

## Village Creek Corridor Addition



*U.S. Attorney, Eastern District, and The Conservation Fund News Conference on Village Creek, April 22. The tract buffers the Village Creek Corridor on the west.*

On the banks of Village Creek near Lumberton, John M. Bales, U.S. Attorney, Department of Justice, Eastern District of Texas, announced a settlement received from CIMPSHIP Transportes Maritimos, SA (Portuguese corporation) of \$1 million to be used for local conservation efforts in lieu of prosecution. The Conservation Fund received \$600,000 plus T.L.L. Temple Foundation funding to purchase 361 acres on Village Creek. The tract buffers the Village Creek Corridor on the west.

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation received \$400,000 to support programs of the Flower Garden Banks National Maritime Sanctuary, northernmost coral reef on the continental shelf (90 miles SW of Sabine Pass).

Through the years, The Conservation Fund has conserved 168,447 acres in Texas. For the National Preserve, they acquired land authorized in the 1993 Addition Act plus additional tracts bringing the total acreage in the Preserve to 106,000 – plus additional tracts not yet transferred.

## NPCA Salutes Parks and Partners

April 15-16-17, the National Parks and Conservation Association met in Washington to salute national parks and park partners. NPCA membership now exceeds 750,000 with about 22,000 of those members in Texas.

The first day was devoted to Council meetings. The event included a buffet Monday evening when the Robin W. Winks Award was presented to Terry Tempest Williams, and a dinner Tuesday evening with Williams as speaker.

Morning work sessions briefed participants on impacts of the "Sequester" on national parks and proposals for supplementing park funding. The funding for national parks was cut 6% in FY13 on top of an additional 6% over the last two years. This has caused parks to shorten hours, reduce services, give less protection to park resources, and vacant positions are not being filled. The entire NPS budget is 1/15th of 1% of the total federal budget. Furthermore, the backlog of needed maintenance to facilities and resources has reached upwards of \$11 billion.

Afternoons were devoted to visiting legislators. The Texas team consisted of Suzanne Dixon (NPCA Texas Office), Dean Bibles (San Antonio),

...continued on page 3

# Conservation Outlook

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## Update for Keystone XL Pipeline

by Dr. Bruce R. Drury

Conservation Committee Chair

The controversial Keystone XL pipeline, a project that when (or if) completed would carry over 800,000 barrels a day of tar sand oil 1,700 miles from Alberta, Canada to the Texas Gulf coast, is under construction in southeast Texas.



*The Keystone XL Pipeline under construction in SE Texas.*

However, the pipeline continues to face challenges. It was intended to cross the Nebraska Sand Hills and the Ogallala Aquifer, but Nebraska citizens and public officials indicated strong concern for the safety of the aquifer. In response, President Obama rejected the proposal until TransCanada agreed to reroute the pipeline away from this extremely important aquifer. The change in the route then required, in keeping with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), another environmental assessment.

The new study, giving a green light to the new route, has been completed by a company contracted by the Department of State. The light is now orange, however, because the Environmental Protection Agency has raised an objection. EPA says, as many of the pipeline's opponents have been saying for several years, that State's EA does not take into consideration the nature

of tar sands oil which is abrasive, heavy and acidic, and thus is potentially far more dangerous to the environment.

EPA offered as evidence the 2010 spill from an Enbridge tar sand pipeline in southern Michigan, the recent spill in Mayflower, Arkansas, and several lesser events. When one agency objects to a policy proposal of another agency the decision is referred to the president. President Obama is in favor of the pipeline for economic reasons, but does not want to alienate environment votes prior to the 2014 congressional elections.

When the northern part of the pipeline was stopped, TransCanada decided to proceed with the southern half from Cushing, Oklahoma, to Nederland, Texas. The construction crews were initially slowed by environmental activists, but local sheriffs ultimately removed the protesters. More recently, Michael Bishop, a northeast Texas farmer, has filed suit against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to invalidate the permits issued by the Corps to allow the pipeline to cross waterway and wetlands. Bishop contends that the Corps should have held formal hearings. If his suit is successful in requiring hearings after the fact, the EPA's argument about the danger of tar sands oil can be brought up in relation to potential damage to the hundreds of streams and marshes the pipeline will cross between Cushing and Nederland.

The Keystone XL pipeline will probably be built, but the opposition to it may result in a safer pipeline than the one originally contemplated.

## Other Pipeline News

**Pipeline Leaks in Tyler County (Source: Pineywoods Sierra Group):** A leak occurred into Tyler County creeks from a Sunoco Logistics pipeline in Tyler County, a neighboring county along the Keystone XL Southern route. This 20,000 gallon leak (*550 barrels of crude oil*) is the latest in a series of recent spills and leaks.

Keystone XL's southern leg was approved last March. Keystone XL's sister pipeline, Keystone 1, leaked over a dozen times in its first year. The Neches is one of 5 major rivers the Keystone XL line crosses. The Neches

# Conservation (cont'd.)

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River is designated as one of Texas' last remaining "wild" rivers, extending more than 415 miles... The Keystone traverses 531 water crossings in the State of Texas. Questions have been raised about the possible effects a spill could have on the Carrizo-Wilcox, Yegua, and Gulf Coast aquifers which feeds numerous water supplies across the state.

"As someone who frequents our local rivers, this spill reminds me of why all of us should be concerned about the Keystone XL pipeline and the tar sands crude which will be transported in it—which I view as far more hazardous," commented Adrian Van Dellen, Woodville nature photographer and author.

**Build It. They Will Come (Source Lou Dubose in *Washington Spectator*, April 1, 2013):** Motiva's Port Arthur refinery...sits on 4600 acres...Motiva's owners—Royal Dutch Shell and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's state-owned Aramco—have completed a \$10 billion expansion that required 700 miles of new pipe and came in \$3 billion over budget and two years late... Today the refinery is cooking heavy South American and Saudi crude and making money for investors. But at 600,000 barrels of daily capacity, Motiva only wins big if Secretary of State John Kerry signs off on the Keystone XL pipeline... [Note: DuBose lists 12 environmental groups that have spent \$1 million vs. \$60 billion spent by oil companies and unions.]

## NPCA Salutes ... (from page 1)

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Alec Rhodes (Austin), Cullen Geiselman (Houston) and Maxine Johnston (Batson), who visited nine legislative offices and one senate office. They stressed the impacts of the Sequester on national parks; the economic benefits of parks to local communities, state and nation; and the expiration of park fees legislation. Two Texas proposals

were discussed including the proposed study of an Upper Neches Wild & Scenic River, and, also, the proposed Lone Star Coastal National Recreation Area.

Mostly, the group talked with aides of representatives, but Houston Rep. Gene Greene welcomed the team personally.



*NPCA's Texas Team (left to right): Dean Bibles, Cullen Geiselman, Rep. Gene Greene, Alec Rhodes, and Suzanne Dixon*



# Preserve Overview

by Ann Roberts

The Preserve's **General Management Plan** has arrived, comprising 351 pages choc-a-bloc with charts, maps, alternatives from "no action" to "preferred" to No. 3 and 4. Check the local newspapers and the BTA or BTNP websites for further information. Local public comments sessions may be scheduled.

## Economic Benefits of Parks

In a study conducted by Michigan State University for the NPS covering data for 2011, the report shows \$13 billion of direct spending by 279 million national park visitors in communities within 60 miles of a national park. Most spending supports jobs in lodging and food (63 %); recreation and entertainment (17%); other retail (11%); transportation and fuel (7%); other (2%).

*Silsbee Bee* on March 29 published data from the NPS report on economic benefits for Big Thicket National Preserve. Data show that 137,722 visited the Preserve that year and spent \$9.9 million in communities surrounding the park, supporting 145 jobs in the local area. Supt. Doug Neighbor noted that in addition to local visitors, others come from all over the U.S. as well as international visitors.

## National Park Service by the Numbers\*

\$48,000,000,000 in private historic preservation investment  
11,700,000,000 visitors  
\$5,409,252,508 in preservation and outdoor recreation grants awarded  
\$2,750,000,000 annual budget  
121,603,193 objects in museum collections  
97,417,260 volunteer hours  
84,000,000 acres of land  
4,502,644 acres of oceans, lakes, reservoirs  
2,482,104 volunteers  
218,000 jobs in gateway communities  
85,049 miles of perennial rivers and streams  
68,561 archeological sites  
43,162 miles of shoreline  
28,000 employees  
27,000 historic structures  
2,461 national historic landmarks  
582 national natural landmarks  
400 endangered species  
398 national parks [3 added recently]  
49 national heritage areas  
1 mission: The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage

## Dubey retires

Hosted by Big Thicket National Preserve Supt. Douglas Neighbor, BTNP staff, family and friends of Leslie Dubey gathered in Village Mills at the Wildwood Lodge to honor her long years of NPS service. Leslie began 37 years ago as a Ranger in the Interpretation/Education Division and ended her career as Division Chief!

Over the years, she won the Freeman Tilden Award for the Southwest Region, and later for the Intermountain Region. She also received the Superior Service Award for her work on the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher (TRT) Program Development. Add to that the BTA's Superior Achievement Award in 1999. These are the biggies!

Supt. Neighbor presented Leslie with the NPS Arrow Plaque and a beautiful coat. Other gifts included kayak paddles from the Employees Association. Sharing memories were son, Reed & Jacqueline Davis, Biloxi; and daughter, Mariah & Diego Almazan, Houston; numerous other family members were present.

Since retiring, Leslie sent this message: "I have been kayaking (love the new paddle), working in the garden, reading, and sleeping late because I still go scorpion hunting at night!! I want to go to Europe and go see friends and relatives across the US. I am not bored yet!!!" [e-mail Leslie.E.Dubey@gmail.com]



*Leslie Dubey, former Division Chief, recently retired from the National Park Service after 37 years of service.*

# Other News

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## DAVIS HILL STATE PARK TOUR

Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. held a guided tour of Davis Hill State Park on May 9, 2013. Agency staff led the tour and used the tour as an opportunity to open a dialog to consider special use permits and the development of a public use plan.

## RICHARD DONOVAN AWARDED NATIONAL DAR CONSERVATION MEDAL

(Lufkin News) Richard M. Donovan of Lufkin, author of "Paddling the Wild Neches," was honored March 15 with a national award by the Daughters of the American Revolution. The DAR Conservation Medal was presented at a gala in Houston hosted by the Texas Society DAR. More than 800 people attended.

Pamela R. Wright, DAR State Regent, and Colleen L. Petosa, State Chairman of the Conservation Committee, presented the national award in recognition of Donovan's 16 years of tireless efforts raising awareness and promoting the protection of the Neches River watershed in East Texas. The medal reads, "Dedicated to the Preservation of the Natural Resources of Our Country, Its Soils, Minerals, Forests, Water and Wildlife."

## FREE FAMILY FISHING DAY

**Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge** along with the **Friends of Trinity River Refuge** will be hosting the annual "Free Family Fishing Day" on Saturday, June 1, 2013 from 9:00am - 11:00am at the Champion Lake Public Use Area. It is the one day in the state of Texas that anyone can fish or crab without a license on public waters. We will have fishing poles and bait for those who need it along with experienced fishermen who can help children with baiting hooks and casting techniques. All ages are invited.

## SHANGRI LA NEWS

Michael Hoke, "architect" and veteran of Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center in Orange, retired recently and was honored at an impressive reception on Feb 25 hosted by the Stark Foundation. The Foundation donated \$2,500 to the BTA honoring Hoke, a

BTA director and long-term advocate for preservation of Big Thicket, having served on the Big Coordinating Committee (early 1970s) before legislation created the National Preserve.

On April 20 Shangri La celebrated Earth Day **with an Eco-Fest and Butterfly Release**. Events included booths offering eco-friendly products and services, a butterfly release, as well as games and fun for visitors of all ages. Prior to Eco-Fest, Shangri La kicked off an Earth Week celebration with three evening programs related to the environmental elements of Adams Bayou and the habitats of animals that live throughout Shangri La. For updates on programs visit: [www.shangrilagardens.org](http://www.shangrilagardens.org).

## MARYSEE PRAIRIE

This Texas Land Conservancy prairie of 9+ acres has undergone an overdue transformation recently. The prairie was cleared of remaining trees, and stumps were ground by Daniel Dietz, Stewardship Director, and Glen Merkord, who works with local Marysee volunteers.

Local rains should encourage the grasses and wildflowers to recover rapidly, and we look forward to coneflowers, gayfeathers and a variety of grasses.



*Stump grinders, Glen Merkord and Daniel Dietz, have logged numerous hours removing stumps from Marysee Prairie.*

# BTA Update

by Jan Ruppel, President

Absorbing the Strategic Plan was on the agenda for April. Although that sounds ominous and tiring, it provided a format for conversation and interaction on the part of board members that stimulated ideas and action toward future goals. Committees were restructured and each tackled their tasks, determined priorities and timelines. By building relationships, sharing responsibilities, and being more action-oriented the board is creating a new direction for BTA.

John Stafford has joined the Board of Directors and is replacing Commissioner Ken Pelt who has served on the BTA board since 1992. We will sorely miss his presence and guidance.

The directors awarded a life membership to Douglas Davis in recognition of his generous donation of 3 acres in the Scott Survey, adding to the 31.9 acres previously acquired through the generosity of Rufus Duncan (life member).

The Neches River Adventures program's transfer to BTA is progressing; paperwork should be completed in early May. The Committee reports monitoring and photographing the Ten-Mile Creek and Neches River area as background for operation of the program—attending each nature tour this spring and developing a PowerPoint presentation. An effort to secure corporate sponsorships has been launched.

The board received a surprise visit from author Christopher Cook, who

wrote the article in the March 2000 issue of *Texas Co-op Power Magazine* describing the extraordinary man and his great friend, Howard Peacock. After lunch Maxine Johnston and Chris embarked on a hike into the Big Thicket so Chris could view the changes since Hurricanes Rita and Ike. He was home from Prague to be inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters and to visit family and friends.

Some events that occurred recently: Our own Maxine Johnston headed

to Washington, D.C. to visit with members of Congress and present them with a resolution passed by the board to approve of the study for an Upper Neches Wild and Scenic River, and asking for National Parks and Recreation Association support (See article "NPCA Salutes Parks" on page 1). Several board members attended the April 22<sup>nd</sup> press conference hosted by U. S. Attorney John M. Bales to announce a future addition of land to the Big Thicket National Preserve.

## BTA - Neches River Adventures



Big Thicket Association  
[www.bigthicket.org](http://www.bigthicket.org)



**BTA Public Nature Tours on the Neches River  
...leaving from Beaumont's Riverfront Park**

**Reservations are required.  
Call: 409-651-5326**

**Weekly Public Tours  
each Saturday:**

March through November  
Call for more information,  
departure times & ticket prices

**Charter cruises may be  
scheduled throughout the year.**

Field Trips – Corporate Meetings –  
Social Events - Nature Classes

[www.nechesriveradventures.org](http://www.nechesriveradventures.org)



# East Texas Miscellany

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## Hardin County Museum

In the last two years the Hardin County Genealogical Society, working with the Hardin County Historical Commission, restored the old Hardin County Bank building. The group plans to use the building as a Museum of Hardin County. The first bank built at the location in 1913 burned. It was rebuilt in 1916 but failed to survive the Great Depression. The building hasn't been used as a bank since 1929.

## Oilfield Cemetery at Saratoga

On April 14, the Hardin County Historical Commission installed a his-

torical marker at the Oilfield Cemetery in Saratoga. The marker records the history of pioneers beginning with John Fletcher Cotten who settled the area and who attempted to produce oil with primitive equipment in 1865. The Hooks discovery well in 1901 followed Spindletop. Among other pioneers buried here are Lance Rosier's grandparents (Tom and Mary Jordan) as well as his Aunt Matt Evans and her husband.

Commissioner Ken Pelt talked about the importance of historical preservation, and James A. McKim

III, chair of the HCHC, recounted the history of the cemetery.

## Festivals

The Big Thicket area has many events and festivals to attract visitors. There is a Mayhaw Festival in Hull-Daisetta, an Oil Patch Festival in Batson, a Village Creek Festival in Lumberton, a Dogwood Festival plus Western Weekend in Woodville, a Liberty Jubilee, and Kountze sponsors a Hardin County Music Festival each year. Undoubtedly, there are others. Check the websites for dates and events.

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# Remembered East Texans

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## Chief Oscola Clayton Sylestine (1932-2013)

Alabama Coushatta Chief Oscola Clayton Sylestine) died January 31 at the age of 80. He was elected Chief and installed with traditional ceremony on January 1, 1993. Previously, he served on the Tribal Council for many years. He is survived by his wife, Ethelyn, two daughters and numerous grandchildren.

Both at Big Sandy High School and the University of Houston, he was a "warrior" in basketball and baseball – with the nickname of "Smiley." He served in the armed forces--a Corporal in the 1st Infantry Division stationed in Germany in 1953-55, and he was a deacon in the Presbyterian Church. He worked 17 years at Champion, retiring in 1988.

His obituary gives tribute to his representation of the Tribe, promoting a better understanding of its rich history and heritage.

## George Jones, 1931-2013

George Glenn Jones was born on September 12, 1931 in Saratoga, Texas, and was raised in Vidor, Texas, with his brother and five sisters. The *Beaumont Enterprise* quotes from an interview: "There ain't much I can say about Saratoga, 'he said in 2001.' It's where I was born and I had all my kinfolks in that neck of the woods." When he was seven, his parents bought a radio and he heard country music for the first time. Given a guitar when he was nine, Jones was soon busking for money on the streets of Beaumont. He left home at 16 and went to Jasper, Texas, where he sang and played on the radio station. The Korean War was underway, and he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. He was stationed in California for his entire service. Not long after his discharge, his music career took off.

Among his numerous hit songs were "Walk Through This World With Me," "We Go Together," "A Taste of Yesterday's Wine," "White Lightning," and "He Stopped Loving Her Today."



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## WEB SITES

**Big Thicket Association**

www.bigthicket.org

**Big Thicket National Preserve**

www.nps.gov/bith

**East Texas Black Bear Task Force**

www.bbcc.org

**Conservation Fund**

www.conservationfund.org

**Gulf Coast Mycological Society**

www.gsmyco.org

**National Audubon Society**

www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

www.houstonaudubon.org

**National Parks Conserv. Assoc.**

www.npca.org

**Native Plant Society of Texas**

www.npsot.org

**Nature Conservancy**

www.nature.org/texas

**Outdoor Nature Club, Houston**

www.outdoornatureclub.org

**Sierra Club Golden Triangle Group**

www.texas.sierraclub.org/triangle

**Texas Conservation Alliance**

www.TCAtexas.org

**Village Creek State Park**

www.tpwd.state.tx.us.park

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**May 22**

Clean Air & Water annual meeting at 6:30 PM, the Cattle Company, 5055 Eastex Freeway, Beaumont. Speaker is Clayton Henderson. Asst. General Manager, Sabine-Neches Navigation District. For reservations call 409-892-4964.

**June 2**

Woodland Trail – Big Sandy Unit @ 1:30 PM – Hike, Fish, or just Picnic by the Lake– Call 409-782-3485 for more information.

**July 31**

East Texas Black Bear Task Force meeting, Saratoga at the Field Research Station.

*Neches River Adventures – Departs 10:00 AM from Riverfront Park in Beaumont every Saturday until November except Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend. Call 409-651-5326 for reservations.*