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Contact: Jim Dunks
(512) 475-4875

TP&WD BUYS HABITAT FOR WHITE-WINGED DOVE

AUSTIN -- The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission has authorized the purchase of 56.3 acres of prime white-winged dove habitat in the Rio Grande Valley Area.

In a public meeting last week the commission approved the expenditure of \$50,000 from white-winged dove stamp funds for the J.S. McManus tract in Hidalgo County.

Whitewing Program Leader Jim Dunks told the commission the tract is one of the few remaining native South Texas brush tracts which are highly productive nesting areas for the migratory game birds.

Dunks said the area also has been a source of broodstock of chachalacas for restocking in other valley areas.

No hunting will be allowed on the tract, which will be maintained as a whitewing sanctuary.

The newly acquired tract is located in Hidalgo County just north of the Rio Grande and south of State Highway 281 near Donna.

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EAGLE MOUNTAIN LAKE
PARK SITE ACQUIRED

PARK FUNDS, cont'd.

AUSTIN - A major new park site has been acquired by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department on the shores of Eagle Mountain Lake at the northwestern outskirts of Fort Worth.

In a meeting last week the Parks and Wildlife Commission approved the purchase of approximately 400 acres near Farm Road 1440 and Peiden Road in Tarrant County, for \$3.8 million.

The rolling, wooded tract features high bluffs overlooking the 9,000-acre reservoir. It has approximately three and half miles of shoreline which will be developed for water-oriented recreation.

Department officials said the tract is basically undeveloped except for one large brick residence which probably will be used as a park superintendents residence.

The site is only 15 miles from the Tarrant County Courthouse in Fort Worth.

As with most recreation park sites, development at Eagle Mountain probably will take three to four years before opening to the public.

Officials said development is expected to include campsites and boat ramps for full usage of the lake's recreation potential.

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PARK FUND
RULES ADOPTED

AUSTIN -- The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission in a public meeting last week adopted new rules for the Parks and Wildlife Department's local park grant program.

The rules were adopted in response to legislation, and will allow the department to pattern the rules for administering the Texas Local Parks, Recreation and Open Space Fund No. 467, after the rules for administering the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program.

The commission also authorized the department's executive director to execute contracts to spend local parks fund monies for up to 10 percent of project costs necessary to provide grants to local governments receiving Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Act project funds from the federal government, at a cost not to exceed \$734,000.

In other business, the commission:

-- Accepted a gift of an additional one-seventh portion of a tract in the Hill Country State Natural Area in Bandera and Medina Counties from Mrs. Louise L. Merrick.

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-- Renewed five-year concession contracts at Huntsville State Park in Walker County and Tyler State Park in Smith County.

-- Authorized expenditure of \$55,000 for road construction at Mustang Island State Park.

-- Adopted amendments to the fiscal year 1980 boat ramp construction program.

-- Authorized construction of a storage building at Heart of the Hills Fishery Research Station at Ingram.

-- Approved a budget adjustment for additional equipment for the Law Enforcement Division, funded through sale of surplus property.

-- Approved purchase of additional equipment for the Park Operations and Maintenance Branch from appropriated funds.

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Contact: Karen Thompson
(512) 729-2328

FISHERMAN LANDS
LARGE TARPON

AUSTIN -- One of the largest tarpon taken from Texas' coastal waters in recent years was caught May 30 off Port Aransas.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Biologist Karen Thompson said Lee Spencer of Dallas caught the 148 1/2-pounder about three miles offshore. The tarpon was six feet, five inches in length and was boated after a 45-minute battle. Spencer said he used a ribbon fish for bait on 20-pound-test line.

The fish is considerably smaller than the current state record tarpon of 210 pounds caught in 1973, but it nevertheless is an unusual catch for the Port Aransas area.

Tom Moore, coastal fisheries director, said tarpon were quite numerous along the Texas coast in the 1940s, but for unexplained reasons the fish virtually disappeared. "Like the snook, tarpon are a true tropical fish, and very likely our waters border on being too cold to support high populations continuously," Moore said. He added that small tarpon occasionally are caught in the bays, and some are taken in the Port Isabel area at the state's extreme southern tip.

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Contact: Bill Brownlee
(512) 475-4875

TWO TEXAS FISH PROPOSED
FOR SPECIAL LISTING

EMPLOYEES GET AWARDS, cont'd.

AUSTIN -- Two minnow-like fish species found only in West Texas have been proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for listing, one as endangered and the other as threatened.

The Leon Springs pupfish, which now lives only in the Daimond-Y Spring and its outflow near Fort Stockton, and the Devils River minnow, native to the Devils River and San Felipe Creek in Val Verde County, are to be the subjects of USFWS meetings this month.

If these fish are listed as proposed, the USFWS also will propose to delineate "critical habitat" and take steps designed to prevent further endangerment.

A public meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. June 13 at the Chamber of Commerce Building in Fort Stockton to discuss the proposed listing of the Leon Springs pupfish and receive public comment. The USFWS will hold a similar meeting at 7 p.m. June 12 in the Del Rio Civic Center to discuss the Devils River minnow.

The USFWS also announced that interested persons may direct written comments on the proposed listings to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

The Leon Springs pupfish was discovered in 1851 in Leon Springs, about eight miles west of Fort Stockton in Pecos County. Because of water diversions, underground pumping and other habitat modifications, the fish disappeared from the spring by 1938 and was thought to be extinct. However, it was rediscovered in 1965 in the Diamond Y Spring nine miles north of Fort Stockton.

The Devils River minnow is found in the free-flowing portions of the Devils River and San Felipe Creek. The fish recently has been eliminated from one of its known habitats and a portion of a second by dam construction and other habitat alterations, the USFWS said.

"Given current trends in the usage and manipulation of water resources and natural drainage systems, the loss of the fish's habitat is likely to accelerate," the agency said.

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TP&WD EMPLOYEES
GET AWARDS

AUSTIN -- Three Texas Parks and Wildlife Department employees have been singled out for awards from the Gulf Coast Conservation Association.

Bob Colura of Rockport was named "Biologist of the Year" for his work in redfish propagation at the department's research station at Rockport.

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Game Wardens Roy Gonzales Jr. of Cameron County and Richard D. Veach of Calhoun County were named "Game Wardens of the Year" for their coastal fishing law enforcement work.

The trio received plaques at the June 5 meeting of the Parks and Wildlife Commission in Austin.

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LEAVE FAWNS ALONE
IN THE WOODS

AUSTIN -- Each year about this time, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department reminds Texans they should not "adopt" fawn deer found in the woods.

Persons discovering young fawns often assume they have been abandoned by their mothers and need help. However, biologists say if the fawn is alive it's fairly certain the mother is nearby.

In any event, the fawn is better left undisturbed.

Possession of any wild game animal without a permit from the department is illegal, and that includes fawn deer. Also, deer raised in captivity often become unmanageable and in some cases dangerous, the department said.

When in doubt about a fawn's welfare, contact a local game warden.

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Contact: Bob Bounds
(512) 475-4931

NEW LAKE FORK
NOT OPEN YET

AUSTIN -- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officials remind fishermen that the new Lake Fork near Quitman will remain closed to fishing at least until August.

Reports that the lake already is open apparently were circulated after a television fishing program prematurely aired some footage in the Dallas area of largemouth bass fishing at Lake Fork.

Officials of the Sabine River Authority told the department the host of the show not only misrepresented the lake as being already open to fishing, but also did his fishing in stocked nursery ponds outside the main reservoir. SRA officials said they granted permission for the filming, with the understanding that it not be aired before the actual lake opening.

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NEW LAKE FORK, cont'd.

GRANGER, NORTH FORK, cont'd.

The department stocked a number of existing ponds in the watershed with Florida largemouth bass and catfish to provide brood stock for the rising lake.

SRA and department spokesmen said the two agencies have been hit by a wave of inquiries from Texas fishermen anxious to fish the new lake. Department biologists stress that Lake Fork is not expected to be very productive for some time after the opening, as most of the bass are below the 14-inch minimum size limit. Although several hundred large brood fish were liberated when the lake was impounded, they would be difficult to find in the 11,000-acre reservoir.

The lake, located near Quitman about 90 miles east of Dallas, is not expected to attain its full 28,000 surface acre elevation for several years.

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Contact: Bob Bounds
(512) 475-4931

GRANGER, NORTH FORK
LAKES NOW FULL

AUSTIN -- Central Texas area fishermen have two interesting new lakes in which to wet their hooks.

However, both Granger Reservoir near Granger and North Fork Reservoir near Georgetown still are too new to provide much fishing, according to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Both lakes filled to near their intended conservation pool level this year after late spring rains. Although the two lakes are in the same general area, they will present two entirely different habitat types for fish and fishermen.

Inland Fisheries Management Coordinator Bob Bounds said North Fork, which is located just west of Georgetown on the north fork of the San Gabriel River, will be a rocky, steep-sided reservoir with fairly clear water. Granger, on the other hand, was impounded on farmlands and will be basically shallow and more turbid than North Fork.

Each presents certain advantages, Bounds said. "North Fork could be a tremendous smallmouth bass fishery. It has plenty of depth and the rocky habitat preferred by smallmouths," said Bounds.

So far, North Fork has been stocked with approximately 200,000 one-inch-long smallmouths, which is a high stocking rate for the 1,300-acre reservoir. It also received about 60,000 channel catfish fingerlings.

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Granger Reservoir in Williamson County will be more suited to largemouth bass and catfish, Bounds said, and so far the lake has received about 26,000 Florida largemouth bass fry, along with 31,860 channel catfish fingerlings.

"Granger already is a good channel catfish lake, even though it just filled," Bounds said, "because there already were a large number of them in the river before the lake was impounded."

Granger has approximately 4,400 surface acres of water, but comparatively little prime habitat for largemouth bass.

"Most of the largemouth fishing will be in the timbered areas of the old river channel and around some mesquite and other inundated brush," said Bounds. However, Bounds added that anglers should keep in mind that Granger could offer very favorable habitat for the popular crappie, and a good fishery may develop with time.

"Both these lakes are about a year or two away from being really productive fishing lakes," Bounds said, except for the already-available catfish in Granger.

Both lakes are U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects. Both are open to fishing with no fee charged, and both have boat ramps and other facilities such as shade shelters along the shoreline.

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SMALLMOUTHS STOCKED
IN LAKE O' THE PINES

DALLAS -- When anglers land a bass at Lake O' the Pines in East Texas, they may have to look twice -- or maybe even three times -- at their catch.

Kentucky spotted bass and native largemouths have always been in the reservoir, and the Parks and Wildlife Department recently introduced a third species of bass, the smallmouth.

Some 180,000 fingerlings recently were stocked, and department biologists expect them to do extremely well because of the rocky, gravel-type habitat.

"Kentucky spotted bass also require that type of habitat," said Joe Toole, P&WD biologist of Marshall. "Coincidentally, the state record for Kentucky spotted bass was set in 1966 at Lake O' the Pines."

The record fish weighed five pounds, nine ounces.

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