prices rise, eventually taking them back to the table with TPWD for a second and third contract. With the project spanning multiple years, it became a collaborative effort on the part of a few TPWD biologists.

Undaunted, this dedicated landowner persisted, and in 2008 with substantial personal funds invested as well as funding from the USFWS Partners Program and the LIP grants, efforts were rewarded and a wetland was completed.

If you build it, they will come ... maybe. With the extensive wetland system barely established, Mother Nature launched a brutal drought that continues today. Despite this additional setback, the wetlands that do currently hold water are the temporary home to a variety of waterfowl and provide a water source to the area wildlife.



GOLIAD COUNTY

BRENT ORTEGO, TPWD

Coastal Prairie Restoration

In the spring of 2004, TPWD biologist Brent Ortego helped a 4,000-acre ranch in Goliad County to receive a LIP grant aimed at reducing brush encroachment (mesquite and huisache) on an area of degraded coastal prairie, in a cooperative effort involving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Grazing Land Conservation Initiative, The Nature Conservancy, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and the landowner.

The ability to obtain the LIP grant was very important for this landowner in developing a budget to purchase the ranch and pay for the needed habitat improvements. Brush was treated with a combination of cool and warm season burns as well as with individual plant herbicide treatments. Necessary fencing and water features were installed to convert large pastures into smaller units of about 500 acres each to better facilitate rotational livestock grazing aimed at improving livestock impact on the land.

Much headway was made in transforming relatively dense mesquite areas into open savannahs comprising scattered mesquite trees amidst native bluestem prairie. Annual quail surveys were conducted on the property. Dramatic variation in rainfall occurred with every other year being either much higher or much lower in rainfall than normal. These wet and dry cycles seemed to be the main force influencing quail numbers during the short duration of this contract. White-tailed hawk presence was noted during project site inspection trips to the ranch.

Educational field trips were held several times on the ranch to demonstrate integrated ranch management to neighboring landowners and regional conservationists.

Attwater's greater prairie-chicken has been stocked across the river from this ranch and will hopefully expand to this property in future years.



Pastures treated with LIP funds

BAILEY COUNTY

HEATHER WHITLAW, TPWD

Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat

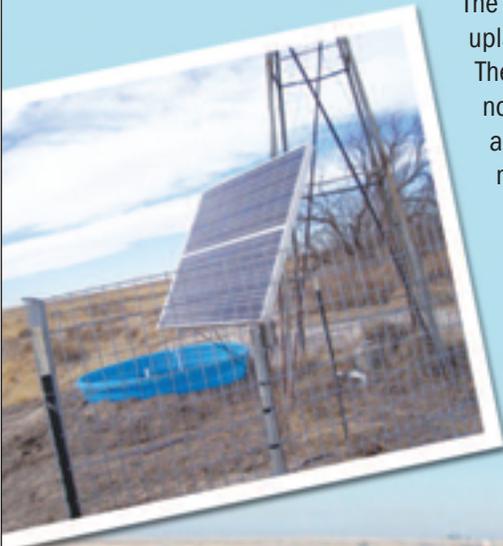
The purpose of this project was to develop three wildlife and livestock watering facilities to allow proper grazing management on a ranch in central Bailey County.

This property is currently enrolled in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program – Lesser Prairie-Chicken (LPC) Special Resource Concern Area. This program provides incentive payments for proper grazing management to enhance LPC habitat on the property. The owners are also working in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through their Partners Program to eliminate the salt cedar around the wetland and springs.

The ranch needed to create additional watering facilities in order to comply with the grazing management system outlined in the LPC-EQIP. A well was drilled on the south side of the ranch using EQIP funds outside of the LPC emphasis program. This well and an existing well on the east side of the ranch required solar pumping systems in order to provide reliable water for wildlife and livestock. A second well was drilled on the north side of the ranch with an electric line installed to an electric pump to draw water up and supply it to additional watering areas across the ranch, and to provide a heated trough during adverse conditions. All three wells feed into water troughs and overflow ponds created for wildlife.

This property is centered around a saline lake of approximately 169 acres. The lake bottom is a large salt flat, and the uplands slant sharply into the wetland. There are a number of springs and seeps that provide water for the lake. Areas around several of the springs have been invaded by salt cedar. The landowners are actively controlling salt cedar in these areas. The uplands are native shortgrass prairie (blue grama and buffalograss species). The uplands are also being encroached on by mesquite and have been aerielly treated. There are two former cropland fields comprising 150 acres that have been converted to non-native grassland vegetation via the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). There are approximately 384 acres suitable for grazing. Historically, the uplands have been managed primarily for cattle grazing.

Proper grazing management to benefit the grassland ecosystem will be implemented in conjunction with the LPC-EQIP. This system will include a small herd of cattle in a rotational grazing program. Properly dispersed water was the limiting factor for implementing this system. The installed water facilities create an interspersion of livestock water and also create moist areas for wildlife. Moist soil sites provide not only water, but also habitat for insects which are a critical food source for quail and prairie chicks.



South watering facility and east watering facility (inset)

BASTROP COUNTYDAVID WOLFE, ENVIRONMENTAL
DEFENSE FUND ECOLOGIST*Houston Toad Habitat Restoration*

In 2001, a private landowner in Bastrop County and his family agreed to embark on a variety of projects designed to enhance habitat conditions for the endangered Houston toad, while at the same time continuing to use their land as they always had: for grazing, hunting and recreation. They wanted to show that it is possible to manage proactively for an endangered species without giving up any of their land management activities or flexibility.

With support from TPWD in the form of a LIP grant, and with technical assistance from the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other partners, this landowner and his family initiated a variety of habitat enhancements including fire break preparation, understory thinning, installation of fencing and new pond creation. These activities were complemented by the implementation of prescribed fire and Houston toad monitoring (activities that were not funded with the LIP grant). This suite of management activities was designed to enhance both upland and wetland conditions for the Houston toad, while also facilitating rotational grazing of cattle and maintaining or improving wild game populations.

Houston toads prefer relatively ephemeral ponds/wetlands with shallow, shaded, undisturbed banks for breeding. One pond and one wetland on this ranch were fenced in order to exclude cattle during the breeding season (January through June) and enable the banks to stabilize and revegetate. The results in the pond were dramatic: more than 10 Houston toads used the pond for chorusing the first spring following fencing (toads had never been detected previously in this pond). In addition, one new pond was created in a swale in the western portion of the ranch. This pond has not yet held water for a period sufficient to support Houston toad breeding, but we believe that over time, siltation will increase the holding capacity of this pond.

Perhaps of greater concern than the ponds and wetlands is the relatively poor quality of the upland habitat on this ranch, as well as throughout much of the toad's range in Bastrop County. The loblolly pine and mixed pine/oak forests tend to be heavily infested with yaupon. In the absence of regular fire, yaupon reaches densities in the shrub and understory layer such that the ground is almost completely shaded and herbaceous vegetation disappears. The loss of native bunchgrasses and forbs reduces insect abundance and diversity (thereby negatively impacting food supply for the

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

Houston toads





Large central wetland area on ranch in dry conditions in summer 2003.

Large central wetland area in wet conditions in January 2005.
This is the same tree that appears in the photo on the facing page.

Facing page: Large central wetland area burned in January 2007.
Fence in foreground installed in September 2004 in order
to exclude cattle from wetland during the breeding season.



Houston toad) and also eliminates the protective travel corridors used by the toads to avoid detection by predators. The process of upland habitat restoration has been initiated on this ranch, and portions of the understory have been thinned, fire breaks have been installed around the entire northern portion of the ranch (deemed to be the most important area for the Houston toad), and fire has been implemented on one upland unit. Drought conditions precluded the use of prescribed fire in 2008, but this

family is committed to working with EDF and other partners to continue the implementation of prescribed burns as soon as weather and fuel moisture conditions are suitable.

Monitoring has been an integral component of this project. From the outset, Dr. Michael Forstner and his Texas State University graduate students have been monitoring Houston toads on this ranch, as well as throughout the toad's range in Bastrop County.

TPWD Wildlife Division Cultural Resource Training Sessions

The Texas Landowner Incentive Program is pleased to offer three cultural resource training sessions for TPWD staff this spring.

These regional trainings address the cultural resource considerations for LIP projects, and project consultations for Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). The training sessions feature class presentations on legal requirements and the consultation process, practical hands-on experience in recognizing artifacts, and field exercises in identifying and recording archaeological sites. Accompanying notebooks will serve as regional reference guides.

Sessions are designed to train field staff on the required LIP Cultural Resource Preliminary Assessment reports, as well as addressing cultural resource issues on the WMAs. Strong cultural resource skills allow LIP and WMA managers to facilitate and streamline the timely implementation of their projects while properly ensuring the preservation of our cultural heritage. Partner agencies, including USFWS, NRCS, and BOR may attend on a space-available basis.

MARCH 3-5:

Region IV Training Locations:
Pattie Dodson Health Center and
Guadalupe Delta WMA

MARCH 17-19:

Region III Training Location:
Tyler Nature Center

MARCH 31 – APRIL 2:

Region I Training Location:
Caprock Canyons State Park

If you wish to attend this training, please contact your supervisor to inquire about seats remaining. For folks outside the TPWD network, contact Arlene Kalmbach at (512) 924-6987.

For more information please contact Arlene Kalmbach at arlene.kalmbach@tpwd.state.tx.us or Chris Lintz at chris.lintz@tpwd.state.tx.us

From the Desk of Arlene Kalmbach

TPWD LANDOWNER INCENTIVE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Upcoming Landowner Incentive Program 2009 Funding Cycle

Since its beginning in 1997, the Texas Landowner Incentive Program has steadily grown, and as we look toward another funding cycle, I cannot help but be excited. Each year we receive an array of remarkable and worthwhile conservation projects put forth by TPWD staff and outside cooperators from all over the state. I have no doubt this year's group of applications will be another collection of extraordinary conservation efforts.

As the program coordinator, it is my task to make this program a useful tool for biologists and landowners working to improve habitat for wildlife in Texas. With that in mind, we have made a few improvements to the application submission process. These modifications are in direct response to your feedback, which is very much appreciated and considered very seriously. The first of these changes is in the application document itself, so be sure to visit the LIP Web page at the TPWD site to download the most current version of the LIP application.

With regard to the TPWD LIP commitment to protecting cultural resources, we will be adhering to the process as outlined in the LIP programmatic agreement between TPWD, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Texas Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. I would strongly encourage every project manager to review this document as you prepare your application for submission. Careful review of this document, with special attention paid to the appendices, will be surprisingly helpful with scope of work planning. The TPWD LIP programmatic agreement on cultural resources is posted on the TPWD LIP Web page.

Another alteration to the process will be the retiring of the LIP target species list. In the past, TPWD LIP has adhered to the species list associated with the 2005 funding grant from the USFWS. With this coming funding cycle, LIP will be broadening its scope by prioritizing applications targeting species described as "high priority" in the *Texas Wildlife Action Plan*.

If you are not familiar with the document, you can view the PDF version posted on the TPWD Web site at: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/twap/ or you may request a CD version by calling (512) 389-4800 or (800) 792-1112. I would advise the use of the CD as it is easier to navigate due to the hefty size of the PDF. As the *Texas Wildlife Action Plan* does not include plant species at this time, LIP will have a supplemental plant prioritization list posted on the LIP Web site.

Lastly, in an effort to make the program and the funding process as transparent and user-friendly as possible, we have developed and posted online a flow chart to the funding process which outlines a project's journey from submission to contract (through cultural resource clearance options, review boards, Section 7 considerations, etc.).

In closing, let me emphasize my personal commitment to making this program and your projects a success. The best way for me to do that is through communication and feedback from you. If you have thoughts, suggestions, concerns, ideas or questions regarding any aspect of this program, please let me know.

Once again, thank you for your interest in and continued support of the LIP program in Texas, both past and future. In a state where conservation work on private lands is essential, it is important that programs such as LIP are available. As such, the LIP program will continue in Texas, utilizing alternate funding sources once federal LIP funds are exhausted.

Please visit the LIP Web site for all updates and details on the 2009 funding cycle. If you have any questions, contact Arlene Kalmbach at (512) 924-6987 or arlene.kalmbach@tpwd.state.tx.us

2009 LIP Funding Cycle Calendar

5 1 09	Request for proposals
6 26 09	Last day to submit applications
6 29 09 through 7 10 09	Preliminary application review (for completion and NRCS cost comparison)
7 13 09 through 8 7 09	TPWD diversity staff species specialists review
8 24 09 through 9 18 09	TPWD Private Lands Advisory Board LIP subcommittee review
9 21 09 through 9 30 09	Final selections. Contracts will be mailed beginning October 1. (Exception: projects requiring cultural resource clearance)

Monitoring Your LIP Project for Unanticipated Cultural Resources During Implementation

CHRISTOPHER LINTZ, PH.D., TPWD WILDLIFE DIVISION CULTURAL RESOURCE SPECIALIST

The LIP programmatic agreement with the Texas Historical Commission regarding the National Historic Preservation Act, requires that some LIP projects involving ground disturbing activities consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) at the Texas Historical Commission (THC) prior to project initiation. Often the consultation process can demonstrate that the proposed project impacts will either (1) not affect cultural resources (defined as sites, buildings structures, or features older than 50 years), (2) not have an adverse affect on known cultural resources, or (3) require that projects be redesigned to mitigate/avoid impacting cultural resources. Sometimes, the THC reviewers will require further archaeological activities to mitigate the project's adverse effects before or during the implementation of the project. Concurrence of no effect from the SHPO does not end the need for concern over project impacts to cultural resources. Obviously initial surface inspections and limited shovel testing can miss important archaeological features and sites. Since archaeologists do not have X ray vision to see buried resources, state and federal laws require monitoring of ground disturbance to watch for and deal with the discovery of unanticipated cultural remains. In this article we'll discuss how to conduct cultural resource monitoring and the process of dealing with unanticipated discoveries.

Who is qualified to conduct cultural resource monitoring?

In the Wildlife Division at TPWD we have one archaeologist (me, Chris Lintz) responsible for the management of cultural resources on 51 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) across the breadth of Texas (involving nearly 1,350 square miles), as well as the cultural resources on the LIP projects.

This is a hefty responsibility which just doesn't make it feasible for me to personally conduct monitoring for cultural resources during project implementation. As such, the THC recognizes the staffing limitations and has encouraged the basic training of TPWD field staff for monitoring purposes.

The goal is to enhance staff sensitivity to the existence and importance of cultural resources and serve as extra eyes in the field. Staff who have completed the cultural resource training are qualified to conduct monitoring activities for unanticipated discoveries.

What is cultural resource monitoring and how is it done?

Monitoring simply means close physical inspection of the active construction zone for potential artifacts. This requires physical presence in safe zones at the construction area, such as beyond the end of the backhoe bucket, or adjacent to the far end of the ditch-witch blade watching the freshly exposed ground surface, the trench profile walls and the sediment contents of the backhoe bucket for signs of cultural remains. (Coordinate with your equipment operator on a series of hand signals to communicate when work is to be halted and you can safely enter the construction area.)

In prehistoric sites these cultural signs or potential anomalies can include usually dark or red soil stains in the floor or walls of the pit, mussel shells or bones, unusually angular fire cracked rocks, charcoal flecking, flint or chert pieces. In historic sites, they consist of coal, bricks, milled lumber, glass, ceramic, or metal, bake-lite/plastic artifacts, bones or shell. Staff

will be taught to recognize these things in training workshops.

When unusual items are encountered, mechanical excavations should be halted. A shovel or pointed mason's trowel should be used to clean the cut floor or trench wall to search for intact materials.

Monitors should conduct the least amount of disturbance needed to expose the discovery. If cultural materials are recovered in place, note their depth, and if possible, take a digital photograph of the profile and artifacts. The recovery of a single artifact is grounds for more intense observation and exploration, but it might not constitute an unanticipated discovery.

Formal significance assessment and declaration of the existence of an unanticipated discovery are limited to trained archaeologists. Contact me at my office at (512) 389-4427 or on my cell at (512) 466-7442 to discuss the observations. Ideally, the digital pictures sent via email allow for greater communication. A picture is worth a thousand words.

What is the process for handling unanticipated discoveries?

Don't be afraid of finding and reporting materials during monitoring. Often a single item is observed but a reasonable effort fails to locate other associated remains, in which case you are probably not dealing with an unanticipated discovery. Similarly, concentrated artifacts that are demonstrably less than 50 years old are also not an unanticipated discovery. In one recent case, someone trained in monitoring discovered a large amount of milled lumber in a pit 4 feet deep; however, faxed pictures clearly showed that the boards were buried with plastic sheeting, suggesting that the deeply buried items were less than 50 years old. The discovery was documented and the project proceeded without a field visit from an archaeologist. Essentially, communication is the key to dealing smoothly with discoveries.

When finds appear old and represent more than an isolate, you are likely

dealing with an archaeological site. At this point the limits of the site (horizontal extent and vertical depth) will be determined and documented by a trained archaeologist through the excavation of more shovel tests. If efforts to redesign the LIP project fail to completely avoid impacting the identified site, a State of Texas Archaeological Site form needs to be completed and filed in the restricted access database maintained for cultural resources across Texas. Written permission from the landowner is required for this.

Most "unanticipated discoveries" can be treated on a fast-track basis by consultation with the THC. If a landowner wishes to avoid reporting the site, they may withdraw from the program. Typically, when a landowner withdraws a discrete activity, all federal funds received for that activity need be returned.

Typically the consultation will report what was found, the integrity and context of the discovery (as judged by the professional

archaeologist), recommendations as to whether the discovery is or is not significant and what steps might be needed to lessen adverse affects. A significant site contains information important to understanding the region when considered with other sites from the same culture, such as information on subsistence, technology, community patterns, etc. If the THC concurs that the discovery is not significant, then the project can proceed unaltered. The discovery of human remains requires a somewhat different notification process.

In summary, cultural resource monitoring is an important component of the LIP program and is required by state and federal laws. The whole process is designed to ensure that the expenditure of federal public funds will not be used to diminish the significant cultural heritage of Texas.





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