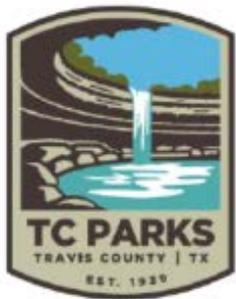


Travis County Parks

Land Management Program

2025

Annual Report



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Executive Summary

The Travis County Parks Land Management Program integrates Forestry, Stewardship, and Fire Management to manage parklands as interconnected functions, with a primary and shared focus on restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes while ensuring for the safety of park visitors and surrounding communities. The program prioritizes protecting both the natural and built environment across the park system and reducing risks to county lands and adjacent communities.

These efforts mitigate a range of climate and disturbance driven risks including drought, extreme heat, flooding, wildfire, and habitat degradation, while enhancing biodiversity and ecological function that benefit both the people and our natural systems. Through strong partnerships, workforce development, and coordinated preparedness, response, and recovery, the program advances equitable access to healthy landscapes and strengthens Travis County's capacity to adapt to evolving environmental challenges.

Key Outputs for 2025



Key Outcomes for 2025

- *Enhanced Regional Collaboration:* Strengthened partnerships with Emergency Service Districts, neighboring land management agencies, and county departments to improve coordinated preparedness, response, and long-term land stewardship across Travis County.
- *Expanded Workforce Capacity:* Developed a more highly training and qualified team through specialized training courses that advance professional development and qualifications that strengthen operational readiness and program effectiveness.
- *Increased Landscape Resilience:* Improved ecological function, reduced risk, and adaptive capacity across the parkland system through integrated fire management, restoration, and forest health treatments.

Fire-Adapted for Resilient Landscapes

- Implemented 30+ prescribed burns totaling over 1,000 acres across Travis County parklands and partner properties to reduce accumulating fuels, restore fire-adapted systems, and maintain ecological function of high-value natural assets.
- Applied prescribed fire strategically across broadcast and pile burns to increase vegetation diversity, improve habitat structure, and strengthen landscape resilience to wildfire and other disturbance regimes.



Prescribed Fire Operations enhance forest health in Post Oak stands at Southeast Metro Park.

Key Projects: Staff conducted 17 prescribed fire operations on several county properties including Pace Bend, Reimers Ranch, Owens Tract, East Metro, Hancock Ranchlands Tract, Schneider Tract, and Southeast Metro Properties. Staff also assisted with prescribed fires on cooperator lands that include Austin Parks and Recreation Department lands, Austin Water Utility lands, and University of Texas lands.

Fuels Reduction & Forest Health for Resilient Landscapes

- Completed approximately 60+ acres of mechanical treatments across high priority parklands, including defensible space projects around critical infrastructure, firebreak maintenance, and multiple hazardous tree removals to protect visitors and neighbors, infrastructure, and ecological resources.
- Targeted treatments in high use and high-risk areas, including developed parks, parkland facilities, historical structures, and boundary corridors, to improve vegetation structure, reduce fuel continuity, and enhance overall tree and forest health.



Land Management Staff remove numerous hazard trees across developed and undeveloped Park Lands.

Key Projects: Mechanical Treatment Projects were completed across numerous county parklands, including LaFluer Tract, Pace Bend, Richard Moya, Arkansas Bend, Reimers Ranch, RGK, Northeast Metro, Southeast Metro, and several other priority parks and tracts.

Stewardship & Restoration for Resilient Landscapes

- Completed approximately 40+ acres of restoration treatments across multiple parklands, focusing on native seeding, tree planting, erosion control, and repair of degraded or disturbed sites.
- Began to restore ecological function in priority areas by improving soil stability, re-establishing native vegetation, enhancing habitat conditions, and supporting watershed health in locations impacted by human and natural disturbances.



Tree Planting and Grow Zone Established at Ben E Fisher Park aimed to reduce erosion issues into Gilleland Creek, which is classified as an impaired waterway by TCEQ.

Key Restoration Projects: Other restoration efforts began at numerous parkland properties countywide, including Southeast Metro, East Metro, Webberville, Ben E. Fisher, and the TXI Tract.

Community Resilience & Emergency Response

- Supported 11 in-county incidents and severe weather events by making available and deploying trained and qualified personnel and equipment to support in-county response efforts.
- Completed multiple out-of-county deployments, including TIFMAS engine and overhead assignments, to support state and national incident response while maintaining in-county readiness for support needed locally.



Land Management staff support July 4th Flooding Event in Northwestern Travis County.

Key Incident Support: Staff support included in-county responses to wildfires at RGK, Pace Bend, multiple County Resource Coordination activations during periods of elevated fire danger days, the July Flooding Event, and numerous winter weather and severe storm responses inside parkland boundaries. In addition, Land Management personnel supported out-of-county wildfire responses, including assignments in South Texas, North Texas, the Texas Panhandle, and Oregon.

Capacity Building & Training

- Delivered and participated in 40+ specialized training courses (NWCG, ICS, arboriculture, emergency response, and land stewardship), strengthening internal workforce capability and shared operational standards with county staff and numerous regional cooperators.
- Expanded internal and regional capacity by providing training to Emergency Service Districts and land management cooperators, supporting wildfire qualification pathways, consistency in operations, and a more coordinated preparedness and response to wildfire and other disturbances.



Land Management Staff Instruct a 2-Day Saw Class to Park Operations staff.



Land Management staff host and instruct a Wildland Fire Pumps and Water Handling course for local Emergency Services District (ESD) partners, along with local and state land management agencies.

Key Courses Provided & Received: Staff delivered and received training in incident management, basic and intermediate wildland fire operations, arboriculture, basic medical skills, chainsaw operations, and leadership development, and more.

Wildlife Management Support

- Land Management staff worked with Park Operations staff to trap nuisance feral hogs on several parkland properties, protecting native ecosystems and reducing habitat degradation, and reducing risk to the public.
- Collaborated with Austin Wildlife Rescue to release rehabilitated animals back into the wild on park lands, supporting native wildlife conservation efforts across the county.



Land Management staff release white tailed deer on parkland property in early November.



30 Feral Hogs removed at Webberville Park

Key Projects: Wildland management support also included facilitating a winter bird count at the RGK property and coordinating with Austin Wildlife Rescue to support the rehabilitation and release of native wildlife, including Great Horned Owls, opossums, skunks, and racoons, back into appropriate parklands.

Research and Monitoring

- Land Management staff implemented monitoring to support land management operations and planning, including live fuel moisture sampling and annual land management monitoring reporting across all Travis County parkland properties, to better inform adaptive management, project prioritization, and longer-term planning efforts.
- Land Management began the development of the Land Management Plan that will better inform management strategies and opportunities for the next ten years. Anticipation of plan completion is expected in summer of 2026.



Land Management staff conduct annual site visit for monitoring report at the 18,000-acre Travis County Property, located in Throckmorton County.

Key Monitoring Projects: Land Management staff completed the annual Throckmorton Monitoring Report, conducted monthly live fuel moisture sampling to inform wildfire risk assessments with local, state, and federal partners, and conducted annual Land Management Monitoring Reports to guide future project prioritization and resource allocation across the park system.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

- Land Management staff actively engaged the public through multiple park-based events, sharing information on land stewardship practices, prescribed fire, and the other natural resource management work that the program carries out across the county parklands.
- Staff also participated in collaborative workshops with partner land management agencies and stakeholders to exchange knowledge, understand shared challenges, and align on effective land management strategies and approaches.



Staff installed Fire Danger Signage on several park lands to better communicate current fire danger conditions to park visitors and partners.



Staff handed out tree saplings at the For Love of Parks Event and discuss with the public tree care, prescribed fire, and other natural resource work the program supports.

Key Support Provided: Staff installed fire danger signage at Pace Bend, Arkansas Bend, Reimers Ranch, and the West Service Center to better inform park staff and the public of changing wildfire conditions. Land Management also supported multiple public events related to the Comprehensive Plan and assisted with numerous fundraising activities that were coordinated by the Travis County Parks Foundation.

Looking Ahead to 2026

The Land Management Program will seek to build on the momentum of recent years by advancing strategic initiatives that further strengthen ecological and community resilience across the county.

Fuel Mitigation Projects

A primary focus will be the implementation of FEMA funded fuel mitigation projects across 10 county parkland properties, which represent an investment of approximately \$2.5 million and target roughly 800 acres of treatments. These projects seek to better protect park lands and infrastructure, along with neighboring communities, and enhance the ecological function and resilience across priority areas of the park system.

Planning and Coordination Tools

In parallel, the program is advancing several foundational planning efforts that will guide long-term management strategies and improve coordination across the county. The Travis County Parks Land Management Plan, scheduled for completion in summer of 2026, will provide a comprehensive framework for program priorities and operations over the next decade. The program is also supporting the development of the Austin/Travis County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, which will further strengthen the alignment between land management priorities, community risk reduction, and emergency response planning efforts.

The Land Management Dashboard will complement these planning efforts by providing real-time visibility into treatment activities and project status across parkland properties. Together, these tools and planning efforts will support data-driven decision making, interagency coordination, and increased transparency for leadership and partners as Travis County continues to adapt to a changing climate and its effects.

Acknowledgment and Appreciation

The accomplishments outlined in this report are the direct result of the dedication, professionalism and teamwork of the Travis County Parks Land Management Staff, who consistently demonstrate technical expertise, adaptability, and a strong commitment to public service. Their work and partnerships directly contribute to safer communities, healthier ecosystems, and a more resilient county.