

bayou



A Report for Members and Friends of the Bayou Preservation Association



forum

What is SWMP?

by John Laser

The City of Houston's Storm Water Management Program (SWMP) was developed by the City of Houston Department of Public Works to provide the City with an integrated, uniform approach to implementing storm water drainage improvements and management practices. Augmenting the City's staff is J.F. Thompson, Inc. (Thompson), supported by Turner Collie & Braden Inc. (TC&B), as the Program Manager for the SWMP.

Current work efforts within the SWMP include:

- The implementation of storm drainage improvements in the vicinity of the Texas Medical Center (TMC)
- The implementation of various neighborhood storm drainage improvement projects throughout the city
- Enhanced floodplain management
- Support of the City's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)
- Further development of the City of Houston Comprehensive Drainage Plan (CDP)
- Various other storm water management responsibilities

In terms of implementation of storm drainage projects, the SWMP is continuing with the design and construction of capital improvement projects in order to provide increased levels of flood protection for the citizens of Houston. To provide financing for the TMC improvements, the City is securing a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to fund 75% of the cost of the projects. The City is responsible for the remaining 25% local share. Credit and due acknowledgement are given to Methodist Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine who have committed \$5 million to the local share. Several other

neighborhoods were also selected for needed capital improvement projects under the SWMP.

The TMC and City-wide storm water drainage improvement projects are designed to reduce the occurrence and severity of structural flooding within the City of Houston. Under the SWMP, the drainage design standards of the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) have been seamlessly integrated with the design criteria of the City of



Houston. This cooperative effort of the City of Houston with the HCFCD and other related agencies assures that the potential for structural flooding is reduced with no adverse impact to the environment or receiving waters through a strategic combination of detention storage and routing to reduce peak discharges to the receiving outfall channels. The result is full mitigation of all impacts on each project designed and constructed under the SWMP.

The individual products that are created under the umbrella of the SWMP include the

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Our mission is to protect and restore the richness and diversity of our waterways through activism, advocacy, collaboration and education.

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following:

1. Technical studies and reports
2. Preliminary engineering reports (PERs), including those produced for the Texas Medical Center (TMC) projects and current selected City-wide projects
3. Construction documents (plans, specifications, and estimates), including those produced for the TMC projects and current selected City-wide projects
4. Comprehensive Drainage Plan (CDP) which identifies existing infrastructure inefficiencies and proposed capital improvement projects with associated costs
5. Floodplain Management Plan (FMP) in support of the City's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS).

The current status of the major components of the SWMP is as follows:

Texas Medical Center Projects – The conceptual (preliminary engineering) design has been completed for all projects in this area. Detailed design is underway and construction of improvements is anticipated to begin early in 2004, depending on funding availability.

City-wide Projects – The conceptual (preliminary engineering) design has been completed and detailed design is underway.

Floodplain Management – Proposed revisions to the floodplain management ordinance, Chapter 19, "Flood-Prone Areas," have been drafted and comments are being received. The City of Houston has prepared draft "Floodplain Management Guidelines," which are also in the review and comment phase of development.

National Flood Insurance Program – The City of Houston is in its second year of the five-year planning cycle under the CRS. Efforts are being undertaken to identify strategies for improving the current flood insurance premium rating class, which may result in greater premium discounts in the future.

Comprehensive Drainage Plan – Drainage studies of certain neighborhoods located in the northern and southeastern portions of Houston are currently being finalized. Once this activity is complete, the entire City shall be included within the CDP.

Identifying storm water drainage improvement needs is one key element of the SWMP. Many of these needs are well known to Houston residents. Meeting these needs and mitigating our flooding problems will require improvement projects that are well conceived, designed, coordinated, and constructed. Such an effort will require a significant investment of time and money by the community. In the next newsletter, we will explore developments for long-term funding of storm water improvement projects in the City of Houston.

For further information on the SWMP, please visit the website at: www.swmp.org.

*John Laser is Project Manager with J. F. Thompson, Inc.
[Http://www.jfthompson.com](http://www.jfthompson.com).*



Continue Protecting ALL of the Nation's Waters Under the Clean Water Act

- New proposed rulemaking and policy guidance threaten the nation's waters
- Bush Administration actions could open many streams, wetlands, ponds and other waters to unregulated pollution, filling, and destruction

The Administration recently took steps to remove federal Clean Water Act protection from many waters (including creeks, streams, small ponds, and wetlands) that have long been protected by the Act. **We call on Congress to:**

- Ensure all waters of the U.S. continue to be protected under the Clean Water Act.
- Ask the Bush Administration to stop the rulemaking and rescind the guidance memo.

On January 15, 2003 the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers published in the Federal Register an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) raising questions about the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act. Simultaneously, they released a guidance memo to their field staff regarding Clean Water Act jurisdiction over certain so-called "isolated," non-navigable, intrastate waters.

The agencies claim these actions are necessary because of a 2001 Supreme Court ruling (the "SWANCC" case). The 5-4 majority in that case held that the presence of migratory birds cannot be the sole reason for asserting Clean Water Act jurisdiction over what the court termed "isolated" non-navigable intrastate waters. **But both the guidance memo and the ANPRM go far beyond the holding in SWANCC.**

The **guidance** takes effect right away and will have an immediate impact on many of the nation's wetlands, creeks, ponds, and streams. It tells the Corps and EPA staff to stop asserting jurisdiction over so-called "isolated" waters without first obtaining permission from headquarters. **Based on this guidance, waters that the EPA and Corps are likely to now judge to be outside the Clean Water Act will be filled, dredged, and polluted without a permit or any other long-standing Clean Water Act safeguard.**

The **ANPRM announces** the administration's intention to **consider even broader changes to Clean Water Act coverage through rulemaking.** Specifically, the rulemaking questions whether there is any basis for asserting Clean Water Act jurisdiction over **any** so-called "isolated" water.

A critical issue to both the guidance and ANPRM is what types of waters the Administration will treat as "isolated." The term "isolated" is not used anywhere in the Clean Water Act. It is clear from the language and history of the law that the Act is meant to protect all waters of the U.S. Depending on how broadly "isolated" is defined by the Administration, the number of waters placed in jeopardy by the guidance and ANPRM could be very large – and will affect every state in the nation.

Very few waters are "isolated" from a scientific perspective, since pollution in or destruction of even small wetlands, headwater streams, and seasonal waters will have serious effects on the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of other waters. But the ANPRM and the guidance memo open the way for developers, mining companies,

and other industries to argue to the Corps and EPA that all kinds of streams, non-navigable ponds, wetlands and other waters – even some tributaries – are “isolated.”

Also, the ANPRM notice invites other “views as to whether any other revisions are needed to existing regulations on which waters are jurisdictional.” This opens the door for industry groups to suggest that even more waters be cut out of the Act’s protections.

None of the waters thrown into question by this proposed rulemaking were held to be outside the scope of the Clean Water Act by the Supreme Court ruling. Congress clearly intended for the Clean Water Act to cover **all** waters of the U.S.

What are the impacts?

Both the guidance and the rulemaking could affect the entire scope of Clean Water Act jurisdiction. The law has one definition of waters that applies to the *entire* Act, so whatever waters the rulemaking and guidance put aside would no longer receive federal legal protection against *any* pollution or destruction.

The waters put at risk by the administration’s actions are critical to public health, our natural environment, and the U.S. economy. Abandoning these waters to destruction and degradation will:

- **Pollute more waters:** EPA’s most recent data show that the nation’s waters are already getting dirtier and almost half of the rivers, streams, lakes and coastal estuaries are not safe for fishing, swimming, or boating.
- **Increase flooding,** as wetlands – nature’s sponges – are no longer available to absorb excess water.
- **Threaten public health** from contact with bacteria, pathogens, toxics, and other pollutants from waters that would no longer be regulated for all types of industrial discharges.
- **Place community water supplies at risk,** and increase treatment costs to remove pollutants.
- **Deplete drinking water sources** (like the Ogallala aquifer in Texas) that are recharged by playa lakes, and other wet land and stream systems.
- **Reduce and potentially extinguish endangered or threatened wildlife species** – 43 percent of which (including the whooping crane) rely on wetlands for survival.
- Place at risk the **breeding habitat used by over half the ducks** in North America.
- **Eliminate** many seasonal wetlands that serve as **nurseries for juvenile frogs, toads, salamanders** and other species, and small streams that also are essential to sustain healthy populations of **fish, amphibians and other aquatic species.**

The guidance went into effect when it was printed in the Federal Register on January 15. The comment period closed on April 16. Over 135,000 comments were submitted, with the vast majority opposed to any rulemaking. 39 of the 42 state agencies that commented opposed changing the Clean Water Act’s scope.

What Members of Congress can do:

Congress must ensure that all the waters of the United States remain protected under the Clean Water Act. We urge Congress to take the following actions:

1. **Sign the Saxton/Dingell/Leach/Oberstar Dear Colleague Letter to the President,** which calls for immediate withdrawal of the January 15 guidance and abandon plans for a rulemaking to narrow the

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EARTH SHARE ... The *Easy* Way to Give

by Susan Hill



Earth Share

OF TEXAS

Fall is coming and so is the season for nonprofits and charities to start serious fund-raising for the coming year. The newspaper has published the gala schedule, committees are hard at work, and annual campaign letters are in the mail. If you’re like me, your mailbox is chock full of heart-tugging appeals and invitations for myriad worthy causes, Stress sets in as you sort through the pile of mail, deciding which organization gets a check this month and which doesn’t. It won’t be long before you’re afflicted with frustration and donor fatigue!

Fortunately, there is a way to avoid this stress and fatigue when it comes to conservation and environmental charities in general and the Bayou Preservation Association in particular. Through Earth Share of Texas, an alliance of nearly 70 nonprofit organizations dedicated to the single purpose of raising money for its members, you can support BPA through your workplace. Nothing can be more painless and stress-free than signing the Earth Share pledge card and sending a portion of your paycheck to BPA! You decide the amount and the frequency, and Earth Share takes care of the rest!

Earth Share workplace campaigns are gearing up in the Houston area right now. If you work for one of the following employers, please watch for Earth Share literature and pledge cards. If your employer hasn’t given you and your coworkers the opportunity to support BPA and its allies, please give me a call at 713-541-0447 or e-mail me at shill@haweshill.com. I’ll be happy to introduce your company to the benefits of offering Earth Share participation to its employees.

Allstate Insurance
American Airlines
American Express
AT&T
Aveda
Bass Pro Shops
CNA Insurance
City of Houston
Cy-Fair ISD
The Gap Stores

Hewlett Packard
Houston ISD
Keane, Inc.
METRO
Page Southerland
Page Architects

Pitney Bowes
REI
Sears

Government – federal and state – including state universities, med schools, etc.

Executive Director's Report

by Mary Ellen Whitworth

Pedro Arrojo Agudo is an economics professor at the University of Zaragoza in Spain. He has fought to stop 100 proposed dams in Spain. Agudo says, "Water is the blue soul of the planet. To fight for water is to fight for the health and dignity of current and future generations." The Bayou Preservation Association has been fighting for our bayous for over 38 years. That makes BPA the second oldest environmental group in Houston. We existed before the Clean Water Act was passed. Men and women for years have donated their time and money to preserve our bayou systems. Not because the bayous could bring them money or fame, but because it was the right thing to do. So many times today I hear the phrase, "it has to be economical or it won't work." So we strip our lands of all vegetation because it is the most economical way to develop. It doesn't matter that animals, birds and fish are displaced, that water quality declines or that flooding may increase-it's cheap. It's cheap to fill in wetlands, dump trash in streams, pour motor oil down storm drains, blow yard waste into storm drains, and just drop your beverage container in the street.

Some economists have estimated the cost of pollution and habitat destruction ends up costing more in the long run than to properly dispose of waste or to protect habitat. But who cares about the long term costs?

Those who cause the problem will never have to pay for it. Families will joyfully move into their new homes in the flood plain, unaware that a complex ecosystem used to inhabit that spot. And they'll be fine unless nature dumps an enormous amount of rain in their watershed. But what happens to the displaced previous inhabitants? They'll either die or they'll run to the nearest undisturbed area. Who will reimburse them for "taking" their land away?

I think it is time to quit trying to justify everything we do on the basis of how much it costs. Some groups want to remove bill boards on our major freeways. But we forget why they are there in the first place. Businesses were told that they would make more money if they advertised. And the bigger the advertisement, the more money they would make. So they paid for bigger and bigger signs. Now we try to convince them to take them down, saying they'll make more money without them. Why not just take them down and replace them with trees? Trees provide shade, habitat, water storage and beauty—none of which are provided by billboards. Why not build away from the flood plain, buy binoculars for people and encourage them to enjoy the diversity of their neighborhood? Why not? As professor Agudo concludes, "True love cannot be bought or sold. We have a lot of values in the world that are not counted in the market."

Houston Bayous are Valuable "Natural Assets"

by Mitch Mathis

Bayous enhance Houstonians' quality of life by providing opportunities to enjoy recreational activities such as canoeing, walking and fishing as well as scenic beauty. Well-preserved bayous also provide crucial urban habitat for a wide variety of birds, small mammals, reptiles, fish and other aquatic creatures. In addition, healthy bayou habitat provides a host of "ecological services" that include reducing surface runoff during severe storms, removing pollution from air and water, absorbing noise, and cooling the surrounding air temperature in a city suffering from the urban "heat island" effect. In this sense, bayous are natural assets that supply us with a variety of beneficial goods and services – without charging us a dime. Unfortunately, for the bayous it may be a case of "we don't value what don't have to pay for."

"Human subtlety will never devise an invention more beautiful, more simple or more direct than does Nature, because in her inventions, nothing is lacking and nothing is superfluous."

-Leonardo DaVinci



We have done a poor job of preserving our endowment of the natural assets that give our city its nickname, the Bayou City. A recent Bayou Preservation Association project to rank bayou conditions throughout Harris county shows that only a small frac-

tion of the region's bayous are in healthy condition. There are signs of progress. Houston's planners and decision-makers are becoming increasingly aware of the bayous' value in providing ecological services and enhancing the quality of life in our urban environment. However, a key roadblock to more effective planning and decision-making bayou habitat is the lack of information about the economic value of the amenities that healthy bayous provide. Without this information, the cost of degrading our bayous in terms of the loss of these amenities is seldom accounted for. A handful of methods are available to estimate these values but they are technically demanding and require time and resources.

Along with the irreplaceable beauty of natural bayous, we must learn to integrate the full value of their important services into our decision-making about bayou preservation and management. When decisions are so often based on costs and benefits, we must ultimately ask ourselves: can we afford not to?

Mathis is an environmental economist at the Houston Advanced Research Center, where he directs the "Valuing Nature in Texas Program."

Halls Bayou Greenway Project Grant Awarded by Texas Parks and Wildlife



All photos provided by the Harris County Flood Control District

by Alisa Max, P.E., Harris County Flood Control District

Harris County just received their first Regional Park Grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission, funding \$2 million for the "Halls Bayou Greenway" project. The total project cost is estimated at \$6.4 million. Harris County was the only sponsor (applicant) out of eight who applied whose application for a regional park grant was approved at the Commission's August 28 annual meeting.

"It is gratifying. This additional partnership with the State is a most welcome addition to our efforts to provide flood control and a livable environment to neighborhoods hard hit in Tropical Storm Allison and other severe events over the years. We want neighborhoods to be not only relieved, but also glad that we came by, and more parks and trails with the State will make that more likely.", Harris County Public Infrastructure Department Executive Director Art Storey said about the State funding.

The Halls Bayou Greenway Project includes work along Halls Bayou, providing connectivity to Greens Bayou. It also includes an extensive trail system into Keith-Wiess Park and through the proposed Bretshire Detention Basin. The Halls Bayou Greenway Project enhances trail connectivity and recreational opportunities along a linear greenway and several prominent parks, in coordination with a much needed Harris County Flood Control District project called the Halls Bayou Flood Damage Reduction Project. The projects include land acquisition for the purpose of multi-use facilities, conservation and water quality/ habitat features. The trails proposed as part of this project connect four Houston parks, two County parks, two Harris County Flood Control District detention basins, an existing Harris County jogging trail and approaches two funded TEA-21 hike and bike trails. Other amenities provided for in the Halls Bayou Greenway Project include four detention basins covering approximately 17 acres, reforestation plantings, wetland plantings and a boardwalk, soccer fields and a playground. Environmental education programming related to this project is expected to be developed by the Aldine Independent School District.

"We believe that the Halls Bayou project is an important con-

servation and recreation action as evidenced by our recent approval of the regional park grant application. The park will be a cooperative effort that will provide multiple public benefits including control of flood waters, preservation of important conservation property that will reforest and replant wetland and provide several outdoor recreation opportunities.", said Tim Hogsett of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The project has been a true collaborative effort. While Harris County has taken the lead, other project partners include the Harris County Flood Control District, Harris County Precincts 1 and 2, the City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department, the Aldine Community Improvement District, and the Aldine Independent School District. The team welcomes the addition of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to the collaborative project through this grant.

The Regional Grant has been funded through the Texas Recreation and Parks Account, an account that is funded through a portion of the state sales tax on sporting goods.

Fall is a Great Time to Canoe And to Explore our Bayous



Visit our web site at
www.bayoupreservation.org

Go to
Projects / Water Access
to find

Eric Ruckstuhl's Guide to
"Canoeing Houston's
Bayous and Creeks"

<http://www.bayoupreservation.org/projwateraccess.html>

GETTING A GOOD GRADE ON YOUR LANDSCAPE

by Mark Bowen

The grade or shape of your land plays a key role in determining how drainage patterns will flow, how much oxygen and moisture your soils will maintain and how your plant selections will fare.

Home gardeners involved in establishing their landscapes for the first time after their new house has been built have the greatest opportunity to establish a desirable grade from the beginning.

In past years, the most popular form of grading for new construction sites involved altering the shape of the land in a manner that resulted in draining rainwater off of the land as fast as possible.

In recent years, it has become popular to grade the land in a manner that allows excess rainwater to drain off site, but allows as much moisture as possible a chance to soak into the ground (rainwater harnessing) for use by plants.

This "water smart" approach to grading emphasizes maximum rainfall absorption. This methodology is also more responsible from a community standpoint since it helps to reduce the downstream drainage load on our bayous and downstream neighbors. We all seem to live downstream of someone.

So, what exactly is "water smart" grading? This approach involves techniques for preventing home water intrusion, for taking advantage of rainwater and for creating optimum growing conditions for your plants.

More specifically, landscape areas near your home can be graded in a manner that will allow excess water to move away from your house rather than inside it during extended heavy rain periods. For those with low-lying weep holes, landscape beds can function as dams, trapping rainwater between your beds and your house. If low-lying weep holes are present, trapped rainwater can move into your house and cause considerable damage.

If you have low weep holes, and you are determined to have landscape beds wrap around your house (foundation beds), then you might want to establish an eighteen to thirty inch wide by 2-4 inch deep strip of 1-2 inch diameter pebbles between your house and your landscape beds. This strip is known as a foundation pathway, and it will serve as a rainwater dispersion field allowing excess water a better chance to soak in or spread out. You may have to remove some soil near your house to install a foundation pathway, since the height of the pathway should not exceed the bottom level of your weep holes.

Foundation pathways are also useful for allowing access to the area adjacent to your home for maintenance purposes, and

they allow you to prune the plants in your beds from two sides. A strip of steel edging can be installed between your landscape beds and the pathways to minimize the movement of soil sediment and mulch particles into the pathway. Bronze gravel and River pebbles both work well as foundation pathway components.

For those of you with low-lying weep holes, it is also important to slope your land if possible in a manner that prevents water from pooling near your slab. It is often preferable to create a series of bed islands with lower pathway openings instead of unbroken wrap-around beds. This approach will give excess rainwater a chance to spread out.

"Water smart" landscaping also promotes working with your natural site characteristics to the extent possible. Specifically, a naturally low area located in your backyard some distance from your home might be a good location for a nature pond (detention pond). Nature ponds are designed to harness excess rainwater while also serving as attractive water garden features.

Working with your land and your natural site characteristics also involves the creation and/or restoration of drainage corridors. Drainage corridors consist of areas that allow water to move through them and to soak in within them. When constructed properly, these corridors resemble swales (shallow land indentations). These swales allow as much water as possible a chance to soak in, but they should also be sloped to direct excess water to a desired location.

Swales can double as "rain gardens" and can be accented with pebble overlays. They can also be planted with moisture loving plants such as irises, spider lilies and crinum lilies. The pebbles can be placed in a manner that lets drainage swales double as pathways. If pebbles are used to create paths, you may want to confine plantings to the perimeters.

Planting the sides of swales and mulching them with coarse mulches such as pine straw or native mulch will help minimize the intrusion of soil sediment... Keep in mind that the sides of swales (or designated inlet sections) need to be lower than the surrounding grade to allow rainwater to move into the swale.

What type of soil should be used for grading? The soil used should resemble the existing soil on your site as much as possible. No, this does not mean those of you with "gumbo" have to use it to grade your landscape. But it does mean that if you have gumbo (heavy clay soil), it will be important to select a sandy loam topsoil that has some clay content, although it will be much easier to work with due to its sand content as well. To the extent possible, it can make sense to reuse soil excavated during swale or pond construction when constructing raised (upland) landscape areas.

Why should soil used for grading resemble the existing soil as

much as possible? If a material such as bank sand with coarse individual particles is used to fill in low areas in a lawn for example with an underlying clay soil, excess water will still be detained in the area since the sand particles are coarser (larger) than the clay particles found in the surrounding areas.

When grading, it is essential to keep trees in mind. Any change in grade will affect existing trees. It is not recommended to add more than two inches of topsoil in any given year to avoid severely damaging trees. Excessive soil additions will minimize the ability of trees to maintain sufficient supplies of soil oxygen, moisture and nutrients. On the positive side, spreading out water through grading, can help improve the health of trees that are not very tolerant of routinely wet soils.

The use of grading equipment such as tractors, bulldozers and maintainers can damage existing trees directly by impacting roots and indirectly by compacting existing soils.

For lawn areas that only need to be raised an inch or two, a one half to three quarter inch layer of sandy loam topsoil can be sprinkled over these areas once or twice a year (preferably spring and fall) to gradually raise them up without smothering the existing grass.

For lawn areas that need to be raised more than two inches, it is often best to remove the existing grass, re-grade and then re-sod since it would take several years to raise these areas up sufficiently with the sprinkling approach. Or alternatively, you might consider replacing lawn in low areas with poor drainage tolerant groundcovers.

Lawn rollers can be useful for stabilizing new soil that has just been spread into place. One hundred pound (water ballast type) rollers can be rented from most equipment rental stores. When grading areas initially or when re-grading them, soil will be much less likely to settle in strange ways or to shift around if it is rolled an inch or two layer at a time.

For newly graded areas, it is advisable to wet them down after the soil has been placed and rolled, to let the soils dry, and then to touchup areas that have settled awkwardly. It is important to take into account that additional settling will occur after grading since the grading and rolling process only partially compacts graded soils.

Keep in mind that the creation of tall berms (raised beds) out in your landscape can block natural drainage patterns. It is also important to note that excessively high berms (three feet tall or more) will often become a liability due to the challenges they will face in maintaining adequate moisture levels during summer months).

When urban land is graded well and plants are grouped according to their moisture and drainage requirements, the various upland (slightly raised areas) and bottomland (lower, indented areas) areas should work in conjunction with each other to protect your house while also allowing rainwater to be used as a resource.

Editor's Note:

Mark Bowen is a horticulturist and a BPA advisory board member. Much can be learned from his weekly column in the Houston Chronicle "Homes" section.



The book "Habitat Gardening for Houston and Southeast Texas" written by Mark Bowen with Mary Bowen, is an absolute must read for every Houston gardener.

A wonderful tool for planting natives and adapted plants along a bayou or creek, or in your back yard is the "Bayou Planting Guide" written by Mark Bowen. Go to page 11 of this newsletter for details on how to obtain a copy from the

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scope of the Clean Water Act.

2. Co-Sponsor the Clean Water Authority Restoration Act (H.R 962 and S. 473) to reaffirm Congress' original intent in 1972 to protect all waters of the U.S., and prevent future, unwarranted attacks on the scope of the Clean Water Act.

For more information about the Administration's proposal, please contact these members of the Clean Water Network Steering Committee:

Betsy Otto, American Rivers, 202-347-7550; Paul Schwartz, Clean Water Action, (202) 895-0420; Joan Mulhern, Earthjustice, (202) 667-4500; Barbara Elkus, League of Conservation Voters, 202-785-8683; Julie Sibbing, National Wildlife Federation, 202-797-6832; Daniel Rosenberg / Nancy Stoner, Natural Resources Defense Council, 202-289-6868; Ed Hopkins, Sierra Club, 202-675-7908.

Here's What YOU can DO:

Place a phone call or send a letter (hand written letters tend to receive much more attention and are the most effective) to their constituents offices in Texas.

Please call Mary Ellen Whitworth at the BPA office 713-529-6443 for a sample letter and your representatives' addresses.

Congratulations

"Houston Press"

Best of Houston 2003 Awards

- Terry Hershey - Best Role Model
- Jon Vanden Bosch - Best Bureaucrat

"Citizen's Environmental Coalition"
Synergy Awards

- Kids on the Bayou - Education Award
- Kevin Shanley - President's Award

Spring Branch Creek

the GOOD



the BAD



and
the UGLY

by Jan Polisensky, *Creative Creekside*
(jpolisensky@yahoo.com (713 468-8630))

The Bayou is good. God given. No doubt about it. The annual flood is as inevitable as the sun rise, a part of our wetland cycle. Bad? No, but begging to be understood, accepted and anticipated so we can avoid damage as much as possible.

But the Ugly? Now this is bad! It is of our own making and totally within our control. The litter; those countless plastic bags that snag, those grocery carts, sofa's and discarded toys that ride down the bayou in flood and settle in the aftermath on our bayou banks are man made.

Can we rout the cause? Can we educate the public at large? Beginning with the most impressionable leaders of the future *Kids on the Bayou* is working on this.

But this takes time. We can change this ugly scene one backyard at a time, by taking ownership which engenders a responsibility for what deposits on our banks. Hilshire Village home owners along Spring Branch Creek are organizing a neighborhood work party to clean out the bayou. We envision a pristine Spring Branch Creek, fellowship and fun (as well as the hard work). The clean out will provide a faster run off when the waters rise again ensuring our safety following which we will meet again. The work is never done but our backyard bayous can be beautiful rain or shine whatever the season. Wouldn't it be lovely if every community did the same!

Something to Think About

by Evelyn Shanley

On September 30, 2003, one of those rare absolutely beautiful clear and sunny but breezy Houston fall days I drove along East T. C. Jester which runs parallel to White Oak Bayou. The bayou banks had just been mowed and they were covered with thousands of shredded plastic bags blowing in the breeze. Several hours later I returned with my camera to capture this distressing image. Many of the bags had already made their way into the bayou, well on their way to Galveston Bay, if not trapped in a patch of vegetation or other obstruction on this journey. We think they are practical and so do squirrels and birds; they are now using them to build their nests. Millions of them end up in our rivers and oceans, killing marine animals who mistake them for food. Of course, we can always arrange another neighborhood clean-up and they will end up in the landfill.

The bags are given to retail customers as though they cost nothing, of course, the real cost is deferred to the generations following ours.

What can we do? We can change our habits! Plastic bags should just not be in vogue any more. We bring our own bags (BYOB) reusable and selected to fit our shopping needs (sturdy handles, flat bottoms). No more groceries rolling around the trunk. We can set an example and spread the word. The next time we are asked "Plastic or Paper?" we can respond cheerfully "Thanks neither, I brought my own". We can feel great because we have done something very good for the environment.

To read some interesting facts about plastic bags, go to:
http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/09/0902_030902_plasticbags.html



Above White Oak Bayou at Ella Blvd after mowing by HCFCD—Below close-up of trash, mostly shredded plastic bags, all along the bayou banks in this area.



Kids on the Bayou will KEEP going Strong!

by Emily Breclaw

This spring, Kids on the Bayou became a private, 501(c)3 organization under the name Kids' Environmental Education Project (KEEP). This change enabled us to continue the exciting work started with the Bayou Preservation Association, and expand our efforts to reach kids in other Texas cities.

Kids on the Bayou continues to receive community recognition for its work helping Houston youth explore the bayous near their homes, and encouraging youth to protect those bayous through sound stewardship practices. In 2002, Kids on the Bayou received the Stewardship Award from the Galveston Bay Estuary program. This fall, we received the Synergy Award from the Citizen's Environmental Coalition, and our founder, Duncan Ragsdale, received the Environment Recognition Award from the Texas Association for Environmental Education.

What truly makes Kids on the Bayou and KEEP unique, though, is the organization's ability to make a long-term impact on large numbers of students. To date, the project has raised a half-million dollars in cash for education and service projects, and \$150,000 more of in-kind resources for KEEP and its affiliated programs. These funds enable us to reach nearly 30,000 students in our education projects at an actual cost of less than \$10 per student. So what, exactly, can you provide each student for \$10? Kids on the Bayou and its affiliate programs take students on half-day field trips to environmental education venues in their city, like the Houston Arboretum, or nearby state parks. To promote long-term interest sparked by such trips, students are then encouraged to participate in after-school clubs, where they learn more about the outdoors, and hone skills like bird watching and wildscaping. By training parents and teachers associated with the program in environmental education techniques, we ensure that the experiences started through our program become part of the student's daily lives, both in and out of the classroom.

Through KEEP, we have even bigger plans for the future. Our current staff in Houston now includes:
Duncan Ragsdale, Founder and Director
Nancy Millar, Director of Finance
Lawrence Spence, Director of After-School Clubs
Emily Breclaw, Director of Programs and Interpretation

While we continue to reach more students through projects described above (collectively, KEEP Learning), we also hope to maintain long-term relationships with these students through projects like KEEP Serving (focusing on environmental volunteer projects); KEEP Traveling (providing environmental trip opportunities for students and their families); and KEEP in Touch conferences (promoting awareness of project opportunities to school administrators and teachers). The first of our KEEP in Touch conferences will be held here in Houston February 19-

21, 2004.

The staff of KEEP would like to thank the board, staff, and members of the BPA for all of their support and assistance over the years. We look forward to our continued partnership with the BPA in making our goals reality, and in helping students recognize the true value of our own Bayou City.



Fiesta San Felipe

Our 4th annual special fundraising event will be held on
**Wednesday,
November 5, 2003**

on the beautiful, expansive grounds of Marjorie Milby's home at **8505 San Felipe**, along Buffalo Bayou. This year, the BPA is honoring **Katherine and Frank Smith** for their long-time dedication to preserving our community's natural resources.

Chairs, Homoiselle and Carlos Bujosa, have worked tirelessly to plan this year's Fiesta festivities.

More than 400 attendees are expected. Guests will be greeted with mariachis and margaritas, followed by casual dining with food from **Pappa's Catering**, music by **Moodafaruka**, treks to the bayou, bayou tales, birds of the bayous and much more. Self-parking in the Kinkaid School lot next door will help us avoid long valet lines.

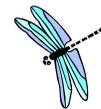
Funds raised through this event provide the BPA with the critical operating support we need to continue our important bayou advocacy and preservation programs. It also helps us expand our base of donors and introduces more members of the community to our work. Look for photos from the event and a complete list of donors in the next issue of the Bayou Forum. For more information on the event, call **Jennifer Hawkins at 713-524-2366**.

Thank you Donors for making it all Possible

City of Houston Migratory Bird Grant
Texas Parks & Wildlife
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*These donations were received since our Summer 2003 Newsletter.
All Gala donations will be shown in our Winter 2003 Newsletter.*

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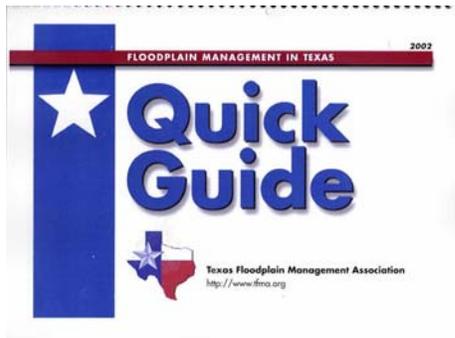
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The Bayou Preservation Association together with Texas Association of Floodplain Managers, Lower Colorado River Authority and Harris County Flood Control District have published

Floodplain Management in Texas Quick Guide

by Rebecca C. Quinn, President, RCQuinn Consulting, Inc.

The BPA will have 1,100 copies of this technical guide available for distribution to Floodplain Administrators and interested professionals. The Quick Guide will help you understand more about why and how communities in the State of Texas manage floodplains to protect people and property. If you would like a copy please call the BPA office at 713-529-6443.

BPA is a member of Earth Share.

Earth Share of Texas is a federation of 70 nonprofit environmental groups who have joined together to participate in workplace giving programs.



Through a payroll deduction program, Earth Share offers employers and employees interested in human health and the environment an opportunity to support BPA and organizations like ours.

If you would like your company to consider offering Earth Share as an option for employee giving, please contact our BPA Earth Share representative:

Susan Hill at 713-541-0447
or by e-mail at shill@haweshill.com.

2003 Calendar of Events

Go to www.cechouston.org and choose "Calendar"
for more event information in our area.

October

11 Freestyle Canoeing Championship	American Canoe Club	cbtigard@msn.com	281-494-7977
13 BPA Executive Committee Meeting	BPA Offices	18:00	713-529-6443
15 TMDL Meeting - Buffalo & White Oak Bayou	Houston Galveston Area Council	18:30	713-529-6443
15 Urban Harvest - 10th Anniversary Gala	Houstonian Hotel	18:30	713-880-5540
		contact Elizabeth Proctor at above number	
18 Texas Watch National Water Quality Monitoring Day			713-529-6443
21 Canoe Access Committee Meeting	BPA Offices	16:00	713-529-6443
23 Evening at the IMAX - The Park People	Museum of Natural Science		713-942-7275
22 Smart Growth Meeting/Gulf Coast Institute	HGAC Building, Timmons Lane	11:30	713-523-5757
25 Installation of Water Feature "Little Thicket"	Urban Harvest/Gary Edmundson		713-880-5540
26 Rice Design Alliance/ Historical Society Lecture	Rice University Campus	16:00	713-348-4876
31 Rice University Colloquium "Observations of the Earth"	Rice University Campus RMC Student Ctr./Farnsworth Pav.		713-348-5736

November

5 Fiesta San Felipe - BPA Annual Gala	Mansion of Majorie Milby		713-529-6443
8 " A Tour of Houston's Working Waterfront"	Buffalo Bayou Partnership	9:00 to 12:00	713-752-0314
10 BPA Board Meeting	Houston Arboretum	12:00 Noon	713-529-6443
15 Buffalo Bayou Canoe Tour	Buffalo Bayou Partnership	13:00 to 17:30	713-752-0314

December

8 BPA Executive Committee Meeting	BPA Offices	18:00	713-529-6443
15 Harris County Flood Control Task Force Mtg	Harris County Flood Control Dist. 9900 Northwest Freeway, Room 100	14:00 to 16:00	713-684-4000



Fiesta San Felipe

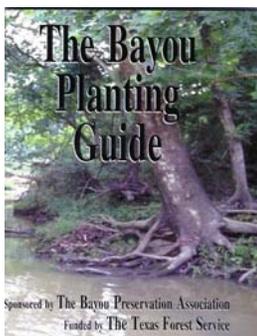
Save the Date: Wednesday November 5, 2003—6:30 pm

A festive evening of celebration,
featuring casual dining, margaritas, mariachis
and other special treats
on the beautiful grounds of Marjorie Milby's home
along the banks of Buffalo Bayou.

Honorary Chairs:
Katherine and Frank Smith

Chairs:
Homoiselle and Carlos Bujosa

For more information, please call 713-529-6443



How to obtain your own copy of *The Bayou Planting Guide*.

Written by Houston Horticulturist Mark Bowen and funded by the Texas Forest Service

1. Use the form on the back side of this newsletter and donate \$100 or more to the BPA and you will receive a free copy.
2. Call Riverbend Publishing Company at 713-621-3468 and order a copy for \$8.50 which includes tax, postage & handling.

We thank DOWNTOWN DUPLICATING 713-659-8295 for doing a great job!



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----- clip here and attach to your donation -----

Please support our efforts to ensure the proper stewardship of our watercourses throughout the "Bayou City."

Name: _____ Home Phone: _____ Address: _____ Work Phone: _____ City/State/Zip: _____ e-mail: _____

How would you like to volunteer your time and talents to assist us? If interested, please specify ONE:

- Fund-Raising _____ Recruiting Volunteers _____ Canoe Launches _____ Citizen Education _____ Office Management _____ Bayou Clean-Up _____ Kids on the Bayou _____ Bayou Monitoring _____ Planting Along Our Bayous _____

Mail this form with your check or credit card instructions for the amount indicated: \$1,000___ \$500___ \$250___ \$100___ \$50___ \$35___ Other: _____

Your gift will be used for the following purposes: Education, Water Quality, Habitat Restoration and Bayou Health.

____ My check is enclosed payable to Bayou Preservation Association ____ Please charge my Credit Card __ Visa __ MC __ American Express Card No. _____ Expiry Date ___/___ Signature _____

Bayou Preservation Association, Inc., is a 501(c)(3), tax-exempt organization. Contributions are tax-deductible