



Community-Led Conservation and Recreation Projects

An Overview of the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program in Texas

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Who We are



The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program implements the natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation mission of the National Park Service in communities across the country.



RTCA is...



- A planning and technical assistance Program
- Always community-based
- Available to non-profits, local, state, and federal agencies
- Not a funding program, but can be considered as “in-kind” contribution for matching purposes



How We Work



- Collaboratively with a variety of partners
- By local request
- Assistance is tailored to partner's needs



Types of Assistance



- Identify and analyze resources
- Coordinate public/private partnerships
- Develop public involvement strategies
- Organize and facilitate public workshops and stakeholder meetings



Types of Assistance Continued



- Design and carry out a planning process
- Help organizations build capacity
- Facilitate community vision
- Outreach and project promotion
- Fundraising support



Application Process



- Call for Submissions in Spring
- Brief Project/Needs Description
- Project Scoping Visit
- Support from Political Leaders
- August/September Selection
- October Project Start



Project Selection Criteria



- Project has specific partner-defined goals and **tangible conservation** or **outdoor recreation** results
- Protects, improves or enhances **natural resources** or outdoor recreation



Project Selection Criteria



- Defined roles and contributions of partners
- Evidence of broad community support
- Clearly stated and appropriate RTCA role



Project Selection Criteria



Preferences (Bonus)

- Network providing physical connections among resources
- **Includes both natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation**
- Partner with an NPS area
- Partner with a health organization



2008 Projects



- Lake Houston Regional Park
- Dallas Green Team
- San Marcos River Corridor
- West Houston Trails
- Waco Brazos & Bosque River Corridor



2007 Projects



- Greenprint for Grapevine
- El Paso Mountains to Rivers to Trail
- Palo Alto National Battlefield



Contact Information



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Questions?





Open Space and Water Quality

How land conservation can help
achieve water quality goals

Water Quality Concerns



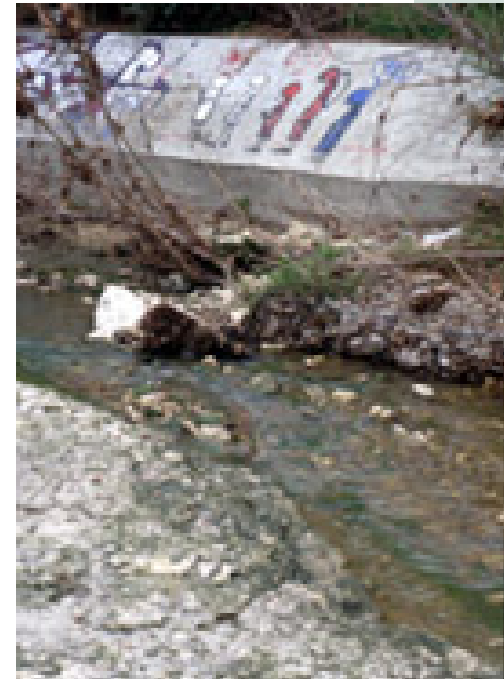
Water Quality Impairments include:

- Trash
- Nutrients
- Organics
- Bacteria
- Others

Health Risks

Waterway closures

Socioeconomic Impacts



Nonpoint Source Pollution



The leading cause of source water degradation is **nonpoint source pollution** ...The commercial and residential **development** of formerly forested land exacerbates existing pollution, by **removing the natural buffers that once trapped and filtered pollutants** before they could reach our waterways. To mitigate nonpoint source pollution, we must practice effective watershed management.

EPA, 2001

Nonpoint Source Pollution



Treatment for nonpoint-source pollution is complex and expensive

"Despite the expenditure of hundreds of billions of dollars over the last 30 years, the 1972 Clean Water Act goals of fishable and swimmable waters have not been achieved, largely because **contaminants from diffuse [nonpoint] sources have not been controlled successfully.**"

National Research Council, 2001.

Land Conservation reduces Non-Point Source Pollution



- “Land ownership offers the most effective long-term water quality protection...”

American Water Works Research Foundation, 1991

- Land conservation offers multiple benefits to the public, including recreation, flood control, and the preservation of wetland and forest habitats. TPL Watershed Conservation Report, 2000

Potential Criteria for Land Protection



- Avoidance of nonpoint-source pollution
- Restoration of natural hydrology
- Contiguity of a parcel with other preservation areas
- Importance of land for recreation
- Protection of unique habitat
- Willingness of the landowner to sell
- Protection of historic and cultural resources.



Examples of RTCA Water Quality Related Projects



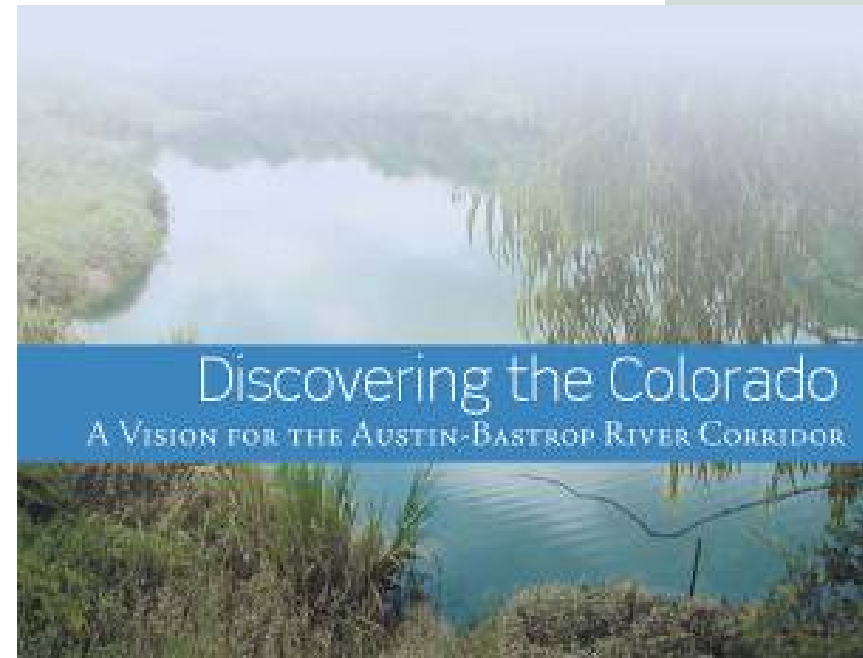
Austin-Bastrop River Corridor Partnership



Goal: Understand existing conditions and develop a vision document

Scope: 60 miles of river corridor between Austin & Bastrop

Process: Stakeholder meetings over two years, canoe tours, developed report of existing conditions, community workshops which informed final recommendations



Austin-Bastrop River Corridor Partnership

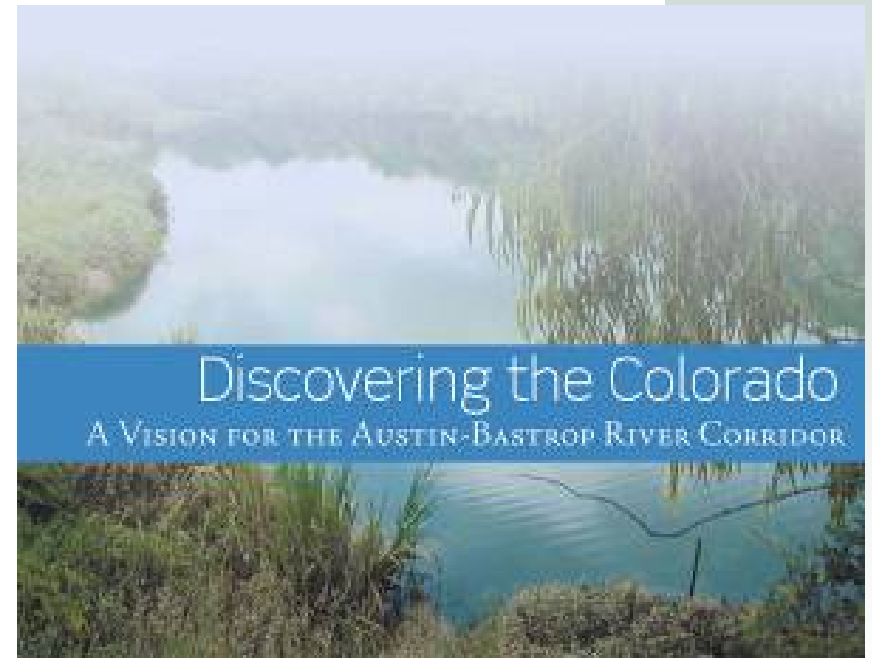


Vision: To support sustainable development & a healthy riparian ecosystem along the Austin to Bastrop River Corridor

Outcomes to date:

- Some land acquisition by partners
- TPL Colorado River Project
- Austin widened river buffers within its ETJ

RTCA Role: Identified stakeholders, developed meeting format, facilitated two public workshops, organized report.



San Marcos River Corridor Management Plan



Goal: Develop a sustainable recreation & conservation river corridor

Scope: Six miles of river corridor protection with riparian restoration & trails

Process:

- On-site river user survey to analyze recreation impacts
- Community workshop
- Grant applications for youth & adult stewardship & trail projects



San Marcos River Corridor Management Plan



Outcomes to date:

- Land acquisition by city with participation by TNC, TPWD, Hays County, & Texas State University

RTCA Role: Led community workshop, implemented survey, assisted in getting funding for youth camps & riparian restoration, helped Texas River Center develop Master Plan for their property



Medina River Watershed Best Management Practices



Goal: Provide landowners with best management practices to preserve water quality

Process: In collaboration with partners, researched BMPs applicable for land in Medina River watershed. BMP descriptions, cost and resources provided for large and small landowners



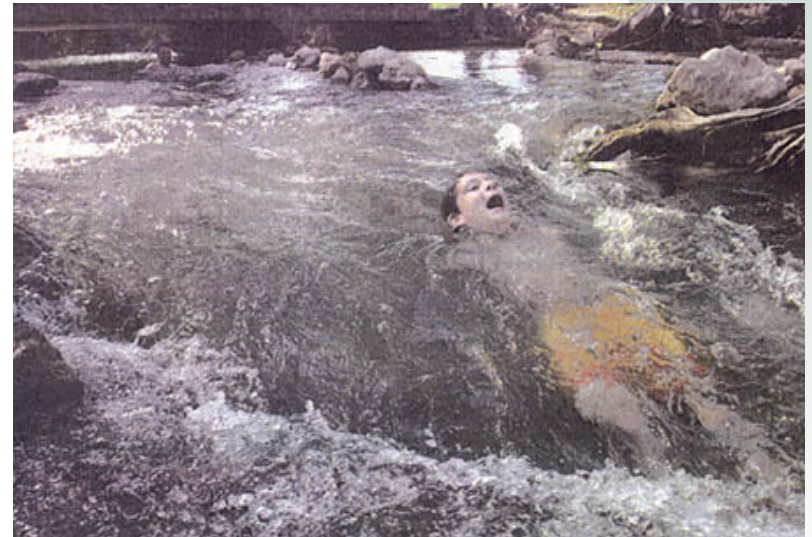
Medina River Watershed Best Management Practices



Outcomes to date:

- Brochure printed and distributed within watershed
- Maintaining bacteria levels consistent with contact recreation – benefit to San Antonio River WPP

RTCA Role: Consulted with landowners and partners, compiled brochure information



Ballona Creek Watershed Management Plan



Watersheds and City of Los Angeles Boundary



 City of Los Angeles Boundary

City Goals for Handling Urban Runoff



- ⌋ **Improve Water Quality**
- ⌋ **Meet Regulatory Requirements**
- ⌋ **Reduce Health Risk**
- ⌋ **Increase Community Awareness**
- ⌋ **Clean Up Our Watersheds**
- ⌋ **Holistic Approach**



Plan Development Strategy (Cont.)

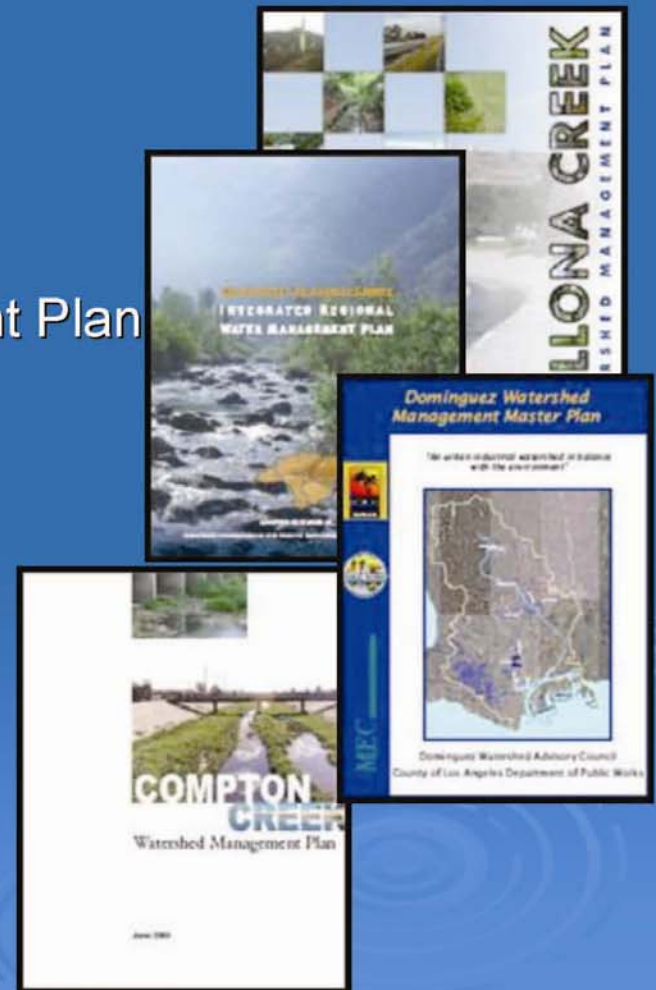
Building on Existing Plans:

➤ Master Plans

- Integrated Resources Plan
- LA River Revitalization Master Plan
- LA County River Master Plan
- Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
- Others

➤ Watershed Management Plans

- Ballona Creek WMP
- Dominguez Channel WMP
- Compton Creek WMP
- Others



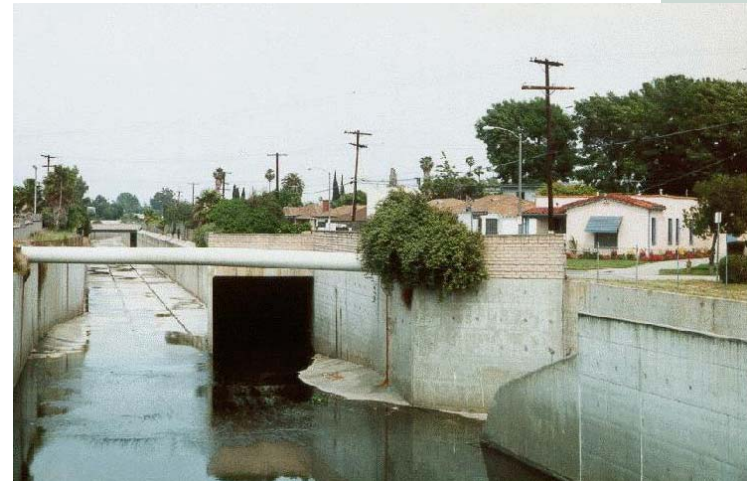
Ballona Creek Watershed Management Plan



Goal: Develop a management plan focused on pollution control and habitat restoration

Process:

- Monthly stakeholder meetings
- Community workshops
- Developed plan based on sound science and community input



Ballona Creek Watershed Management Plan



Outcomes to date:

- WMP adopted
- 4 of 8 demonstration projects in the plan are funded
- Stakeholder group remains intact after 7 years

RTCA Role: Facilitated stakeholder meetings and community workshops. Through local partners supported Ecological Restoration Feasibility Study

<http://ladpw.org/wmd>



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