

# Environmental Stewardship

2009 Annual Report

## Protecting the Natural Resources of the Lost Pines Region



Colorado River at Pope Bend, Bastrop County, Texas



February 2010



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### Introduction

Environmental Stewardship was founded as a charitable nonprofit corporation in 2007 to provide a platform for environmental work in the lower Colorado River basin. Tax exempt status was received with the help of the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program in 2008.

The founding purposes are:

1. To meet current and future needs of the environment and its inhabitants by protecting and enhancing the earth's natural resources (Public Policy Advocacy).
2. To restore and sustain ecological services using scientific information (Science & Ecology).
3. To encourage public stewardship through environmental education and outreach (Outreach & Education).

Environmental Stewardship seeks to pursue its public advocacy work by helping to develop a vision of how both human and environmental needs can be realized while protecting and restoring our natural resources. Guardianship of the resources while the vision is advocated and realized is an important function of our mission.

As a platform for environmental work, Environmental Stewardship seeks to empower concerned citizens and local nonprofit organizations to pursue their vision and guardianship work under the Environmental Stewardship umbrella where such assistance is appropriate. Using this model the Texas Paddling Trails and Lost Pines Nature Trails were created. NatureFest was created to celebrate the Colorado River and other natural resources of the Lost Pines Region.

### PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY

Bastrop County is where the Colorado River intersects with the Carrizo-Wilcox major aquifer and a host of minor aquifers. This intersection in Bastrop County is under the jurisdiction of several water planning groups including Groundwater Management Area 12 and the Lower Colorado Regional Water Planning Group (Region K). Pursuant to a legislative mandate the Groundwater Conservation Districts in the region have been working to set the desired future conditions for the aquifers under their jurisdiction. Likewise, Region K is revising its regional water plan which will be incorporated into the Texas State Water Plan.

Environmental Stewardship's Executive Director participates in the public meetings of the various groups involved in these planning processes. Where appropriate, Environmental Stewardship makes public comment and provides written letters for the public record regarding our concerns. Working through Opportunity Bastrop County's Citizens' Advisory Committee, Environmental Stewardship helped develop a vision for the region to serve as a foundation for public policy advocacy. The citizens' vision **"to welcome development, improve mobility, and increase health standards as we preserve and protect our historic culture and natural resources,"** is detailed in a 45 page document adopted by the Bastrop County Commissioners' Court December 10, 2007.



Bastrop's environmental vision was confirmed in The Central Texas Greenprint for Growth, Conservation & Economic Opportunity for Bastrop County in 2009. An independent stakeholder group of county citizens established goals to protect water quality and quantity, conserve farm and ranch lands, protect sensitive ecological areas, enhance park and recreation opportunities, protect scenic corridors, and protect cultural/historic resources.

## Groundwater – Surface Water Initiative

The focus of Environmental Stewardship's concerns has been the interaction between the Colorado River and the Carrizo-Wilcox aquifer group. Several years ago the Lower Colorado Regional Planning



**Spring that supplies water from the Carrizo-Wilcox aquifer to the Colorado River.**

Group predicted that the anticipated pumping of groundwater in Bastrop and Lee counties would have a negative impact on the river. They predict that the river will go from being a “gaining river” to being a “losing river” when it no longer receives water from the aquifers. As the work of the groundwater conservation districts in our region have progressed, this concern has been raised by Environmental Stewardship along with the Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation, Environmental Defense Fund, and Texas Parks and Wildlife. Unfortunately these concerns have been, for the most part, dismissed for various reasons.

Decisions will be made over the next year that will have long-range consequences that are not easily

reversed. Data recently released covering 1980 –1999 indicate that pumping increased 31% during the period while the flow of water from the aquifers to rivers and streams decreased 50%. **This is a significant change in the relationship between groundwater and surface water. The anticipated impact on the Colorado River is likely a predictor of a significant change in the ecological relationships as over-pumping accelerates in the region over the next 20-50 years.**

## Environmental Flows for the Colorado River and Matagorda Bay

Environmental flows for the Colorado River and Matagorda Bay will likely be impacted by this shift in hydrology and ecology. Fortunately, a stakeholder committee has been appointed by the legislature for Colorado River and Matagorda Bay. We are very fortunate to have Andy Sansom, Executive Director of the River Systems Institute, and Myron Hess, of the National Wildlife Federation, serving as the environmental stakeholders representing our interests. As our concerns regarding the groundwater – surface water relationship continue to reveal the potential impact on the Colorado River, this group will be kept informed and will likely take an interest in the implications.

Having followed the Environmental Flows legislative process since 2006, Environmental Stewardship is committed to helping Andy and Myron as they represent our concerns to this committee. Executive Director Steve Box is Mr. Sansom's alternate to the committee.

## Bastrop County Watershed Protection Initiative

Environmental Stewardship has initiated a project to bring these planning activities into focus for Bastrop and surrounding counties. The goal of this initiative is to advocate for a watershed protection plan to help our counties avoid the water impairments experienced by up-river counties. The project is based on the Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) process that is recognized by the US Environmental Protection Agency and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality as the preferred method for protecting against the impacts of non-point source pollution. The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) are resource partners for the Bastrop County Watershed Protection Initiative. With the help of the LCRA we have developed a watershed map of Bastrop County that has been incorporated into a table-top display to promote the program. The table-top display will be used over the next year in an education and outreach program to develop a stakeholder community in support of the initiative.

## Envision Central Texas

Nominated by Bastrop County Judge Ronnie McDonald, Executive Director Steve Box has served on the Board of Directors of Envision Central Texas since 2008 and is a member of the Natural Infrastructure Committee (formerly the Open Spaces Committee).



## SCIENCE & ECOLOGY

### Bastrop Spring – Historic Landmark Springs in Riverwalk Park

Bastrop Spring in Riverwalk Park was designated as a significant historic landmark by the Bastrop City Council September 9, 2008. Located at the base of the stairway below City Hall, the spring was initially identified for their importance by Gunner N. Brune in his book *Springs of Texas*.

Environmental Stewardship has organized a local stakeholder group to prepare plans for restoring the springs and to provide interpretive signage to inform the public about the historic and ecological relevance of the springs. An interpretive boardwalk with river overlook platforms will educate visitors about the Colorado River, groundwater aquifers, their ecological functions, and the relationship between these important natural resources. The group is working with Texas Parks and Wildlife and The River Studio landscape architect to develop the project.



**Artist's concept of restored spring, wetlands, and interpretive boardwalk.**

### Colorado River and Springs Monitoring



**Water quality monitors Robert Fuller, Robin Berry (LCRA), Billy Gravitt, and Phil Bredfeldt.**

Water quality in the Colorado River and tributaries is monitored by a team of trained monitors as a part of the LCRA Colorado River Watch Network. Steve Box monitored at Riverbend Park for three years, earning his Certified Trainer certificate in 2009. Under his leadership, Billy Gravitt, Phil Bredfeldt, and Robert Fuller monitor three other sites in the county.

As a member of the Austin Bastrop River Partnership, Steve Box participates in the monitoring of the Colorado River led by Allan Kugler. Monitoring trips are scheduled for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month and cover Bastrop County from the FM 969 Bridge in Utley to LaGrange.

### Lost Pines Nature Trails

The Lost Pines Nature Trails are located on the Colorado River in Tahitian Village. The park was started on Bastrop County WCID#2 property in 2007 with grants from Texas Parks and Wildlife, LCRA and Bastrop County Development Corporation. In 2009 the final trail work was completed giving the site one-half mile of ADA accessible trails and over 1 ½

miles of natural trails. Picnic tables, a portable toilet, trash containers, and fencing make the site a family friendly nature area for hiking, biking,

swimming, fishing, canoeing and kayaking. The park was dedicated on Earth Day 2009. Master trail steward Dale Morrison was honored for the hundreds of hours of volunteer time he has dedicated in laying out and developing trails at the park. Restrooms, security lighting and a storage area are planned for 2010. The site serves as an outdoor classroom for home school students taught under the leadership of Joan Russell and the Lost Pines Master Naturalists. Juvenile service projects have built



**Volunteer Master Trail Steward, Dale Morrison**



**Earth Day 2009 at Lost Pines Nature Trails**

and maintained trails throughout the area under the guidance of Dale Morrison and the Juvenile Services Department staff of the CEN-TEX Regional Juvenile Board. Tahitian Village Property Owners Association and their Architectural Control Committee assist with the Jackpot Portable toilets and trash removal by Lone Star Waste. Rising Phoenix Adventures, Dempsy Brown, and John Minnis help with trash removal and mowing. Restroom facilities are expected to be installed this year using a Housing and Urban Development grant provided by Congressman Lloyd Doggett.

## OUTREACH & EDUCATION



**NatureFest** was created in 2007 to dedicate the first Texas Paddling Trail along the Bastrop segment of the Colorado River and to celebrate the natural resources of the Lost Pines Region. Working under the Environmental Stewardship umbrella, festival coordinator Denise Rodgers and a group of local volunteer committee chairs organized and held the event in 2008 in cooperation with the Texas Canoe Racing Association. They organized NatureFest 2009 which hosted an estimated 8,500 visitors and volunteers as they gathered at Fisherman's Park on October 24<sup>th</sup> to "Celebrate Our River." New events featured the "Last Chance Forever" raptor show and the "Big Bass Tub" fishing demonstration. Over 300 "newbie's" were put on the river for their first experience with canoeing and kayaking. "Mr.

Habitat" (Bill Oliver) hosted the main stage events where Congressman Lloyd Doggett, Andrew Sansom of the River Systems Institute, and Councilman Joe Beal spoke at the opening ceremony.

Thirty-one (31) sponsors, thirty-five (35) vendors and forty-five (45) environmental and community non-profits and volunteer organizations provided education, nature booths, kid's games and activities. Texas Parks and Wildlife, Bastrop State Park, LCRA, Keep Bastrop County Beautiful, Bastrop Audubon and Historical societies, Campfire USA, Rotary clubs, Envision Central Texas, Lost Pines Master Naturalists and the Sierra Club were among the many organizations that participated in making the day a huge success. And then of course, it just could not have been done without all the exceptional volunteers who spent nearly 3,000 hours over many months planning for the event. Our special thanks goes to Denise Rodgers, Betty Rucker, Ann Brown, Janice Baldrige, Cindye Wolford, Wanda Schopp, Jeff Haladyna, Warren Pederson, Tina Fucil, Ginger Leedy, Christy Kosser, Jane Glenn, Kristi Koch, Catherine Gryder, Jamie Smith, Dale Morrison, John Cline, Allan Kugler, Elizabeth Gray and the hundreds of volunteers who helped these individuals plan and host the event.

### Website and e-Newsletter

Communications with residents and stakeholders in the Lost Pines region is an important aspect of the outreach and education mission. Environmental Stewardship has maintained a website at [Environmental-Stewardship.org](http://Environmental-Stewardship.org) for several years where information is posted on topics such as: Colorado River Stewardship, Stewardship Projects, Water Stewardship, NatureFest, Public Policy, as well as other topics. The website is designed to inform the public about environmental issues and provide information about events. In addition to the website, several attempts have been made over the years to publish an e-Newsletter. Due to various issues regarding third-party support these attempts have been frustrated. Constant Contact is the current service provider. We will seek to re-establish this communication medium in 2010.

## **AWARDS & HONORS**

### **Bastrop Chamber of Commerce “Friends of the Environment”**

Environmental Stewardship received the “Friends of the Environmental Award” at the Bastrop Chamber of Commerce 2008 Annual Awards Banquet held at the Lost Pines Hyatt Regency in January 2009.

### **Envision Central Texas Community Stewardship Award Finalist**

The Board of Directors attended the Envision Central Texas Community Stewardship Award Banquet in Austin, Texas where Environmental Stewardship was a finalist in the “raising public awareness” category. Honored guests at their table were the honorable Congressman Lloyd Doggett who was a banquet speaker, and Andrew Sansom, Executive Director of the River Systems Institute who has mentored Mr. Box for several years.



**Denise Rodgers, Andy Sansom,  
Lloyd Doggett, Steve Box**

## **DONORS, SPONSORS AND GRANTORS**

We are honored to have had the financial support of the following companies, organizations, and individuals who have enabled our programs over the last year:

**The Magnolia Charitable Trust  
Texas Department of Agriculture  
KGSR Radio Bastrop – Austin  
Sam’s Club Store- I-35 Austin  
Lower Colorado River Authority  
Blue Bell Creameries, LLC  
Frontier Bank of Texas  
ABC Pest and Lawn Services  
Bluebonnet Electric  
BEFCO Engineering  
Lone Star Waste & Disposal  
Saunders Distributing  
Classic Bank  
Jonathan M. Beall  
Tahitian Village Property Owners Association**

**City of Bastrop  
Preserve America  
Sam’s Club Store - Round Rock  
Time Warner Cable  
LCRA Employees’ United Charities  
Camp Wilderness Ridge  
Jay & Maxann Collins  
Bastrop County Board of Realtors  
Aqua Water Supply Corporation  
Hyatt Lost Pines Resort & Spa  
REI Downtown Austin  
Trust Texas Bank  
YogaOnTheGo.com  
Victor Gonzalez**

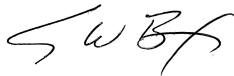
**Balcones Recycling  
Best Buy  
Sam’s Club Store - Brody Lane  
The Technology Studios, LLC  
Austin Canoe & Kayak  
First National Bank  
Wal-Mart Foundation  
AT&T  
Baxters on Main  
Insurance Network of Texas  
Roscoe State Bank  
Anne & Marvin Beck  
Melanie Phillips  
Thomas & Vicki McCutchan**

## **MEMBERSHIPS AND DONATIONS**

**Bastrop Chamber of Commerce  
Smithville Chamber of Commerce  
Sierra Club – Lone Star Chapter  
Friends of the Lost Pines State Parks**

**Bastrop Education Foundation  
Bastrop Opera House  
Kerr Community Center  
Envision Central Texas**

Respectfully submitted,



**Steve Box  
Founder and  
Executive Director**

**Melanie Phillips  
Secretary**

**Michael Wunderlin  
Treasurer**

Environmental Stewardship is a Texas nonprofit 501(c) (3) public charity headquartered in Bastrop, Texas. For more information visit our website at [www.Environmental-Stewardship.org](http://www.Environmental-Stewardship.org).

# Environmental Stewardship Financial Report

The following table represents Environmental Stewardship's un-audited financial position from formation in 2007 through year-end 2009. The categories used in the financial statement conform to the founding purposes: Public Policy Advocacy (related to protection of the Colorado River and related natural resources); Science and Ecology (habitat restoration such as the Bastrop Spring and ecosystem monitoring such as the LCRA Colorado River Watch Network water quality testing); and Outreach and Education (NatureFest, Earth Day and other events and fairs). Net income from unrestricted donations and fundraising events is used to fund programs, projects, initiatives and operations. Directors and Officers are not compensated for these functions but may be reimbursed for expenses such as documented automobile travel and office supplies, when requested.

Restricted funds are those funds that are earmarked by funding source for dedicated purposes. For example, funds from Texas Parks & Wildlife Department Recreation Trails grant are earmarked for the Lost Pines Nature Trails project in Tahitian Village.

Financial records are maintained in Quick Books Pro for Non-Profits by an independent third party bookkeeper. A Certified Public Accountant reviews the records and has filed IRS form 990 for 2007 and 2008.

Fixed assets include a Coleman canoe donated by Joe Ternus, a lot in Tahitian Village adjacent to the Lost Pines Nature Trails donated by John Creamer, and a lap-top computer purchased in 2009.

<b>Financial Statement</b>			
<b>Annual Report</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
<b>OPERATIONS</b>			
Balance Forward	0.00	866.86	8,981.63
Income	1,449.96	12,163.37	16,636.44
Expenses	583.10	4,048.60	14,526.69
Net Income	\$866.86	\$8,981.63	\$11,091.38
<b>PUBLIC POLICY</b>			
Balance Forward	0.00	0.00	3,000.37
Income	0.00	3,075.00	0.00
Expenses	0.00	74.63	1,051.95
Net Income	\$0.00	\$3,000.37	\$1,948.42
<b>SCIENCE &amp; ECOLOGY</b>			
Balance Forward	0.00	23,623.30	-3,625.81
Income	32,209.00	26,532.55	63,234.85
Expenses	8,585.70	53,781.66	34,427.36
Net Income	\$23,623.30	-\$3,625.81	\$25,181.68
<b>OUTREACH &amp; EDUCATION</b>			
Balance Forward	0.00	2,569.45	690.14
Income	18,162.89	40,065.71	44,307.44
Expenses	15,593.44	41,945.02	32,218.07
Net Income	\$2,569.45	\$690.14	\$12,779.51
Balance Forward	0.00	27,059.61	9,046.33
<b>TOTAL Income</b>	<b>51,821.85</b>	<b>81,836.63</b>	<b>124,178.73</b>
<b>TOTAL Expenses</b>	<b>24,762.24</b>	<b>99,849.91</b>	<b>82,224.07</b>
<b>TOTAL Net Income</b>	<b>\$27,059.61</b>	<b>\$9,046.33</b>	<b>\$51,000.99</b>
<b>Unrestricted</b>	\$866.86	\$5,355.82	\$11,091.38
<b>Temporarily Restricted</b>	\$2,569.45	\$690.14	\$37,961.19
<b>Permanently Restricted</b>	\$23,623.30	\$3,000.37	\$1,948.42

## Environmental Stewardship Programs and Initiatives

Over the next year the activities of Environmental Stewardship will be focused on the issues, objectives and initiatives listed below. Common to all ongoing work will be efforts to raise and manage funds to support the activities of Environmental Stewardship and other local partners.

### Public Policy Advocacy

- ▲ **Regional Planning** - Continue monitoring and participating in the water planning efforts of the Lower Colorado Region Water Planning Group (Region K) and Groundwater Management Area 12. The GMA-12 will be finalizing its “desired future conditions” for the aquifers in 2010.
- ▲ **Environmental Flows** - Participate in the Colorado and Lavaca Basin and Bay Area Stakeholder Committee as alternate stakeholder representing environmental issues. The recently appointed Science Team will be conducting a review of the information available on the Colorado and Lavaca rivers and Matagorda and Lavaca bays in order to make recommendations on the water needs of these ecosystems.
- ▲ **Watershed Protection** - Advocate for a Bastrop County watershed protection planning process to ensure a sound ecological environment that serves the needs of the natural and human communities by protecting and enhancing the land and water as growth and development occur.
- ▲ **Envision Central Texas** – Continue to serve on the Board of Directors and the Natural Infrastructure Committee.

### Science & Ecology

- ▲ **Riparian & Wetland Habitat Restoration**  
Bastrop Spring – Restoration of Historic Landmark spring and development of interpretive boardwalk.  
Lost Pines Nature Trails Wetlands – Construct water diversion on Colorado River Reserve and develop wetlands habitat on Lost Pines Nature Trails site.
- ▲ **River, Stream and Spring Monitoring**  
Colorado River Watch Network – Expand program in Bastrop County to support watershed protection initiative.  
Austin Bastrop River Corridor Partnership – Participate in monthly monitoring.
- ▲ **Trail and Park Development**  
Lost Pines Nature Trails – Organize efforts to continue development of the site and establish a security and maintenance agreement between local partners and government entities. Continue to support local efforts to expand the trail system throughout our cities and the county.

### Outreach & Education

- ▲ **Watershed Protection Initiative** - Provide educational information at local events, to civic organizations, and to local governments that informs citizens and elected officials about the benefits of watershed protection.
- ▲ **Outdoor Classroom Initiative** - Support efforts to expand the outdoor education programs at the Lost Pines Nature Trails and Colorado River Refuge.
- ▲ **Community Communications through Website & e-Newsletter** – Continue to provide information on local issues by way of the Environmental-Stewardship.org website and expand the effort by publishing regular e-newsletters, bulletins and alerts.

### Environmental Stewardship Capacity Building

- ▲ **Organization Structure** – Continue to build organizational infrastructure capable of planning, funding, developing, characterizing, protecting, restoring, and maintaining natural resources in the lower Colorado River basin.
- ▲ **Empower Others** – Strengthen ability to empower concerned citizens and local nonprofit organizations to pursue their vision and guardianship work under the Environmental Stewardship umbrella where such assistance is consistent with our vision and purposes.