



# PACE BEND PARK VISION PLAN

2026

Travis County Parks Department

# Table of Contents

- 0 Executive Summary..... 3**
- 1 Introduction..... 8**
  - Envisioning Pace Bend Park’s Future .....8
- 2 Existing Conditions ..... 11**
  - History & Context.....11
  - Park Layout & Amenities.....14
  - Community Health.....17
  - Natural Systems.....18
  - Climate Challenges & Risks.....21
  - Key Takeaways.....23
- 3 Park Assessment ..... 25**
  - Individual Amenity Assessments.....25
  - Key Takeaways.....33
- 4 Vision and Goals..... 35**
  - Project Engagement .....35
  - Community Engagement Results.....36
  - Park Tour and Design Workshop Recap.....39
  - ADA Considerations.....44
  - Cultural Resource Investigations .....45
  - Project Goals .....46
  - Project Vision Statement .....47
- 5 Concept Design..... 49**
  - Overall Concept Design.....49
  - Park-Wide Strategies .....51
  - Area-Specific Improvements.....57
- 6 Implementation..... 69**
  - Implementation Strategy.....69
  - Implementation Overall Cost Estimate .....70
  - Implementation Table by Recommendation .70
  - Acknowledgments.....73

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# 0 Executive Summary

Pace Bend Park is one of the most significant natural and recreational assets in the Travis County Parks system. Encompassing more than 1,300 acres and over nine miles of Lake Travis shoreline, the park offers a rare combination of expansive wilderness, water-based recreation, camping opportunities, and deep history. Shaped by centuries of natural processes and generations of human use, from Indigenous stewardship to ranching, restoration, and modern recreation, Pace Bend Park stands at a pivotal moment. Today, an intentional, long-term vision is needed to guide the park's future.

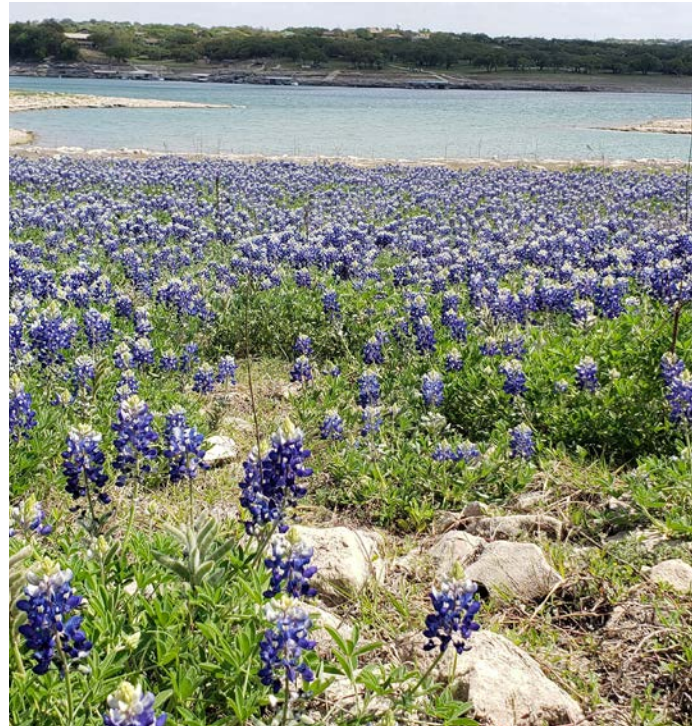
This Vision Plan establishes a holistic framework to steward Pace Bend Park as both a regional recreation destination and a resilient ecological and cultural sanctuary. Building on the Travis County Parks Comprehensive Plan, the Vision Plan aligns goals for conservation, access, expanded amenities, safety, and storytelling. Developed over a ten-month planning process, the plan reflects extensive site analysis, staff expertise, community engagement, and best practices in park planning and design.



## A Park Defined by Land, Water, and Change

Pace Bend Park's identity is inseparable from its Hill Country setting. Dramatic limestone cliffs, carved coves, and fluctuating lake levels define both the park's beauty and its operational challenges. Seasonal and long-term changes in Lake Travis influence shoreline access, boat ramp functionality, vegetation patterns, and visitor experience. These dynamics demand a flexible and adaptive approach to design that embraces change.

Ecologically, the park is a critical preserve within Central Texas. Its mosaic of savanna, woodland, shrubland, and riparian habitats supports a diverse range of plant and animal species, including rare and protected flora. Ongoing restoration and invasive species management have strengthened habitat health, but continued stewardship is essential to maintain biodiversity and reduce risks related to wildfire, erosion, and climate extremes.



## Cultural History and Untold Stories

Pace Bend Park holds deep cultural significance that remains largely invisible to visitors today. Archaeological evidence confirms Indigenous presence spanning thousands of years, followed by colonization, settlement, and ranching. The short-lived community of Mud, the era of Pale Face ranching, and the park's eventual transition into public land are all chapters that shaped the landscape visitors experience today.

Despite strong visitor interest and frequent questions directed to park staff, there is currently no formal interpretation of this history on-site. The Vision Plan identifies storytelling as a core opportunity that can foster deeper connection, encourage stewardship, and honor the people and cultures tied to the land. Interpretive signage, educational experiences, and potential centralized interpretation near the park entrance are envisioned as key tools for sharing these layered narratives.



## Existing Use, Access, and Park Experience

Today, Pace Bend Park supports a wide range of activities, including hiking, mountain biking, boating, fishing, swimming, picnicking, and camping. It is one of only a few parks in the county system offering overnight camping, with campsite experiences ranging from primitive to improved. Multi-use trails wind through the park's interior, offering a largely wild experience, while day-use facilities and campsites are concentrated along the park's perimeter.

While the park's layout and amenities generally support its wilderness character, the assessment identified several areas for improvement. The main park entrance experiences congestion during peak periods and lacks modernized infrastructure. Wayfinding and signage, particularly along trails, is inconsistent. Restroom facilities, especially pit toilets, received some of the lowest satisfaction ratings from visitors. Boat ramps are heavily impacted by fluctuating water levels, creating access challenges during drought and peak-use periods.

At the same time, visitors consistently emphasized a shared value to preserve Pace Bend's rugged, primitive character. Community input made clear that improvements should be thoughtful, targeted, and supportive of safety, accessibility, and comfort without overdevelopment or loss of the park's natural feel.

## Community Health, Equity, and Regional Value

Pace Bend Park plays an important role in supporting physical, mental, and social well-being across Travis County. Its trails, water access, and camping opportunities encourage physical activity and connection to nature. While the park is located in a part of the county with relatively lower social vulnerability, it serves as a destination for visitors from across the central Texas region, offering experiences not available in many nearby parks.

As Travis County continues to grow, the park's value as a place of restoration, escape, and community gathering will only increase. Ensuring equitable access, clear navigation, and safe facilities is critical to making Pace Bend welcoming and usable for a broad range of visitors.



# A Framework for Action

The Pace Bend Park Vision Plan is not a prescriptive design document, but a roadmap for decision-making. It identifies clear priorities for investment and action, including park-wide strategies, as well as area-specific strategies, as follows:

## Recommendations 5.1 through 5.5: Park-Wide Strategies

An outline of overall park improvement recommendations, intended to be applied to larger areas of the park or to all portions of the park. These park-wide recommendations fall into the following categories:

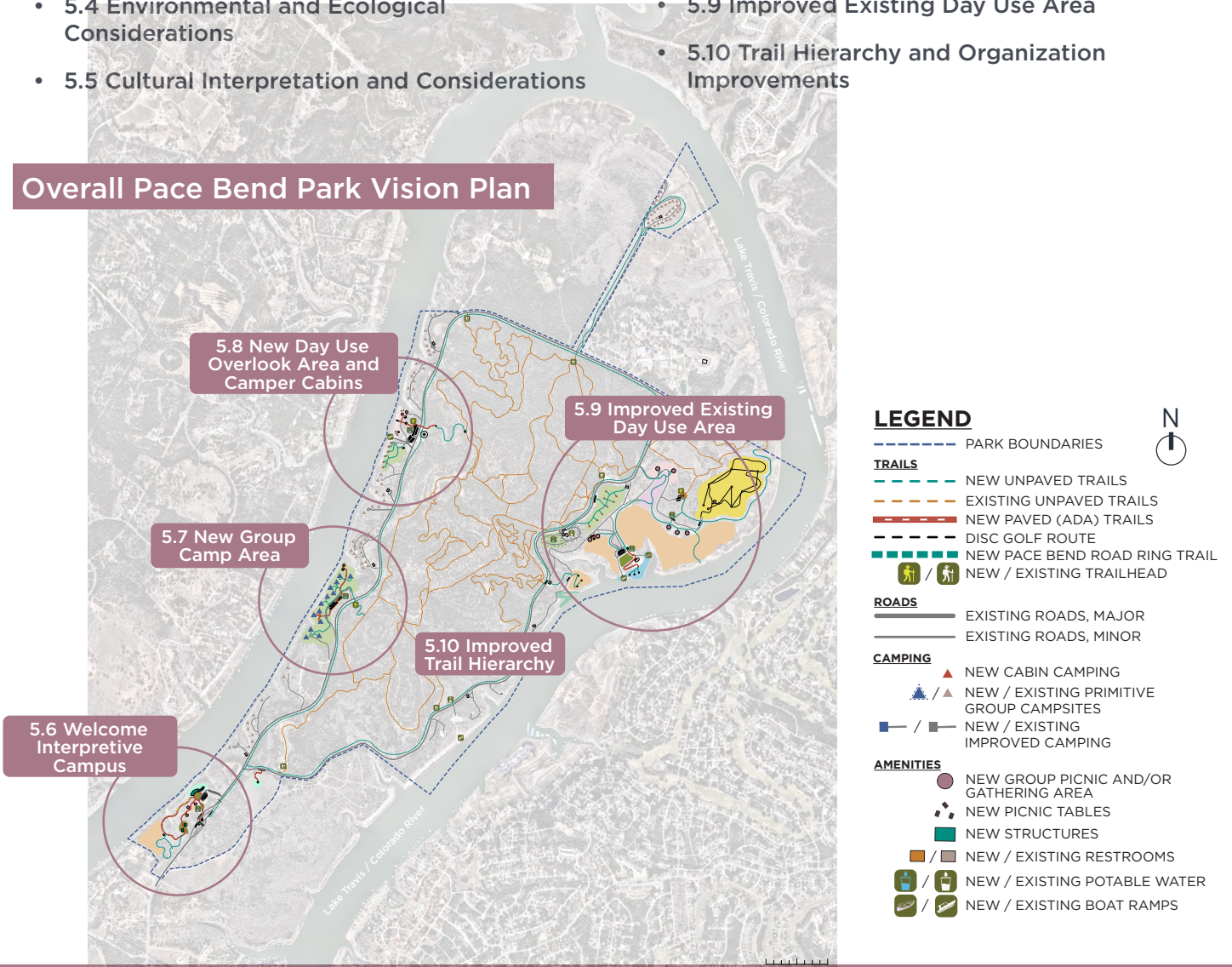
- 5.1 Utility and Infrastructure Upgrades
- 5.2 Safety and Lighting Enhancements
- 5.3 Guest Experience Improvements
- 5.4 Environmental and Ecological Considerations
- 5.5 Cultural Interpretation and Considerations

## Recommendations 5.6 through 5.10: Area-Specific Improvements

A series of more detailed areas of particular focus envisioned by illustrative concept plans. These areas include:

- 5.6 Park Entry and Interpretive Welcome Campus and Habitat Observation Field
- 5.7 New Group Camping Area
- 5.8 New Day Use Overlook Area and Camper Cabins
- 5.9 Improved Existing Day Use Area
- 5.10 Trail Hierarchy and Organization Improvements

### Overall Pace Bend Park Vision Plan





1

# INTRODUCTION

# 1 Introduction

## Envisioning Pace Bend Park's Future

Pace Bend Park has seen epochs of change, and it is time to put a closer lens to an intentional plan for the park's future.

### Purpose of the Vision Plan

Pace Bend Park has undergone significant transformation over time, evolving from natural Hill Country landscape to cattle grazing land, to a moment of uncontrolled camping and ATV use, and now into a beloved space of intentional restoration, recreation, and stewardship. As the park continues to change, a comprehensive vision plan is needed to guide its next chapter as both a community recreation destination and an ecological sanctuary. This plan will build on ongoing restoration efforts, shaping a long-term framework that balances recreation, conservation, and habitat restoration. By envisioning how these elements can coexist and reinforce one another, the vision plan will ensure that Pace Bend Park remains a resilient and cherished public landscape for generations to come.

Pace Bend Park is inherently shaped by its dynamic Hill Country setting, where the forces of geology, water, and vegetation are in constant flux. Surrounded by the shores of Lake Travis, the park experiences dramatic shifts in water levels that both over time and in quick moments create a landscape that is naturally ephemeral and striking. Seasonally, shorelines expand and contract, influencing vegetation patterns, wildlife habitat, and recreational access. Over time, stunning topography has been carved out of the soft limestone, creating dramatic views over the Colorado River (Lake Travis) over the river's edge and along many coves caved from overland flow from the parkland. **This ever-changing relationship between land and water defines the park's character, offering both challenges and opportunities for adaptive design, ecological resilience, and visitor experience that respond to the natural rhythms and geology of the place.**

This Vision Plan for Pace Bend Park will embrace the park's natural character as a defining element that highlights the park's living relationship with the Hill Country landscape. At the same time, this plan intends to reveal the park's deep layers of history, inviting visitors to understand the land as both a cultural and natural continuum. In this plan, Pace Bend Park's extraordinary nature-based experiences are opened to all visitors, ensuring that everyone can connect with its beauty and ecological richness. By expanding access and improving inclusivity, this plan envisions new opportunities to experience the park's most striking features: stunning cliffside vistas, tranquil coves, and abundant wildlife habitats. This plan seeks to provide a range of experiences that honor the park's natural character while fostering a deeper sense of belonging, stewardship, and wonder for all who visit.



Views of Lake Travis from the western limestone cliffs of Pace Bend Park. Source: Mend Collaborative

# Project Background

This Vision Plan for Pace Bend Park was developed as an outgrowth of the Comprehensive Plan for the Travis County Park System, where Pace Bend Park is identified as a key destination with potential for enhancement and long-term investment. Building on the system-wide priorities outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, this Vision Plan establishes a focused framework to guide future improvements and programming at Pace Bend Park. Travis County Parks intends to prioritize investments in the park in the near future, addressing both infrastructure

needs and opportunities to enhance recreation, storytelling, accessibility, and environmental stewardship. The Vision Plan will serve as a roadmap for these efforts, ensuring that future investments align with a cohesive vision that honors the park’s natural character while expanding its value to the community.

The Vision Plan was developed over 10 months, beginning in March 2025 and ending in December 2025. The general project timeline and milestones are illustrated below:

## Phase 1 - Understand

In this phase, the project team laid the groundwork for understanding the history, ecology, biology, geology and programs of Pace Bend Park.



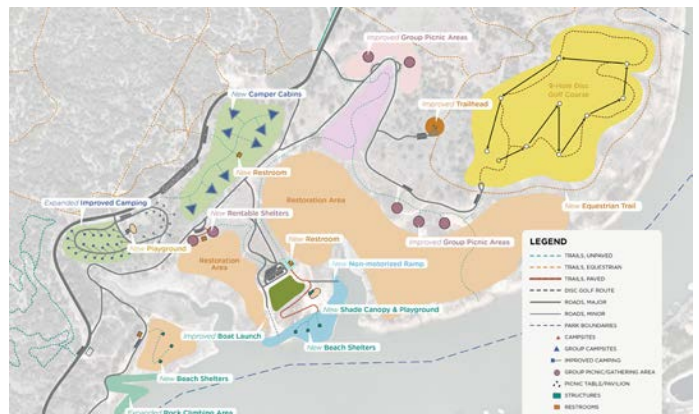
## Phase 2 - Envision

In this phase, various ideas for Pace Bend Park were developed and brought to the community for input.



## Phase 3 - Act

In the final phase, the complete Vision Plan for the future of Pace Bend Park came together.





**2**

# **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

# 2 Existing Conditions

## History & Context

Pace Bend Park has much to reveal about its deep culture and history, and holds a special place in the County's greater park system.

Pace Bend Park is an LCRA park managed by Travis County Parks that must be experienced to be understood. From the winding paths leading to scenic views of Lake Travis, to the birders looking for sightings of a unique species, Pace Bend Park is a special place of nature, recreation, and connection to a deeper story.

### Pre-Contact History

Pace Bend Park, like much of Central Texas, is tied to the Indigenous peoples who lived in and moved through the region for thousands of years before European colonization. The area around Pace Bend Park, along the Colorado River (Lake Travis), was inhabited by various Native American groups who relied on the land's resources for survival. There have been numerous cultural resource surveys within the park, confirming Indigenous presence and occupation of the land over thousands of years. As development continues within the park, careful research and investigation is required to ensure these precious cultural resources within Pace Bend Park see no further decimation or desecration.



Pace Bend Park signage estimated to be from the 1980's.  
Source: Travis County

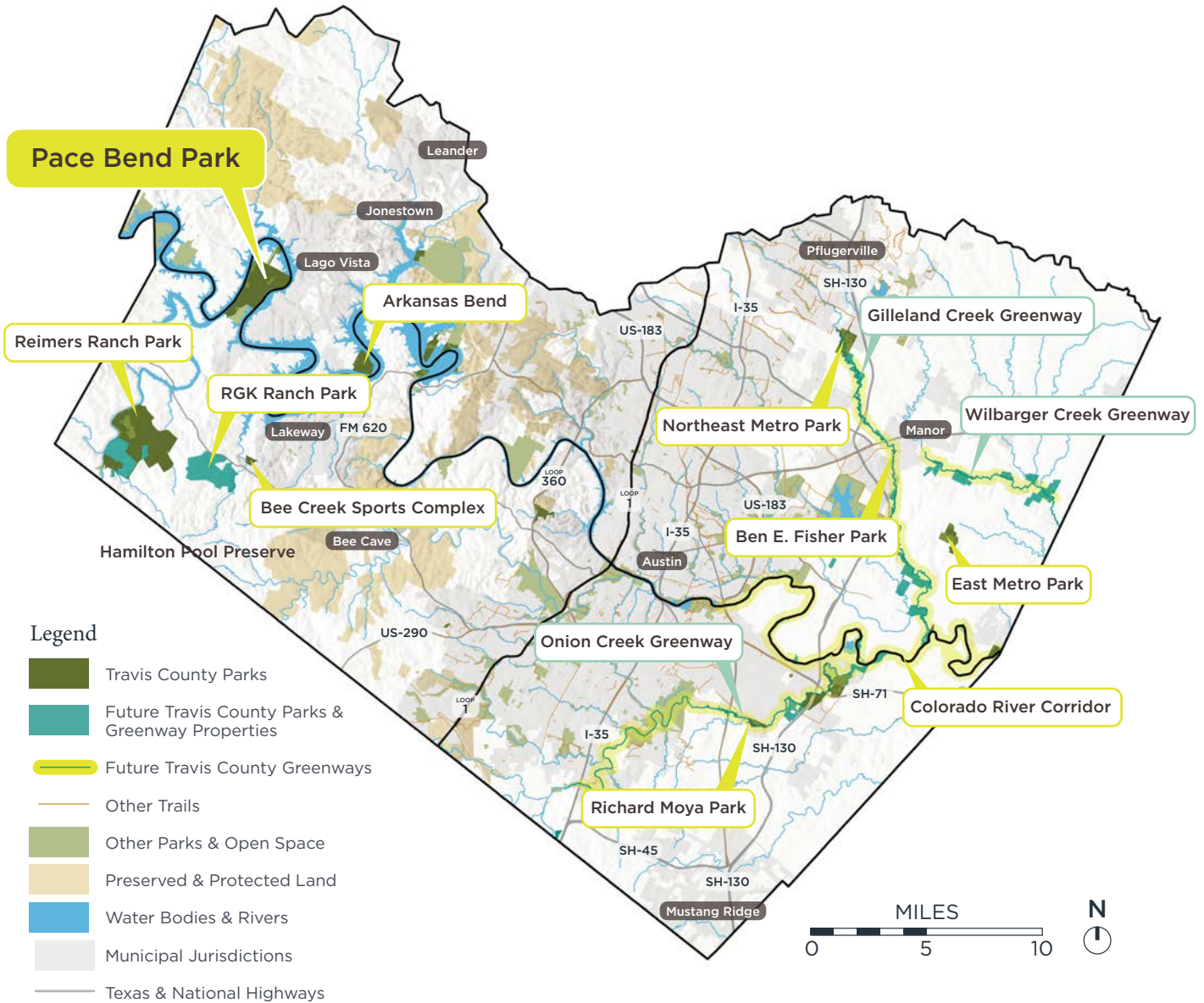
### Post-Contact History

By the 1700s, Spanish explorers and missionaries arrived in Texas, directly leading to the displacement and decline of many Indigenous groups. The subsequent arrival of settlers in the 19th century, followed by ranching and land development, ultimately pushed out the remaining Native peoples.

In the mid-to-late 19th century, the community of Mud was established somewhere within the modern day boundaries of Pace Bend Park, most likely near Mud Cove, finding inspiration for its name from the wet lowlands along the river. The town of Mud fluctuated from a few to up to 100 residents and had community assets such as a post office and general store, but a declining population led to the town's demise. The Mud Schoolhouse still stands today outside of the park near the Maxey Cemetery, and has seen a life since being a schoolhouse as a shop and a bar.

The land was then ranch land known as Pale Face, named after the white-faced cattle that grazed the ranch land. The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) eventually took ownership of the land in 1976 and re-named it Pace Bend Park. John Milloy, a former Travis County commissioner from 1982 through 1984, was a critical figure in improving parkland within Travis County. He played a key role in creating an agreement between the County and the LCRA that allowed the County to lease LCRA parkland, including Pace Bend Park. Today, the County still leases this land from the LCRA and maintains and operates it as a critical park in the County's system.

Significant restoration efforts have taken place since the park was first created, as uncontrolled activities in the park such as unstructured camping, ATV-ing, and biking led to significant destruction of the park's features. Today, park staff have successfully organized park activities to protect and preserve the park's resources and special natural feel.



## Context Within the County's Park System

At 1,368 acres, Pace Bend Park is one of the largest parks in the County's system, and is one of three parks in the County system that offers camping. The park holds a still and wild presence along the banks of the Colorado River (Lake Travis), and is a beloved space for those who frequent the park. The park draws day users and overnight users from all over the County, as well as greater central Texas.

The park is activated by occasional bike races and similar events, but sees most activity as a daily hiking, fishing, and mountain biking park/nature area, as well as overnight camping.

The overall social vulnerability score for Travis County as a whole is considered a medium-to-high level of vulnerability. The Southwest Planning Area which Pace Bend Park resides in comprises about 25% of the county's population, and in comparison to the greater County, experiences low rates of poverty, unemployment, housing cost burden, and uninsured rates, with most residents having at least a high school diploma. English proficiency is high, disability rates are low, and minority populations are smaller compared to the rest of the county. Generally, the population surrounding the park is well-served with nearby park spaces and more natural landscapes. The area surrounding the park is mostly suburban-to-rural-feeling ranches, single family developments, resorts, and retreat centers.



# Park Layout & Amenities

Located in western Travis County about one hour from Downtown Austin, Pace Bend Park is a haven for nature lovers.

## Park Use & Facilities

Pace Bend Park is a nature-lover's paradise, with majority of its land being wild, natural central Texas landscape. Considering the park's size at 1,368 acres, the park currently features a variety of opportunities for people to recreate and enjoy this special piece of Hill Country.

### Day Use

Pace Bend Park sees many day-users who visit the park to fish, boat, picnic, hike, and bike the park. Day users generally head to the northeast area generally referred to as Tournament Point for many of the sanctioned day-use activities, including boat launch access, parking, picnicking, and access to trails and lakefront. The two other boat launches at Collier Cove and Tatum Cove are more dependent of lake level on whether they are open or closed for day use lake access.

Many folks visit the park to hike and bike the trails. The park's trail map indicated three types of trails: 1. Multi-Use Trails (easiest) for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding, 2. Novice Trails (easiest) for hiking and mountain biking, and 3. Intermediate Trails (more difficult) for hiking and mountain biking. Trails are either easy/novice, or intermediate, with opportunity for more difficult options. There are no paved or ADA compliant trails in the park.



A typical primitive campsite with a pull up area for a vehicle, a picnic table, grill, and firepit.

The park sees mostly hikers and bikers, with some equestrian riders. Five trailheads help users navigate the trails. With the exception of the northeast corner of the park, all trails are on the interior of the park where users prefer the "wildness" of the park. There is one mountain bike skills area within the park.

### Camping

Pace Bend Park is one of three parks that provides campsites in the county's park system. The park features 161 campsites, 20 of which are considered "improved" with water service, electricity, and a plumbed restroom building. The remaining 141 sites are considered "primitive", each with a gravel or grassed drive-up parking space, a picnic table, fire ring, and grill. Each grouping of primitive sites share a pit toilet. 81 of the primitive sites and all 20 of the improved sites are currently open for reservations, with the other 60 primitive sites being closed due to staffing level needs. All campsites must be reserved for a fee. There are no hike-in sites, with all camping being on the perimeters of the park off of the main park road.

## Access & Experience

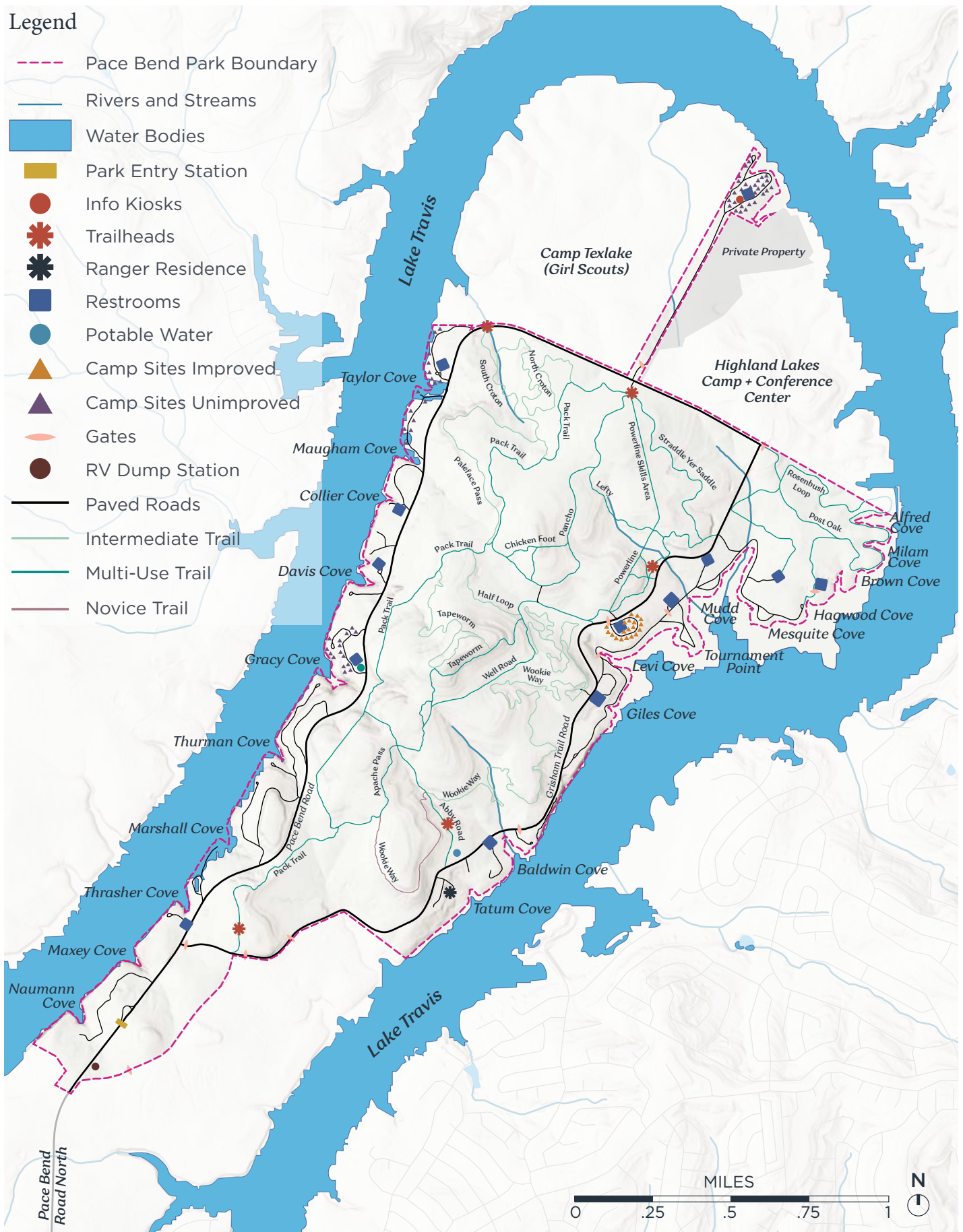
There is one main loop of road navigating the more outward perimeter of the park, with access routes branching off it for camping and day use access. This layout is functional for ease of navigation, event routes, as well as park safety. The privately-owned camps and a singular private property owner at the end of the bend utilize the park's roadway for access. There is one park entrance point for check-ins, which is in need of functional improvements.



**See Section 3: Park Assessment for more detail on the park amenities, including quality of function and aesthetics of each amenity type.**

**Legend**

- - - Pace Bend Park Boundary
- Rivers and Streams
- Water Bodies
- Park Entry Station
- Info Kiosks
- ✱ Trailheads
- ✱ Ranger Residence
- Restrooms
- Potable Water
- ▲ Camp Sites Improved
- ▲ Camp Sites Unimproved
- ◌ Gates
- RV Dump Station
- Paved Roads
- Intermediate Trail
- Multi-Use Trail
- Novice Trail





Most pit toilets, while generally functional, leave much to be desired.

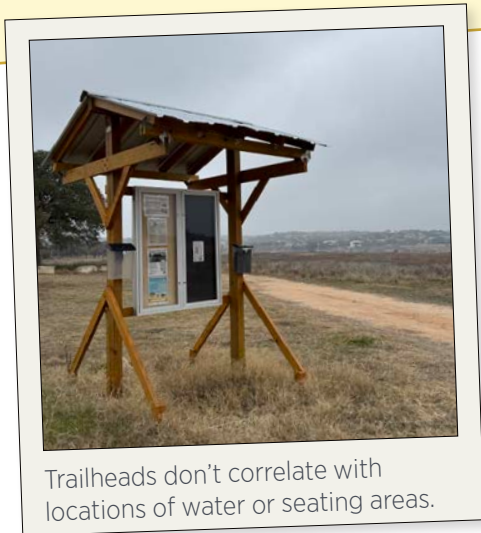


One of two park entrance booths can get very busy during high volume park times.

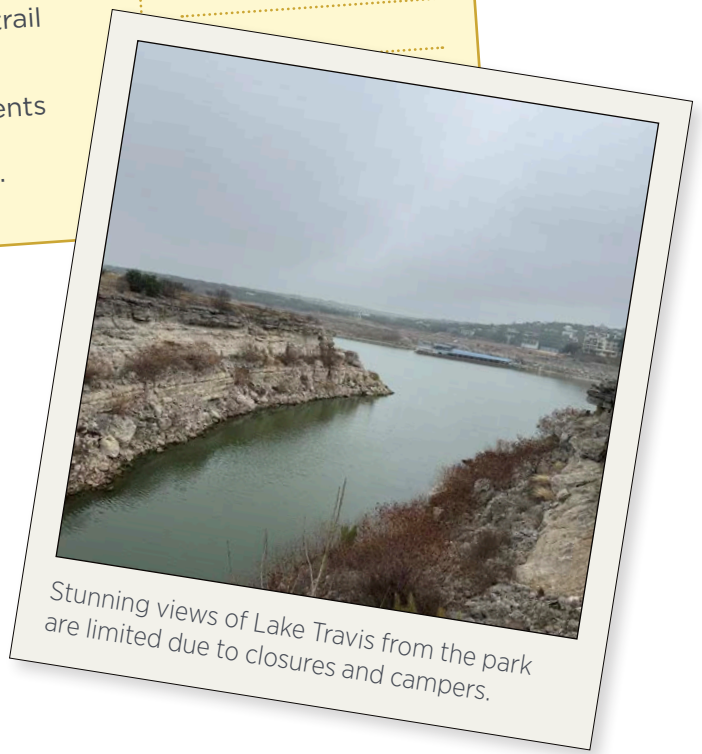
### A Snapshot Home...

- » The layout of the park generally works well, with some opportunities to allow for cliff-side viewing to all park visitors, as well as enhancing the efficiency of the main park entrance.
- » The amenities in the park match the desire to keep the park a place of wilderness, but there are areas to improve existing amenities and expand on some offerings to provide more opportunities in the park.
- » The trails are more internal to the wild-like interior of the park, while the camping and day uses are on the perimeters.
- » There is opportunity to diversify and expand on the trail system within the park.
- » There is opportunity to look at added comfort elements within the park that are easy to find, such as added wayfinding, water stations, safety elements, and more.

Travis County Parks



Trailheads don't correlate with locations of water or seating areas.



Stunning views of Lake Travis from the park are limited due to closures and campers.

# Community Health

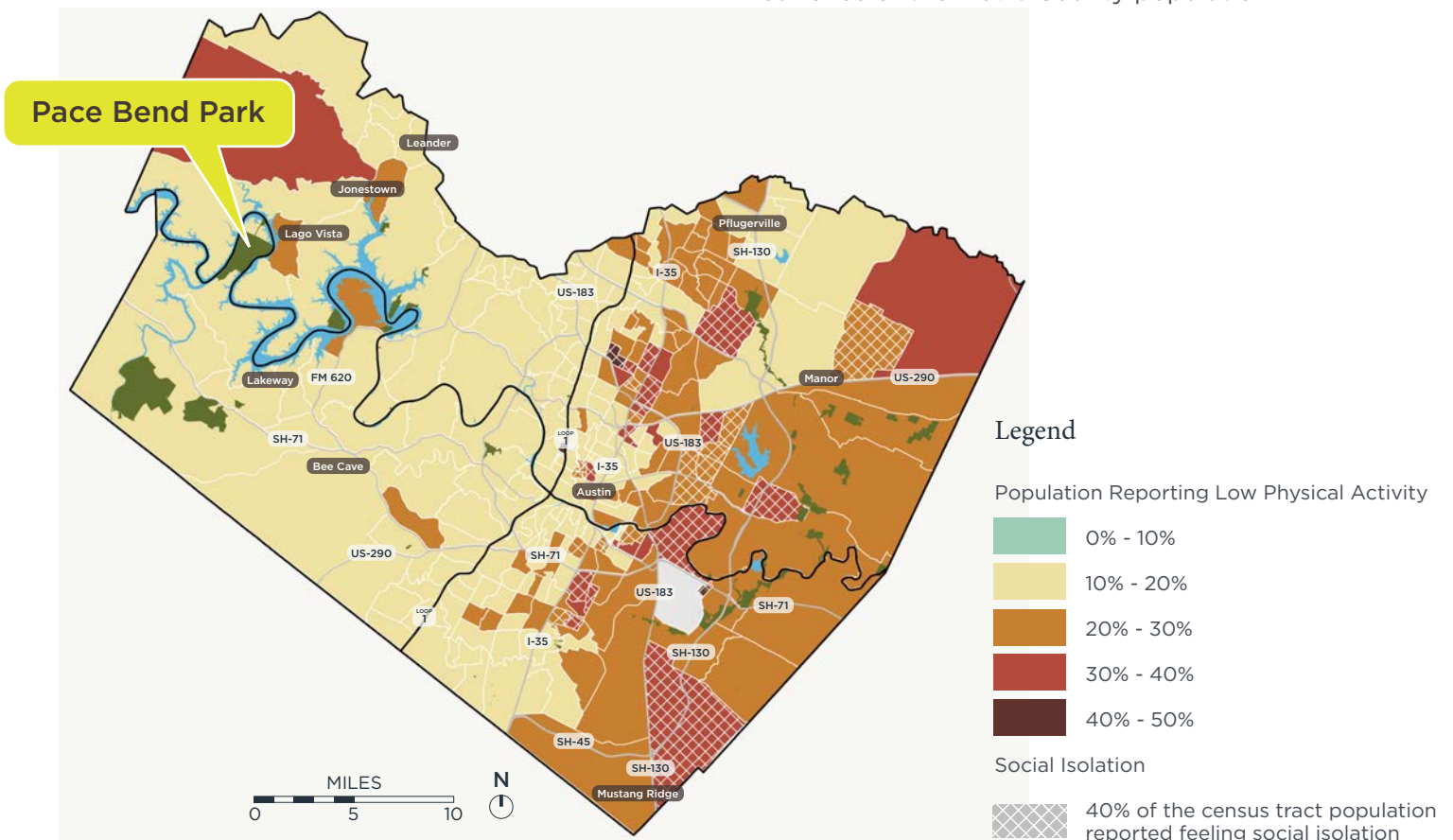
Pace Bend Park plays a key role in supporting healthy lifestyles and a healthy environment in Travis County and the greater region.

## Pace Bend Park’s Role in Community Health

Pace Bend Park is a key component of the Travis County park system and plays an important role in supporting public health. The park offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities, including hiking, biking, swimming, and camping, which encourage regular physical activity and help reduce the risk of chronic health conditions such as obesity and heart disease. Its natural environment allows visitors to stay active while enjoying the scenic beauty of the Hill Country and Lake Travis.

Beyond physical health, Pace Bend Park also supports mental and social well-being. Social isolation remains a significant concern in Travis County, with census tracts in the northeastern and southeastern regions showing isolation levels higher than the county average of 36%. Although Pace Bend Park is located in the western region of the county, it offers amenities and experiences not commonly found in all parks, making it a destination for residents across Travis County and visitors from across the state.

As the region continues to grow, the value of Pace Bend Park as a place for restoration, community building, and everyday wellness becomes increasingly important to the overall health and resilience of the Travis County population.



# Natural Systems

Pace Bend Park is a well-managed wilderness area that is home to an incredible and special array of flora and fauna.

## Landform & Water

One of the most striking features of Pace Bend Park is along the edges of the park, as coves wind their way up and down the 9 miles of lake edge of the park, creating dramatic landscapes of rocky outcroppings, habitat, views, erosion, and fluctuation.

The west side of the park abruptly meets Lake Travis along limestone cliffs and coves. Stunning long-distance views from the cliffs are most apparent here, most notably at the coves and edges closer to the park entrance. The north edge and east edge of the park ease a bit more gently to Lake Travis, providing a more friendly way to access the lake, and flatter land to gather and recreate.

Water is a critical feature of this park, considering how the lake draws users in with fishing, boating, nature-viewing, and lounging along its shores. The fluctuating water levels of Lake Travis have a dramatic impact on the park's functions, including the operations of the park's boat ramps and availability of camp sites during times of flooding or drought.

Pace Bend Park also contains a perched water table, which is an accumulation of groundwater that sits above the primary water table, separated by an unsaturated zone that prevents permeability between the two water tables. While specific studies detailing perched water tables within the park are limited, the presence of limestone, which can develop impermeable layers or lenses, makes the formation of perched water tables plausible. Understanding the presence and behavior of this perched water table is crucial for managing groundwater resources and woodlands in the park.

## Living Systems

Pace Bend Park is home to diverse plant and animal species. The park's vegetation primarily consists of Edwards Plateau Limestone Savanna and Woodland and Edwards Plateau Shrubland. Dominant tree species include plateau live oak, Ashe juniper, Texas red oak, and post oak. These woodlands and shrublands provide habitat for various wildlife species and support a range of plant life, contributing to the ecological diversity of the park.

Generally, the Edwards Plateau Limestone Savanna and Woodland and Edwards Plateau Shrubland are more dominant from the west edge of the park to the eastern side of the main road. From there, the eastern edge of the park is characterized by disturbed landcover due to programmed park usage, transitioning into Post Oak Savannah and Edwards Plateau Riparian at the gently sloping edge along the river.

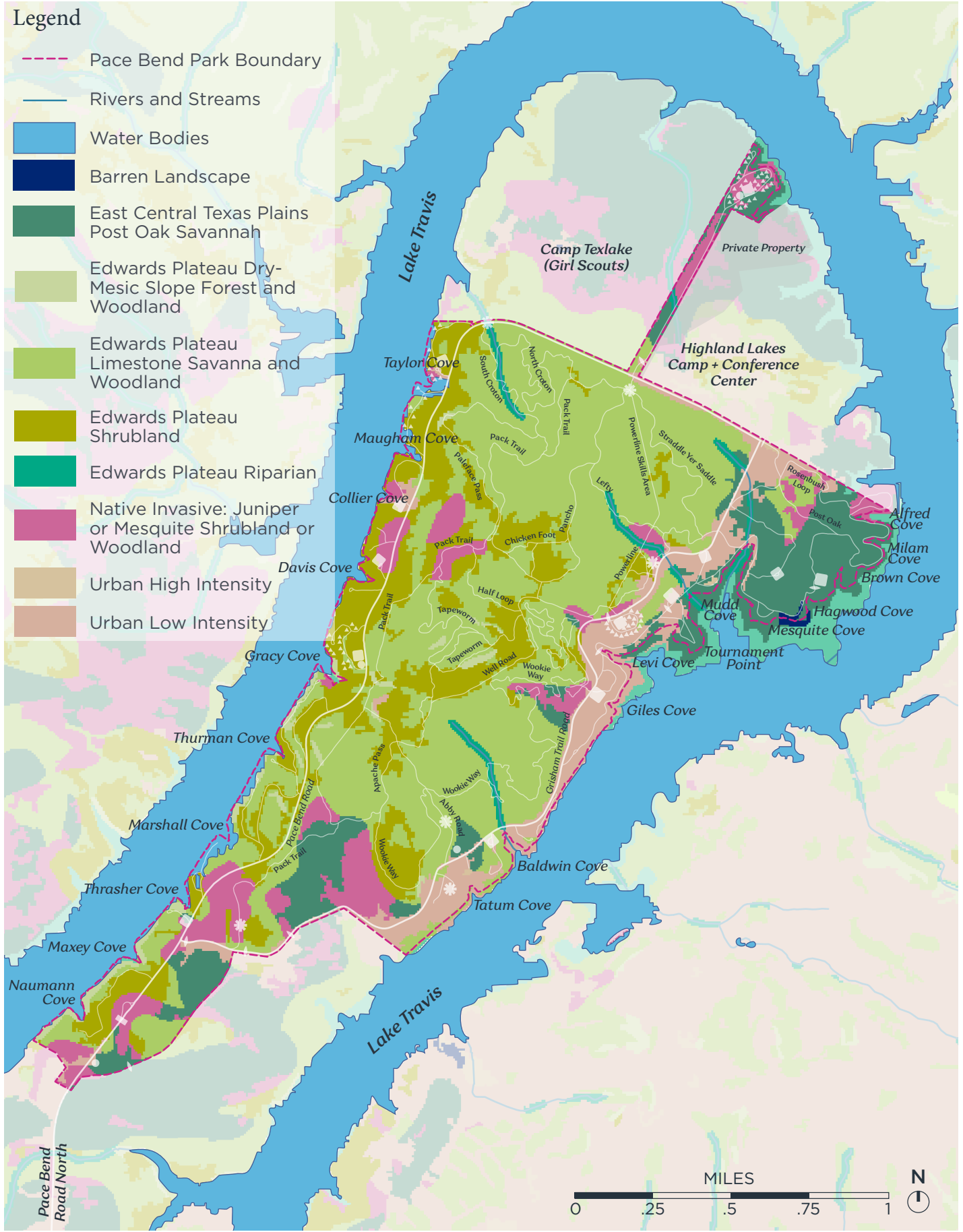
There are pockets of invasive plant habitats concentrated along the main park road and more heavily-used trail entrance areas, indicating that invasive species are hitch-hiking or blowing in and finding opportunity where there are areas of more disturbance in the park. Invasive animal species include zebra mussels in the lake.

The park's diverse environments attract various wildlife, including white-tailed deer, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, and ringtails. Pace Bend Park is also a notable birding destination. Resident and breeding birds include the Black-chinned Hummingbird, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Vermilion Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and more.

A rare plant species inventory is available on the Travis County Parks webpage for Pace Bend Park. This resource highlights the park's importance as a preserve for reclaimed habitats and ongoing restoration efforts, which have contributed to an increase in protected and special-interest species.

**Legend**

- - - Pace Bend Park Boundary
- Rivers and Streams
- Water Bodies
- Barren Landscape
- East Central Texas Plains Post Oak Savannah
- Edwards Plateau Dry-Mesic Slope Forest and Woodland
- Edwards Plateau Limestone Savanna and Woodland
- Edwards Plateau Shrubland
- Edwards Plateau Riparian
- Native Invasive: Juniper or Mesquite Shrubland or Woodland
- Urban High Intensity
- Urban Low Intensity



MILES





Live oak canopies near the river's riparian zones provide shade, habitat, and character.

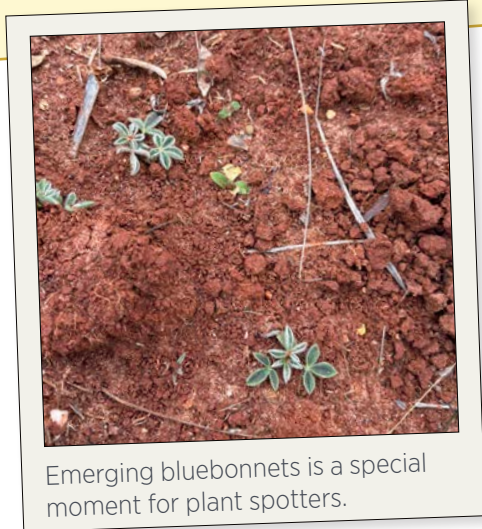


Updating species catalogues will help track the success of preservation efforts.

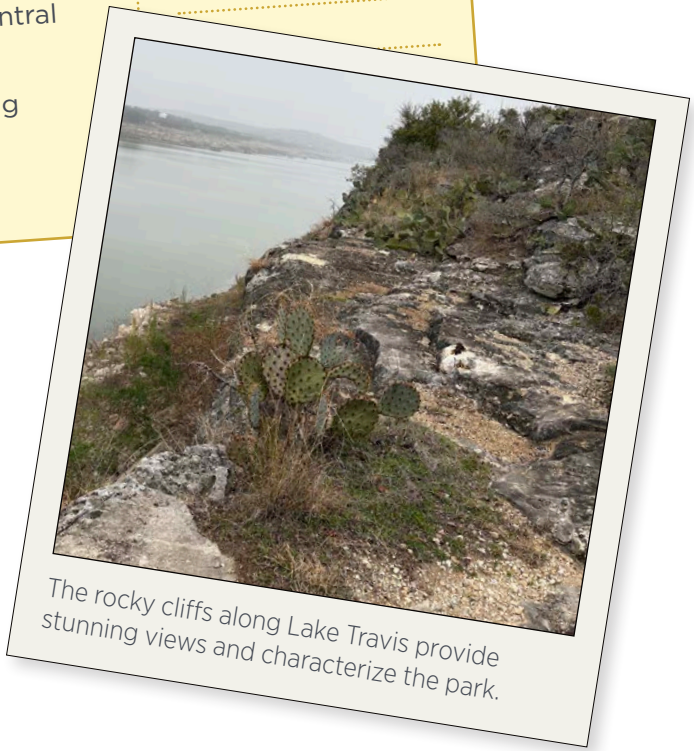
**A Snapshot Home...**

- » The park has over 9 miles of lakeshore along Lake Travis, providing unique water-based recreation and gathering opportunities for visitors.
- » The fluctuating water level of the lake can have a significant impact on the operations of the park.
- » Groundwater access is a challenge in the park, creating a challenge for expanding any amenities that require a water source.
- » Pace Bend Park is a critically important wilderness preserve for many threatened and non-threatened species of central Texas.
- » Maintaining the park's habitat diversity and mitigating invasives should be of critical importance.

Texas  
County  
Parks



Emerging bluebonnets is a special moment for plant spotters.



The rocky cliffs along Lake Travis provide stunning views and characterize the park.

# Climate Challenges & Risks

Heatwaves and droughts will persist in Pace Bend, and flooding risks may rise due to changing precipitation patterns and urban expansion.

On June 2, 2020, the Travis County Commissioners Court unanimously adopted the County's first Climate Action Plan, a roadmap for reducing the environmental impact of County operations. The County's Climate Action Plan includes action recommendations to protect and plant more trees in parks and expand the prescribed fire program.

The challenges and risks related to climate change, especially increased wildfire risk and flooding and drought, would have significant impacts on the operations of the park.

## Wildfire Risks

Pace Bend Park benefits from significant tree cover, which provides ample shade and enhances the overall visitor experience. However, the continuity of this canopy is interrupted in areas where paved roads cut through the landscape, potentially increasing vulnerability to environmental stressors. Notably, portions of the park—particularly along some exterior hiking trails, roadways, and heavily used camp sites—show elevated wildfire risk. Areas of less wildfire risk are in the more interior of the park where there is less significant disruption due to roadways and vehicular movement.

The mapping illustrating these elevated risk areas indicates that in the event of a wildfire in the park, much of the park's revenue-generating amenities, as well as the only safe vehicular route through the park, would be jeopardized. Wildfire risks are also elevated in areas where native yet invasive juniper shrubland or woodland is present in the same more heavily disturbed areas, with junipers being more fire-prone due to their volatile oils, dense growth, and retention of dead plant material.

Given these risks, it is essential to prioritize safe campfire practices among park users, especially in designated camping areas, to help prevent wildfire ignition and ensure visitor safety. Park staff monitor and update fire risk daily, keeping visitors informed about current conditions and best safety practices. To improve the landscape's resilience to wildfires and enhance habitat diversity, the Travis

County Land Management Program also carries out prescribed burns across the park as part of its ongoing stewardship efforts.

## Flooding & Drought

Central Texas, located in Flash Flood Alley, is prone to frequent thunderstorms and flash flooding due to its terrain and climate. While all of Travis County's planning areas are at risk, the floodplain dynamics vary across the county. The western areas, part of the Edwards Plateau Ecoregion, feature narrower, more contained floodplains, including along Lake Travis at Pace Bend Park. Considering the park features over 9 miles of lakeshore, there is significant impact that flooding and drought have on the park.

In a 200-year flooding event, water will crest above the roadway, inhibiting travel through the park and flooding nearly all campsites in the park, impacting park operations and revenue generation.

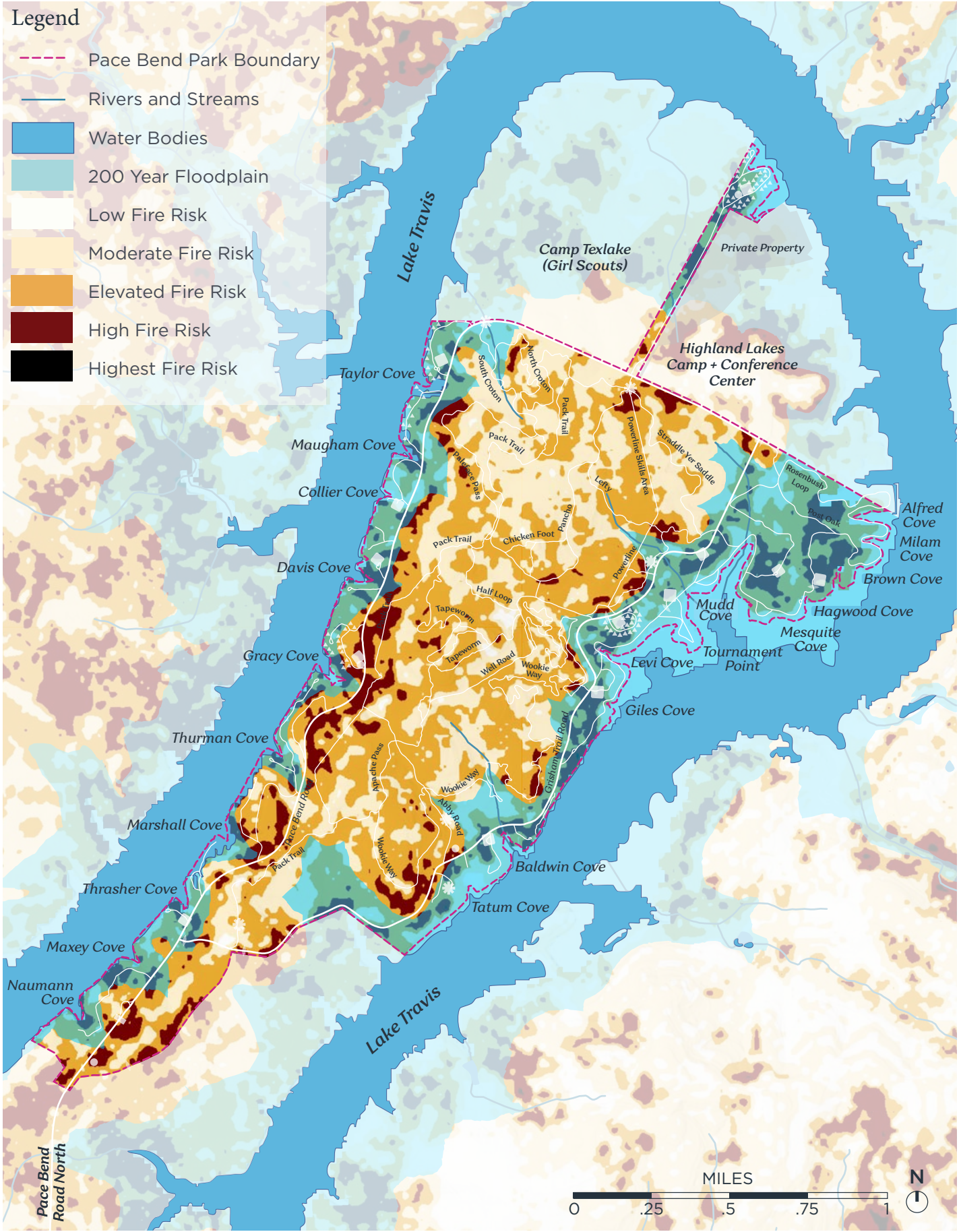
In years of drought, not only are wildfire risks increased, but parks staff is forced to close two of the park's three boat ramps, reducing the potential day-use interest and putting usage stress on the Tournament Point boat ramp access area.



In times of drought, some boat ramps in the park must close due to low lake levels.

**Legend**

- - - Pace Bend Park Boundary
- Rivers and Streams
- Water Bodies
- 200 Year Floodplain
- Low Fire Risk
- Moderate Fire Risk
- Elevated Fire Risk
- High Fire Risk
- Highest Fire Risk



# Key Takeaways

Pace Bend Park is a vital recreational and ecological preserve in Travis County that is rich in amenities, cultural, and habitat.

Pace Bend Park stands as one of the largest and most significant parks in the Travis County Parks system, offering a wide range of recreational opportunities including day use, overnight camping, and special events. With over nine miles of lakeshore along Lake Travis, the park provides unique spaces for water-based recreation and scenic enjoyment. Its current layout supports a strong balance between natural preservation and public access, although improvements could enhance the experience—such as increasing cliffside viewing opportunities, improving the efficiency of the main entrance, and adding comfort features like wayfinding, water stations, and safety elements.

Beyond recreation, Pace Bend Park holds a rich cultural history that remains largely untold. There is significant potential to develop educational experiences around the park’s pre- and post-contact history. By using artifacts in the care of Travis County Parks, the Travis County Parks Foundation, and the Travis County Historical Commission, park could present more inclusive and compelling historical narratives. These stories would enrich visitors’ understanding of the land while honoring its cultural significance.



Natural materials assist in maintaining the wilderness aesthetic of the park while protecting important habitats.

The park’s amenities reflect its wilderness character, but there is room for thoughtful expansion to increase access and opportunity without compromising its natural feel. Trails are primarily located in the interior wild areas, while camping and day-use facilities are concentrated along the park’s edges. Expanding and diversifying the trail system could better connect these spaces and encourage deeper exploration. However, the park also faces practical challenges, including fluctuating lake water levels that impact accessibility and operations, as well as limited groundwater availability, which complicates efforts to expand amenities that require tapping into a water source.

As a vital place for both threatened and non-threatened species native to Central Texas, Pace Bend Park plays a crucial ecological role. Maintaining the health and diversity of its habitats, while actively managing invasive species, is essential to its long-term sustainability. Balancing human enjoyment with ecological stewardship will ensure the park continues to thrive as both a recreational haven and a natural sanctuary.



Creative park users find ways to experience nature through setting up slack-lines in the park.



3

## PARK ASSESSMENT

# 3 Park Assessment

## Individual Amenity Assessments

Pace Bend Park was assessed through in-person site visits, online engagement, and evaluation against established park design standards.

### Assessment Process

This section of the needs assessment offers a comprehensive evaluation of each existing program area within Pace Bend Park. The analysis is grounded in multiple sources, including feedback gathered through community engagement, detailed on-site observations by the project team, and comparisons to established park design standards—particularly those outlined by the National Park Service and other best practice references.

The purpose of this assessment is to identify both gaps and opportunities in the park’s current conditions. By layering community input with technical review, the assessment highlights what aspects of the park are most valued by users, where existing amenities fall short of national standards or user expectations, and where improvements could significantly enhance the overall park experience. This approach helps guide future investment and design decisions, ensuring they are responsive to user needs, environmentally responsible, and aligned with broader goals for access, equity, and long-term sustainability.



Campground Design Guidelines Link



Each park program is assessed using three metrics:

### What we heard:

The community shared their voices in multiple ways throughout the planning process. A summary of both online and in-person engagement can be found in the Vision and Goals section of the Needs Assessment (page 24). Key insights from that engagement are highlighted there, and any findings specific to park programs are also summarized within this Park Assessment section.

### What we saw:

The project team conducted a comprehensive assessment of the park, including its overall layout, program areas, and ecological conditions. Observations were documented through detailed field notes and photographs to establish a clear understanding of existing conditions. Each program area was photographed, and those images are included throughout this section to illustrate key findings.

### What we know:

Where relevant, this document references the National Park Service Campground Design Guidelines as a baseline for design evaluation. These guidelines provide a consistent framework for campground planning and construction nationwide. Additional resources, including Basic Elements of Trail Design and Trail Layout, are also used to inform and support the findings in this needs assessment.

The above metrics culminate in an overall star rating, with 1-star reflecting significant improvements needed, 2-stars reflecting adequate condition or service, and 3-stars reflecting above typical standards of condition of service.

# Park Entrance



## What we heard:

Park staff identified several challenges with the current entrance to Pace Bend Park. During peak times, especially when many visitors are checking in to camp, the single-lane entry creates significant congestion and long wait times. Additionally, outdated and slow check-in technology further contributes to these delays. Staff also noted a lack of clear and visible signage at the entrance, which can create confusion for first-time visitors and adds to the overall inefficiency of the arrival experience.



## What we saw:

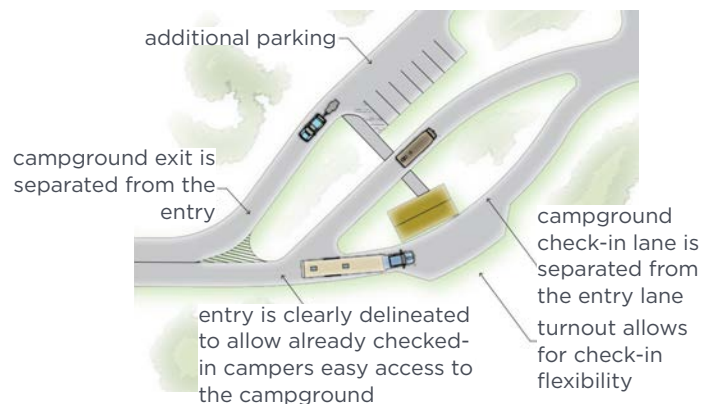
The entry building offers a functional space for staff operations, but lacks a functioning restroom - relying instead on an outhouse for facilities. Entry signage appears weathered and sun-faded, reflecting its age and exposure. Despite these issues, the landscaping at the entrance is well-maintained and free of litter, creating a welcoming first impression for visitors.



## What we know:

The National Park Service Campground Design Guidelines suggest several standard practices that Pace Bend Park does not currently have:

- *At least two incoming traffic lanes. One lane can be a bypass for registered campers with one for in-bound campers.*
- *A self-service fee depository.*
- *Vehicular turnaround space both inside and outside the entrance station.*



# Wayfinding and Signage ★★☆☆

## What we heard:

While there are various signs throughout Pace Bend Park, community members most often mentioned trail signage. There is strong interest in expanding and standardizing signs for both hiking and mountain biking trails. In particular, visitors expressed the need for clearer trail markings that indicate difficulty level and the type of experience required.



## What we saw:

Pace Bend Park features signage at the entrance, trailheads, and campsites. Some signs are designed to be flexible and updated throughout the year, but many become faded and difficult to read due to prolonged sun exposure. Trail information is shared with a QR code and there is currently no signage that shares the history of Pace Bend Park.



## What we know:

The National Park Service Campground Design Guidelines requires these baseline elements for Trailhead Signage:

- Length of Trail
- Surface Type
- Typical and minimum tread width
- Typical and maximum running slope
- Typical and maximum cross slope



# Restrooms

## What we heard:

Both written comments and survey responses pointed to a strong need for upgrading existing restrooms and adding new ones—particularly in high-traffic areas such as boat ramps. Current restroom facilities received an average rating of just 3.3 out of 5, making them one of the lowest-rated amenities in the survey. Participants also expressed a desire for showers and more access to drinking water throughout the park. Restroom facilities are often used as wayfinding for camp sites.



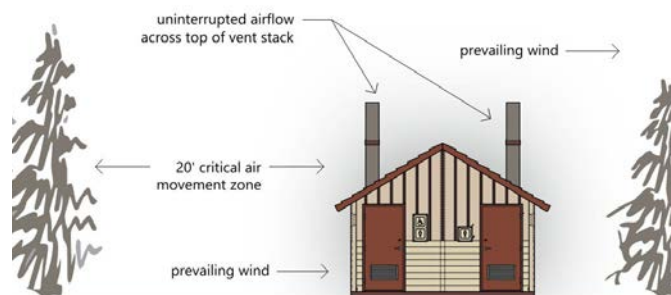
## What we saw:

Pit toilet structures are located near primitive camp areas and are non-flushing, waterless facilities. They do not offer showers or access to drinking water. Improved toilets are located in the RV and improved camp areas and include access to water, showers and flushing toilets.



## What we know:

The National Parks Service Campground Design Guidelines recommends using flushable toilets wherever possible. Where they are not possible, vault toilets are recommended.



# Boat Ramps

## What we heard:

Boat ramps were frequently mentioned as needing attention. Visitors want more ramps and extensions of existing ramps to handle low water levels, as well as solutions for congestion and long wait times, especially related to types of water recreation (motorized vs. non-motorized). The survey reflected this need, with boat ramps scoring 3.4/5 in quality and ease of use. Boat ramps must be flexible and be able to handle unpredictable future water levels.



## What we saw:

Boat ramps at the park serve as essential water-access points, but fluctuating water levels from year to year mean they do not always provide consistent access. While the ramps allow vehicles to approach the shoreline, they are designed to discourage driving directly onto the beach—a practice many visitors still prefer. At the day-use area, the large unpaved parking area near the shoreline often encourages off-road driving, leaving the surrounding landscape vulnerable to erosion and long-term damage.



## What we know:

The National Park Service Campground Design Guidelines has suggestions for non-motorized watercraft use:

- *Limit water access areas so there is minimal chance of erosion along the shoreline*
- *Provide boat tie-ups at campsites*
- *Use a permanent dock on rough, rocky shorelines*



# Camping

## What we heard:

Camping remains a central part of the Pace Bend Park experience, with over 60% of survey respondents identifying as campers. Feedback pointed to a need for both more campsites and better campsites, with calls to reopen cove spots and primitive areas. Visitors stressed the importance of separating different types of camping to reduce conflicts, improve privacy, and enhance the overall experience. Staff use an intricate primitive reservation system, which could be improved to utilize modern tech.



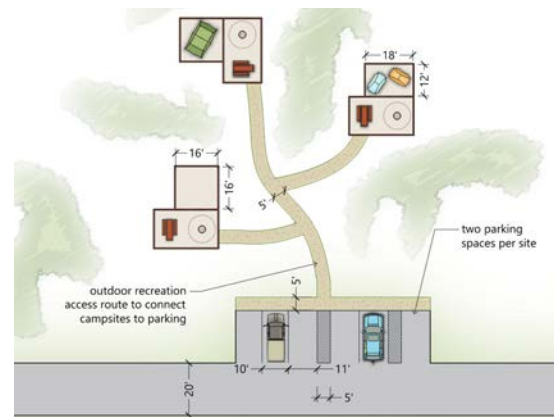
## What we saw:

Pace Bend Park offers a variety of campsites, though they are not clearly labeled from the road. Most sites provide scenic views along with picnic tables, fire pits, and varying levels of shade. The primitive campsites along the park's western edge are popular and hold deep personal significance for many longtime visitors who have camped at Pace Bend Park for decades. The K&J campsites are popular for families as it is lower and closer to the water



## What we know:

The National Parks Service Campground Design Guidelines has recommendations for each type of campground site present at Pace Bend Park. There is also a section specific to bike-in, equestrian, and hammock camping which should be considered when developing the vision plan. There are various types of camping not currently at Pace Bend Park that can be explored.



# Natural History

## What we heard:

Nature observation is one of the most cherished activities at Pace Bend Park. Visitors are drawn to the park’s iconic dynamic landscape, diverse ecological features, and excellent birdwatching opportunities. Over time and through restoration efforts, the landscape has changed noticeably, offering a new experience with each visit and deepening the connection many feel to the park’s natural rhythms. Many guests have questions about flora and fauna on site and will ask park staff.



## What we saw:

The landscape at Pace Bend Park is unlike any other park in the county, defined by its distinctive rock formations, rare plant communities—such as the Texabama croton—and vibrant bird life. These unique natural features make the park ecologically special, yet the story of this rich natural history remains largely untold on-site. Sharing more of this narrative would deepen visitors’ appreciation and foster a stronger connection to the park’s remarkable landscape.



## What we know:

At its core, the National Park Service Campground Design Guidelines recognize that modern camping has evolved from the principles established in the Wilderness Act of 1964, which prioritized the protection of natural resources. These guidelines emphasize that visitors should leave each park with a deeper understanding of the landscape and what makes it so unique—including how it was formed and how it has changed over time.



# History and Storytelling



## What we heard:

In-person conversations with Pace Bend Park staff revealed that visitors frequently ask about the park's history. While staff are able to share general historical information, there is a clear desire for more intentional interpretation throughout the park—whether through signage, an interpretive center, or special events. It is also clear that many people have deep personal connections to the park through a lifetime and generations of visiting the park.



## What we saw:

Currently, Pace Bend Park does not have any signage or interpretation that references its history. Additionally, the only central location that all visitors experience is the park entrance. That general area could lend itself well to host an interpretive center or signage.



## What we know:

Based on numerous archaeological reports and cultural resource reporting, Pace Bend Park has a unique and complex history. People will inherently be curious about this park due to significant change of the park from ranchland to parkland having happened in just 1-2 generations passed. Storytelling also contributes to stewardship, making people feel more likely to take care of the park if they know how special this place really is.



# Key Takeaways

This needs assessment serves as a baseline for Pace Bend Park improvements by gathering essential voices and information.

## Entrance

Reorganize the entrance to streamline park entry processes.

## Wayfinding & Signage

Incorporate clear wayfinding signage throughout the park, but especially along trails. Additionally, introduce signage about the park's history and natural resources.

## Restrooms

Introduce more flushing or vault toilets in higher-use areas of the park where feasible to improve camping and park visitor experience.

## Boat Ramps

Create flexible boat ramps that accommodate fluctuating water levels; additionally, adding a ramp for non-motorized watercrafts should also be considered.

## Camping

Improve upon and add camp sites and types of camping experiences for park users, ensuring that sites remain separated to accommodate different programs - group, primitive, etc.

## Natural History

Introduce interpretive signage, including a potential interpretive center, to communicate and educate about the flora, fauna, geology and hydrology of the park.

## History & Storytelling

Introduce interpretive signage, including a potential interpretive center, to communicate and educate about the history of the park.

## Maintenance Shed

Improve and expand upon the maintenance shed to ease maintenance tasks and ensure adequate resources and equipment are readily available for park needs.

## Ranger Residence

Consider improvements to the ranger residence to improve park safety operations and modernize the facility.



# 4

## VISION AND GOALS

# 4 Vision and Goals

## Project Engagement

Coordinating the park's future vision with key stakeholders is imperative to ensuring a realistic and implementable vision plan.

Community and stakeholder engagement for the Pace Bend Park Vision Plan was approached through a combination of online and in-person strategies to ensure broad community and stakeholder input. Through various engagement opportunities, community members were provided an easy and accessible way to share their thoughts, ideas, and priorities for the park's future. This input helped shape the long-term vision for the park's natural, cultural, and recreational assets.

In addition to community-wide engagement strategies, a day-long park tour and workshop was held where all Pace Bend Park staff and key Travis County Parks staff were in attendance. This two-part event began with a park walk, where park staff provided input and thoughts about day-to-day life and experiences within the park, followed by a design charette where park and county staff were able sit with the design consultant group and draw their vision for the future of the park. This staff input is essential, as the parks staff are experts on the park and how people currently use the park and want to use the park.

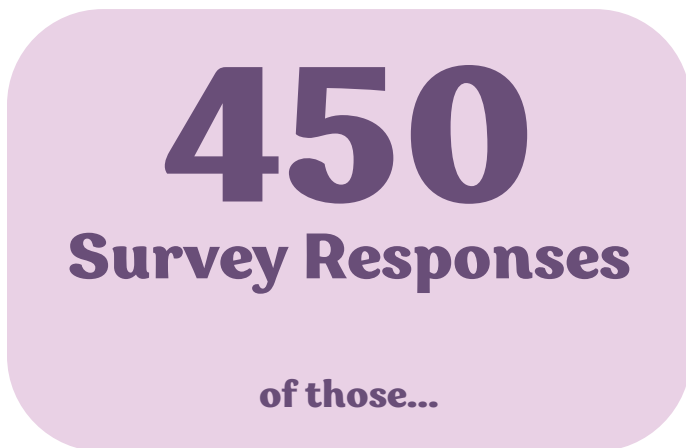


# Community Engagement Results

Online survey and pop-up event opportunities gathered community input to guide future improvements at Pace Bend Park.

## Pace Bend Park Pre-Design Survey Summary

Across both write-in comments and survey responses, visitors consistently emphasized the importance of preserving Pace Bend Park's primitive, rugged character while making thoughtful improvements to existing infrastructure, amenities, and access. The desire is clear: do not overdevelop, but focus on enhancements that support safety, accessibility, and enjoyment without diminishing the park's natural beauty.



## Boat Ramps

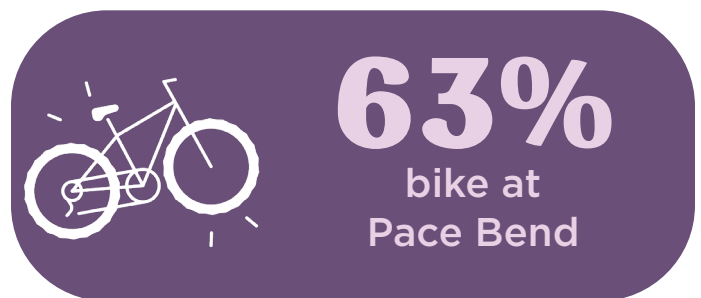
Boat ramps were frequently mentioned as needing attention. Visitors want more ramps and extensions of existing ramps to handle low water levels, as well as solutions for congestion and long wait times. The survey reflected this need, with boat ramps scoring 3.4/5 in quality and ease of use. Suggestions included adding docks, zebra mussel washing stations, and improving shoreline vegetation management to enhance boat access.

## Climbing

Many written-in comments called for expanding climbing options. Visitors requested more cliffside climbing routes and deep water solo (DWS) opportunities, seeing these as natural fits for the park's terrain. There were also mentions of adding slacklining areas to complement climbing activities.

## Mountain Biking

Mountain biking drew passionate responses, with riders asking for better maintained trails, more mileage, and features that offer greater challenge and fun. Suggestions included advanced flow trails with jumps, berms, and drops, as well as a hard-surface pump track or skills park, inspired by places like Bentonville and Valmont Bike Park. Biking trails were among the most visited areas (67% of visitors) and saw strong interest in expanded and improved options. Safety and wayfinding signage on trails was another priority.



## Camping

Camping remains a central part of the Pace Bend experience, with over 60% of survey respondents identifying as campers. Feedback pointed to a need for both more campsites and better campsites, with calls to reopen cove spots and primitive areas. Visitors stressed the importance of separating different types of camping—primitive, hike-in, group—to reduce conflicts, improve privacy, and enhance the overall experience. Campsite quality earned an average rating of 3.8/5, with room for improvement noted.

## Restrooms and Utilities

Restrooms and basic utilities emerged as one of the most common concerns. Written-in feedback and survey ratings highlighted the need to improve the quality of existing restrooms and add more—especially near high-use areas like boat ramps. Restroom facilities rated 3.3 on a 5-point quality scale, one of the lowest-rated amenities in the survey. Respondents also called for adding showers and increasing access to drinking water across the park.

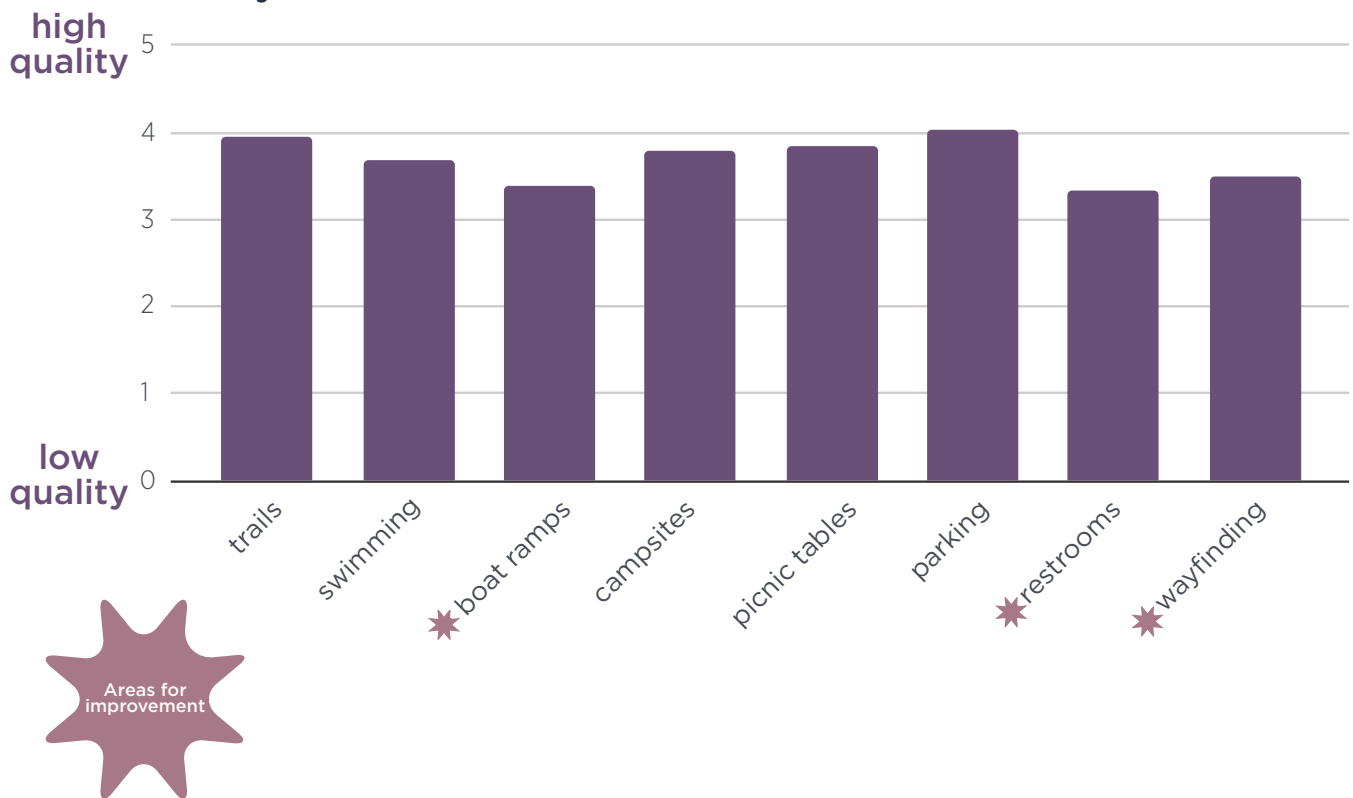
## Park Information

The modernization of the park’s reservation, payment, and mapping systems was another prevalent theme, with visitors asking for online booking, credit card payments, and clearer, more accurate maps. Better signage for wayfinding and safety on trails was also emphasized, with about 3.5/5 given for current signage and wayfinding in the survey.

## Additional Themes

Visitors expressed deep appreciation for the dedication and knowledge of park staff, as well as the primitive, natural environment of Pace Bend Park. Other ideas included reopening day-use areas on the north and west sides, creating a separate bike lane on Pace Bend Road, adding picnic tables, improving swimming shoreline access, acquiring adjacent properties, and providing features like a skate bowl, equestrian trails, night-sky-friendly lighting, benches, and a dedicated event entry point. The importance of balancing new amenities with habitat protection and preservation goals was a consistent theme throughout the feedback.

### Quality of Amenities at Pace Bend



# Pace Bend Park Concept Design Online Survey and Pop-Up Events Summary

The Pace Bend Concept Design Survey was administered online and in person at pop-up events and centered on proposed programming and design concepts, allowing users to respond directly to specific improvement ideas.

## New Pace Bend Road Trail

Overall, feedback shows strong support for a new ring trail that improved safety and accessibility. Users support a trail that:

- » Uses natural or crushed granite surfaces
- » Minimizes environmental disturbance
- » Does not replace or interfere with existing mountain biking trails

## Improved Trail Hierarchy

Overall, people strongly support better wayfinding, clearer trail information, and easier navigation. Users support mountain biking and hiking trails that are:

- » Informational
- » Clear, simple, and well-communicated
- » Developed in collaboration with user groups (mountain biking, equestrian, hiking)

## Habitat Observation Area

Overall, feedback shows general interest but lower prioritization compared to trails and active recreation. Users support a habitat observation area that:

- » Clearly supports birding, wildlife viewing, and environmental education
- » Includes interpretive signage explaining what visitors are seeing
- » Is set back from high-traffic trails to reduce disturbance

## Park Entry Interpretive Center

In general, people are excited about upgrades and new features for interpretation in this area of the park, while some are wary of over-development. There is strong support to preserve the natural and primitive character of the park in this area, and to avoid making the park feel like a “resort” or overly commercialized. Cost sensitivity is also noted in some of the feedback received.

## Group Camping

Overall, feedback reflects support, especially from scouts and organized groups, alongside concerns about noise, cost, and loss of existing campsites. Many visitors support group camping that:

- » Provides essential amenities only, avoiding overbuilding
- » Minimizes environmental impact and preserved trees
- » Included ADA accessibility

Top Priorities identified for this area:

- » a mix of primitive and improved camping (prioritizing primitive camping)
- » flushable toilets
- » showers

## New Western Day Use Area

Overall, feedback shows strong support for reopening and activating the west side of the park, particularly through inclusive day-use amenities. The New Western Day Use Area should:

- » Separate day use from camping, avoiding conflicts near the boat ramp and high-traffic areas
- » Maintain a primitive, natural character, using local materials
- » Minimize environmental impacts, including habitat disturbance, tree removal, and impervious surfaces
- » Support accessibility and inclusivity
- » Address operational needs such as boat cleaning stations, trail connections, and safety considerations

Top Priorities identified for this area:

- » Flushable toilets
- » Connection to the greater trail system
- » Many ways to experience the cliffs

# Park Tour and Design Workshop Recap

The event brought together staff, partners, and stakeholders to collaboratively envision the park's future using local knowledge.

The Pace Bend Park Design Blitz brought together a passionate and knowledgeable group of Travis County Parks staff, Pace Bend Park staff, agency partners, and key stakeholders for a focused day of collaboration and visioning.

The event created space for the many voices who care deeply about Pace Bend Park - those who work in the park, steward it, and hold meaningful memories of the landscape - to get in the same room and shape a vision grounded in both deep local knowledge and a collective hope for what the park can become.

## Agenda

The day began with a group session focused on understanding the park. Participants received packets with maps and analysis documents, then toured key areas of the park to discuss opportunities on the ground.

In the second session, held at *Casa Blanca* on RGK Ranch Park (future), the group shifted into visioning and design. After a quick overview of draft goals and vision statements, participants grouped into 5 tables for a round of collaborative sketching that incorporated insights from the day. The event wrapped up with presentations of each table's sketches and a group discussion to reflect on outcomes.



## Summary of Park Ideas by Table

### Biodiversity, Recreation & Preservation

Key ideas that emerged from the discussion reflect a shared commitment to enhancing both recreation and conservation at Pace Bend Park. Participants envisioned a granite biking trail following the existing road around the park, an interpretive center with nearby nature play areas, and bird blinds with signage in vireo habitat zones. They emphasized the importance of more water stations and shaded picnic areas, particularly on the west side, as well as benches along trails offering scenic views.

Suggestions also included bolted climbing areas on the west side, low-impact design strategies in flood-prone areas, such as movable shelters and educational signage, and night-sky friendly lighting throughout the park. The group expressed enthusiasm for expanding wildflower diversity and supported the idea of visitation limits to help preserve the park's natural character.





## Interpretation, Camping and Conservation

Ideas shared in the discussion showcased a vision for Pace Bend Park that thoughtfully blends recreation, education, and conservation. Participants proposed an interpretive center south of Naumann Cove, connected by a bridge overlook offering views across the cove. Interpretive signage at Mesquite Point overlooks would help visitors engage with the landscape, while group rental primitive camping areas on both the eastern and western sides would feature communal shelters and improved parking.

Suggestions also included adding a playground to the existing improved camping area, creating hike-in primitive camping along the waterfront at the park's northeast point with upper areas preserved for hiking and habitat, and establishing scenic overlooks at Mesquite Point. To enhance water access, the group supported an improved day-use boat ramp on the eastern edge with a parking lot and limited access roads to the water.



## Park Access, Camping & Habitat Preservation

The group's ideas reflected a strong desire to honor the park's natural features while enhancing the visitor experience. Priorities included improving the park entrance, preserving the Naumann and Maxey Coves, and creating day-use areas near the entry that would feature an interpretive visitors center and a playground. Participants envisioned primitive camping along the western edge with centralized parking to support a pack-in/pack-out approach, helping to protect sensitive areas.

Other key ideas included habitat preservation, parking near trailheads, scenic overlooks and vistas along the western edge and pack trails, bird blinds, and a visitor's center near Mudd Cove on the eastern side. The group also identified a need for a helicopter landing zone within the primitive camping area to support safety and emergency response.



## Trail Safety, Access & Group Experience

The discussion generated ideas focused on improving safety, accessibility, and the overall visitor experience at Pace Bend Park. Participants recommended a designated bike trail along the park's drive lane loop, with pull-off parking for road cyclists near the entrance. To enhance safety, the group proposed installing emergency call phones at locations with frequent incidents, including the skills course. Clearer trail wayfinding was a priority, particularly for indicating mountain bike trail skill levels and difficulty.

Additional ideas included improving trailheads near key features—such as wells, overlooks, parking, future bike repair stations, playgrounds, and cabins—and adding a covered pavilion near day-use and boat access areas for shade and gathering. The vision also featured group camping near Gracy Cove with a scenic amphitheater, equestrian camping near K&J campground, and interest in acquiring the Camp Chautauqua property to support cabins, a playground, a camping check-in area, and a maintenance shop.



## Entry Experience, Camping, Art and Wayfinding

Participants shared ideas that centered on creating a more welcoming, engaging, and accessible experience for visitors to Pace Bend Park. A streamlined and organized entry with multiple lanes was seen as key to improving arrival, complemented by a visitors center with trail access offering views of Naumann and Maxey Coves. The group envisioned additional camping opportunities, including RV sites along the park's western and southern edges, and expanded day-use access on the west side.

Suggestions also included a designated bike trail following the park drive lane loop, a disc golf course at the northeastern corner, equipment rentals, and more walking trails within day-use areas. Updates to the ranger residence, improved interior trail signage, and opportunities for art and sculpture along trails and key viewsheds rounded out the vision for a more vibrant and inviting park.



## Group Visioning Summary

### Access & Entry

- **Improved or streamlined park entry** (including multiple entry lanes)
- **Visitors/Interpretive Center** near the park entry
- **Pull-off parking for road cyclists** near entrance
- **Improved trailheads** near key park features
- Suggestion to **acquire Camp Chautauqua property** for camper cabins, playground, check-in area, and maintenance shop

### Trails & Circulation

- **Designated bike trail** along the park drive lane loop
- **Improved trail signage, trail hierarchy, and wayfinding** throughout the park
- **Emergency call phones** at frequent incident areas, especially at the **skills course**

### Camping & Overnight Use

- **Group camping** near Gracy Cove
- **Hike-in camping** to limit vehicular disturbance, especially on the western edge of the park
- **Improved camping reservation system** (though noted this is a TC-wide concern)

### Day Use & Recreation

- **Day-use areas** on both eastern and western sides
- **Covered pavilion** near day-use/boat access area for **shade and gathering**
- More **walking trails** and scenic **overlooks**
- Interest in **playgrounds** (especially nature-based), **equipment rental**, and gathering areas
- Increase in **water stations**/potable water throughout park

### Environmental Stewardship

- Strong support for **habitat preservation** (Naumann Cove, Maxey Cove, NE corner of park)
- **Low-impact design** in flood-prone areas (e.g., movable shelters, educational signage)
- **Bird blinds** with signage in areas of higher habitat interest
- **Benches** at scenic spots
- **Night-sky-friendly lighting**
- **Expanded wildflower diversity**
- **Viewing opportunities** such as bird blinds, viewing platforms

## Conflicting Priorities

Pace Bend Park faces the challenge of balancing different needs and expectations as it plans for the future. There is a spectrum of desired camping experiences, ranging from minimal-impact hike-in primitive sites to fully accessible RV accommodations. The potential addition of a helicopter landing pad within a primitive area could create environmental and experiential disruption. Similarly, a proposed disc golf course in the northeast may conflict with habitat goals depending on its location. More broadly, calls for expanded amenities, such as cabins, roads, and rental infrastructure, will need to be weighed carefully against preservation goals to protect the park's ecology and manage visitation goals.

## Vision Plan Goals - Prioritization Rankings

### Goal 1: Maintain existing park features and amenities

Pace Bend Park's top priority is to preserve its defining character—the “rugged wildness” that makes it a unique and treasured destination. The park's natural core will be protected, with active uses thoughtfully placed along the edges to maintain a true wilderness feel.

To support this vision, clear distinctions between day visitors and overnight campers will be maintained, helping ensure a safe and organized experience. Design Blitz discussions and table sketches align with the prioritization of these goals, reinforcing their importance in future planning.



### Goal 2: Enhance existing park features and amenities

Enhancements will focus on thoughtfully expanding and improving the visitor experience. Utilities will be upgraded to support future park improvements. The trail system will be refined with a clear hierarchy of trail types and skill levels, while comfort and ADA accessibility will be elevated through improved facilities. Camping opportunities will be increased and diversified—offering options from primitive sites to camper cabins—and recreation options like mountain biking and skills courses will be expanded.

Operationally, distinct entry points will be established for different park uses, including day use, overnight stays, annual pass holders, and neighbors. A more functional and better-located park office and maintenance barn will also support these goals. Safety will be strengthened by improving road biking conditions and introducing modern safety and communication features. Design Blitz feedback supports these priorities while leaving room to re-examine the desire for expanded recreation offerings.

### Goal 3: Introduce BIG IDEAS to the park

Big ideas for the park aim to deepen connections with Pace Bend's history, ecology, and landscape. Educational opportunities will highlight the park's rich stories, while new spaces will encourage gathering, interpretation, and access to provisions. The park will seek ways to foster group and multi-generational experiences, create intentional moments to capture stunning views, and introduce new recreation opportunities—with a potential focus on features like playgrounds.

A dedicated main space will be established for organized events, supporting both community use and larger gatherings. Design Blitz discussions indicate alignment with these goals, with opportunities identified to further refine and specify priorities.

# ADA Considerations

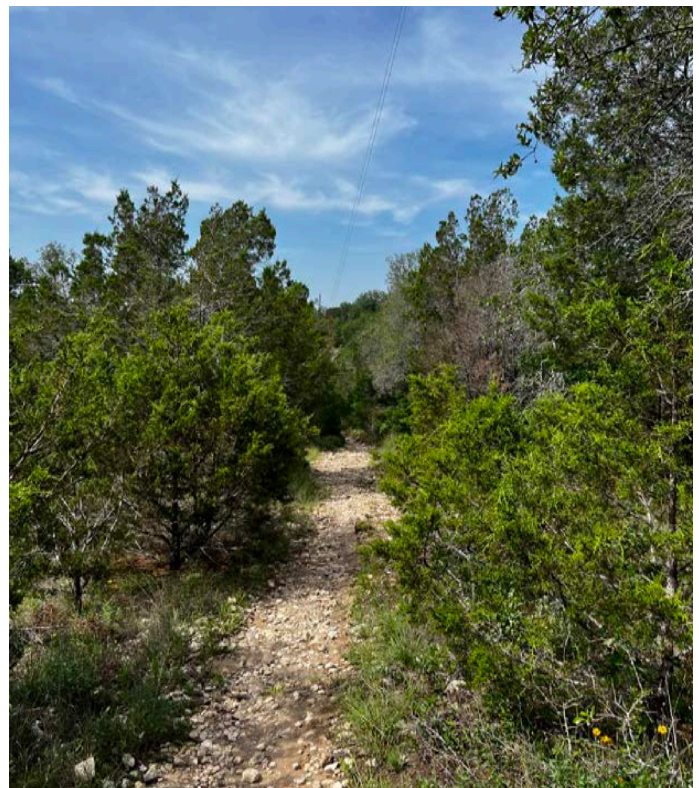
Everyone has the right to access our shared beautiful natural resources and participate in outdoor recreation.

Providing access to natural landscapes is a fundamental responsibility for those who manage and design nature-based experiences. Parks like Pace Bend Park offer visitors the opportunity to engage with extraordinary natural beauty, from rugged cliffs to serene water edges and wildlife habitats. Ensuring that these experiences are accessible to people of all abilities allows everyone to connect with nature, promoting equity, well-being, and a deeper sense of stewardship for the environment. Accessibility in natural landscapes is about more than meeting minimum standards; it is about thoughtfully creating pathways for meaningful engagement while respecting the integrity of the environment. Accessibility is woven into the park Vision Plan experience, not as an afterthought but as a guiding design principle, creating moments where people of all abilities can engage meaningfully with the landscape.

In highly naturalized landscapes, achieving accessibility requires intentional design practices that balance environmental protection with user experience. Paved trails and gently graded routes in strategic areas of the park can open access to key viewpoints, overlooks, and interpretive sites without compromising the overall park ecology. By carefully selecting locations with unique natural or cultural significance, these accessible routes can highlight the park's most compelling features, such as cliffside vistas, points of interpretation, hiking paths, or habitat observation areas, ensuring that a wide range of visitors can experience them safely and comfortably.

In addition to trails, thoughtful design approaches can include flushable toilets with accessible routes and stalls, braille and audible interpretation elements on signs, and accessible seating in rest areas that allow visitors to pause and enjoy the landscape. Integrating these elements with natural materials and minimal-impact construction methods maintains the park's character while fostering inclusivity. By prioritizing accessibility in key areas of opportunity, the vision plan can make Pace Bend Park a model for equitable nature-based recreation, where the beauty and wonder of the Hill Country can be shared with everyone, regardless of physical ability.

As improvements are implemented, it will be imperative that accessibility considerations are accommodated and prioritized in some locations, ensuring that Pace Bend Park is an inclusive natural place for all visitors.



# Cultural Resource Investigations

The history and culture of Pace Bend Park is one that we are responsible to steward and care for.

Pace Bend Park has been a place of human connection and activity for thousands of years, with its rich natural resources, access to water, and dramatic topography drawing people to its shores long before it became a public park. Archaeological findings throughout the area reflect deep cultural histories, with artifacts and site remnants offering insight into Indigenous communities who lived, traveled, and gathered here. These traces reveal a profound relationship between people and the landscape, one grounded in sustenance, spirituality, and stewardship of the land and systems that define the Hill Country.

Beyond its ancient roots, the park also holds more recent historical significance tied to settlement, recreation, and community use over the last century. Notably, remnants of the former town of Mud and other small, unmapped settlements within and near the park boundaries speak to a complex human history shaped by migration, agriculture, and changing water levels along the Colorado River and Lake Travis. These stories, layered across time, give Pace Bend Park a sense of living history that deepens its identity as both a natural and cultural landscape.

As the park continues to evolve, it will be essential that all future improvements respect and protect this cultural legacy and resources. Any areas proposed for construction, excavation, or infrastructure upgrades must undergo thorough archaeological investigation to ensure that significant artifacts, features, or sacred sites are documented and preserved. Integrating this process into the vision plan not only safeguards irreplaceable cultural resources but also provides an opportunity to share these stories with visitors, enriching the park experience by connecting the land's visible beauty to its unseen layers of human history.



# Project Goals

These goals are born from understanding the park and desires for its future, and will guide forthcoming recommendations.

## Goal 1: Maintain existing park features and amenities

### Experiential Strategies

- Maintain the “rugged wildness” of the park
- Keep more active uses to the edges of the park to preserve the more wilderness feel of the center of the park

### Operational Strategies

- Maintain ease of distinguishing day visitors from overnight campers

## Goal 2: Enhance existing park features and amenities

### Experiential Strategies

- Improve utilities throughout the park to support park improvements
- Refine the trail system and better define the hierarchy of trail types and skill levels
- Improve comfort and ADA experiences (restrooms, accessibility, etc.)
- Increase and diversify camping opportunities - primitive, improved, camper cabins
- Expand current recreation opportunities (mountain biking, skills course)

### Operational Strategies

- Establish distinct entry points for the different uses of the park (day use, overnight, annual pass, neighbors)
- Create a more functional and better-located park office and maintenance barn

### Safety Strategies

- Improve safety of road biking on roadway
- Introduce modern safety and communication features

## Goal 3: Introduce BIG IDEAS to the park.

### Experiential Strategies

- Create opportunities and educational experiences to reveal the history and ecology of the park
- Create a place(s) for interpretation, gathering, and park provisions
- Find opportunities for group and community-oriented experiences in the park
- Create intentional ways to capture the park’s views for all to experience
- Introduce new recreation opportunities

### Operational Strategies

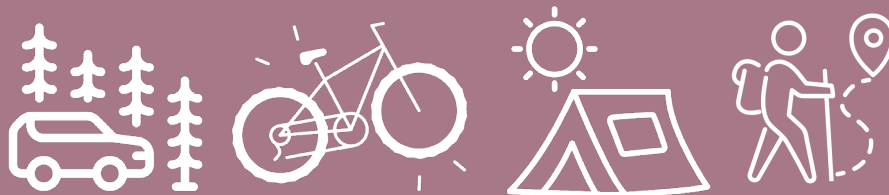
- Establish a main space for organized events (such as boneshakers) to take place

# Project Vision Statement

This vision statement will guide forthcoming recommendations.

**Pace Bend Park is a place where rugged wildness is preserved, while accessibility, safety, camping, and recreation is enhanced for all visitors. The park fosters deeper connections with the natural and cultural environment, allowing everyone to appreciate stunning landscapes and deep histories through opportunities that enrich visitor experience, while supporting long-term park sustainability and operations.**

**Pace Bend Park is the place to go.**





**5**

# **CONCEPT DESIGN**

# 5 Concept Design

## Overall Concept Design

The overall concept plan supports a future of improved access, recreation, and understanding of Pace Bend Park.

The guiding approach to this overall design for Pace Bend Park balances preservation with specific areas of improvement that will better support park operations and recreation within the park, while allowing opportunities for visitors to better understand the park from an experiential and educational perspective.

This chapter introduces improvement recommendations in two parts:

### Recommendations 5.1 through 5.5: Park-Wide Strategies

An outline of overall park improvement recommendations, intended to be applied to larger areas of the park or to all portions of the park. These park-wide recommendations fall into the following categories:

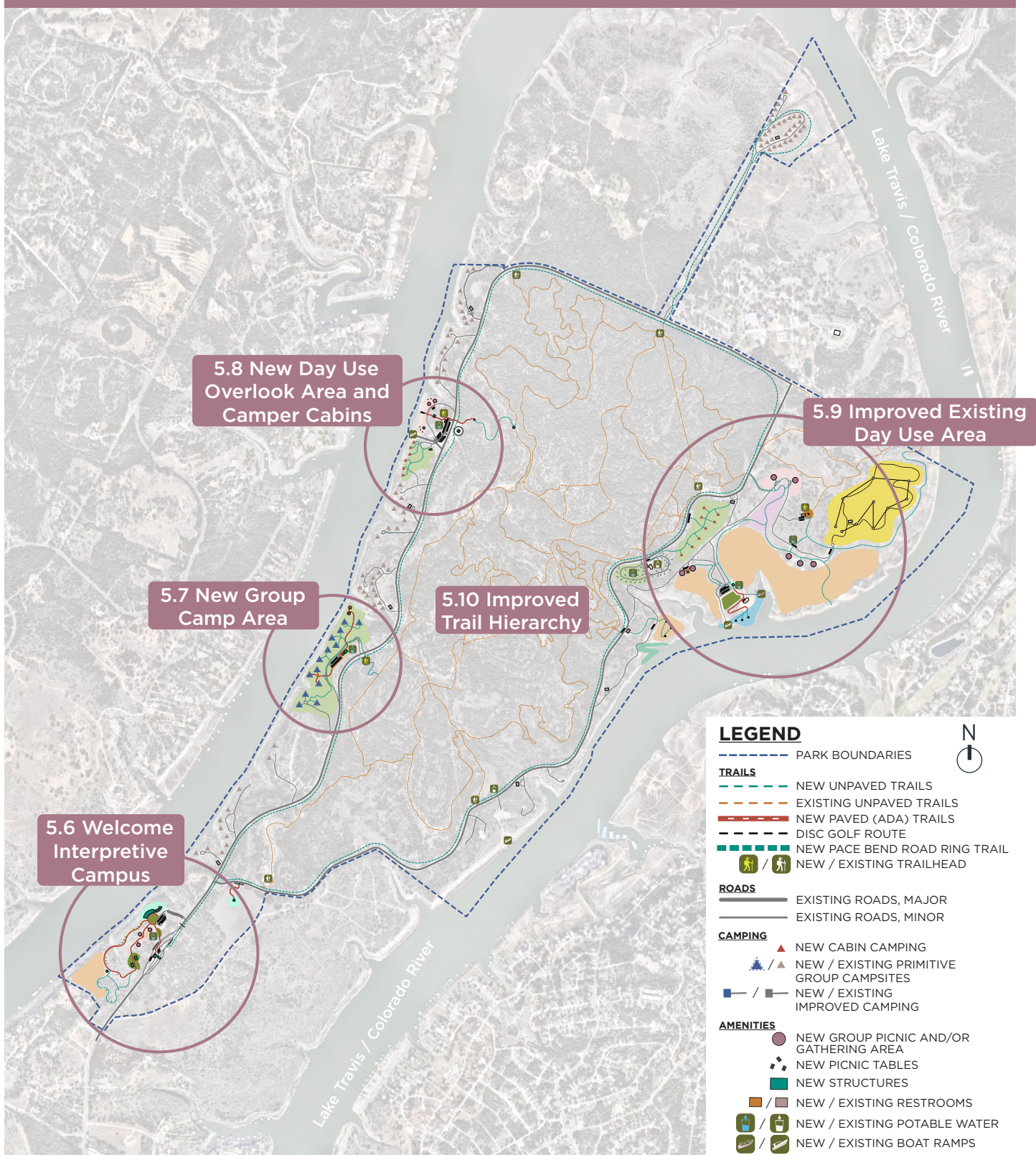
- **5.1 Utility and Infrastructure Upgrades**
- **5.2 Safety and Lighting Enhancements**
- **5.3 Guest Experience Improvements**
- **5.4 Environmental and Ecological Considerations**
- **5.5 Cultural Interpretation and Considerations**

### Recommendations 5.6 through 5.10: Area-Specific Improvements

A series of more detailed areas of particular focus envisioned by illustrative concept plans. These areas include:

- **5.6 Park Entry and Interpretive Welcome Campus and Habitat Observation Field**
- **5.7 New Group Camping Area**
- **5.8 New Day Use Overlook Area and Camper Cabins**
- **5.9 Improved Existing Day Use Area**
- **5.10 Trail Hierarchy and Organization Improvements**

# Overall Pace Bend Park Vision Plan



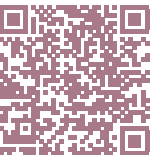
# Park-Wide Strategies

While there are areas of focused design that re-imagine specific areas of the park, many recommendations for Pace Bend Park have a park-wide impact and should be considered holistically across the entirety of the parkland.

## 5.1 Utility and Infrastructure Updates

Improving utilities and infrastructure across the park will provide the groundwork for expanding recreation and amenity offerings within the park, as well as providing for much needed services that are currently under-provided for in the park.

- **5.1.a** Expand the water well system to improve access to drinking water and flushable toilets across the park.
- **5.1.b** Upgrade electrical and wastewater systems for improvements outlined in this Vision Plan and for flexibility for longer-term improvements.
- **5.1.c** Relocate septic dump station to be closer to improved campsite area.
- **5.1.d** Improve and expand the park maintenance shed and staging areas to reflect increased maintenance needs as park improvements move forward.

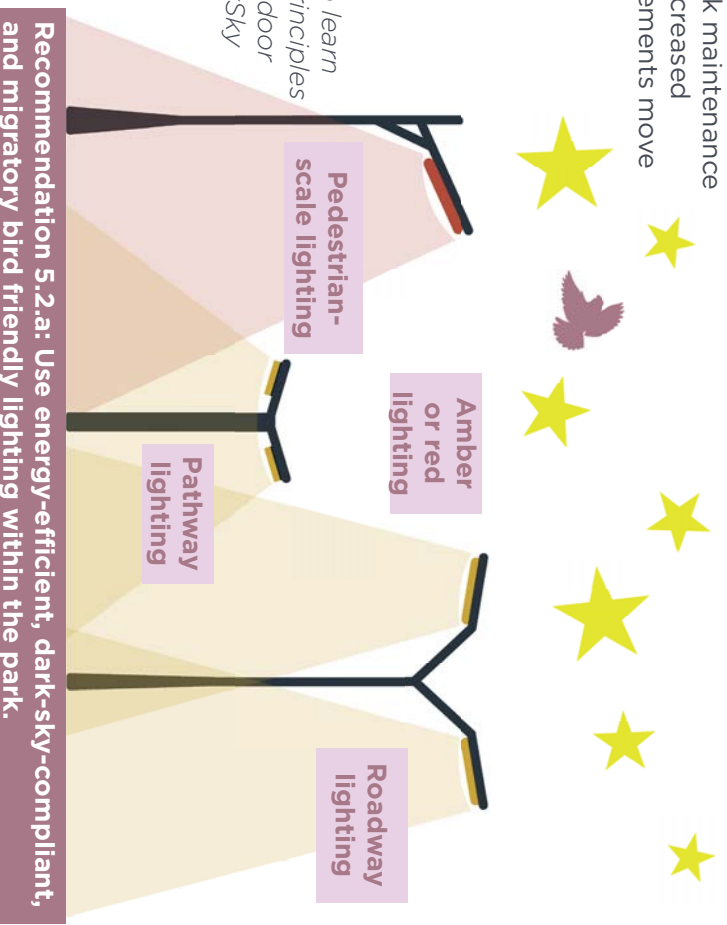


Scan this QR code to learn more about the Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting from DarkSky International

## 5.2 Safety and Lighting Enhancements

- **5.2.a** Introduce energy-efficient, solar-powered, dark-sky-compliant lighting throughout the park at areas of high use. Use amber or red lights to reduce artificial-light induced disorientation and confusion in migratory bird species. Refer to the overall Parks Comprehensive Plan recommendation 1.2.F.

- **5.2.b** Improve and expand safety systems within the park. Work with Travis County Park Rangers to identify areas of specific safety improvements, including added call phones and variable message signage.
- **5.2.c** Improve and expand the Park Ranger Residence to reflect adjusted safety and preparedness needs as improvements move forward.
- **5.2.d** Provide a solar powered Rapid Flashing Beacon crosswalk wherever park trails cross roadways.



## 5.3 Guest Experience Improvements

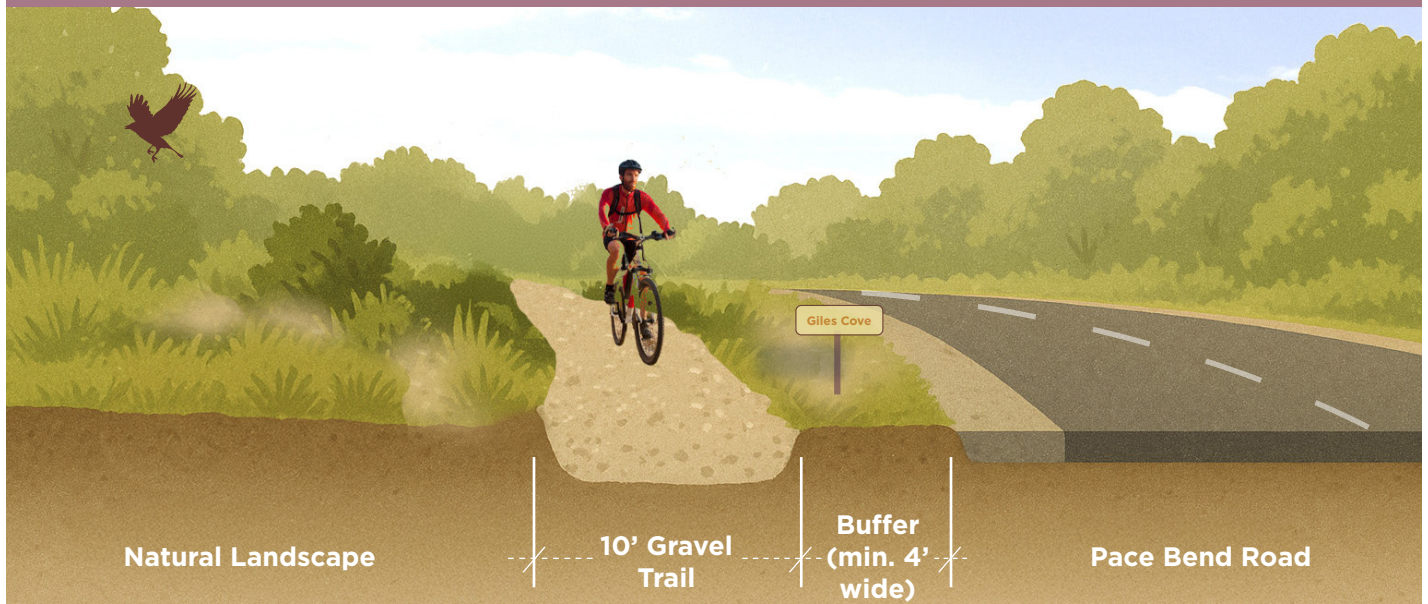
- **5.3.a** Adopt new technologies and systems to streamline guest and park staff transactions:
  - » Adopt a new reservation system to streamline online guest bookings/reservations that assists parks staff in matchmaking guests with available campsites (see Parks Comprehensive Plan recommendations 5.2 and 6.1)
  - » Adopt the ability to accept electronic payments at the park entrance
  - » Develop an app that provides up-to-date park information, such as park maps, closures, and events (see Comprehensive Plan recommendation 6.1)
- **5.3.b** Replace existing and install new and more expansive park monument park signage, trailhead kiosks, wayfinding signage, and amenity markers for orientation and interpretation throughout the park using the 2023 TC Parks Signage Guidebook.
- **5.3.c** Construct a new ring trail that follows Pace Bend Road. This trail should be compacted gravel, 10' width with a planted buffer between the trail and Pace Bend Road. In the future, paving this trail should be assessed against environmental impact and trail usage.



Image Source: 2023 TC Parks Signage Guidebook.

**Recommendation 5.3.b: Implement new park signage based on the 2023 TC Parks Signage Guidebook throughout the park.**

**Recommendation 5.3.c: New Pace Bend Road ring trail conceptual perspective section.**



## 5.4 Environmental and Ecological Considerations

- **5.4.a** Continue and expand the prescribed burn program, where appropriate, to reduce fuel loads, promote native grass regeneration, and maintain ecosystems.
- **5.4.b** Develop a long-term invasive species control or Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan for both terrestrial and aquatic invasives, especially oak wilt and Brown-headed Cowbirds.
  - » Expand cowbird trapping activity and monitor songbird populations to assess program success.
  - » Monitor and treat for oak wilt especially in areas where it has been detected in the past.
- **5.4.c** Monitor and treat areas of high concentrations of native invasive shrubs such as retama and mesquite, especially in highly disturbed areas.
- **5.4.d** Expand grassland and wildflower restoration efforts in the park by encouraging the continuation of the native wildflower competition.
- **5.4.e** Balance rare and threatened species habitat protection with more active park use.

» Perform an overall, full survey for rare and endangered species to get a better understanding of extents.

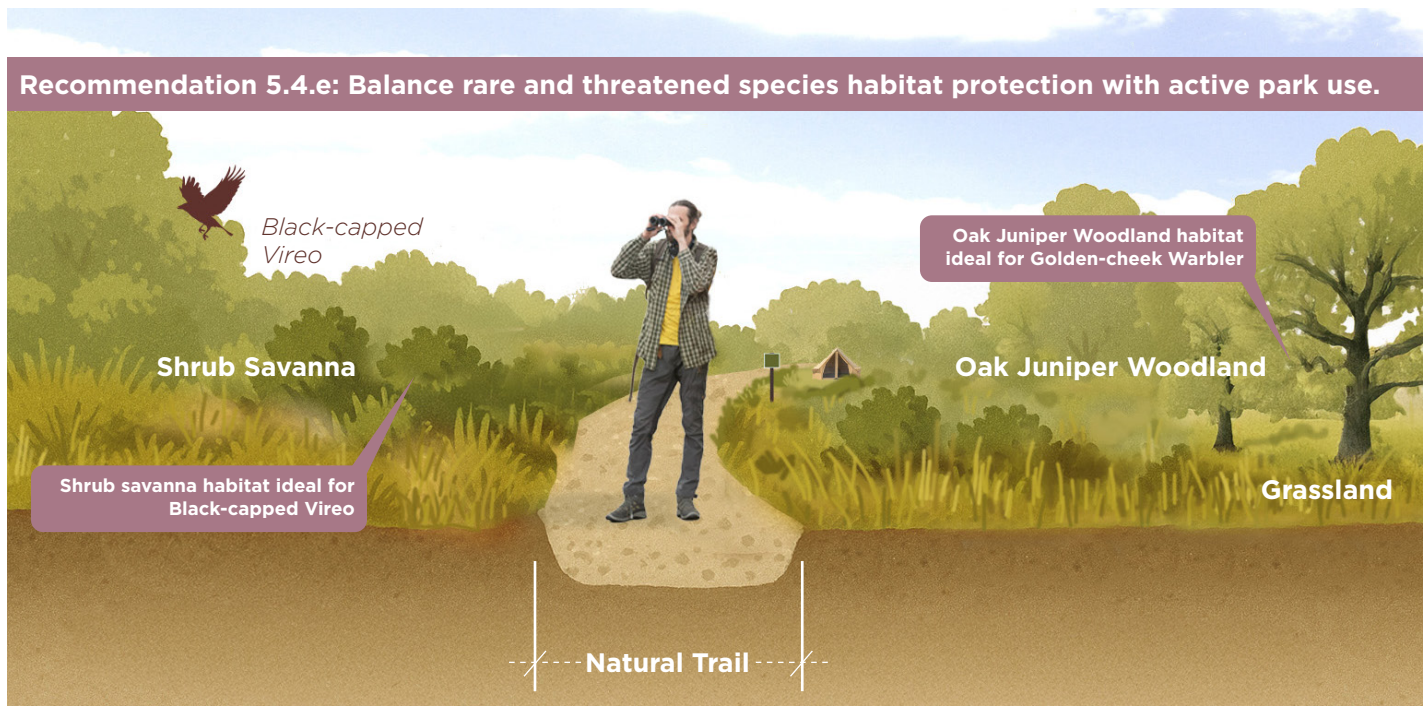
» Continue monitoring and mapping for species such as the Golden-cheeked warbler, Black-capped vireo, and Texasabama Croton colonies. When appropriate utilize citizen science programs to supplement for staff time.

» Align appropriate park activity with habitat areas to insure the co-existence of habitat and park uses.

» Monitor and maintain the health of the oak juniper woodland. The Golden-cheeked Warbler is present at the park and relies on oak juniper woodland for its life cycle. Mapped habitat areas are found in the north-central part of the peninsula.

» Monitor, maintain and expand the shrubland and shrub savanna habitats at the park. The Black-capped Vireo is present at the park and relies on shrublands for its life cycle. Mapped habitat areas are found in the south-central and western slopes of the peninsula.

» Increase habitat diversity by interspersing shrub and savanna areas with denser woodland where appropriate to support bird and pollinator species.



- **5.4.f** Develop a shoreline stabilization plan that balances access and habitat preservation by conducting a robust shoreline stabilization plan and implementation project with a freshwater ecosystem restoration consultant.
- **5.4.g** Expand restoration efforts to pilot developing wet meadow buffer zones with native grassland species such as Switchgrass, Eastern gamagrass, Bushy bluestem and other species along the flatter eastern shoreline to filter runoff and reduce sedimentation. Align this with the shoreline stabilization efforts.
- **5.4.h** Incorporate adaptive design strategies to accommodate fluctuating lake levels, such as movable picnic areas, modular or floating docks, flexible boat ramps, and resilient shoreline trails.
- **5.4.i** Prioritize erosion control measures along the limestone cliffs and high-use coves using native vegetation, biodegradable coir logs, and encouraging grass regeneration.
- **5.4.j** Implement stormwater best management practices (BMPs) in parking and camping areas to prevent pollutant runoff into the lake. Integrate stormwater BMPs into new development at the park, similar to what was done at Arkansas Bend Park.
- **5.4.k** Create educational signage and programming about the park’s unique landforms, hydrology, and habitats, including the role of prescribed fire, water fluctuations, ecology, and habitat to rare and threatened species.
- **5.4.l** Before any major development or construction, undergo a presence/absence survey for any rare or endangered species in the project area.

**Rare and critical species observed in Pace Bend Park include:**



**Texabama Croton (*Croton alabamensis* var. *texensis*)** a Texas endemic species



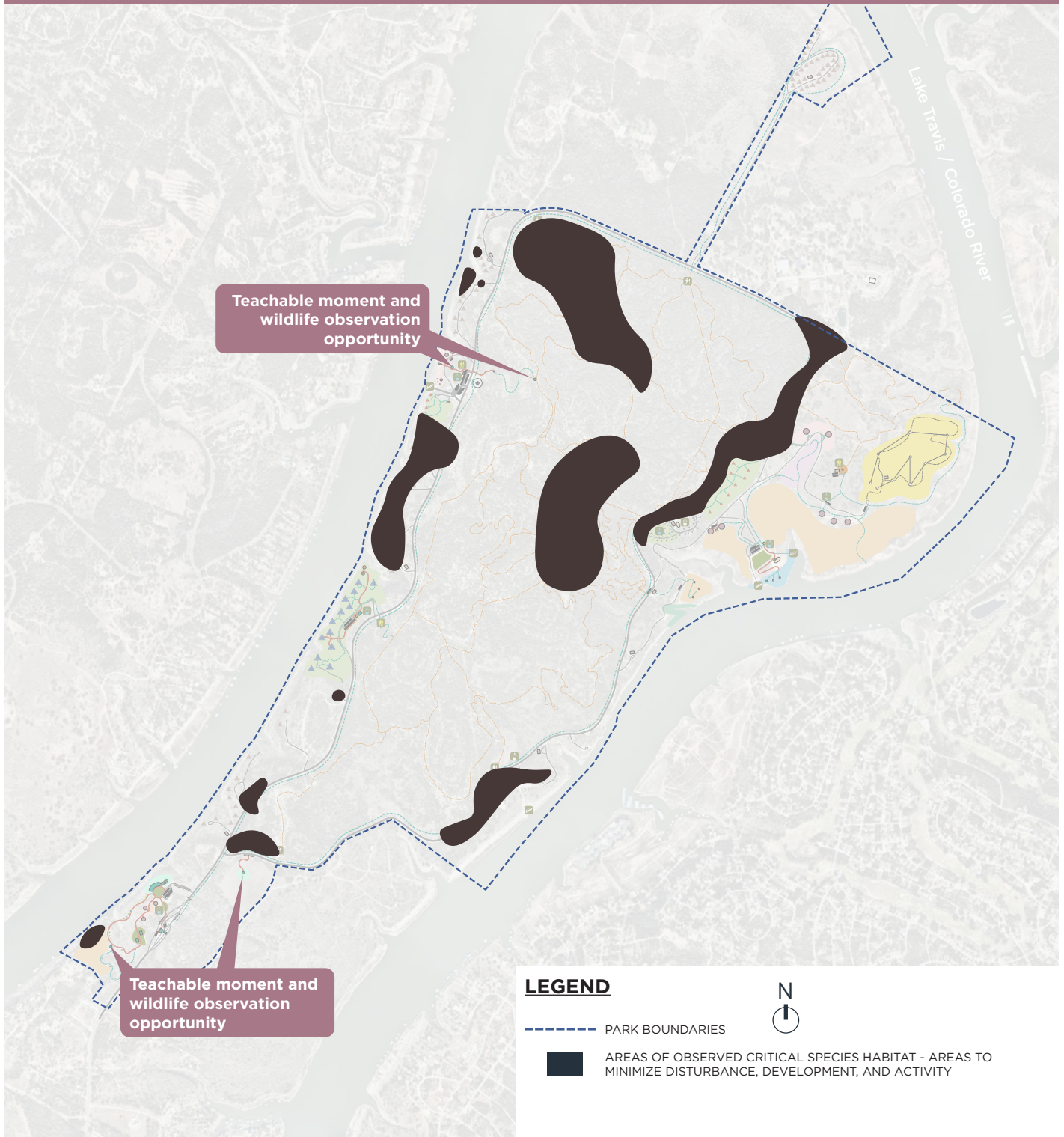
**Golden-cheeked Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*)** an endangered species in Texas



**Black-capped Vireo (*Vireo atricapilla*)** a rare species in Texas

# Pace Bend Park Critical Habitats

Recommendation 5.4.e: Areas of observed rare and threatened species within Pace Bend Park should be protected from active park uses, and can be leveraged as teachable opportunities within the park.



## 5.5 Cultural Interpretation and Considerations

Pace Bend Park is rich with cultural artifacts and archaeological sites that reflect thousands of years of human presence, from Indigenous peoples who first inhabited the region to later post-colonial settlements that shaped its more recent history. These cultural resources are deeply significant and require protection. While the details remain confidential to ensure preservation, the stories embedded in this landscape, including stories of habitation, adaptation, and change, offer a powerful narrative of the area's heritage.

Recommendations for preserving and respecting cultural resources within the park are:

- **5.5.a** Conduct archaeological investigations in areas of proposed improvements before improvement projects break ground (also see Chapter 6), building from previously mapped investigations. See Parks Comprehensive Plan recommendation 4.3 for additional resource preservation gestures.
- **5.5.b** Hire a historic and cultural signage design consultant to integrate cultural and historical storytelling into signage and interpretive moments throughout the park. Ensure signs are strategically located to avoid sun exposure that can cause fading or warping.
- **5.5.c** Look for opportunities in adjacent or nearby lands to buffer the character of Pace Bend Park from new developments or preserve nearby historical and cultural features. Refer to Parks Comprehensive Plan recommendation 4.2.



**Recommendation 5.5.b: Opportunities to tell the rich story of Pace Bend Park in various ways throughout the park, including interpretive signage, sculpture, and vignettes of how the land has changed over time.**

# Area-Specific Improvements

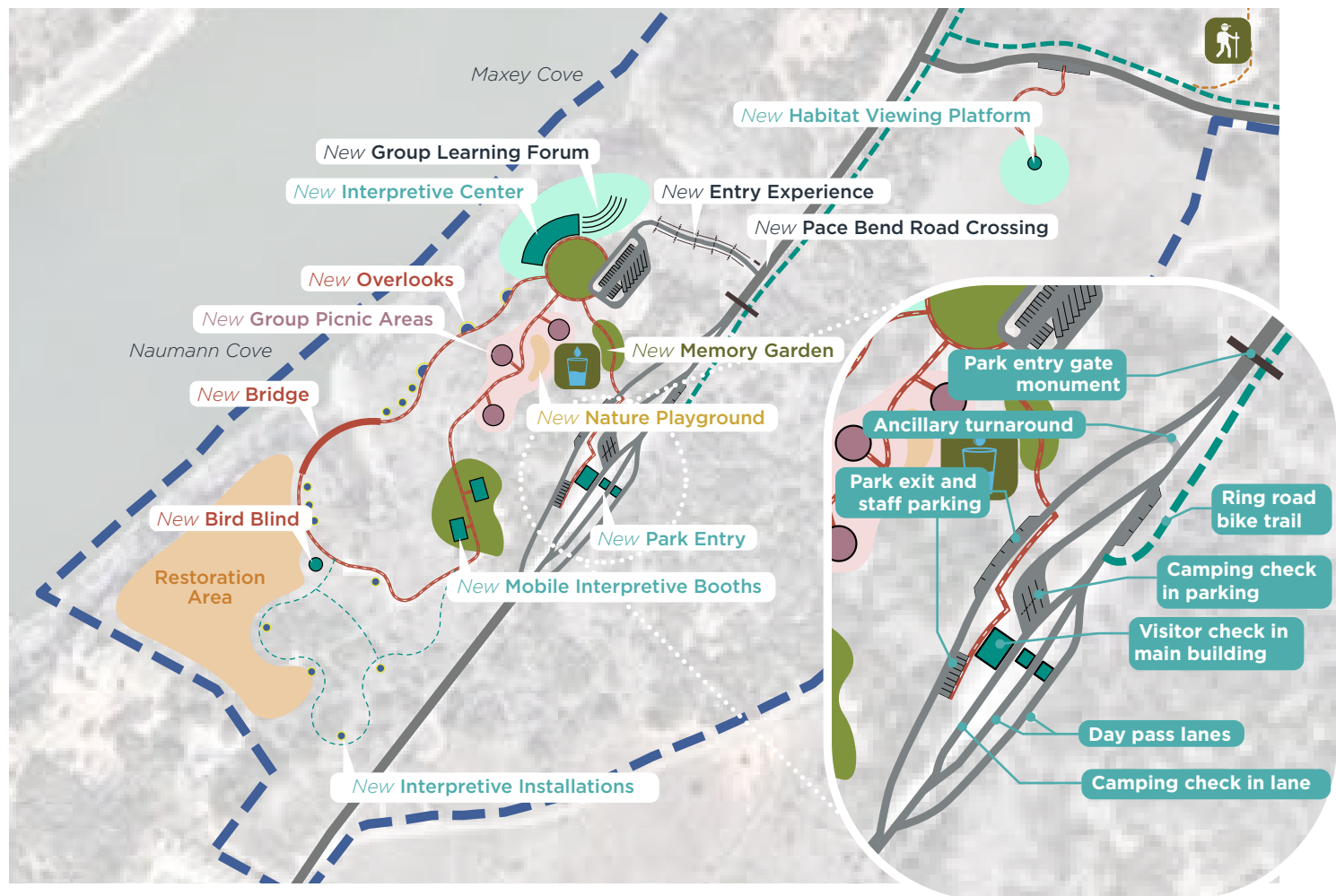
## 5.6 Park Entry and Interpretive Welcome Campus and Habitat Observation Field

Upon approaching Pace Bend Park, visitors will be welcomed with a reconfigured park entrance to streamline check-ins and park passes, and to create a more intentional sense of arrival to the park.

West of the entrance, a new Welcome Interpretive Campus is envisioned. The Welcome Interpretive Campus features a full-season, enclosed Visitor's Center building that could potentially host restrooms, a park shop, cafe, interpretation and educational installations, and event space. The building is situated at the edge of the western cliffs, taking advantage of the incredible views along the western side of the park.

### LEGEND

- - - - PARK BOUNDARIES
- TRAILS**
- - - - NEW UNPAVED TRAILS
- - - - EXISTING UNPAVED TRAILS
- - - - NEW PAVED (ADA) TRAILS
- - - - DISC GOLF ROUTE
- - - - NEW PACE BEND ROAD RING TRAIL
- / NEW / EXISTING TRAILHEAD
- ROADS**
- EXISTING ROADS, MAJOR
- EXISTING ROADS, MINOR
- 
- CAMPING**
- NEW CABIN CAMPING
- NEW / EXISTING PRIMITIVE GROUP CAMPSITES
- NEW / EXISTING IMPROVED CAMPING
- AMENITIES**
- NEW GROUP PICNIC AND/OR GATHERING AREA
- NEW PICNIC TABLES
- NEW STRUCTURES
- NEW / EXISTING RESTROOMS
- NEW / EXISTING POTABLE WATER
- NEW / EXISTING BOAT RAMPS



An outdoor amphitheater is situated at the edge of Maxey Cove, along with ample parking for guests. Small learning spaces are speckled along the cliffside trail, leading to a dramatic and architectural bridge spanning over Naumann Cove, providing changing experiences to visitors as water levels ephemerally change throughout the season. A habitat viewing platform allows visitors to observe critical species habitat, and a pathway leads visitors to an interpretive path to learn more about the park's history and ecosystems. Looping back toward the parking lot brings visitors to mobile interpretive trailers, picnic spaces, and a nature themed playground.



A new entrance building similar to the one at Arkansas Bend would improve entrance flow.

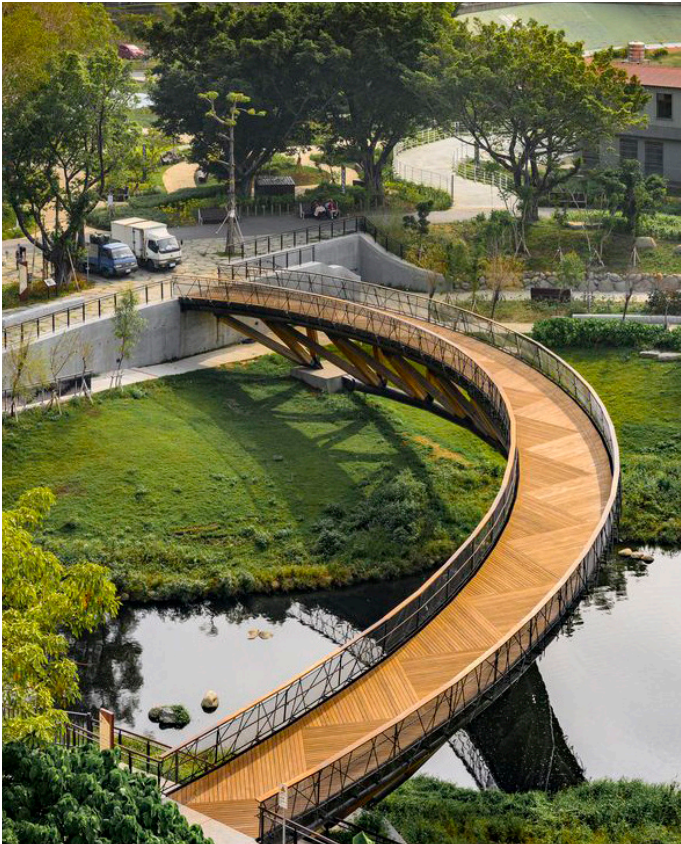
A new interpretive center can take advantage of the cliff's edge to create a unique experience.



A park entry gate provides a sense of arrival and moment of "leaving the world behind". This gate can also be designed to architecturally tell the story and history of ranching at Pace Bend Park.



Interpretive panels in the new building will help visitors understand this special landscape.



The bridge over Naumann Cove will provide a unique way for visitors to experience areas of the park from perspectives they haven't seen before, and provides a way to experience the ephemerally changing landscape.



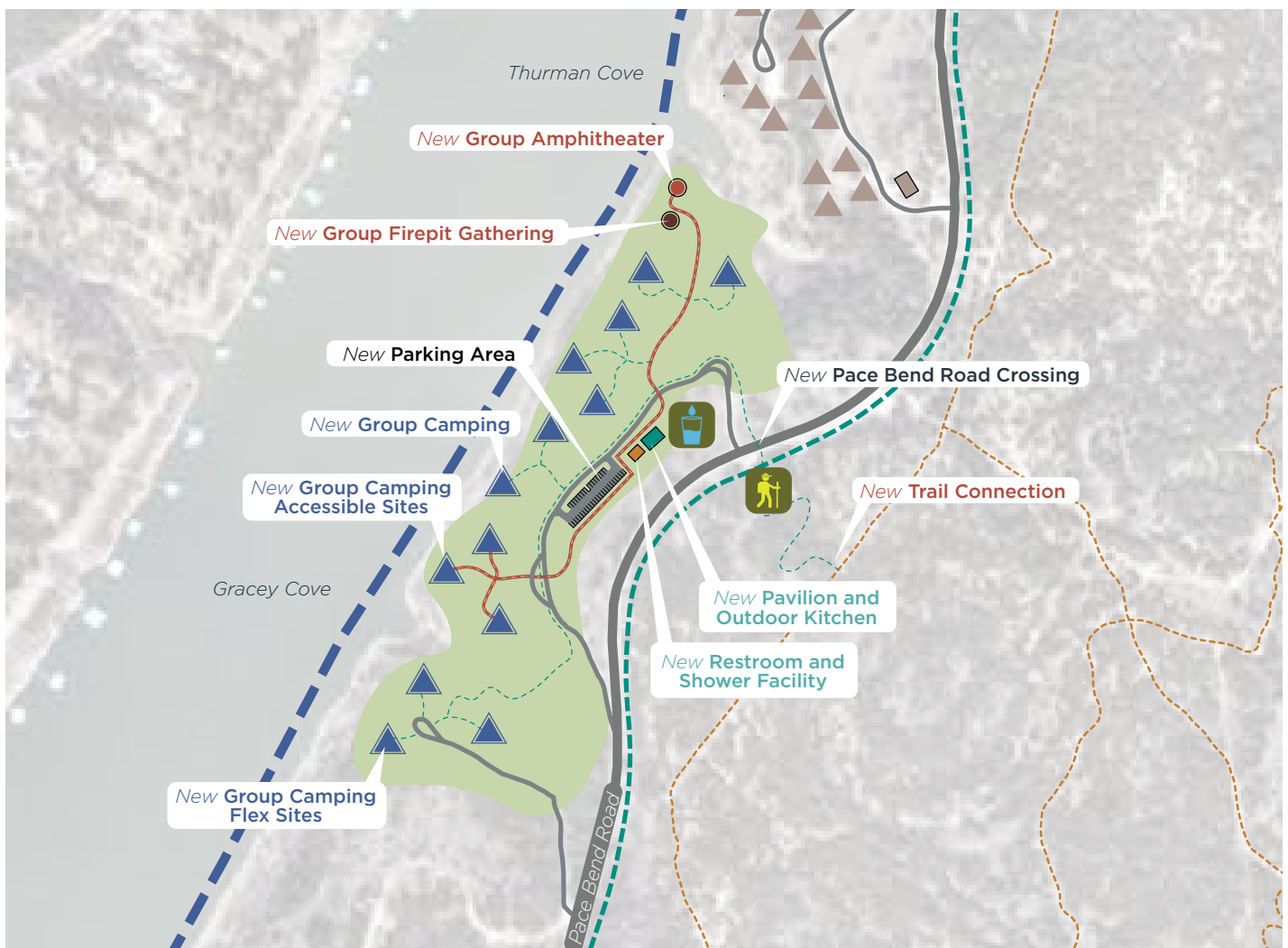
Overlooks along the edge of the cliff allow for opportunities of group gathering and learning, but also places for pause and contemplation as visitors appreciate the incredible views.

## 5.7 New Group Camping Area

The new group camping campus will allow larger groups to rent a grouping of primitive camp sites, including scout groups, family reunions, etc. The group camping campus would feature ADA accessible camp sites and trails, restroom facilities to support a group, a large picnic shelter, dedicated parking, and a shower and outdoor kitchen facility. A learning amphitheater and group campfire site act as communal learning and connecting spaces.

### LEGEND

- |               |                               |                  |  |  |
|---------------|-------------------------------|------------------|--|--|
|               | PARK BOUNDARIES               | <b>CAMPING</b>   |  | NEW CABIN CAMPING                        |
| <b>TRAILS</b> |                               |                  |  | NEW / EXISTING PRIMITIVE GROUP CAMPSITES |
|               | NEW UNPAVED TRAILS            |                  |  | NEW / EXISTING IMPROVED CAMPING          |
|               | EXISTING UNPAVED TRAILS       | <b>AMENITIES</b> |  | NEW GROUP PICNIC AND/OR GATHERING AREA   |
|               | NEW PAVED (ADA) TRAILS        |                  |  | NEW PICNIC TABLES                        |
|               | DISC GOLF ROUTE               |                  |  | NEW STRUCTURES                           |
|               | NEW PACE BEND ROAD RING TRAIL |                  |  | NEW / EXISTING RESTROOMS                 |
|               |                               |                  |  | NEW / EXISTING POTABLE WATER             |
| <b>ROADS</b>  |                               |                  |  | NEW / EXISTING BOAT RAMPS                |
|               | EXISTING ROADS, MAJOR         |                  |  |  |
|               | EXISTING ROADS, MINOR         |                  |  |  |





Combination restrooms and shower/sink facilities are desirable for group camp areas.



Outdoor kitchens and communal dining spaces allow groups to spend mealtime together.

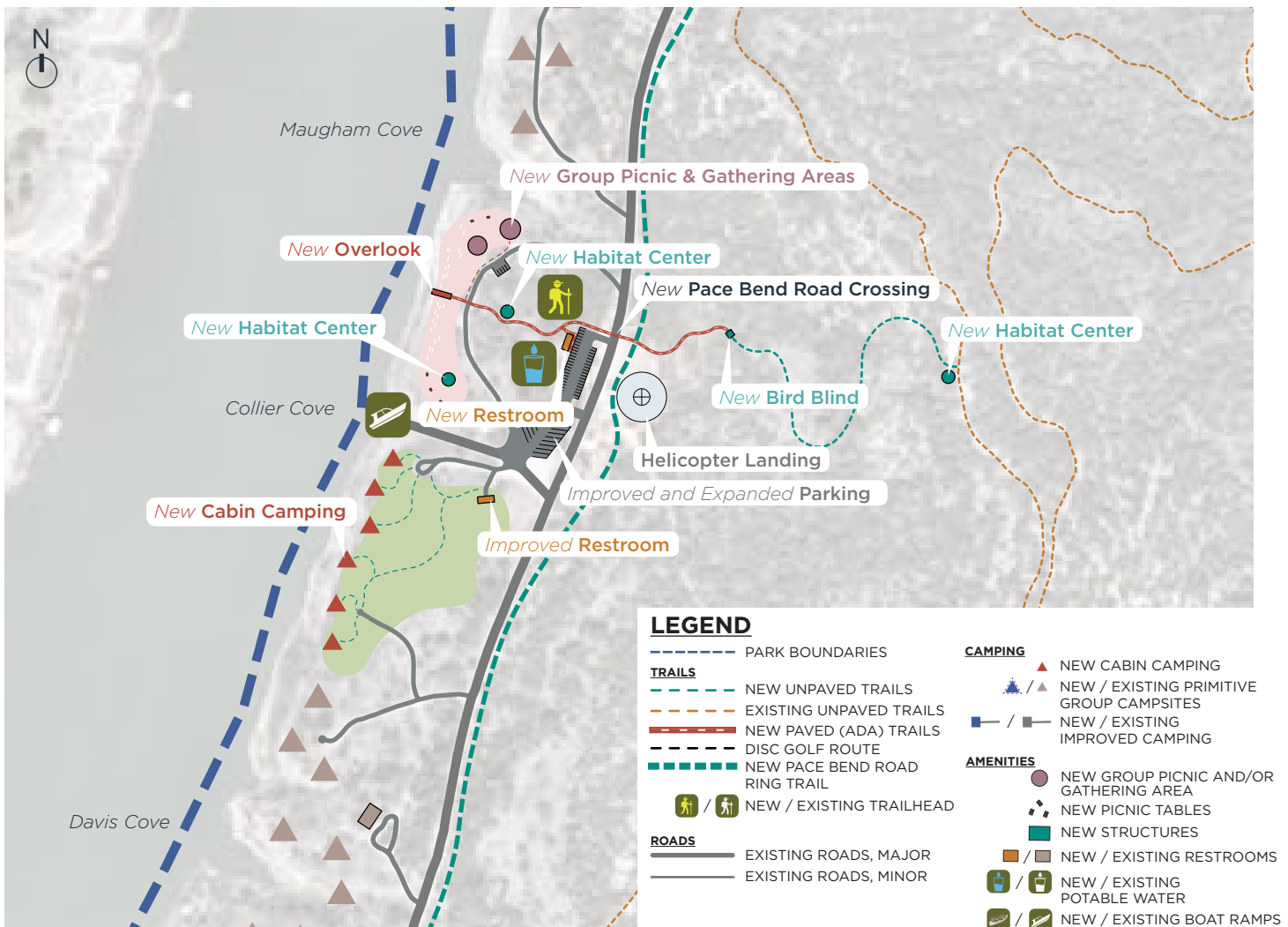


Group gathering spaces such as amphitheaters and firepits provide spaces to communally learn and bond among groups and with the natural environment.

## 5.8 New Day Use Overlook Area and Camper Cabins

The new western day use overlook area will sit between Maugham and Collier Coves, providing an expansion of the current day use offerings within the park for visitors who are just there for the day an opportunity to experience the captivating cliffs and coves on the western edge of the park. The new day use area will feature fully ADA-accessible trails, dedicated parking, shorter hiking trails, restroom facilities, habitat viewing areas, picnicking spaces, and an experiential overlook deck to allow park visitors to really take in the captivating geology and landscape of this special place.

South of Maugham Cove, new camper cabins will provide a new and unique desirable camping experience to Pace Bend Park, capitalizing on new camping trends and providing an elevated camping experience for those who seek a step above primitive camping. If located and designed properly, these camper cabins have the potential to take advantage of the dramatic landscape and views atop the cliffs over Lake Travis. Rental fees for cabins like this are often higher than a primitive or improved site, and can generate another stream of revenue for the park.





Providing a dramatic overlook would be a unique amenity not only in the Travis County Parks system, but regionally and state-wide, attracting more visitors to the park to enjoy its natural wonder.



Ecology interpretive stations open the world of the flora, fauna, and natural systems of Pace Bend Park to park visitors. These spaces can also be used for cultural storytelling.



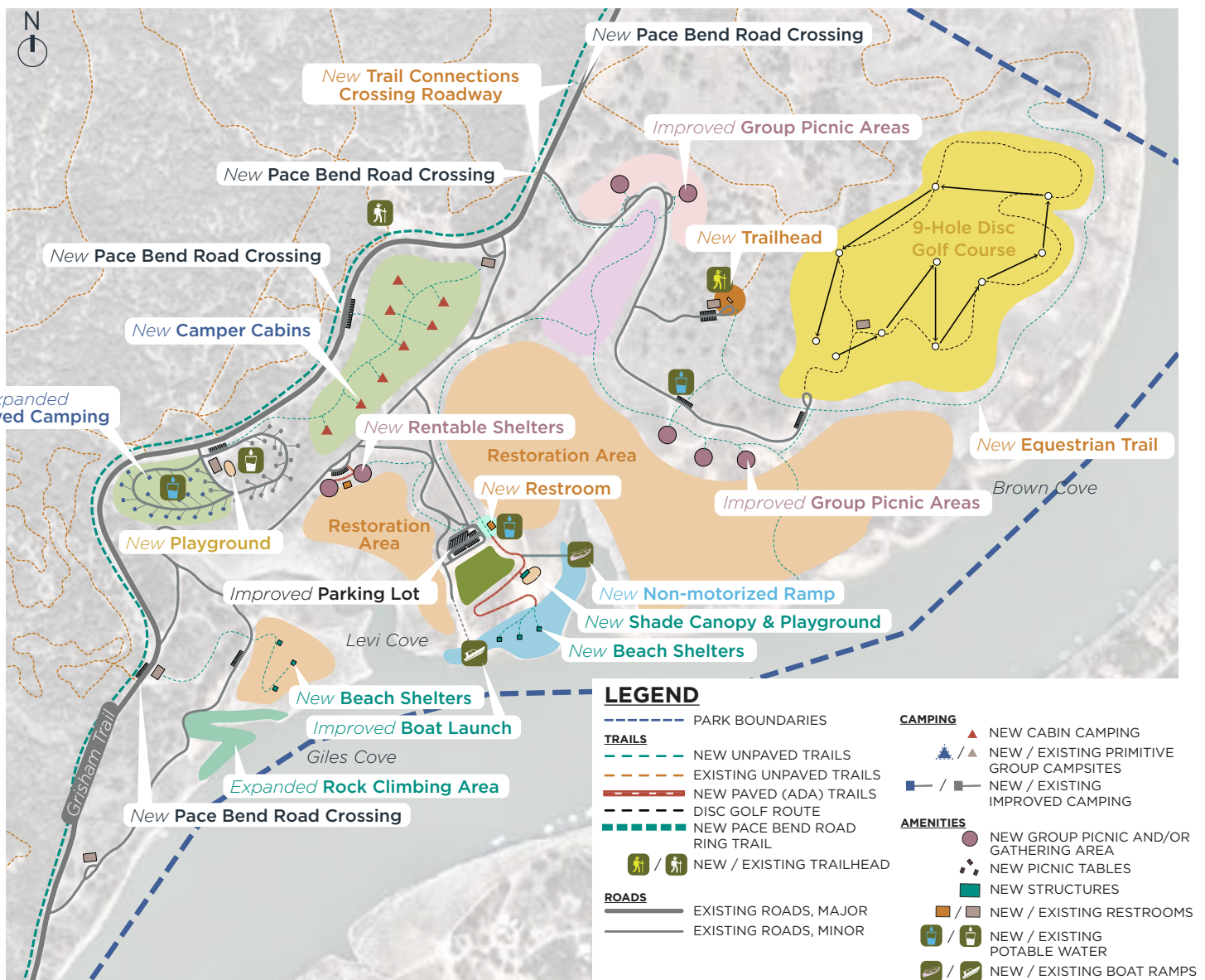
Camper cabins are a popular attraction for visitors who prefer a less primitive camping option. Camper cabins can take architectural advantage of dramatic landscapes and command a higher reservation price point.

## 5.9 Improved Existing Day Use Area

The vision for the day use area focuses on expanding camping opportunities and types within the park. This concept features:

- Expanded improved camping with a new playground in the area
- Adding new cabin camping area
- Adding new rentable shelters for group gatherings

- Improving the boat access area with dedicated motorized and non-motorized boating access, beach shelters, shade canopies, and a beachside playground
- Restoration of habitat area
- New group picnicking areas
- Re-opened hiking and equestrian trails with new trailhead
- New 9-hole disc golf course





**Planted parking areas help with:**

- Flood Control
- Stormwater Management
- Pollution Prevention
- Reducing Impervious Area
- Reducing Areas of Soil Compaction
- Cool large open areas with shade

Improving the boat launch parking lot to be more intentionally designed will assist with beautifying the day use area, reducing erosion from errant vehicular traffic, and adding order to the day use area.



Natural and nature-inspired play structures fit the character of Pace Bend Park.



Shade canopies around the beach and group gathering areas have the potential to harvest solar energy.



Group picnicking and gathering areas should be diversely designed to provide a variety of options for groups, as well as provide a pricing structure that may fit different budgets.

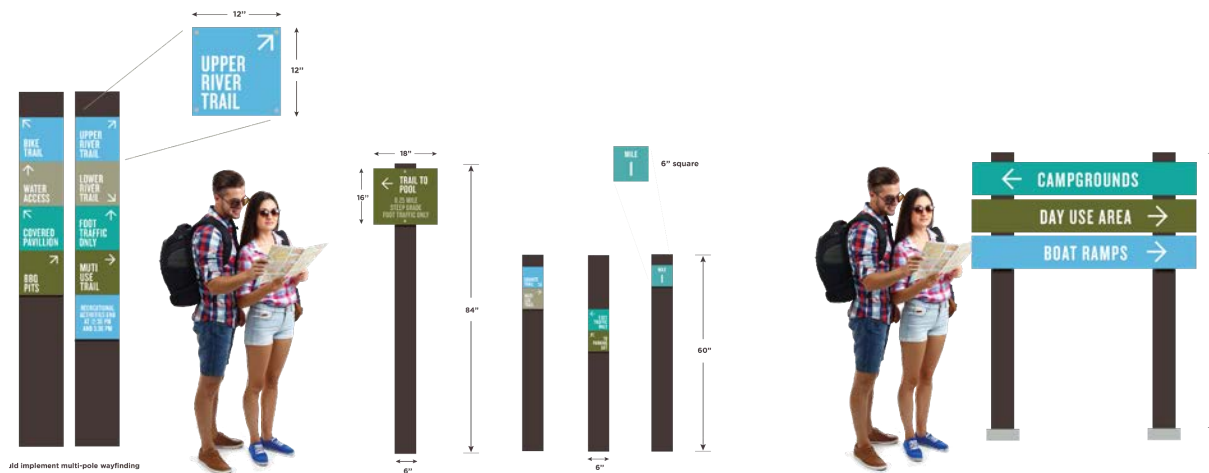


## 5.10 Trail Hierarchy and Organization Improvements

The mountain biking, hiking, and equestrian trails within Pace Bend Park are beloved and a main draw that bring people to the park. Stewarded and maintained through Travis County Parks and community-based groups, the trails are in need of clarifying hierarchy for novice trail users, as well as in need of improved wayfinding.

To clarify trail hierarchy, including types of use (bike, hike, equestrian), difficulty, and clarity on loops, a new hierarchy organization system is proposed to better orient users on the existing trails. The current names for the trails will remain, but a new identity for loops will be created with more intentional trail wayfinding so visitors can better navigate the park.

To best improve the overall functionality and user experience of the trail network within Pace Bend Park, next steps should be to hire a professional natural trail builder consultant to evaluate, map, and refine the existing trail system. This consultant would help establish a clear trail hierarchy that organizes routes by purpose and difficulty, ranging from accessible, low-impact trails to more challenging backcountry experiences. Their expertise would guide the reconstruction of existing trails to align with this new organizational framework, ensuring consistency in trail design, safety, and sustainability. Additionally, this consultant would identify opportunities to better connect trails of similar difficulty, creating a cohesive network that enhances both navigation and recreation while protecting the park’s natural resources.



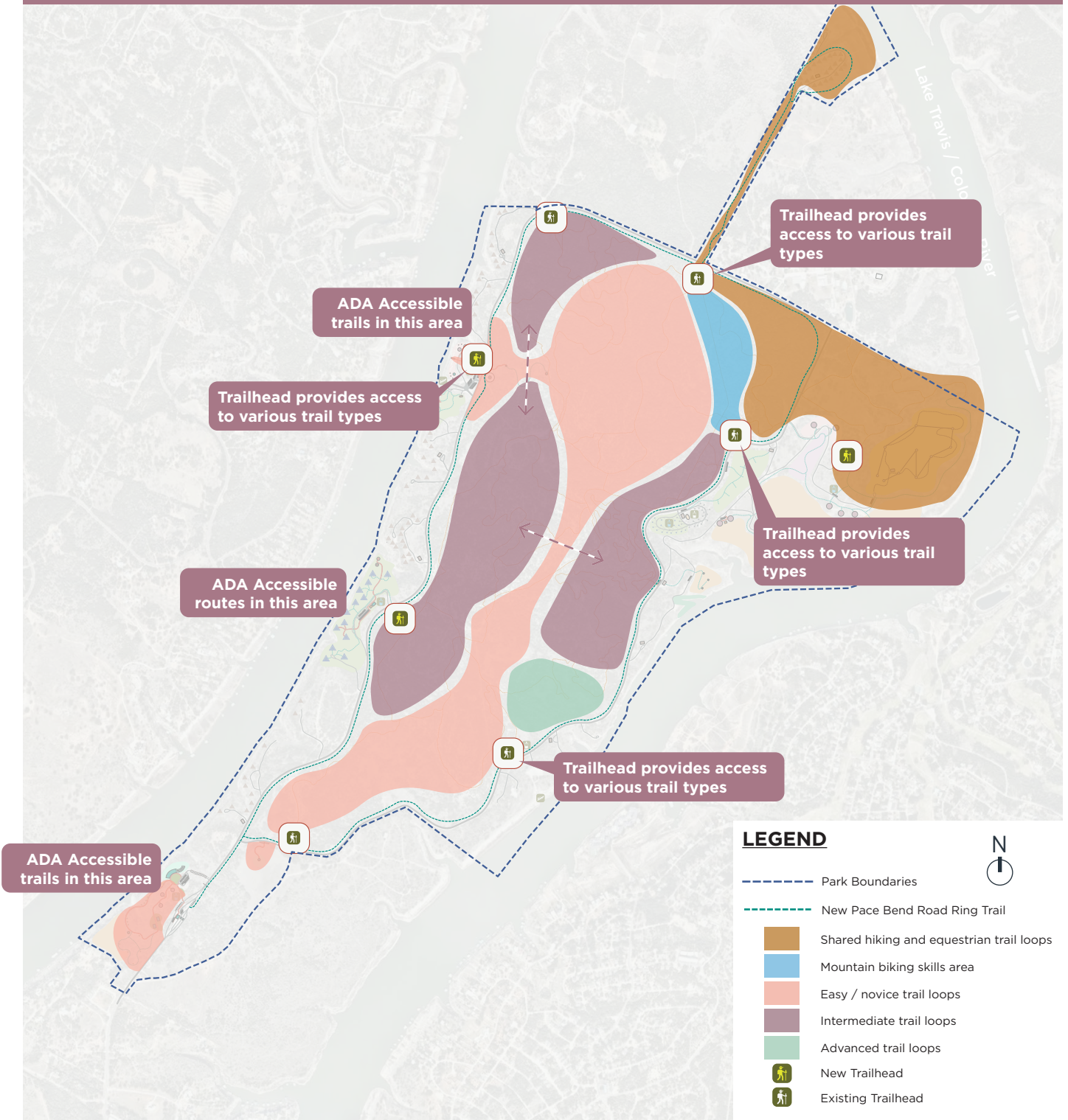
TRAIL DIRECTIONAL — DETAIL

TRAIL DIRECTIONAL — BROAD

Use color-coding and unique icons for trail wayfinding at regular intervals along trails within the park. Create easy-to-follow maps so visitors feel comfortable navigating trail systems that align with their skills and goals for their visit to the park.

# Pace Bend Park Trail Improvements

Recommendation 5.10: Trail hierarchy should be assessed and re-configured to better organize the various individual trails to improve wayfinding and trail loop experiences for users.





**6**

# **IMPLEMENTATION**

# 6 Implementation

## Implementation Strategy

Creating these improvements within Pace Bend Park should be leveraged and delivered as one big vision.

Future improvements within Pace Bend Park should be planned and implemented as one cohesive package rather than as isolated projects. By approaching upgrades holistically, Travis County Parks can more efficiently coordinate construction activities, minimize disruptions to park operations, and ensure that all elements, from trails and utilities to restrooms and picnic areas, work together to create a unified visitor experience. This comprehensive approach allows the County to align design, permitting, and construction schedules, ultimately reducing redundant mobilization costs and taking advantage of economies of scale.

Coordinating improvements in this way also ensures that major utility and infrastructure upgrades, such as water, power, and wastewater systems, are designed to support both current and future park needs. Rather than retrofitting systems as new areas are improved, a park-wide framework ensures that infrastructure investments are made strategically and serve the entire park efficiently. This approach lays the groundwork for long-term resilience and sustainability, preventing piecemeal decisions that might limit flexibility or require costly revisions down the line.

At the same time, implementing cohesive park-wide improvements allows targeted project areas to fully benefit from these shared investments. For example, upgraded utilities, parking, and access roads can support new or revitalized recreation zones, campgrounds, and trailheads. By balancing park-wide utility and infrastructure improvements with focused enhancements in key use areas, Travis County can ensure that each investment builds on the next, resulting in a stronger, more connected, and future-ready park system that continues to serve visitors for generations to come.



## Implementation Overall Cost Estimate

Cost Category	Considerations	Overall Cost Estimation
Project Sub-Total		\$15,467,508.55
General Contractor Fee (includes mobilization)	35% overhead estimate	\$5,413,627.99
Contingency	10% estimate	\$1,546,750.85
<b>Project Estimated Total</b>		<b>\$22,427,887.40</b>

## Implementation Table by Recommendation

Note: Itemized cost estimations do not account for General Contractor fees, mobilization, or contingencies.

Park Impact Area	Recommendation	Cost Estimation
<b>Park-Wide Strategies</b>		
<b>5.1 Utility and Infrastructure Updates</b>	5.1.a Expand the water well system.	\$375,250.00 6 locations / 4,550 LF of connection
	5.1.b Upgrade electrical and wastewater systems.	\$73,750.00 2,500 LF / J-Boxes
	5.1.c Relocate septic dump station.	\$17,825.10 2,500 Gallon
	5.1.d Improve and expand the park maintenance shed and staging areas.	\$180,507.78 Fenced in PEMB
<b>5.2 Safety and Lighting</b>	5.2.a Introduce energy-efficient, solar-powered, dark-sky-compliant lighting throughout the park.	\$1,059,732.50 10' Ht., 19.5' Ht., 13' Ht poles; varies per condition
	5.2.b Improve and expand safety systems within the park.	\$54,348.75 9 New solar call box phones
	5.2.c Improve and expand the Park Ranger Residence.	\$75,000.00 300 SF Expansion
	5.2.d Provide a flashing crosswalk wherever park trails cross Pace Bend Road.	\$45,000.00 9 Crossings

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Park Impact Area	Recommendation	Cost Estimation
<b>Park-Wide Strategies</b>		
<b>5.3 Guest Experience Improvements</b>	5.3.a Adopt new technologies and systems to streamline guest and park staff transactions.	<i>(system-wide cost to be determined)</i>
	5.3.b Apply the new 2023 TC Parks Signage Guidebook designs for new park monument signage, trailhead kiosks, wayfinding signage, and amenity markers throughout the park.	\$100,000.00
	5.3.c Construct a new 10' wide gravel ring trail that follows Pace Bend Road.	Primary Ring: \$805,545.00 Secondary Ring: \$58,446.00
<b>5.4 Environmental and Ecological Considerations</b>	5.4.a Continue and expand the prescribed burn program.	<i>(assumption not included)</i>
	5.4.b Develop a long-term invasive species control or Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan for both terrestrial and aquatic invasives.	<i>(assumption not included)</i>
	5.4.c Monitor and treat areas of high concentrates of native invasive shrubs.	<i>(assumption not included)</i>
	5.4.d Expand grassland and wildflower restoration efforts.	<i>(assumption not included)</i>
	5.4.e Balance rare and threatened species habitat protection with more active park use.	<i>(assumption not included)</i>
	5.4.f Develop a shoreline stabilization plan.	<i>(assumption not included)</i>
	5.4.g Expand restoration efforts to pilot developing wet meadow buffer zones with native grassland species.	<i>(assumption not included)</i>
	5.4.h Incorporate adaptive design strategies to accommodate fluctuating lake levels.	\$264,000.00 <i>Assumes movable picnic areas, floating docks, flexible boat ramps</i>
	5.4.i Prioritize erosion control measures along the limestone cliffs and high-use coves.	<i>(included with earthwork)</i>
	5.4.j Implement stormwater best management practices (BMPs) in parking and camping areas.	\$285,900.00 <i>SWPPP for 2 years</i>
	5.4.k Create educational signage and programming about the park's unique landforms, hydrology, and habitats.	\$50,000.00 to \$75,000.00
5.4.l Undergo a presence/absence survey for any rare or endangered species in the project area.	<i>(assumption not included)</i>	

*continues on next page*

Park Impact Area	Recommendation	Cost Estimation
<b>Park-Wide Strategies</b>		
<b>5.5 Cultural Interpretation and Considerations</b>	5.5.a Conduct archaeological investigations for future improvements.	\$20,000.00
	5.5.b Integrate cultural and historical storytelling into signage and interpretive moments throughout the park.	\$100,000.00
	5.5.c Look for opportunities in adjacent or nearby lands to buffer the character of Pace Bend Park from new developments or preserve nearby historical and cultural features.	<i>(system-wide cost to be determined)</i>
<b>Area-Specific Improvements</b>		
<b>5.6 Park Entry and Interpretive Welcome Campus and Habitat Observation Field</b>	New park entry building with restrooms and visitor check-in, nature playground and memory garden, entry drive experience, group learning forum, interpretive center, overlooks, picnic areas, bridge, bird blind, restoration area, mobile interpretive booths and habitat viewing platform.	\$3,741,366.00
<b>5.7 New Group Camping Area</b>	New restroom and shower facility, new pavilion with outdoor kitchen, new group camp sites, new parking area, new group firepit area and amphitheater.	\$703,381.22
<b>5.8 New Day Use Overlook Area and Camper Cabins</b>	New and improved restrooms, habitat centers, cabin camping, bird blind and group picnic areas.	\$4,252,251.55
<b>5.9 Improved Existing Day Use Area</b>	Expanded improved camping with a new playground, new cabin camping, improved boat access with separate motorized and non-motorized access points, beach shelters, shade canopies, beachside playground, habitat restoration, new group picnic areas, re-opened hiking and equestrian trails with new trailhead and a new 9-hole disc golf course.	\$3,759,144.65
<b>5.10 Trail Hierarchy and Organization Improvements</b>	Assess and re-configure trail hierarchy to better organize the trails.	\$60,000.00 <i>Estimated consultant costs</i>

# Acknowledgments

This Vision Plan is a guidebook for implementing a future of improved access, recreation, and understanding of Pace Bend Park. This plan could not have been possible without the effort and guidance from numerous groups and organizations, and from the community and stakeholders who worked with the project team to ensure the following vision was rooted in community needs and aspirations.

**A special thanks to numerous community members, community groups, and recreation organizations who participated in open houses, online activities, and pop up events, as well as the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA).**