

GBRA RIVER RUN

A publication of the GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY Fall 2014/Winter 2015

*Family Traditions at
Coletto Creek Park and Reservoir*

Board Officers Named



IWPP Gets Federal Funding



5th Circuit Denies Rehearing

From the GM

Decisions Are Coming to Pass

Two important things have been happening lately that affect how the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority will or will not be able to move forward in helping its constituents. First, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) took up GBRA's Mid-Basin Project permit on its Agenda in February. And secondly, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit responded to an appeal by The Aransas Project (TAP) in December.



The surface water portion of GBRA's proposed Mid-Basin Project, which has both surface water and groundwater components, is pending before the TCEQ. The Mid-Basin Project would allow GBRA to help meet the demands of the Guadalupe River Basin, including the fast-developing Central Texas region that includes Hays, Caldwell, Comal, Guadalupe and Gonzales counties. In July 2013, a draft surface water permit was prepared by the executive director of the TCEQ. Ten entities sought party status to contest the permit. On Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2015, TCEQ commissioners recognized New Braunfels Utilities, the Upper Guadalupe River Authority and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department as affected parties to be in a permit hearing before an administrative law judge at the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH). The commissioners indicated the San Antonio Water System (SAWS) and Kerr County had not demonstrated that they were affected by GBRA's Mid-Basin application to justify being admitted as parties. They also referred TAP, the National Wildlife Federation, the Coastal Conservation Association and Trout Unlimited to SOAH for an affected party status hearing. The City of Kerrville dropped its protest of the permit prior to TCEQ's Agenda.

On June 30, 2014, a three judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit rejected the District Court's ruling in *The Aransas Project vs. Shaw* and rendered judgment against TAP. This decision to reject the District Court's ruling was reaffirmed by a large majority of the entire Fifth Circuit justices on Dec. 15, 2014, when they denied an attempt by TAP to have the Fifth Circuit reconsider its ruling. I encourage you to read more about that decision on page 2 in this issue of the *River Run*.

In the meantime, Texas also awaits a ruling by the Texas Western District Court in the case of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) versus the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA). SAWS joined the LULAC lawsuit, which challenges the makeup of the EAA board of directors. LULAC's suit claims that the method of electing the board does not provide equal representation of minorities. As a party to the suit and if successful, SAWS likely would be able to promote installing a significant majority of board members from Bexar County, effectively controlling EAA decisions. There is no specific time limit for the presiding judge in the case to issue a decision, so the outcome is still awaited.

However, GBRA is not sitting on its hands while waiting. We will continue to work, step by step, on managing the water supply for the benefit of all of our basin constituents.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. E. West, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

W. E. "Bill" West, Jr.
General Manager

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GBRA River Run

Fall 2014/Winter 2015

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Back cover photo: Janet Thome

5th Circuit

Denies Request for Rehearing in Whooping Crane Case

by LaMarriol Smith

NEW ORLEANS — The United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit on Monday, Dec. 15, denied a Petition for Rehearing En Banc in *The Aransas Project (TAP) vs. Shaw* in which a three-judge panel of the Fifth Circuit reversed a judgment of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas. In a June 30 decision, the Fifth Circuit panel agreed with defendants that the plaintiff failed to prove its case that diversions of water for use by Texans had led to multiple deaths of federally protected whooping cranes in the winter of 2008.

A lawsuit against the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) initiated by a group wielding the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) to bring a halt to water permitting on the Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers by alleging multiple deaths of the endangered whooping cranes that winter on the Texas coast led the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) to intervene as a defendant. With only two whooping crane carcasses and two partial carcasses found during 2008-2009, no evidence supported the double-digit losses claimed by the plaintiffs.

Yet, on March 11, 2013, federal district court Judge Janis Graham Jack “adopted verbatim TAP’s proposed findings of fact” and held that the TCEQ caused the deaths of the whooping cranes by issuing water permits that resulted in diverting water from the cranes and ordered TCEQ to immediately stop issuing water permits on the Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers. The judge also ordered a costly federal planning process that is duplicative of current state programs.

In the decision released on Monday, Judge Edith Jones, writing for the majority, indicated that 11 judges of the Fifth Circuit had voted to deny TAP’s Petition for Rehearing En Banc, thus leaving in place the three-judge panel opinion (as modified), while four judges voted in favor of rehearing.

“After considerable thought on the issue of rehearing, the vast majority of the full Fifth Circuit decided to reaffirm the ruling of the original three-judge panel in this case,” Bill West, Jr., GBRA general manager said Monday after hearing about the opinion.

Three of the four judges who favored a rehearing signed on to a dissenting opinion written by Judge Edward Prado. He opined that the panel’s decision independently weighed facts to render judgment in violation of principles of federal law and cautioned that the Supreme Court has reversed the Fifth Circuit before for improperly reweighing the factual findings of district courts.

The plaintiffs in the case have 90 days from the issuance of the opinion to file an appeal with the U.S. Supreme Court.

In the Fifth Circuit hearing, GBRA’s appellate attorney Aaron Streett of the firm Baker Botts LLP argued that TAP failed to prove proximate cause as a matter of law because the chain of causation from permit holder to alleged harm to the cranes was too attenuated and unforeseeable to constitute proximate cause. The Fifth Circuit panel that consisted of judges Jones, Jerry Smith and Emilio Garza agreed, finding “Nowhere does the court [District Court] explain why the remote connection between water licensing, decisions to draw river water by hundreds of users, whooping crane habitat, and crane deaths that occurred during a year of extraordinary drought compels ESA liability...the court’s ambiguous conclusion cannot be sustained.”

The panel concluded that “the district court’s opinion misapplies proximate cause analysis and further, even if proximate cause had been proven, the injunction is an abuse of discretion. The judgment is reversed.” Because of the ruling, the district court’s injunction stopping the State of Texas from issuing water permits for the affected basins is of no effect.

In the revised panel opinion released Monday, Dec. 15, the panel made minor clarifications to its proximate-cause analysis but reconfirmed its reversal of the district court.

New Grant Writer/Administrator Hopes to Make an Impact



Carrie Kasnicka joined the GBRA team as its grant writer/administrator, a position located organizationally within the Office of Communication and Education. New to Texas, Kasnicka worked eight years as the administrator of Environmental Education and Land Stewardship for the City of Indianapolis where she managed 6,000 acres, multiple nature centers and natural areas. She played an integral role

with the design and opening of two environmental education centers, including the \$4 million Earth Discovery Center of Eagle Creek Park and the renovated Ornithology Center of Eagle Creek.

Kasnicka has experience with water related issues, fundraising, capital improvement projects, education, and fostering

communication with stakeholders. Prior to her municipal position, she worked in the zoological field for a decade. Executive Manager of Strategic Communications and Public Affairs LaMarriol Smith said, "Carrie is well rounded in the environmental arena and brings knowledge and enthusiasm in connecting others to the outdoors and protecting vital natural resources. We expect that she will make an impact on grant writing for GBRA's operational projects, recreational areas and the proposed environmental learning center in a relatively short period of time."

She is responsible for preparing proposals and grant applications, researching funding opportunities for infrastructure, engineering, water quality, and education, and assisting the organization's managers with implementing and maintaining reporting requirements for awarded grants. Kasnicka said she looks forward to working with the many stakeholders that support and care about the Guadalupe River Basin.

Kasnicka earned a bachelor of science degree in biology from Benedictine University and completed certification through The Revenue Development and Management School (NC State University/National Parks and Recreation Association).

GBRA Selects Water Quality Leader from Inside

Mike Urrutia took the helm as GBRA's new Director of Water Quality the old fashioned way. He worked his way up through the ranks over a period of 27 years of employment with the river authority.

Urrutia began his new responsibilities through an internal search when Debbie Magin announced her retirement after 38 years of employment with GBRA and having served as its Director of Water Quality since 1999. Urrutia had served as Division Manager for Comal/Kendall Counties since 2005. Prior to that, he had served as its Rural Utilities Manager. He began his career with GBRA as a Laboratory Analyst in 1987.

Urrutia earned a master of science degree in biology in 1987 from Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University) and a bachelor of science in biology in 1985 from the University of Texas at San Antonio.



Rojas Takes Reigns of Comal and Kendall Counties

Jorge E. Rojas, experienced in water and wastewater operations management and formerly chief operator of the Western Canyon Water Treatment Plant, recently was promoted to GBRA Division Manager for Comal/Kendall Counties.

Before coming to GBRA, Rojas worked for CH2MHill/OMI as a project manager who was responsible for overall management and administration of the City of Del Rio's two wastewater treatment plants. He also previously worked for Bethany-Warr Acres Public Works Authority in Oklahoma and as a laboratory supervisor for the City of Edmond in Oklahoma.

Rojas earned his bachelor of science degree in biology from Central State University in Edmond, Okla., and an associate of science degree from Cowley County Community College in Arkansas City, Kan.



GBRA Awards Twelve Merit Scholarships to Area Students



Logan Hanzel

GBRA officials awarded three \$2,000 academic scholarships and nine \$1,000 academic scholarships to deserving area students within GBRA's 10-county district who began post-secondary studies in fall 2014. The scholarships, presented annually, are part of GBRA's Employee Volunteer Program.

The following students earned scholarships:

Logan Stuart Hanzel graduated from San Marcos High School in Hays County. His plans were to attend Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, working toward a degree in mechanical engineering.

Stacey JoAnn Havel graduated from Gonzales High School in Gonzales County. She planned to attend Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, majoring in business.

Karen Taylor graduates from Comfort High School in Kendall County. Her plans were to attend Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, where she planned to major in human resources.

Karli Jo Downey graduated from Gonzales High School in Gonzales County. Her plans were to attend Texas State University at San Marcos, Texas, to major in radiation therapy.

Brookelynn Michelle Helmke graduated from Canyon Lake High School in Comal County. She planned to attend Texas State University at San Marcos, Texas, to major in engineering technology.

Matthew LeeRoy Jandt graduated from Gonzales High School in Gonzales County. His plans were to attend Lincoln College of Technology at Grand Prairie, Texas, to study diesel and automotive engines.

Jaden Kyle Lewis graduated from Victoria West High School in Victoria County. He planned to Victoria College at Victoria, Texas, to major in electrical instrumentation.

Michael Justin Montana graduated from Jack C. Hays High School in Hays County. He planned to attend the University of Texas at San Antonio, Texas, to major in kinesiology.

Jake Schneider graduated from Goliad High School in Goliad County. His plans were to attend the University of Texas at Dallas, Texas, to major in computer science.

Shaelynn N. Scott graduated from Seguin High School in Guadalupe County. She planned to attend St. Phillips College at San Antonio, Texas, to undertake coursework to become a veterinary medicine technician.

Brooke Ellen Terry graduated from Seguin High School in Guadalupe County. She planned to attend Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, to major in animal science with the intent of becoming a veterinarian.

Andrea Urrutia graduated from Incarnate Word High School in Bexar County. Her plans were to attend Texas Tech University at Lubbock, Texas, to major in Chemistry.



Stacey Havel



Karen Taylor



Karli Downey



Brookelynn Helmke



Matthew Jandt



Jaden Lewis



Michael Montana



Jake Schneider



Shaelynn Scott



Brooke Terry



Andrea Urrutia

Board Members Name New Officers



Tommy Mathews



Rusty Brockman



Dennis Patillo

The GBRA Board of Directors elected board officers for 2015 during its meeting Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2014, and those officers began their service during the January board meeting. Tommy Mathews of Kendall County is the new chairman, Rusty Brockman of Comal County will serve as vice-chair, and Dennis Patillo of Victoria County will serve as secretary/treasurer.

Mathews, a resident of Boerne, is president of Westward Environmental, Inc., and a member of the National Registry of Environmental Professionals, Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists, Associated General Contractors of Texas, and Texas Hot Mix Asphalt Pavement Association, and president of the Cow Creek Groundwater Conservation District.

Mathews is past board chair of the Allied Division of the Texas Aggregate and Concrete Association, and a past board member and past secretary of the National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association. He also is past president of the Hill Country Alliance of Groundwater Conservation Districts, past citizen representative of the Lower Guadalupe River Water Supply Project Advisory Forum, and past board secretary of the Winston School San Antonio Board. Mathews received a bachelor's degree from Trinity University. Mathews is appointed for a term to expire Feb. 1, 2015.

Brockman, a resident of New Braunfels, is director of economic development for the Greater New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce

Inc. He is vice-chair of the Texas Economic Development Council, Economic Development Committee chair of the Austin/San Antonio IH-35 Corridor Council, a life member of the Texas Parent/Teacher Association, and a member of the International Economic Development Council. Brockman also is director and past president of the New Braunfels Breakfast Lions.

Brockman received a bachelor's degree from the University of Houston, teaching certification from the University of Houston at Clear Lake, and a master's degree in education and professional administrator certification from Stephen F. Austin State University. Brockman is appointed for a term to expire Feb. 1, 2017.

Patillo, a resident of Victoria, is president of Stewart Title of the Coastal Bend, Inc. He is vice-chair of the Victoria Economic Development Council, infrastructure chair of Crossroads Commission on Education, and a board member of DeTar Healthcare System.

Patillo is past board chair of the Texas and Houston associations of realtors, a former board member of the National Association of Realtors and Victoria Country Club, and a past member of the Texas Tax Reform Commission and University of Houston Commission on Downward Expansion. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Houston. Patillo is appointed for a term to expire Feb. 1, 2015.

Water Quality Director Retires



Photo by Connie Rothe

After 38 years of employment with GBRA, Debbie Magin announced her retirement effective Dec. 31, 2014. She began employment July 6, 1976, initially serving as Laboratory Analyst for the Regional Laboratory Division. In 1982, she was promoted to Regional Water Quality Laboratory Director for Regional Laboratory Division, and on March 5, 1999, to Director of Water Quality Services. In that capacity, she continued to initiate, implement, manage and develop programs in fulfillment of the legislative charge to develop, conserve and protect the water resources of the Guadalupe River Basin.

Professionally, Magin served as president, president-elect, vice president, and on the Management Committee of the Texas Water Utilities Association, and was active in numerous other industry organizations.

In Memoriam: Myrna Patterson McLeroy 1938-2014



Myrna Patterson McLeroy died Sunday, Nov. 30, 2014 in Gonzales, Texas.

McLeroy served on the GBRA board of directors for 13 years, having been appointed first by Governor George W. Bush and then Governor Rick Perry. She served as board chair in 2006 and 2008.

Born in New Gulf, Texas, March 31, 1938, to Frank

Mathew Patterson Sr. and Dessie Finch Patterson, McLeroy grew up in Houston, where she graduated from San Jacinto High School. She attended Southern Methodist University and the University of Houston before marrying Gene Austin McLeroy Nov. 29, 1958. Together they had two children. In 1984, she moved to Gonzales to her family farm.

She became active in the oil and gas industry. She created the McLeroy Land Group, served on the American Association of Professional Landman Ethics Committee, and the Voyager Oil and Gas Company board.

McLeroy enjoyed being politically active and was elected to the State Republican Executive Committee for two terms. She was responsible for obtaining a Republican primary election judge and polling location for the first time in Gonzales County's history.

According to the Gonzales Inquirer, "one of her esteemed accomplishments was being a founding board member of The Patriot Academy."

McLeroy served as a founding school board member of Grace Christian Academy in Gonzales. A classically trained pianist, McLeroy played for Memorial Heights Baptist Church the last six years of her life.

She is survived by her daughter, Shelly McLeroy Sekaly and her husband Tony Sekaly; her son David McLeroy and his wife Clare Crosswell McLeroy; grandchildren, Elizabeth Sekaly, William "Drew" Sekaly, William "Will" McLeroy, Mary Grey McLeroy and Hudson McLeroy; brothers, Frank Patterson, Jr., and James Wayne Patterson; sister Becky Pacheco and her husband Jesse Pacheco; and many cousins, nieces and nephews.

A private interment was held at the Waelder Cemetery in Waelder, and a celebration of Myrna's life was held at the First United Methodist Church in Gonzales on Thursday, Dec. 4, 2014.

Retiree Donates Fishing Gear to Coletto

Charles Schons (pictured center), a Victoria-area Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) volunteer kids fishing education instructor, donated all of his fishing instruction gear to the Coletto Creek Park in October because he is retiring.

Schons, who taught these classes since 1994 and has touched thousands of kids through his fishing classes, is passing his "rod and reel" to Dan Beckendorf, Coletto Creek reservoir ranger and TPWD-trained kids fishing education instructor, who has already conducted several fishing education classes at Coletto. Schons donation will allow Beckendorf to conduct classes without having to coordinate a loan of equipment from the TPWD office in Corpus Christi.

"It is through contributions like Schons that allow children to enjoy recreational fishing and families to continue to make memories at Coletto Creek Park," GBRA Chief Ranger Wilfred Korth said.



Photo by Wilfred Korth

Bureau of Reclamation Funding Adds Boost to GBRA's IWPP Study

Washington, D.C. — Bureau of Reclamation Acting Commissioner Lowell Pimley announced this summer that BOR will provide \$1.29 million to nine projects for Title XVI Water Reclamation and Reuse Feasibility Studies, including \$450,000 for the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority's "Integrated Water and Power Project: A Drought-Proof Water Supply for Texas."

GBRA officials and their partners, the General Land Office (GLO), and the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) last May named a team led by MWH Global to conduct a feasibility assessment study for developing ocean water desalination as a regional water supply, including the option of co-located power generation facilities.

"Planning and preparation are essential for communities looking to meet their growing water needs," Pimley said. "This funding will help communities gather critical information in assessing whether these water recycling and reuse projects can meet their future water needs."

"This Reclamation funding could not have come at a better time. We are taking a regional approach to solving our water issues and we have been moving this very important IWPP study along so that relevant questions will be addressed when the Texas Water Development Board begins evaluating projects to support with SWIFT (State Water Implementation Fund for Texas) and

SWIRFT (State Water Implementation Revenue Fund for Texas) funding," Bill West, GBRA general manager said.

"Yesterday, the TWDB approved the publication of the proposed draft rules for the SWIFT and the SWIRFT in the *Texas Register*," West said, explaining that in addition to the IWPP, GBRA has been working on a Mid-Basin Project to bring much-needed water to high growth areas along the I-35 and Texas 130 corridors, and a Lower Basin Project that would help supply water for municipalities, industry and agriculture in the lower basin region and possibly relieve some of the downstream demands on Canyon Reservoir.

Last November, Texas voters approved legislation that created the SWIFT and SWIRFT. Both funds will be used to finance water projects in the current state water plan.

"The IWPP feasibility study takes into consideration many factors, such as plant location, most effective and efficient water conveyance system, fuel source, safe brine disposal and other environmental issues, economic issues, and construction timelines. This funding will be instrumental in helping us get the remaining issues completed," James L. Murphy, GBRA executive manager for Water Resources and Utility Operations said. Total cost of the IWPP study is expected to be about \$2 million.

Smith Promoted to GBRA's Executive Management Team



This summer, GBRA promoted internal staff member LaMarriol Smith to its Executive Team as executive manager for Strategic Communications and Public Affairs.

Smith, who began work for the authority Feb. 1, 2007, has 28 years of experience that includes public affairs, media relations, higher education administration,

marketing, project and event management, speechwriting, publications management, website development and social media communications.

As executive manager for Strategic Communications and Public Affairs, Smith oversees communication and publications, grant writing and administration, environmental education, marketing and geographic information system services. She also serves as the interim executive officer of the Guadalupe River Foundation.

She earned a bachelor of arts degree in journalism from Baylor University in Waco and a master of public affairs from the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas in Austin. She recently began doctoral work in the Adult, Professional and Community Education Program at Texas State University.

Before joining the GBRA, Smith served as executive director of College Relations at Austin College in Sherman, Texas, and before that was director of communications for St. Edward's University in Austin. She also spent more than seven years working in the Agency Communications Division of the TNRCC and Texas Water Commission, predecessor agencies of the Texas Commission for Environmental Quality. Other previous experience includes positions with Southwestern University in Georgetown and reporting for the *Waco Tribune-Herald*.

"Because of LaMarriol's contributions to the organization as a whole, key communications guidance and leadership, and increasing responsibilities in different areas of the organization, her role became a vital component of the Executive Management Team ultimately resulting in this promotion," Bill West, GBRA general manager said.

Who Got Our Campi

by Barbara Elmore

Camping in the same spot year after year is as much of a ritual as celebrating Father's Day or Thanksgiving for fans of this type of recreation. So the families who camp often at Coletto Creek Park and Reservoir might be forgiven for placing invisible marks of ownership on "their" camping spots.

But a sense of ownership of a particular spot is only one sign of a veteran camper at Coletto Creek. A second clue: when RVers invite park rangers to family fish fries.

A third clue is knowing the best fishing places and sharing that information—because there is no best spot.

And a fourth clue? Hiking often in the park to recharge the spirit. Some regulars live just

down the road from Coletto Creek Park and use the nature trails to grab a quick walk on a sunny winter afternoon. And to think.

Fifth and final clue: Even the winter is not off-season for a regular. If the temperature climbs into the 70s or 80s, that's swimming weather.

A multipurpose refuge

Coletto Creek Park and Reservoir sits between Victoria and Goliad. The creek-fed reservoir serves as a cooling pond for a coal-fired plant, but when it opened to the public for recreational purposes in 1981, visitors claimed it as their haven and amusement park, a go-to place to relax and have fun.

Robert and Sharon Roell, for example, travel only 10 minutes from their home to visit the park and thus go

there four times a week in the summer—not to camp every time, but to recharge their human battery packs. They cut back their visits in the winter—maybe to three times weekly.

The park is her special place, said Sharon, a spot for hiking, fishing and swimming. Or, to celebrate holidays, birthdays and commune with nature, family and friends.

"We are a very thrifty, average family, and we always camped in tents when our children were young," Sharon said. The Roells and their camping friends didn't hire babysitters. They bought tents and took their babies camping with them.

And a tradition began. The Roells' three daughters—Melody, Misty and Mikayla—are veteran campers, as are

young grandsons Benjamin and Courtland.

After the tents came RVs and even more camping trips, which included friends who often asked when the Roells were going to the lake. "Our children grew up with kids out there," Sharon said.

A wealth of fish; a record blue cat

John and Barbara Schmidt, who live just 20 minutes away from the park, visit it more often now than when their children were small.

Still, the Schmidts have camped and fished in the park since the lake opened to the public more than 30 years ago, taking children Jeff, Michelle and Bradley with them. And they have passed their love of the park to son Brad, who works in Alaska, lives in Victoria, and probably uses the park more than his parents do.

"If you go before the summer, you have the run of the park." — Barbara Schmidt



ng Spot?



Photo by Wilfred Korth

the Family Traditions at Coletto Creek



John Schmidt with grandsons

Photo courtesy of Schmidt Family

He noted that a large fish tastes fine if you cut off the fat, and then added a bit of fisherman humor: “The smaller ones are better-tasting, but you can’t brag about the small ones.”

However, wife Barbara does brag about John’s almost-scientific expertise at cutting up fish, which he attributed to “lots of practice.” She also brags about his skill with a fish on the grill. One of the reasons she fell in love with John, she said, was that they fished together and he was good at it.

His fishing trips often provide entertainment for people at the park, who run to the boat when John and his fishing buddy return from a trip to see what they caught. Onlookers are rarely disappointed.

“People always ask ‘Where did you catch that?’ ” John said. “We fish all over the lake. We don’t have a particular spot. One time they will bite there and the next time they won’t.” He uses trotlines and scrounges for bait, and is usually successful. So successful that the Schmidts used to host large fish fries on Saturday nights at Coletto Creek. Eighty people attended one party.

But the activities of fishing, swimming, floating and hiking are more important when families have fun together, which is the bait that draws adults repeatedly when their children are small and establishes the ritual that lures the next generation with their own families after they are all grown up.

Putting out the welcome mat

“Play together, stay together,” Sharon Roell said, noting that it sounds corny but adding that she believes it. She is pleased when friends of her daughter Mikayla want to camp with the family. This happened with her older daughters, too. As their daughters reached their teens, more friends wanted to join the campouts, which last from 10 days to two weeks in May, June, July, August and sometimes lap over into September.

Their wintertime campouts last only a weekend or a few days. But the welcome mat is always unfurled and often includes park employees. The Roells mourned the May 2014 death of longtime park hostess Betty Bartram, whom Sharon called “Miss Betty.” She was an important part of the park family, and thus like a member of her own family, Sharon said.

Long-term stays at the lake give the Roells a chance to teach their children and visitors how to do things, like fish. “Many children have never seen a fish. They don’t go outside,” said Sharon.

Not so for the Roell children. When the youngest Roell, Mikayla, was born 16 years ago, Robert and Sharon got a new camper and started all over again. And although the world changes, their camping trips at Coletto remain the same. They schedule around work and



Roells' grandchildren

Photo courtesy of Roell Family

The Schmidts’ 15 grandchildren also camp there. The Schmidts have 12 grandchildren by birth but count three spouses of grandchildren as their own.

Barbara Schmidt grew up in Mission Valley, the daughter of a man raised on Coletto Creek. Like her father, she spent childhood days fishing and swimming in the creek before it was part of a lake or park. Now, the Schmidts go camping three times a year, more often if they can.

They prefer to go before or after the summer rush. “If you go before the summer, you have the run of the park,” Barbara said.

So what does a family do at Coletto Creek?

For the Roells, the activities include swimming, wading and hiking in the wintertime or swimming, fishing and floating in the summer. Or that’s what they do when they are not riding bikes or participating in a ranger’s educational program.

The Schmidts’ activities are the same—but add in a prize-winning fish John caught on one of his trips around the lake with his buddy. “We have the record for the largest blue cat: 51 and one half pounds,” John said.



Park and Reservoir

Mikayla's school term. Their other daughters, both married and working, join in as they can.

When family camping trips include all three daughters, the Roells' two grandchildren, and Mikayla's friends, it is so much the better. "I like that," Sharon said. "I like that their friends can grow up out there together. I like sharing that," Sharon said.

One of the benefits of regular camping for the Schmidts has been meeting people from everywhere else. "In the winter there are a lot of snowbirds. We have met some of the same people for years, and it is one of the things we've always enjoyed," John noted.

For Barbara Schmidt, enjoyment comes from watching the sun rising and setting, and just being in nature. And since the couple lives on a ranch, the ability to vacation 20 miles from home offers the opportunity to go home quickly when chores need tending to.

Must-have equipment

Some of the required gear of camping for the Schmidts are life jackets and a boat, because they both fish. They always take a gas tank and all of their grilling equipment, as well as fishing lines and hooks.

The Roells take bicycles, fishing poles, floats and lots of swimsuits, plus personal watercraft and kayaks for navigating the lake. "We are nuts on the water," Sharon said.

Adding to the enjoyment of camping for both families is an RV. Camping spots at Coletto Creek Park are a minimum of 60 feet long and are spaced out, offering vacationers more elbow room than some RV parks. And campers like using the same spot, often wondering "Who got my spot?" if they see someone else in it when they are not.

But vacationers don't have to have an expensive RV to have fun at Coletto Creek.

The park has four cabins and four trailers to rent. And for \$150 a year, visitors can purchase a permit and use the park daily. "It's cheaper than taking the family to the movies," Sharon said.

"Play together, stay together."

— Sharon Roell

Both families have camped in other parks occasionally, but returning to Coletto Creek is like coming home. Some parks do not have water as the main attraction, and some places do not have the same family atmosphere, space, or proximity to home.

Even through injuries—one of the Schmidts granddaughters broke a leg at the lake, and the Roell family was nearby to help an injured man—and equipment breakdowns, the campers keep returning. You either love camping, or you don't.

"You go back to what's important," Sharon said.



Melody and Mikayla

Photo courtesy of Roell Family



Conservation Easement at Co

By Danni Sabota

VICTORIA, TX — In October, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust (GBR Trust), Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA), and GDF SUEZ Energy North America joined with county officials, the Boy Scouts, and other community organizations to invite local residents, school groups, photography clubs, and other outdoor enthusiasts to visit a large conservation easement donated by GDF SUEZ's Coletto Creek Power Plant.

The 238-acre site—valued at \$1 million—features hiking trails, basic camping facilities, an active Bald Eagle's nest, and many outdoor and wildlife photography opportunities. Accessible year-round, the easement was originally part of Coletto Creek Power's 8,000-acre property that includes a 3,100-acre lake and public park facilities that attract more than 300,000 visitors annually.

GDF SUEZ donated the easement to the GBR Trust to ensure the natural area would be available for generations of visitors to enjoy for years to come. The GBRA, which has been managing the Coletto Creek Reservoir and the surrounding property since Coletto Creek Power was built, will continue to work with the GBR Trust to manage the easement property.

Local Boy Scout groups have already conducted a variety of skills development and service projects within the easement, including overnight camping, installation of Wood Duck nesting boxes to protect mother ducks and their young, and clean-up of the entire shoreline of the property. The River Authority and River Trust look forward to continuing to welcome the local Scout groups, as well as school and other youth organizations to use the easement to promote outdoor skill development and environmental stewardship well into the future.

Meanwhile, members of the Victoria Photo Club have also availed themselves to the site to develop outdoor

photography skills. They have generously shared a number of quality photographs of wildlife on the property with the River Authority, which also looks forward to welcoming members and other nature enthusiasts back season after season.

"This unique partnership has been working to protect this waterfront property and the recent commitment from GDF SUEZ to conserve the land along Coletto Creek Reservoir ensures that the diverse wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities that exist on the property will be permanently protected," Jeff Crosby, GBR Trust executive director, said.

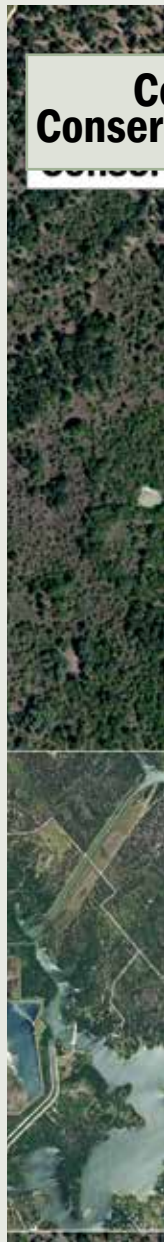
"This unique partnership has been working to protect the waterfront property and recent commitment from GDF SUEZ to conserve the land along Coletto Creek Reservoir to ensure the diverse wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities that exist on the property will be permanently protected."

— Jeff Crosby

"Using natural resources wisely is an important part of our mission at GDF SUEZ," said Robert Stevens, plant manager at Coletto Creek Power. "We're pleased to provide this land to help promote and protect many enjoyable, enriching activities for our neighbors and visitors alike—in perpetuity."

"The relationship we have enjoyed over the years with GDF SUEZ is a great example of how public and private entities working cooperatively can benefit their local communities," Bill West, GBRA general manager, said. "We are excited to be a part of this ongoing venture to offer the greater Victoria and Goliad areas a place to experience and appreciate nature."

Operating in Goliad County since 1980, Coletto Creek Power provides electricity to about 400,000 homes, employs 85 operators and staff, and is a part of GDF SUEZ Energy North America, which manages a range of energy businesses in the U.S., Mexico, and Canada, including electricity generation and cogeneration, natural gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) distribution and sales, and retail energy sales and related services to commercial and industrial customers. GDF SUEZ Energy North America is a part of the international energy group GDF SUEZ.





Coieto To Benefit Community

Map by Janet Thome



Inside GBRA

employee anniversaries @ gbra

GBRA recognizes the following employees for the dedication of service. (These employees started with GBRA between the months of August and December.)

August

8/18/1975	Richard Maxwell	Hydro	39
8/25/1975	Christy Dietert	General	39
8/7/1989	Scott Kolbe	Canyon Hydro	25
8/5/1991	John Urban	Coleto Reservoir	23
8/29/1994	Felix Cortinas	Luling WTP	20
8/11/1995	Billy Imhoff	General	19
8/5/2002	Josephine Longoria	Lab	12
8/18/2008	Jeffery Hebert	Western Canyon	6
8/24/2009	James Irby	Coleto Reservoir	5
8/1/2011	Thomas Schulte	Water Resources	3
8/13/2012	Kimberly Helmke	Water Resources	2
8/12/2013	Daniel Wilhelm	Lockhart WTP	1
8/19/2013	Jeffrey Crosby	Water Resources	1
8/19/2013	James Lucas	Luling WTP	1

September

9/1/1988	Eduardo Montana	Lockhart WWTP	26
9/3/1991	Stephanie Shelly	Port Lavaca WTP	23
9/15/1992	Ronnie Parenica	Port Lavaca WTP	22
9/2/1992	Jason Eeds	Lockhart WWTP	22
9/14/1998	Susan Cochran	Water Resources	16
9/10/1999	Ryan Boedeker	Calhoun County RWSS	15
9/1/2000	Brian Lyssy	RUD	14
9/28/2001	Gerardo Rodriguez	Water Resources	13
9/16/2008	Kylie Gudgell	Lab	6
9/24/2012	Jennifer Sanchez	Lab	2
9/3/2013	Joshua Dennis	Luling WTP	1
9/30/2013	Michael Whitten	San Marcos WTP	1
9/15/2014	Justin Cortez	Lab	New Hire
9/16/2014	Colten Boothe	Water Resources	New Hire
9/2/2014	Carrie Kasnicka	General	New Hire
9/2/2014	Justin Turner	Lab	New Hire
9/27/2014	Carmen Phillips	Lab	New Hire
9/3/2014	Cecil Holliday	Western Canyon	New Hire

October

10/22/1979	Herbert Wittliff	Calhoun Canal	35
10/10/1998	Dennis Walker	Buda WWTP	16
10/1/2001	Barbara Gunn	General	13
10/15/2001	Marella Dalme	General	13
10/20/2003	Jose Leal	Lockhart WTP	11
10/25/2007	Annlee Drazkowski	General	7
10/22/2011	Tommy Walenta	San Marcos WTP	3
10/17/2012	Elizabeth Aguilar	General	2
10/29/2012	Tirso Hinojosa	Coleto Recreation	2
10/9/2012	Patricia Ramirez	General	1

November

11/1/1976	Michael Gerdes	RUD	38
11/19/1979	Wilfred Korth	Coleto Creek Recreation	35
11/10/1981	Don Koble	Calhoun County RWSS	33
11/14/1983	Jason Lewis	Coleto Creek Recreation	31
11/24/1997	Jeannine Herrmann	General	17
11/22/1999	Eric Mendez	Lockhart WWTP	15
11/8/1999	James Asbury	General	15
11/20/2000	Robert Scott	Hydro	14
11/1/2007	Gynna Hernandez	General	7
11/5/2008	John Moryl	Canyon Hydro	6
11/21/2009	Fred Hernandez	Buda WWTP	5
11/4/2013	Jeremy Stanton	RUD	1

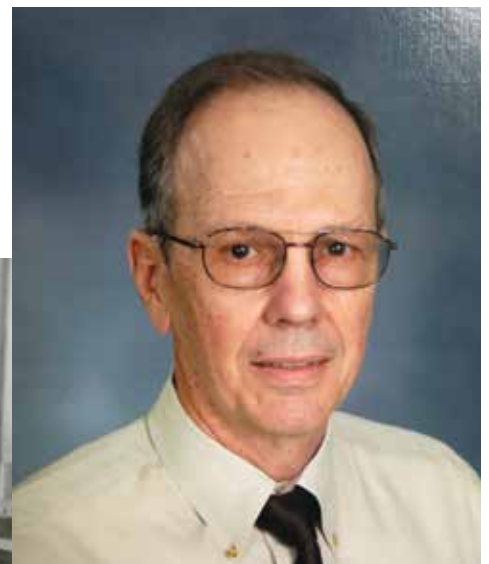
December

12/25/1981	Roy Odom	Hydro	33
12/6/1983	Constance Rothe	General	31
12/28/1992	Dianne Fly	Coleto Reservoir	22
12/10/1999	Jerry Sharp	San Marcos WTP	15
12/20/2000	Wallis Gudgell	Hydro	14
12/29/2000	James Medrano	Hydro	14
12/3/2012	Daniel Alonso	Water Resources	2
12/1/2014	David Spivey	Western Canyon	New Hire
12/3/2014	Jeffrey Robison	Hydro	New Hire

The information for the employee anniversary list was compiled by Daphne Harder, Human Resources Department of the Office of Finance and Administration.



Photo GBRA archives



Herb Wittliff

GBRA *Training & Licenses*

The information for the employee training list was compiled by Daphne Harder, Human Resources Department of the Office of Finance and Administration.

Fred Hernandez of Buda WWTP completed TDEM Hazardous Materials Technician Refresher training, Wastewater Lab - PC0217/CC0081, Water Utilities Management, Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Dennis Walker of Buda WWTP completed TDEM Hazardous Materials Technician Refresher training and the Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Richard Gaona of Calhoun Canal attended FISH/ Supervisor training.

Rodney Guice of Calhoun Canal attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Billy Penney of Calhoun Canal attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Michael Tompkins of Calhoun Canal attended TWUA - "Disinfection Process" training.

Herbert Wittliff of Calhoun Canal attended FISH/ Supervisor training and the TWUA - "Disinfection Process" training.

Don Koble of Calhoun County RWSS attended FISH/ Supervisor training, the Disaster Preparedness Webcast, Road to Recovery: Managing Water Emergencies in Texas, and TRWA - "Technology-based training: Pump and Motor Maintenance."

Scott Kolbe of Canyon Hydro completed Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Tirso Hinojosa of Coletto Creek Recreation completed Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Wilfred Korth, Jr. of Coletto Creek Recreation completed FISH/ Supervisor training, TWUA W/WW Utilities Math training, Texas Aquatic Plant Management Society training, and the Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety Class.

Jason Lewis of Coletto Creek Recreation completed Certified Park and Recreation Professional training and the Texas Aquatic Plant Management Society training.

Curtis Seiler of Coletto Creek Recreation attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

James Irby of Coletto Creek Reservoir attended Texas Aquatic Plant Management Society training.

Marlon McAdams of Coletto Creek Reservoir attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Alan Schneider of Coletto Creek Reservoir attended FISH/ Supervisor training and the Texas Aquatic Plant Management Society training.

John Urban of Coletto Creek Reservoir attended FISH/ Supervisor training and the Texas Aquatic Plant Management Society training.

Elizabeth Aguilar of General attended STEM Symposium.

Barbara Gunn of General attended Wastewater Worker Safety - Addressing Concerns on Ebola in Wastewater.

Daphne Harder of General attended Wastewater Worker Safety - Addressing Concerns on Ebola in Wastewater.

Susan Hubbert of General attended Wastewater Worker Safety - Addressing Concerns on Ebola in Wastewater.

Carrie Kasnicka of General completed Microsoft Project training (Level 1 Introduction).

LaMarriol Smith of General completed Microsoft Project training (Level 1 Introduction).

Carl Westergard of General completed Microsoft Project training (Level 1 Introduction).

Wallis Gudgell of Hydro attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Russell Hester of Hydro attended Team Building and Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Manuel Lopez of Hydro attended Team Building and Bucket and Digger Truck Operations.

Steven Maricle of Hydro attended Team Building.

Richard Maxwell of Hydro attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

James Medrano of Hydro attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Reagan Ploetz of Hydro attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Clint Retzlloff of Hydro attended Team Building.

Justin Cortez of Water Quality Lab attended TNI Webinar

Kylie Gudgell of Water Quality Lab attended TNI Webinar.

Josephine Longoria of Water Quality Lab completed Microsoft Project training (Level 1 Introduction) and STEM Symposium.

Carmen Phillips of Water Quality Lab attended Hach training - Basic Water and TNI Webinar.

Jennifer Sanchez of Water Quality Lab attended Public Drinking Water Conference.

Justin Turner of Water Quality Lab attended Hach training - Basic Water.

Richard Gonzales of Lockhart WTP attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Jose Leal of Lockhart WTP attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Daniel Wilhelm of Lockhart WTP attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety training and Team Building.

Jason Eeds of Lockhart WWTP attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Eric Mendez of Lockhart WWTP attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Eduardo Montana of Lockhart WWTP attended Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

Joshua Dennis of Luling WTP completed Team Building.

Joseph Downey of Luling WTP completed Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Robert Foley

by Tammy Beutnagel

Robert Foley had been working at GBRA's Victoria Wastewater Treatment Plant for 15 years when a catastrophic flood appeared in October of 1998. "The river was doing strange things that day," Foley said. "It grew too big and came up too quick. It became five miles wide within 45 minutes."

On October 20, Foley and his coworkers were on duty at the plant. Tuned into every radio station, they listened to every available weather forecast. They knew the Guadalupe River would soon crest, but that was all they knew. After Foley's shift was over, he headed home to Ganado.

Built only about 100 yards from the river, flood waters quickly surrounded the plant later that night. "The river surrounded the plant and then everything inside of it," said Foley. There was nothing anyone could do to prevent it.

On October 23 Foley and coworkers were contacted by supervisors to see who was available to help with cleanup. "Since we still couldn't get into the plant, we met at a local hotel, got tetanus shots and uniforms to start cleaning up the plant."

When Foley and others entered the plant, doors had to be pried open because of the mud, muck and sludge remaining inside the building. Lab equipment, motors, computers, printers, furniture, papers, and new uniforms were covered in the filth.

Foley remembers a small miracle that happened during clean-up. An operator's log book, containing valuable plant information, was recovered near a sludge press. "All the log books were either lost or unreadable, except for this one," said Foley. "We let it dry



Photo by Tammy Beutnagel

and pieced it back together. Then we used it to help us get the plant running again."

Thanks to the extensive help from GBRA staff, technicians, electricians and other specialists, Foley proudly remarked that the plant was back online 21 days after the devastation. "We flew by the seat of our pants after that," he said.

Today Foley lives in Ganado with his wife, Nancy, and grandson Brandon, making up the smallest number of people who have ever lived in his home at one time.

Foley explained that he has a large and extended family, including his three sons and his wife's four children.

Foley said his home has always been available to family members and even neighborhood children. "I am called 'Grandpa' by kids that grew up in my home, and now as adults, they still call me that," he chuckled.

Foley said he enjoys taking road trips with his grandson Brandon and his wife, an ordained minister, to Christian events for their church.

Robert Foley

Started at GBRA—1983 Phone—(361) 782-6782

Retired at GBRA—2014

Tree Dedicated in Honor of Bruce Wasinger

The GBRA Board of Directors approved the dedication of a "Grand Ole Oak Tree" in memory of GBRA's late general counsel, Bruce E. Wasinger. The huge tree sits on GBRA property next to the River Annex Building at 905 Nolan Street in Seguin and just yards away from the Guadalupe River.

During the dedication ceremony, then Board Chair Oscar Fogle invited members of Wasinger's family, co-workers and board guests to gather outside for an unveiling of a dedicatory plaque and remembrance of Wasinger.



Photo by Tammy Beutnagel

Outdoor Education Flourishing in Seguin

For many, high school physical education, or P.E., conjures up memories of sweaty gym shorts, a gray cotton T-shirt and an odoriferous pair of tennis shoes.

These days, at Seguin High School, physical education can happen off the beaten path, well beyond the realm of a stodgy game of badminton.

Thanks to a variety of resources, students in the Outdoor Education class earn their physical education credit by doing things like cooking, pedaling and paddling.

On June 4, Seguin High School physical education teacher and volleyball coach Morgan Graham had her students taking their final exam in the course, which involved kayaking on the Guadalupe River in Starcke Park.

"We couldn't create this opportunity for our students without several entities in the community pledging to make it happen,"



Seguin High School students celebrate after completing their Outdoor Education final exam on the Guadalupe River.

said Pete Silvius, Seguin ISD coordinator of physical and outdoor education.

He notes that Graham's students were initially exposed to kayaking at the Irma Lewis Outdoor Learning Center, where a pond serves as an ideal body of water for learning how to paddle and maneuver a kayak.

Photo Courtesy Seguin ISD

"The City of Seguin, especially the Parks and Recreation Department, Texas Parks and Wildlife and Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority have

been instrumental in making the venue on the river, which is a designated Texas Paddling Trail, available to us. The location and amenities are ideal," he said.

Most of the kayaks used for the course were purchased through a grant awarded by the Seguin Education Foundation.

"Just another example of the community's positive impact when it comes to supporting our students and schools," he added.

GBRA's Regional Laboratory Toured by Accounting Firm

Auditors with the ABIP Certified Public Accountants and Advisors recently toured the GBRA Regional Laboratory in Seguin. Lee Gudgell, green shirt, provided details about laboratory operations to the accounting team.



Photos by Josie Longoria



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Mark Your Calendar

Mar. 4-6, 2015

TWCA Annual Convention
Sheraton Hotel, Austin, TX

<http://www.texaswca.com/meetings/annual/2015/index.html>

Mar. 18, 2015

GBRA Board Meeting
Victoria, Texas

<http://www.gbra.org/board/meetings.aspx>

April 3, 2015

Good Friday Holiday
GBRA Offices Closed

April 13-15, 2015

NWRA Federal Water Issues Conference
Washington Court Hotel, Washington, D.C.

<http://www.nwra.org/upcoming-conferences-workshops.html>

April 14-17, 2015

Water Environment Association of Texas
Texas Water™ (20th Anniversary)
American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, TX
<http://www.txwater.org>

April 15, 2015

GBRA Board Meeting
River Annex Bldg., Seguin, TX
<http://www.gbra.org/board/meetings.aspx>

May 5-6, 2015

TCEQ Environmental Trade Fair & Conference
Austin Convention Center, Austin, TX

<http://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/events/etfc/etf.html>

May 20, 2015

GBRA Board Meeting
River Annex Bldg., Seguin, TX
<http://www.gbra.org/board/meetings.aspx>

Coleta Creek Park at Sunset

Photo by Janet Thome

