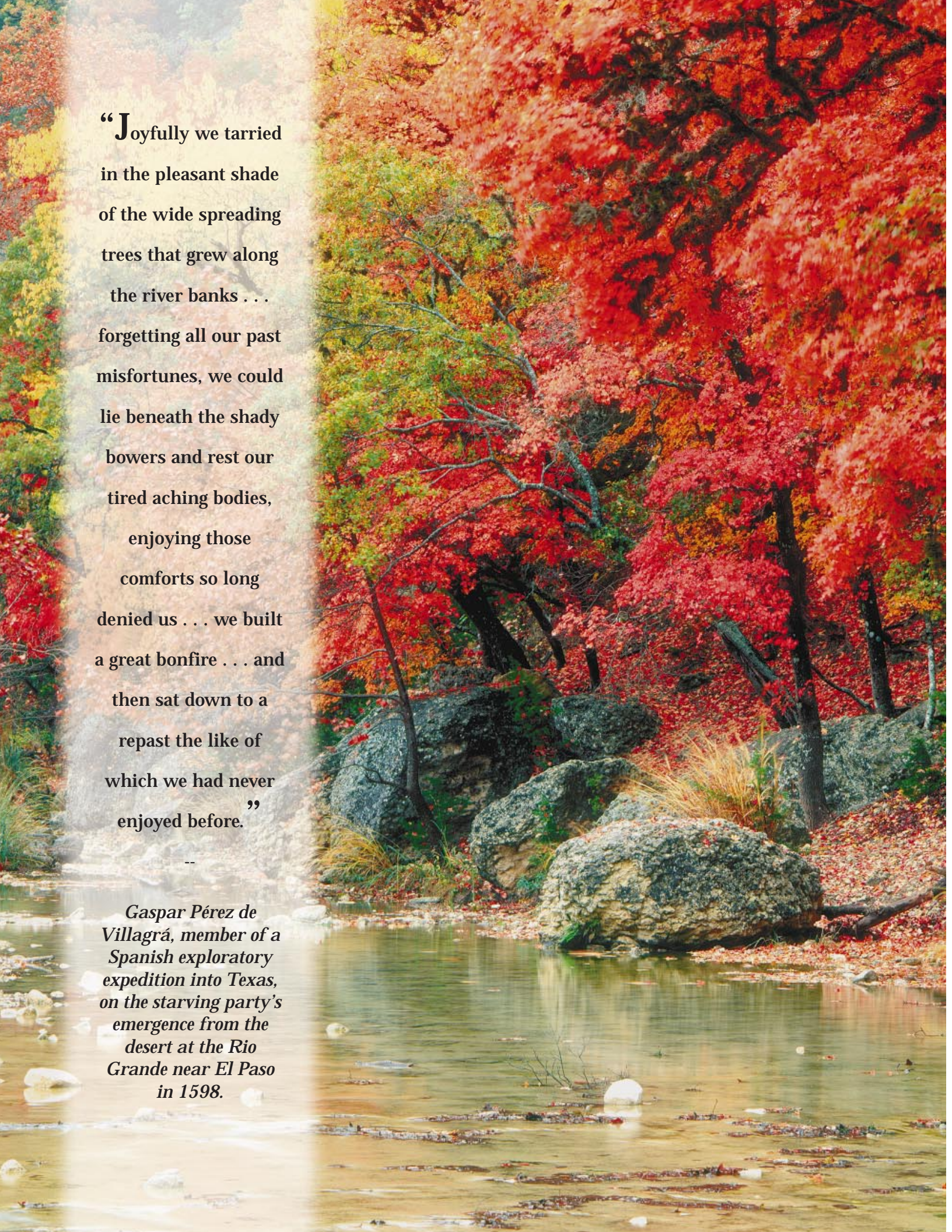


# Texas Outdoors



A Vision  
for the Future





“Joyfully we tarried  
in the pleasant shade  
of the wide spreading  
trees that grew along  
the river banks . . .  
forgetting all our past  
misfortunes, we could  
lie beneath the shady  
bowers and rest our  
tired aching bodies,  
enjoying those  
comforts so long  
denied us . . . we built  
a great bonfire . . . and  
then sat down to a  
repart the like of  
which we had never  
enjoyed before.”

--

*Gaspar Pérez de  
Villagrà, member of a  
Spanish exploratory  
expedition into Texas,  
on the starving party's  
emergence from the  
desert at the Rio  
Grande near El Paso  
in 1598.*





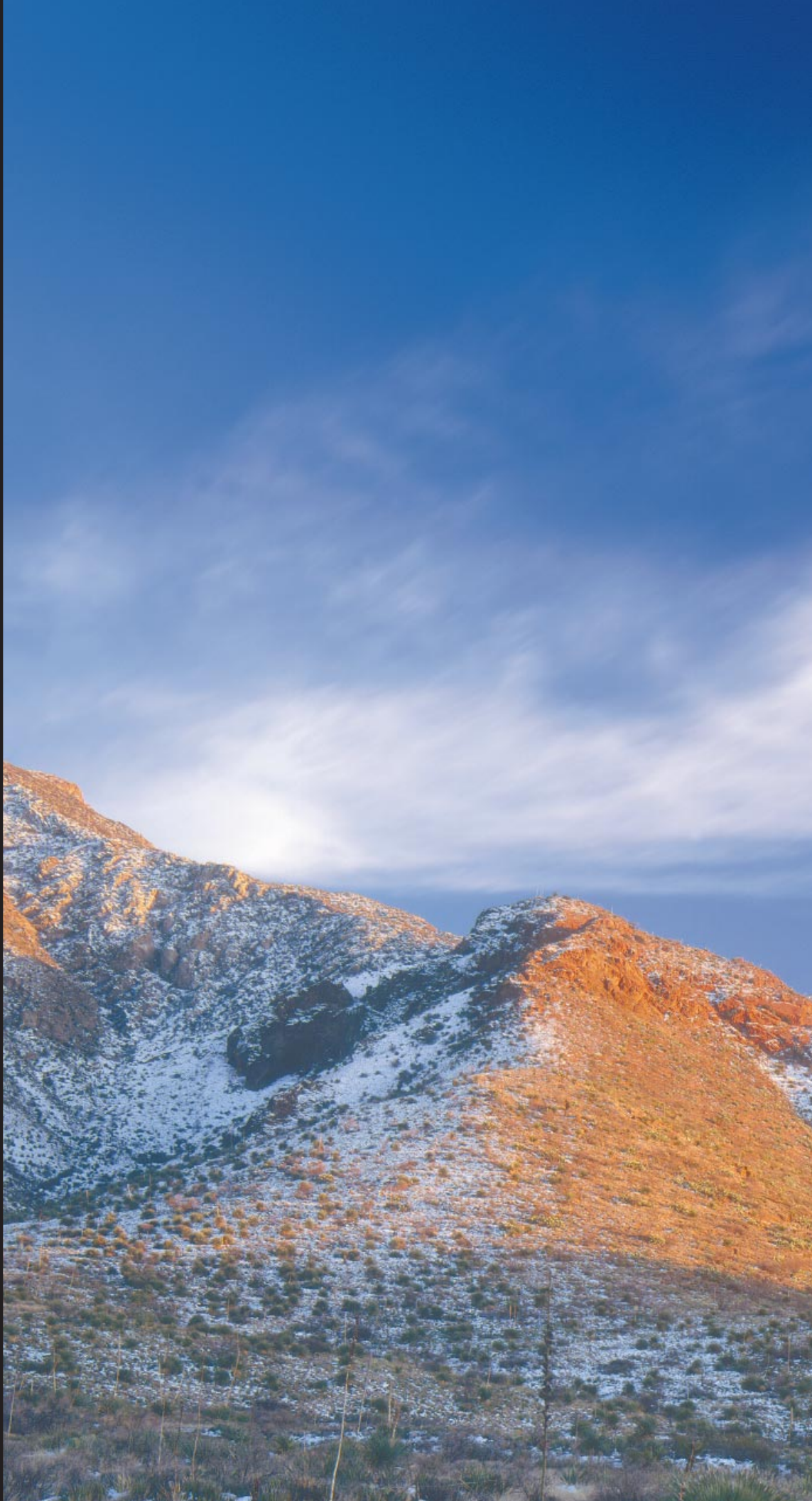
“One of the things I learned . . . was that you can’t work all the time . . . we would camp out in tents and light fires and get dressed in the morning and sleep on mattresses and all that sort of business. Sometimes we would fish and troll in the streams.”

--

*The late Barbara Jordan, Texas Senator and U.S. Congresswoman, writing in her autobiography of the importance of having fun and of a camping trip to Inks Lake.*

“We renew that call in the cause of conserving our natural and cultural resources and of enshrining our parks, forests, wildlife, waters and monuments ... it is for them, America’s children ... millions of kids of every age have gotten the message: protecting and preserving America’s cathedral of the outdoors. And they’re restocking our forests and wildlife refuges and helping from campgrounds to playgrounds.”

--  
*Former President George Bush at the “Take Pride in America Awards,” July 1989*







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### PHOTO CREDITS

(All photos ©Laurence Parent unless otherwise noted.) Cover: Town Lake Hike & Bike Trail, Austin. Page 2: Sabinal River in Lost Maples State Natural Area. Page 3: Re-enactors as Buffalo Soldiers at Texas State Railroad State Historical Park (Earl Nottingham, TPWD); trail riders, Somerville State Park (Earl Nottingham, TPWD); young couple, Pedernales Falls State Park. Pages 4-5: Franklin Mountains State Park, El Paso. Page 34: Anglers at sunset (Bill Reaves, TPWD); birders in South Texas (©Larry Ditto); children hiking at Enchanted Rock State Natural Area (Earl Nottingham, TPWD). Back cover: Formation at Enchanted Rock.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) has done a commendable job of providing all citizens with opportunities to enjoy our state's rich natural, historic and cultural resources. These opportunities include hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, athletics, birdwatching, experiencing history and much more. Compared to other states, however, Texas lags considerably in its investments in parks, recreation and conservation opportunities. Maintaining standards in some areas and improving them in others in the coming decades will be difficult without additional funding.

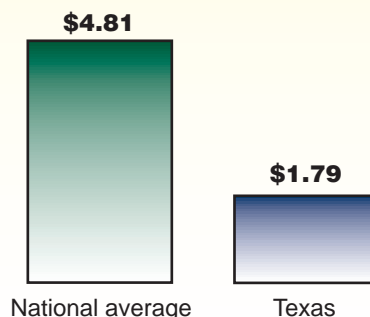
Recognizing potential demands on outdoor recreation facilities at all levels, the State Recreational Resources Committee and the House Appropriations Committee conducted a joint study of the state park system in 1998. To complement the legislative inquiry, TPWD, in cooperation with the Texas Recreation and Park Society, commissioned Texas A&M University in January 1998 to conduct an analysis to explore needs and identify methods for providing adequate natural, recreational, historic and cultural resources for Texas'

future. The study team recognized that Texans' needs are met by an extensive system of resources and infrastructure, both public (federal, state, regional and local) and private. Therefore, various agencies, conservation and recreation organizations (including the Texas Recreation and Park Society), private landowners, nonprofit groups and others helped shape the study's scope and gave input throughout the process.

As an initial step, the project team participated in a parks and recreation summit co-hosted by the Texas Recreation and Park Society and TPWD, which brought together 150 delegates from various parts of the statewide system. Vision statements developed at the conference, as well as TPWD's mission statement, served as starting points for the project. The study team conducted a statewide public opinion survey to supplement extensive gathering of information and opinions from conservation and outdoor recreation groups (both users and providers), local park and recreation departments, TPWD leadership, TPWD's counterparts in other states, academic journals, state documents, agency reports and many other sources. The team used a facilitated group process to derive issues, actions and funding strategies.

## State park operating expenditures per capita, 1996

Texas ranks 49th in the nation for per capita spending on state parks. The state falls 63% below the national average.



## ■ Guiding Principles

From the facilitated process, four cross-cutting principles emerged:

1. Texans want and should have a coordinated system of outdoor recreation, tourism, cultural and natural resources involving the private sector, user organizations and associations, friends groups, and all levels of government.

2. TPWD must continue to be the primary driving force in identifying, acquiring, managing and protecting sites that have statewide natural, cultural or historic significance.

3. User demand for outdoor recreation must be balanced with protection and sustenance of significant resources.

4. TPWD should increase emphasis toward acquisitions, partnerships, and cooperative efforts with other public sector suppliers, with the private sector, and private landowners. This will help preserve and increase a wide spectrum of outdoor recreation and conservation opportunities for all Texans throughout the varied ecoregions of the state. At the same time, TPWD should continue to allocate state funds, expertise and assistance to creation of urban parks and recreation areas managed and maintained by local government.

#### ■ Critical Issues

With these principles in mind, the study team identified five critical issues and more than 100 potential actions. The issues are:

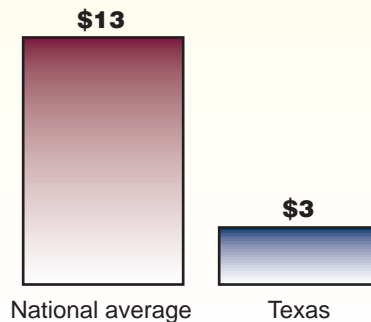
1. Recreation demand will increase, but demographic changes in the profile of visitors will be an even greater challenge for TPWD and other providers in responding to Texans' needs.

2. The inventory of natural, historic and cultural resources managed by TPWD is part of a statewide system of private lands and public holdings that currently does not function in a unified way. System holdings are inadequate in some areas and redundant in others.

3. TPWD must increase public aware-

#### Government spending on all parks

In 1996, the state government of Texas spent only \$3 per capita on all state parks and recreation. At 77% below the average of \$13 per capita, Texas ranked 48th in the nation.



ness and understanding of its management, conservation and stewardship roles. In addition, TPWD and other entities must increase awareness of their contributions to economic development, alleviation of juvenile crime, reduction of health care costs, and enhancement of education.

4. Lack of basic information about users and nonusers, the resource base, and the system limits the ability of TPWD and other providers to make optimum decisions.

5. Infrastructure integrity and compliance with health and safety regulations must continue to be addressed methodically by all system elements.

#### ■ Recommended Actions

As a final step, the list of more than 100 potential actions recommended in the study was prioritized, with the following eight emerging as the most critical:

- Additional dedicated financial resources should be made available to cover what is basically a “public trust” responsibility of recreation providers. Protecting and managing the rich and diverse cultural, historic and ecological resources of Texas

brings value to all Texans. The most significant of these are so important that low visitation or an inability to support themselves should not be an issue.

- As the population changes, TPWD and other recreation providers must respond to the needs of underserved constituents. This can be done by developing and augmenting programs and services that increase access to outdoor recreation, including expansion of the highly successful Community Outdoor Outreach Program. A related strategy is for TPWD to take the lead in facilitating development of new, large, regionally significant, intensive-use outdoor recreation and park lands, as well as linear greenway parks and conservation areas near major cities and high-growth areas. Also, in partnership with other public and private entities, TPWD should encourage and facilitate multiple-use outreach opportunities and centers in major

metropolitan areas. These should coordinate urban outreach programs and environmental education; provide information about cultural areas and historic sites and environmental protection; enable public sales of hunting and fishing licenses and boat registrations; supply park resource information; and carry out other appropriate TPWD functions.

- TPWD should use financial incentives to promote joint ventures with non-profit and private entities, including landowners, as it now does with local park and recreation departments. These ventures should cooperatively deliver programs and services, acquire lands, and manage resources in line with state goals.

- In concert with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission, the Legislature should direct that, as part of the 1999 Sunset process, there be a rigorous review of thematic needs and gaps in TPWD holdings. This should include discussion of potential new holdings and possible divestiture of duplicate holdings or holdings that lack statewide merit or could be more appropriately managed at the local level.

- TPWD and managers of other natural, recreational, historical and cultural resources must clearly communicate the importance of protecting our resources and the contributions managers make toward attaining state goals in economic development, crime prevention, education and health.



Jim Cox, TPWD

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*TPWD's Sunshine Kids program matches mentors with youths who might not otherwise be exposed to outdoor activities.*



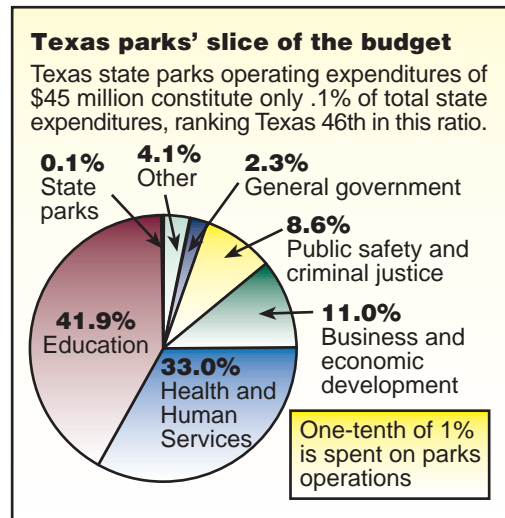
- Infrastructure repair and maintenance are significant challenges at all levels of the system. In partnership with legislative leaders, TPWD is addressing its most urgent repair requirements. However, TPWD and its partners all must commit themselves to financing regular maintenance and routine renovation and repairs, independent of normal operating funds. To meet this need for infrastructure improvements at both TPWD and local park and recreation agency facilities, TPWD and its partners must work together with legislative and local leaders to identify the most appropriate dedicated funding strategies for renovation and repairs.

- TPWD must improve information-gathering and database capabilities that are crucial to better management.

- TPWD must nurture more and better relationships with citizens and private industries who can support and help fund the system.

Creative approaches to staffing and financing (along with the full involvement of local park and recreation departments, other governmental providers and the private sector) will be required to ensure success in the implementation of the proposed actions. Park and recreation staff at all levels of the system must possess the skills, knowledge and training to meet the future challenges identified in this report. Maintenance of workforce proficiency and diversity reflective of population demographics will be a continuing challenge to management.

Many of these actions can be undertaken at little or no cost. Others could be



paid for by shifting funds from current activities. However, new funding will be required to finance several of the proposed actions. There are four main potential funding solutions for implementing these recommendations and others contained in the report. Included are increased appropriations from sales taxes attributable to sporting goods; access to all of the unclaimed motor boat fuel tax refunds; access to additional dedicated general revenue funds to finance stewardship of public trust responsibilities; and increased revenues from current and potential TPWD users.

With its vast array of resources, Texas has an opportunity and obligation to further develop and maintain its recreation resources to serve current and future Texans, as well as visitors to the state. It is incumbent upon state and local leaders to recognize that similar to the transportation, education and criminal justice infrastructure, the conservation and recreation infrastructure will play a critical role in determining the future quality of life for Texans.

## Issue 1



Earl Nottingham, TPWD

**Issue 1: Recreation demand will increase, but demographic changes in the profile of visitors will be an even greater challenge for TPWD and other providers in responding to Texans' needs.**

The face of Texas is changing. By 2030, Hispanics will probably be the largest group among an expected 34 million Texans (about 72 percent more than 1998). The median age and proportion of older citizens most likely will increase, and 90 percent of Texans will live in metropolitan areas. Despite these changes, one constant will remain: Texans, who list “lack of time” as their primary constraint to recreation, will be choosy about how they spend their free hours.

Those two factors—demographic change and personal constraints—mean agencies must pay careful attention to the desires and needs of various groups. It is important to understand factors which may have kept such groups as women, African Americans, Hispanics, seniors, urban dwellers and disadvantaged youth from participating in various activities. Although Anglos now account for about 86 percent of state park visitation, that will change, along with other ethnic groups' market share of the 46 outdoor recreation activities studied for this report. The largest growth will occur in fitness activities, followed by pleasure walking, family gatherings, beach visits, picnics, sightseeing, nature center visits, sporting event attendance and historic site visits.

Better understanding of all Texans by TPWD and other recreation providers can help them create opportunities for all citizens, positioning providers in Texans' minds as offering highly desirable leisure activities. Ways to provide these opportunities include:

*Tomorrow's outdoor and cultural resource users will come from a population dramatically different from today's.*



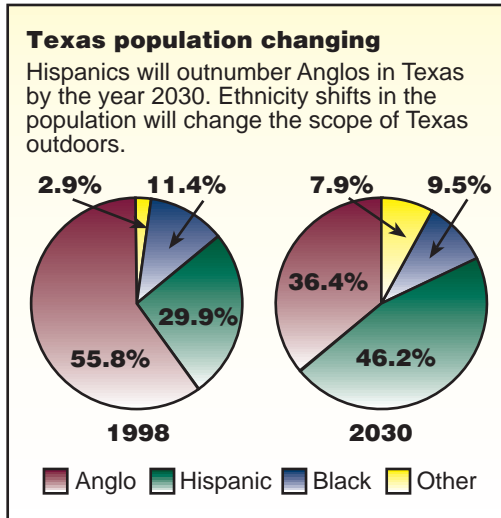
By the year 2030, under the most likely population scenario, 6 million Texas Hispanics will take part in family gatherings outdoors at least once annually.





- Creating large, intensive-use outdoor recreation and park lands in areas surrounding the fastest-growing cities (Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston-Galveston, Austin-San Antonio, and the Lower Rio Grande Valley). A lack of such parks is a major constraint for Texans. An important element of this action is developing TPWD capacity for multimillion-dollar matching grants to leverage development of these projects with private sector, nonprofit and local agency partners. A second element is ensuring adequate surface water resources for aquatic habitat and water-based recreation. Another is developing regional systems of parks and conservation areas with trail linkages or linear greenways between them and other community amenities (using integrated approaches like those taken by the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail or rails-to-trails projects to provide more opportunities for walking, biking, birding, canoeing and other activities for both urban and nonurban dwellers).

- Creating programs that increase access to traditional activities like hunting, fishing, camping and hiking for groups that



have not participated in them; and creating outreach and education efforts to enhance support for TPWD's stewardship of natural and cultural resources.

Such efforts could include expanding the Community Outdoor Outreach Program targeted at disadvantaged inner city youth and disabled populations, as well as developing and augmenting programs such as the Texas Outdoor Women Network and the TPWD Kidfish program that promote the outdoors and environmental education for target groups. Expanding the Texas Recreation and Parks Account and creating and



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*Survey data show African Americans and Hispanics to be less likely to take part in fishing, so encouraging future participation will be a critical issue for TPWD.*





© Maslowski photo

*Some outdoor traditions are passed from generation to generation, but others must be established through other means.*

facilitating grant programs for these purposes will stimulate involvement by local agencies. A separate, low-cost metropolitan fishing license would stimulate interest among city dwellers, as would local put-and-take fisheries. Free youth hunting or fishing licenses would encourage involvement later in life.

In all its work, TPWD and other providers should strive to understand and help Texans overcome constraints such as access to facilities, lack of skills, physical difficulties, or personal safety that might keep them from park visits and recreational activities.

- Developing other new opportunities and products. These could include regional events that feature parks, the use of technology and other interpretive means to

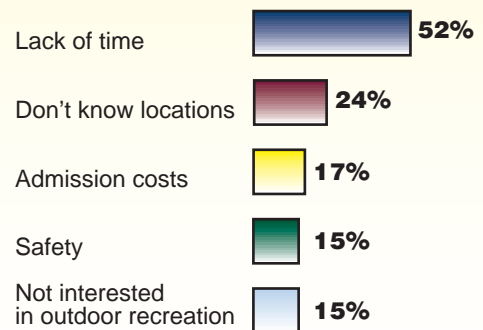
make Texas historic sites “come alive” for visitors, and products like the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail Map that integrate facilities from multiple suppliers and focus on specific market segments.

- Creating opportunities for TPWD to cooperate with nonprofit organizations on programs and services, including greater use of underutilized areas.

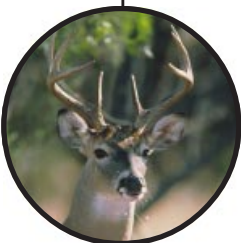
Direct grants, access to loans, and guarantees for nonprofit organizations can encourage other organizations to acquire or manage facilities or offer programs fully accessible to the public. TPWD can also offer facilities, equipment or other subsidies to groups that provide resources for a program element such as interpretation, which is often underused at TPWD facilities. Finally, TPWD should increase its technical assistance to nonprofit and volunteer groups, helping them define goals, establish administrative procedures, address legal issues, and design, promote and raise funds for programs.

- Identifying benefits people seek most through leisure. Promotion and marketing

**Limiting factors in Texans' use of outdoor recreation facilities away from home** (Percent indicating as Very Important)



\*Respondents could choose more than one answer



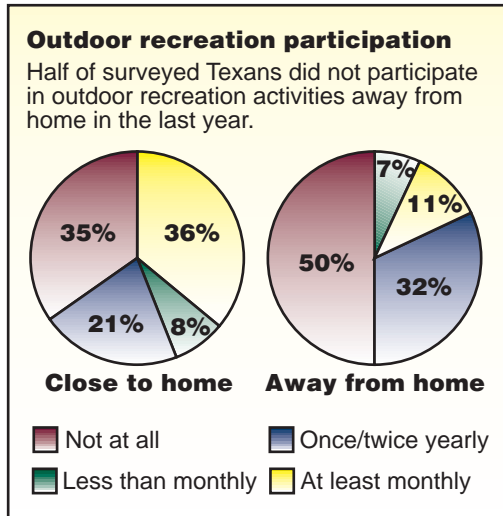


strategies must emphasize how programs and services provide these benefits and should use private sector expertise if needed.

- Identifying populations who use TPWD resources infrequently but might benefit from them. This will include creating incentives for new users; expanding product mixes with nontraditional offerings like conference centers, executive-level cabins, or facilities for weddings, reunions or other events; and providing self-directed, less time-consuming opportunities close to users' homes during off-peak and low-use periods. Private-sector partnerships also are critical to the state-wide outdoor recreation system.

- Expanding functions of the state park accommodation reservation system.

An independent, external evaluation of the current reservation system would ensure that the system is not in itself a constraint to park use. Privatizing the system might enhance its capabilities and effectiveness, and it could incorporate



private campgrounds, hotels and motels, and other services and attractions, as well as enabling Internet reservations. Referrals to adjacent private sites may foster local tourism and provide an additional revenue source for private landowners.

TPWD should consider using the system to ration particular activities at some parks. For instance, birding opportunities may need to be rationed to ensure quality viewing experiences and protect the resource base.



© Laurence Parent

*Higher proportions of Texans will live in cities, meaning more recreation opportunities for metropolitan residents will be necessary.*





© Laurence Parent

**Issue 2: The inventory of natural, historic and cultural resources managed by TPWD is part of a statewide system of private lands and public holdings that currently does not function in a unified way. System holdings are inadequate in some areas and redundant in others.**

Few states are so rich and diverse in culture, history, and ecological resources as Texas. Such resources are held by the state in trust for the benefit of all citizens. Although the TPWD mission includes managing and protecting natural and cultural resources, it is not always clear which resources should be the responsibility of TPWD and which should fall to others. Some are clearly of state-wide significance, while others may have regional, local or limited significance and probably should not be owned or maintained by TPWD.

As demand increases and changes, no single provider can meet demand by itself. Market segments defined by products, services and benefits will provide the basis for coalitions and partnerships, and TPWD must increase its facilitative role in that system. These actions are suggested for helping unify the system:

- In concert with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission, the Legislature should direct that, as part of the 1999 Sunset process, there be a rigorous review of thematic needs and gaps in TPWD holdings. This should include discussion of potential new holdings

*Mission Concepción is part of the Mission Trail, which combines federal, state and local efforts to upgrade links between the Alamo in downtown San Antonio and outlying area missions.*



Under the most likely population scenario, 9.6 million Texans will visit historic sites in 2030. That compares to 3 million in 1990.





and possible divestiture of duplicate holdings or holdings that lack statewide merit or could be more appropriately managed at the local level.

- Protect and manage the rich and diverse cultural, historic and ecological resources of Texas to bring value to all Texans. The most significant of these resources are so important that low visitation or an inability to support themselves should not be an issue, and additional dedicated financial resources should be made available to cover what is basically a “public trust” responsibility.

- Develop legislative funding to support significant sites that are not self-sustaining.

- Encourage use of conservation easements to protect significant sites. TPWD should forge relationships with nonprofit groups to foster site protection.

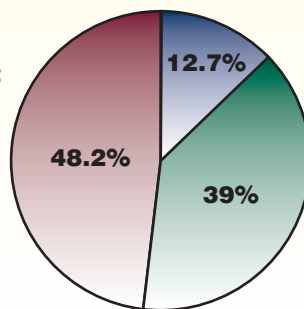
- Develop incentive programs for local governments to assume management of some facilities. Texas Recreation and Parks Account grants might be used as endowments or renovation funds to make this possible.

**Texans say cultural and historical sites merit government funding**

Asked about state government spending priorities, a majority of Texans indicated that cultural and historical sites should receive medium to high priority.

**Priority in government spending**

- high
- medium
- low



- Clearly define management and interpretation roles and responsibilities at historic sites and develop innovative management partnerships.

- Consider adapting cultural and historic sites to other uses that maintain public access and standards of resource integrity, such as leasing to nonprofit or commercial entities.

- Create funding advocacy groups for some sites, where special events or other activities by the group raise support dollars.

- Encourage increased coordination



Kevin Good, TPWD

*Volunteers like these from a Waco church group, shown at Mother Neff State Park, often help maintain facilities for both TPWD and other parts of the system of resource providers.*



and cooperation among providers through existing, new or strengthened affiliations. Develop an integrated information management system as detailed in issue 4; expand the TPWD Internet home page to link all system elements and encourage such links by others; develop an inclusive map of state parks, conservation areas, river authority properties and other public and private facilities to offer Texans a view of system opportunities; create system-wide award and recognition programs for innovative partnering; and work with the Texas Department of Transportation to integrate and better coordinate TEA-21 initiatives.

- Facilitate provision by local communities, federal agencies, private landowners and others. TPWD can increase partnerships with local governments using hotel/motel tax funds to expand capital and program efforts; negotiate with private landowners to secure access easements and

development easements through a grant fund similar to the one established by Florida's legislature; expand technical assistance to landowners for recreation revenue generation; expand the Landowner Incentive Program and the Texas Wetlands Plan; and identify legal actions to reduce liability concerns of landowners and governments, as well as identifying other constraints to granting access to recreation sites.

- Solicit donations and create endowments to help fund existing park, wildlife and cultural needs and provide support for future acquisitions. This effort could include matching funds for challenge grants, identification of ecological and cultural/heritage sites to be acquired through mitigation funds, and financial support from industry, nonprofit groups and individuals for each TPWD facility.

*Texas Recreation and Parks Account grants help cities fund multi-use parks where families gather for many activities, including youth sports.*



© Peter Rocha







TPWD photo

*Resource providers supplement the state's educational mission through environmental learning programs like TPWD's Texas Wildlife Expo.*

**Issue 3: TPWD must increase public awareness and understanding of its management, conservation and stewardship roles. In addition, TPWD and other entities must increase awareness of their contributions to economic development, alleviation of juvenile crime, reduction of health care costs, and enhancement of education.**

Few things are more cherished by individuals but taken for granted in public life than benefits provided by park and recreation agencies. Even TPWD's current mission statement reflects this irony: while aligning itself with the natural resource goal outlined by Governor Bush's Vision Texas plan, the statement does not address at least four other goals in the plan (economic development, public safety, criminal justice, and education). Clearly articulating the role of TPWD and other entities in these areas is crucial to attaining recognition of the entire system's role in state priority issues and receiving additional funding and support.

Parks and recreation contribute to economic development in at least three major ways: tourism, business location decisions, and attracting retirees to an area. Pleasure travel by Texans within the state and by non-Texan visitors to the state includes visits to such attractions as parks and natural areas, beaches, waterfronts, historic sites, museums, athletic complexes and golf courses. In 1996, an estimated 22 million trips were made for these purposes by non-Texans and another 98 million by Texans.

Local amenities such as athletic and aquatic facilities—eligible for grants from the Texas Recreation and Parks Account—may contribute substantially to a community's economy. During the



Non-Texans spent an estimated 82 million "person days" on leisure travel in Texas in 1996, while Texans spent an estimated 155 million person days.





© Laurence Parent

***Lifelong advantages such as better health for individuals, along with decreased public health care costs, are among the recreational benefits overlooked by the public.***

course of a year, the Bryan-College Station area is likely to host some 20 recreational special events contributing approximately \$5 million in direct expenditures, \$2.75 million in personal income, \$9.3 million in sales, and 215 full-time equivalent jobs to the metropolitan area. State parks have similar impacts.

Parks and recreation services also encourage “footloose” businesses and retirees to relocate to Texas. Many businesses (especially in the intensely recruited high-technology, research and development, and company headquarters categories) rely on ability to attract and retain highly educated employees. For these individuals, the deciding factor on where they work is often quality of life. One of the most

successful Texas communities in attracting these types of businesses is The Woodlands, near Houston. Substantial investment in parks, golf courses, hike and bike trails, recreation facilities, and urban forestry gives The Woodlands both ambiance and a major competitive advantage in attracting “footloose” businesses.

Recruitment of retirees has been termed a new clean-growth industry in America. If 100 households relocate to a community in a year, each with an annual retirement income of \$40,000, they impact the community like a new business spending \$4 million annually there. Younger, affluent retirees tend to migrate to areas rich in amenities—particularly a warm climate and recreational opportunities. Retirees have an image of how they want to live and seek environments to facilitate that lifestyle.

TPWD now targets several programs to meet needs of at-risk youth (e.g., Texas Buffalo Soldiers, Exploring Texas Roots and Blazing New Trails). The Community Outdoor Outreach Program funds projects in local communities encouraging children and youth (especially minority, low income and other underserved populations) to enjoy outdoor activities and learn about conservation and the environment. The Texas Recreation and Parks Account provides matching grants to local governments for recreation centers, parks and other facilities. Participating youth receive strong mentorship and opportunities for constructive alternatives during nonschool time, reducing the likelihood of gang involvement or other undesirable activities. TPWD programs strongly supplement





prevention efforts by other agencies.

Park and recreation services decrease health costs by facilitating physical fitness and decreasing stress. Many activities improve cardiovascular fitness, and there is convincing scientific evidence that stress is reduced through viewing and interacting with scenic and outdoor places. In addition, some facilities, such as swimming pools, provide training and education that can help save lives in case of accidents in water.

Finally, TPWD plays a strong educational role for all ages by teaching about the environment, conservation and stewardship, as well as the history and legacy of Texas, through cultural and historic facilities. Environmental education improves interest in school and skills such as math, reading and science, contributing to progress toward Vision Texas goals such as exemplary school performance in science.

Local park and recreation departments are critical, but too often are perceived as discretionary, nonessential services. Greater understanding of their role in community and individual well-being is

**Recreation attracts small businesses**

Despite their size, small businesses (eight or fewer employees) combine to employ more workers than mid-sized or large businesses in America. Small businesses ranked recreation, parks and open spaces as the most important of six quality-of-life elements in a survey on relocation decisions. Large businesses (88 or more employees) ranked cost of living and housing first.

**Business rankings**

	Small	Large
Recreation	1	4
Living costs	2	1
Education	3	2
Safety	4	3
Culture	5	5
Health care	6	6

necessary before elected officials see them as worthy of more funds, especially redirected funding. Local parks, green spaces, trails and other open community spaces, recreation and community centers, and programs sponsored by local departments provide the same benefits as state resources.

The single most important task in increasing financial support is to broaden the constituency beyond traditional users, making articulation of TPWD and local department roles critical. Both TPWD and other system components should consider



Mario Gonzalez, TPWD

*TPWD's stewardship role includes cataloging and preserving many fauna and flora, such as native grasses.*



**Local economic impacts by outside visitors to state parks**

Economic impact studies at selected TPWD state parks show that direct expenditures by visitors from outside those counties make substantial contributions to local economies.

State parks	Outside visitor spending	Income to residents from visitor spending	Sales volume stimulated by visitor spending	Fulltime equivalent jobs created by visitor spending
Bastrop	\$ 4,055,119	\$ 2,395,131	\$ 8,851,178	212.44
Brazos Bend	916,275	669,577	2,235,670	43.21
Enchanted Rock	6,094,193	3,503,781	12,224,880	289.35
Garner	3,058,892	1,638,739	5,957,704	142.60
Goose Island	12,119,346	7,708,515	28,426,927	658.82
Lake Livingston	3,865,975	2,319,914	8,600,661	208.03
LBJ State Historical Park	19,294,301	11,300,630	39,561,688	968.25
Ray Roberts Lake	1,393,483	1,123,157	3,765,304	70.85

these potential actions:

- Document and communicate important contributions they make to state and community goals. Along with other system components, TPWD and local departments must particularly note their economic contributions to the state and to local communities; the role of agencies in prevention programs for at-risk youth; the value of cultural, historic and park facilities as educational resources; and their role in physical fitness, stress reduction and reduced health care costs.

- Align with local and state tourism groups in a system to enhance visitation and rural economic development. Chambers of commerce or development officers should recognize the role of TPWD properties as key destinations in the system.

- Move from emphasizing facilities to demonstrating benefits and outcomes to taxpayers from these resources.

- Emphasize the wide array of benefits in TPWD publications, radio programs and television programs. Local agency media efforts should also take this approach.

*Park employees at Casa Navarro State Historical Park in San Antonio pass the state's rich historical legacy to new generations of Texans.*



© Larry D. Hodges







© Laurence Parent

*Among participants in a survey for this report, 13 percent reported having camped in the previous 12 months, making it the second-most cited outdoor activity away from home.*

- Consider modified mission statements to reflect a broader range of collateral benefits.

In addition to building better awareness of public benefits, TPWD must improve awareness of its role as an environmental steward. Texas A&M survey results indicate wide support for environmental and conservation programs in Texas, but almost two-thirds of respondents did not know TPWD was responsible for running state parks and protecting fish and wildlife resources. To increase public support, TPWD should extend existing conservation and environmental education efforts to new constituencies, including these actions:

- In partnership with public and private entities, TPWD should encourage and facilitate development of multiple-use outreach opportunities or centers in major metropolitan areas. These should include coordinated urban outreach programs; environmental education and protection; cultural area and historic site information; public interfaces for hunting and fishing license sales, boat registrations, and park resource information; and other appropriate

TPWD functions. Funding might be shared with local governments, schools, foundations, corporations or other partners.

- Partner with nonprofit foundations to implement environmental education; with the Texas Education Agency to integrate such efforts and others into public school curricula; and with TEA and others to fund mandated school-based environmental education.

- Develop and nurture stronger state-wide citizen and industry support and advocacy groups for wildlife, fisheries and outdoor recreation issues. Because parks often have less advocacy than other functions, focus on individual champions of parks and build a “Texans for State Parks” movement. Involve members of the Citizens Board Branch of the Texas Recreation and Park Society to build this movement.

- Fully acknowledge TPWD partnerships in literature and signage at sites.

- Initiate promotion campaigns using well known Texans who use Texas outdoor opportunities.





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**Issue 4: Lack of basic information about users and nonusers, the resource base, and the system limits the ability of the TPWD and other providers to make optimum decisions.**

TPWD managers need to know as much about the people who use resources as about the resources themselves. To maintain biological, ecological and historical integrity while meeting customer needs, managers require substantially more information about users and visitors than they have now. They need a more comprehensive data base—starting with adoption of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Visitor Estimation and Reporting System—to effectively manage outdoor resources in the public interest.

TPWD personnel know more about some users, such as hunters and anglers, than others. Park managers have little reliable data to guide operating decisions or to gauge their performance. Examples of needed data include: number of day use and overnight visitors to state parks; visitation at wildlife management areas and historic sites; and frequency and seasonality of visitation by various types of visitors. Without such data, managers will have more difficulty setting policy on resource use.

To operate in a more businesslike fashion, TPWD managers need basic, routinely available information and state-of-the-art technology to provide cost-efficient data. A good example is the new TPWD point-of-sale system making fishing and hunting licenses available to customers 24 hours a day, which both removes a constraint to participation and efficiently collects data from these user groups.

*Knowledge of how many visitors take part in various state park activities is just one of the crucial types of information TPWD managers often lack.*



Hispanics are expected to gain 15 to 20 percentage points in market share of most recreation activities by 2030. For instance, Hispanics currently make up about 20 percent of anglers, but are expected to be 35 percent of that market by 2030.





For activities where no licenses or admissions are required, gathering customer information is more difficult, but TPWD can conduct surveys in partnership with other public and private interests. Such information allows better consideration of other user groups in TPWD's programs and services; it also benefits other organizations' service delivery, tourism, and economic impact.

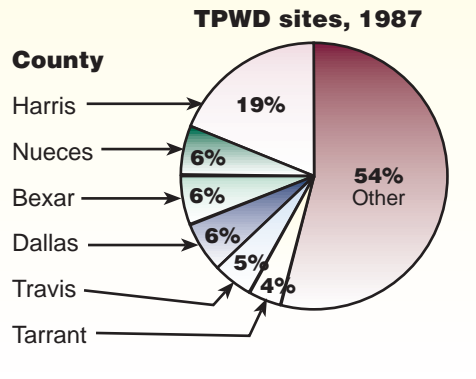
Better information capabilities can improve agency credibility with both legislators and the general public, provide benchmarks for measuring progress and accountability, help assess investment opportunities with criteria not currently available, and allow more meaningful income projections.

To improve its information system, TPWD should:

- Replace the current visitation formula based on car counts with the Visitor Estimation and Reporting Systems (VERS) developed and used by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This system, extensively tested and used at a larger and more geographically diverse system than TPWD,

**Origins of state park visitors**

There are 254 Texas counties, but only six account for 46 percent of all in-state park visitors.



will provide more accurate visitation counts, which are the cornerstone of the overall information system.

- Establish time- and place-specific carrying capacities at all TPWD areas to ensure that overcrowding does not diminish visitor experiences.
- Collect basic ZIP code information to track origins of all TPWD visitors.
- Implement licenses/permits on a cost-recovery basis to gather information on user groups such as river and beach users, birders using state lands, trail users and others.



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*Surveys of all groups of outdoor recreation participants are necessary for improved service.*



- Continue to survey users who need licenses or permits from TPWD. This will provide insights about each user group and improve service, guide product development and enhance partnerships.

- Routinely collect basic trip data from site visitors by integrating data collection into VERS and other systems used for collecting fees and reporting Conservation Passport visits.

- Find creative ways to survey other participants in activities not requiring licensing. This provides information on participation patterns and motivations to assist decisions in planning, management, and development.

- Conduct broad-based surveys every two to five years to broaden TPWD perspectives on outdoor recreation, park visitation, natural and cultural resources, and agency awareness. This will help ensure appropriate programming, agency responsiveness and fiscal responsibility.

- Establish a statewide council or task force of public and private providers to define information needs and guide development of a cooperative management

information program.

- Develop a user-friendly information system to profile TPWD visitors and share information with the state's public and private recreation providers. This is likely to increase private sector investment. Use Geographic Information System methods to demonstrate user-resource relationships and facilitate management decisions.

- Assume responsibility for commissioning and coordinating statewide research data. TPWD also should establish a repository where the data are publicly available, including an annually updated data catalog.

- Cultivate staff knowledge and skills regarding management information system data. TPWD should create a culture for accessing, using, evaluating and communicating market information both internally and externally.

- Examine TPWD website management objectives and promote the availability of information on recreation and park areas and natural resources statewide by establishing links to other providers' pages.

*As park use for some activities increases, managers will need to have information on park carrying capacity to ensure that visitor experiences do not deteriorate.*



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Bill Reaves, TPWD

*Restoration of the Texas State Cemetery, which includes this sculpture of Gen. Albert Sydney Johnston by Elisabet Ney, was managed by TPWD and completed in 1997. It made the cemetery into a first-rate interpretive facility that showcases the state's history.*

**Issue 5: Infrastructure integration and compliance with health and safety regulations must continue to be addressed methodically by all system elements.**

Infrastructure repair and maintenance is a significant challenge at all levels of the system. Deterioration jeopardizes the safety and health of system visitors, discourages continued visitation, and threatens investments already made in resources. Although the 1997 legislature authorized a five-year, \$60 million bond program to resolve urgent needs at TPWD's facilities, the need for new repairs mounts as all TPWD facilities age and are impacted by heavy public use. In addition, local parks and recreation directors rank infrastructure maintenance as their biggest problem. Delaying maintenance will result in increased long term costs; deterioration is less expensive to fix if diagnosed and dealt with early. Actions to help ensure ongoing sources of funding include:

- TPWD and its partners all must commit to financing regular maintenance, renovation and repairs, independent of normal operating funds. To meet this need for infrastructure improvements at both TPWD and local park and recreation facilities, TPWD and its partners must work together with legislative and local leaders to identify appropriate dedicated funding strategies.

- Establish a maintenance trust fund for existing facilities and create maintenance/renovation endowment funds for any new TPWD facilities.

- Seek TPWD divestiture of high-maintenance, underused facilities unless alternative funding becomes available.

- Use more volunteers to maintain TPWD facilities and areas.



In 1997, TPWD estimated backlogs of \$76 million for renovation of water/wastewater systems, \$76 million for renovations, \$44 million for ADA and other regulatory compliance, and \$13 million for general facility repairs.



## FINDING THE NEEDED SUPPORT



*Just as resource users will be more diverse, TPWD employees should reflect racial, ethnic and gender composition of the state.*



Since 1993, TPWD has granted \$67.9 million in matching funds from the Texas Recreation and Park Account to 197 community projects. Another 317 requests for a total of \$82.1 million, however, could not be funded.

Despite low funding levels, Texas has accomplished much with its recreation, cultural and natural resources. But the system is strained, and only greater support for both TPWD and other providers will remove that strain.

Although the goal of this study was to explore needs and methods of providing adequate natural, recreational, historic and cultural resources for the future Texas, there was considerable focus on state-level responsibilities for outdoor recreation and parks—for several reasons.

First is a strong tradition in Texas for natural resource users such as anglers and hunters to support management services through direct taxing mechanisms. Second, the state park system has operated at a deficit for some time and consistently has drawn monies from other TPWD functions and services. Using the philosophy of “user-benefit, user-pay,” TPWD has tried to fund the state park system on the backs of its users.

Third, meeting public trust responsibilities benefits all Texans; thus all Texans, not just users, should pay. Under the public trust doctrine, natural resources and areas of recreational, cultural and historic significance are held by the state in trust for the benefit of all citizens. General revenue funds derived from a broad cross-section of Texans are required to meet present and future needs in these areas.

Finally, new large-scale initiatives driven by changing demographic needs and recreation and park opportunities will require legislative attention and funding.



Most actions suggested in this report require no additional funding. They can be implemented by shifting resources to reflect different priorities, changing elements of the agency's culture, conceptualizing issues differently or changing organizational focus. Some actions, however, address new issues requiring major initiatives and additional funding:

- Developing new, large, regionally significant, intensive-use outdoor recreation and park lands, linear greenway parks, and conservation areas near high-growth and major metropolitan areas (see issue 1).
- Acquiring and managing resources with statewide significance, but not currently among state holdings (see issue 2).
- Creating direct grants and low-interest loan programs to encourage involvement by nonprofit and private organizations in acquiring, managing or programming resources. This is particularly important for targeted programs and facilities in economically disadvantaged areas and for traditionally underserved audiences (see issue 1).

In other cases, existing efforts to address problems can be expanded only with additional funding. These include:

- Creating a designated fund for infrastructure renovation and repairs at TPWD and local facilities, independent of normal operating funds (see issue 5).
- Expanding the Community Outdoor Outreach Program targeted at disadvantaged inner city youth and disabled populations (see issue 1).
- Creating multiple-use outreach opportunities and centers in major metro-

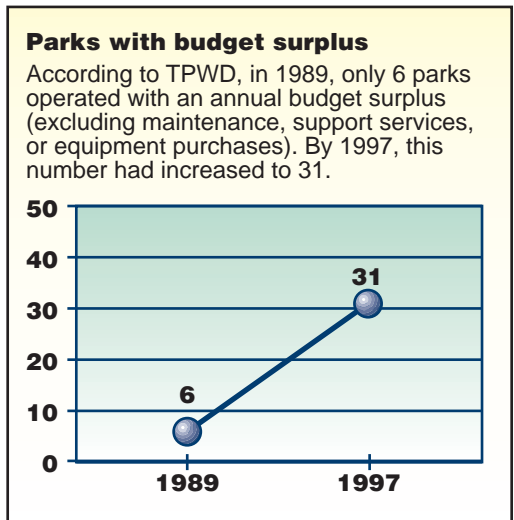
politan areas (see issue 1).

- Improving information-gathering and database capabilities for acquiring data crucial to better management (see issue 4).

**■ Sources for Additional Funding**

In 1991, TPWD went from receiving substantial general fund support to being funded almost exclusively by users, either directly or indirectly. While generating some funding for the TPWD, the shift brought unintended deterioration in the range and the quality of services, and employee morale fell substantially as demands on staff became increasingly onerous. The transition to a user-supported agency is unlikely to be successful in the long run; user fees have increased substantially in an effort to bring revenues in line with expenses.

TPWD needs additional revenues to sustain and enhance current services and successfully undertake additional activities. At least four sources for additional resources may be found through: sales taxes generated by sporting goods, unclaimed



motor boat fuel tax refunds, designating other appropriate general fund sources, and fees charged to park users,

**Tax revenue from sporting goods**

**sales:** As demands for hunting, fishing, and boating increase, there is an incremental increase in resources to accommodate those additional demands. There are natural links among population growth, sales growth for sports equipment, and growth in demand for spaces where Texans can use that equipment. Data show a clear relationship between sports equipment purchases, more frequent state parks visitation and more frequent participation in outdoor recreation close to home.

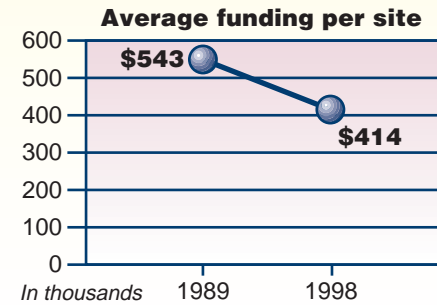
While increasing federal excise tax revenues from fishing and hunting equipment sales automatically provide higher appropriations for Fund 9, there is no similar adjustment mechanism for local park and recreation funds or TPWD funds from revenue generated by the sales tax on sporting goods (SGT). Increasing appropriations from the SGT and linking them to increases in the state sales tax is the logical way to create an adjustment mechanism.

Because the state has no means of directly calculating the level of SGT revenues it receives, estimates must be derived indirectly from several sources. These estimates suggest SGT revenues approach \$85 million annually. If an SGT appropriation was expressed as a percentage of total sales taxes, appropriations to TPWD would rise (or fall) in accordance with sales taxes.

If annual appropriations stay constant while SGT revenues continue to rise, TPWD and its local government partners

**Average funding for Texas parks**

In 1983, funding for TPWD's 116 parks was \$63 million. By 1998 the number of parks had increased to 123, but the parks' budget had declined to \$51 million, despite inflation.



will be in the untenable position of facing additional demands and costs without commensurate resources available. First fully appropriated in 1996, the \$32 million SGT appropriation then represented only 0.003% of total state sales tax receipts. As total sales taxes have grown, this percentage has decreased each year, with no effort to keep the appropriation at 0.003% or increase the relative percentage received.

Each 0.001% increment of change will yield an additional \$11.34 million. Given the estimated \$85 million size of the SGT fund pool, additional increments of SGT funding appear justifiable.

One use would be an increase for the Texas Recreation and Parks Account, which receives approximately half the current SGT appropriation. This fund stimulates establishment of additional local facilities, without ongoing state costs for operation, maintenance and renovation. An extraordinarily popular program among local communities, the fund is an effective catalyst in leveraging matching investments from communities. However, its effectiveness is



constrained because its \$15.5 million annual appropriation is far exceeded by the amount of matching funds needed by many local projects, which then do not reach fruition. Expanded funding could be specifically targeted at economically disadvantaged and traditionally underserved population areas.

**Unclaimed motor boat fuel tax**

**refunds:** TPWD currently receives 75% of this third potential source of funds, and the remaining 25% is credited to the Available School Fund. Providing the remainder to TPWD would not increase taxes and would yield the approximately \$4 million needed by TPWD to meet its public trust needs in state parks. The 25% credited to the Available School Fund is only 0.003% of its funding. Loss of this amount from the school fund would be outweighed by the strengthening of TPWD’s abilities to carry out its public trust, educational and archival responsibilities.

**Identifying other general fund**

**designated sources:** TPWD’s operating budget currently is funded almost entirely from user-related sources. Consistent with the “user-benefit, user-pay” principle, this approach encourages agency entrepreneurship because budgets depend on direct or indirect user payments.

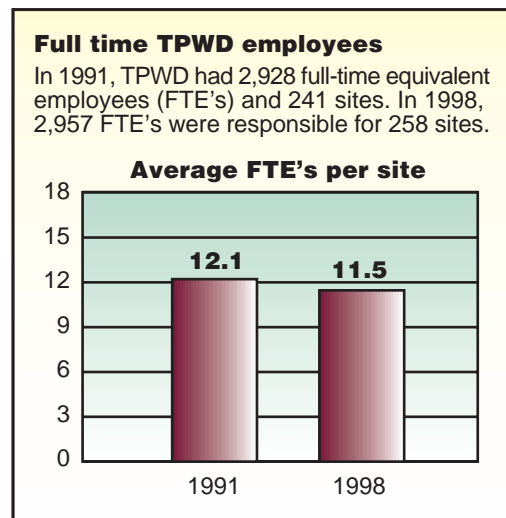
Users, however, reach a point beyond which they are no longer willing to pay. In addition, the agency is expected to respond to the interests of particular users, perhaps ahead of the interests of all Texans. This approach is not fully consistent with TPWD’s stewardship mission, which requires the agency to manage all resources

and provide services from which all Texans benefit, such as monitoring freshwater inflows to the Gulf of Mexico or enforcing public health regulations regarding shellfish.

This lack of consistency between funding sources and responsibilities means TPWD usually has insufficient resources for high priority elements in its system; too many are absorbed by nondiscretionary public trust responsibilities. Fund investment frequently must be prioritized on the basis of stewardship needs, rather than being based on return on investment. These are missed opportunities to increase public satisfaction.

While surpluses from 31 profitable parks amounted to \$3.7 million in 1997, the remaining 89 parks accrued an aggregate deficit of \$7.7 million. Because this net deficit must be covered, it impacts the entire agency budget.

Many deficit facilities were acquired for inclusion in the state system because they are part of Texas’ cultural and historical heritage. They represent and interpret the



culture, traditional lifestyles and history of Texas. They include not only historical buildings, burial sites, monuments and museums, but also some natural and conservation sites that are valuable as examples of original Texas land forms rather than for their recreational potential. These elements of the TPWD system are an integral part of our archives and heritage.

Financing stewardship of these facilities should not come solely from revenues earned from anglers, hunters, boaters and park visitors, because they receive no more or less benefit from them than other Texans. Because all Texans benefit equally from preservation of these resources, all Texans should pay; appropriated general revenue funds are an acceptable way for them to do so.

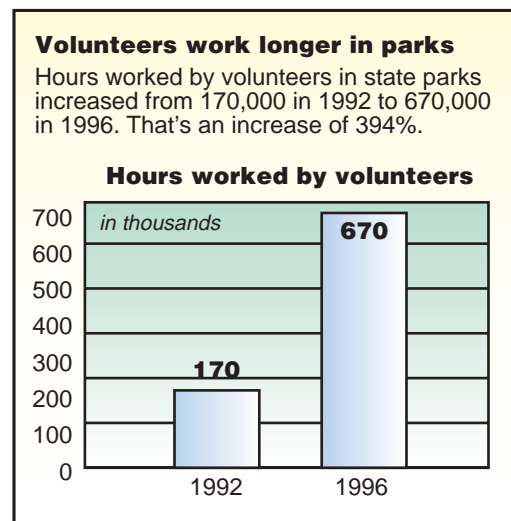
**Park fees:** To generate additional revenues from park users, TPWD changed from per vehicle to per person entrance prices in May 1996. Although substantial, these price increases have been widely accepted by both visitors and nonvisitors to

state parks, regardless of income level. Study data show, however, that further price increases are unlikely to be tolerated. Still, there are two possible sources from which additional user revenue may come: increased Texas Conservation Passport (TCP) sales and overnight accommodations.

While the TCP is widely perceived to be a good value, its sales have declined precipitously from 123,000 in 1995 to 48,000 in 1997. Some of the decline was caused by termination of TPWD promotional efforts targeting existing and lapsed TCP holders, and the department should consider restoring these efforts. Potential added revenue from this source was estimated at more than \$1 million. Even a fraction of this potential would be a good return on investment. Restoring TCP sales numbers to a higher level is important not only because of the added revenue, but also because TCP holders provide an accessible constituency for supporting park enhancement and natural resources protection.

Since 1996, overnight camping sales and revenues have declined substantially, even though both total campsites and parks with overnight facilities have increased. The challenge is to generate more revenue from higher occupancy in existing sites rather than by creating new capacity, unless new capacity is sufficiently different to attract new market segments.

Using these suggested approaches—additional designated general revenue funds for resources that benefit all Texans, earmarking more of the tax revenues directly related to outdoor recreation, and built-in adjustments to reflect cost in-





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*Bordering Davis Mountains State Park, the officer's quarters at Fort Davis National Historic Site help educate visitors about the frontier era while providing economic benefits to the area.*

creases—the State of Texas will be in a better position to meet its public trust responsibilities for outdoor recreation, natural, cultural and historic resources.

**Workforce enhancement:** There is also, however, a final element for success: a well prepared workforce. TPWD and its partners will need more personnel training to respond to changing demographics and social issues, increased demands and conflicts over resources, and increased use of management technology. Training should encourage personnel to adopt a customer orientation and be more entrepreneurial while maintaining sensitivity to environmental and conservation issues. Agencies need to:

- periodically assess the knowledge and skills necessary for all employees to deal with social issues and emerging technologies;
- increase training that focuses on visitor service and on issues arising from the resource protection mandate;
- increase employee opportunities to participate at agency expense in structured

continuing education programs;

- recruit all staff vacancies nationally to promote excellence and diversity of experience;
- continue efforts to create a workforce reflecting the racial, ethnic and gender composition of the state;
- create ways to increase interest by persons of color in pursuing careers related to natural resources management, conservation, and park management; and
- encourage universities to integrate social science into existing natural resources management programs for better training of future professionals.

It is often said that an organization's greatest resource is its people, and this would be equally true for the state as a whole. The citizens of Texas are enriched by the remarkable natural, cultural and historic resources entrusted to TPWD and other agencies. The benefits of these resources are proven, and following the vision of this report will help ensure a more healthy, economically secure and well-rounded citizenry for years to come.



## TECHNICAL REPORTS

All technical reports can be found at:  
<http://www.wrpts.tamu.edu/tpwd.htm>

Crompton, J. L., Var, T. & Lee, S.  
*Repositioning TPWD and Local Park  
and Recreation Agencies.*

Crompton, J. L. & Kim, S. S.  
*Visitor Reactions to Prices at TPWD  
Parks.*

Crompton, J. L. *Analysis of  
Reported Attendance.*

Crompton, J. L. *TPWD Funding  
Sources.*

Crompton, J. L. & Kim, S. S.  
*Analysis of the Sales Tax Attribut-  
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Survey of the Public.*

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Witt, P. A. *Willingness to Pay for  
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Witt, P. A. & Baker, J. *Attitudes of  
Texans Concerning Selected Environ-  
mental and Property Issues.*

Witt, P. A. *Summary Report on The  
Texas Parks and Recreation Summit  
(February 20, 1998).*





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Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, famous as the whooping crane's winter home, is across San Antonio Bay from Matagorda Island State Park and Matagorda Island Wildlife Conservation Area.



# THANKS

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- Parks and recreation directors from across Texas — especially those who attended listening sessions and provided survey responses.
- The Texas Recreation and Park Society, Texas Parks and Recreation Foundation, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation.
- Representatives of conservation, non-profit and other organizations who provided invaluable insights about the outdoor recreation system in Texas. Telephone survey responses from and meetings with many of these individuals were indispensable in shaping the report.
- TPWD staff and members of the internal and external review committees established by the department to provide feedback on early drafts of the study.

The team also appreciates the work and dedication of graduate students and staff of the aforementioned Texas A&M departments. Staff assistant Vivian Gonzales is gratefully acknowledged for information processing assistance and facilitating the work of project managers throughout the process. TPWD Director Andy Sansom, Chief of Staff Gene McCarty, and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Ralph Rayburn provided essential insights and access to needed information.

Telsurvey Research Associates is acknowledged for conducting the statewide citizen survey.

The dedication of these groups and individuals to the well-being of all Texas citizens will help the visions presented in this report to become reality.







Shirley and Bill Howse were Lone Star Land Steward Award statewide winners in 1997 for their accomplishments in habitat management and wildlife conservation. Their Lighthouse Canyon Ranch, bordering Palo Duro Canyon State Park near Canyon, is named for the the Lighthouse, a geographical formation they sold to the state in 1973 to help preserve it and the surrounding area. They still lease land from the park for ranching. (Earl Nottingham, TPWD)





## VISION FOR THE TEXAS PARKS, RECREATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES SYSTEM

Texas will provide a variety of affordable opportunities to facilitate park, natural resource, recreational and cultural experiences which educate and enrich the lives of all Texans, without regard to age, income, gender, race or social status; public lands in Texas will be actively managed and conserved to preserve cultural, natural and recreational resources through a coordinated strategic plan; and the public will be well-educated regarding the availability, use, and preservation of cultural and natural resources, and their contribution to quality of life in Texas.

(Developed by the delegates to the 1998 Parks and Recreation Summit)