



With support from:



Trinity River National Water Trail Task Force Meeting (Virtual)

August 29, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome & Meeting Purpose – Steve Smith, Trinity Coalition

Erin Blackman (NCTCOG) welcomed the participants to the Trinity River National Water Trail Task Force meeting. Steve Smith (Trinity Coalition) described the history and background of the Water Trail. In 2018, the paddling trail was assembled, consisting of 130 miles and 20 canoe launches that ran from the Fort Worth Nature Center and Lake Lewisville Dam downstream to Dallas. In 2020, the Trinity River Paddling Trail was awarded the National Water Trail designation by the National Park Service (NPS). Steve explained that the Trinity Coalition is charged by NPS to meet their water trail standards and new launches should meet best management practices. However, Trinity Coalition does not own any of the launches, cities do, thus coordinating and connecting with them through these quarterly task force meetings are important.

2. State of the Trail – Dale Harris, Steve Smith, & Teresa Patterson, Trinity Coalition

Dale Harris (Trinity Coalition) provides an update at each meeting on the state of the trail. The first few slides provide information about the Water Trail for the benefit of those new to this task force or those who are unable to attend every meeting. The Trinity River National Water Trail is the only nationally recognized trail in Texas and is one of 35 in the nation. There are now 21 official launch sites; all but two sections are four to six miles in length (one section is 12 miles and one is 24 miles). There are a few new launch sites in various stages of development that will shorten some of the longer distances (e.g., Beltline Road in Grand Prairie, Viridian Development in Arlington, Trinity View Park in Irving, and Riverside Parks in Fort Worth).

Dale noted that 20 of 21 sites are open. The canoe launch at Loop 12 is still closed because of flood damage and safety. Paddlers and the main outfitter in Dallas are hoping to see it open soon. A few paddlers reported that the pull-off for loading and unloading at Handley Ederville is now fenced off, but Dale needs to verify. There is not a parking area, it is just a drop-off point. Lexi McCalip (Tarrant Regional Water District) mentioned that the owner of the property has fenced it off. Dale asked if this launch site should be taken off the list, and Lexi mentioned that there is no way to walk there, so maybe. Teresa Patterson (Trinity Coalition) said it would be worth contacting the property owner first.

Dale provided information on the Water Trail usage. In the past quarter, it has been usable except three times when the water flow exceeded 2,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). The section between Lewisville Lake Learning Area (LLELA) and Hebron Parkway still has a tree impeding the river during low flows. Dale mentioned that he reached out to the local outfitters to try to determine how many people are using the Water Trail and that he will try to provide recreation paddling usage numbers at the next quarterly task force meeting. Trinity River Expeditions' business has been impacted by the closure of Loop 12, and outfitters typically use trailers and prefer boat ramps (Trammel Crow and Loop 12 are the only two launch sites with boat ramps on the Main Branch).



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In the future, Trinity Coalition would like to see the Water Trail expanded to South Dallas and South Dallas County; however, lock and dam #1 is a hazard. Dale explained that a whitewater paddler might make it through, but an amateur paddler would have difficulty. The dam was a low-head dam across the river but was abandoned. There is about a 15-inch drop on the lock and dam side, and exposed hinges and metal brackets are hidden under the water on the dam side. There may be money available to mitigate the danger of the dam so that the trail could eventually be extended to the Gulf.

3. Trinity River National Water Trail Master Plan Update – *Jai-W Hayes-Jackson, NCTCOG*

Jai-W Hayes-Jackson (Trinity Coalition) presented information about the effort to create a small-scale Trinity River National Water Trail Master Plan. NCTCOG staff are currently working with stakeholders to analyze inventory; identify challenges, opportunities, mapping, and promotion/branding needs; and define maintenance. Input from the communities with frontage along the Water Trail on recommendations moving forward would be great for long-term planning to include future launch sites and recreational opportunities around the Water Trail.

The vision of the Master Plan is to assemble the various segments of the Upper Trinity River in North Texas into a fully integrated paddling trail so that communities have a standard way of maintaining the Water Trail. One of the main goals is to identify future sites that would decrease the distances between some of the existing launch sites. Jai-W asked if there are any additional goals to add to the list? Brandon Morton (Dallas College) recommended adding an economic or business plan-related goal. He mentioned that the City of Austin produces income/expenditure information on how recreational opportunities at Lady Bird Lake contribute to the economy (<https://services.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=350287>). Steve Smith responded that this has not be a focus to the extent that it should be. He recommended having Grand Prairie present at the next Task Force meeting to learn more about their efforts to value the river as an economic resource.

Jai-W presented a draft outline of the Master Plan that was discussed at the June meeting with the Master Plan Work Group. The Master Plan will provide an overview/history of the Water Trail, planning process, goals, inventory of the Trinity River launches and surrounding parks/trails, and recommendations (e.g., on expansion, design, etc.). For branding/signage needs, Steve mentioned that Dale Harris has designed signs (e.g., Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area, LLELA) and can assist with more. There is a QR code on the LLELA sign that brings up the Trinity Coalition website where hazards and flow rates are available. Communities that are interested in signage can let NCTCOG know.

Steve mentioned that the hope is to meet quarterly with the Master Plan Work Group.

4. Tarrant Regional Water District River Plan – *Brian Trusty, Pros Consulting*

Brian Trusty (Pros Consulting) was joined by Adam Brewster from Dunaway, the prime consultant on this project, and project manager, Lexi McCalip with Tarrant Regional Water District (TRWD). Together, they are creating a Recreation Master Plan “to foster healthy communities, promote environmental stewardship, and provide outstanding recreation opportunities while also connecting neighborhoods throughout our [TRWD] service areas.” Brian described TRWD’s role: provide reliable water supply, flood protection, recreation opportunities, and environmental stewardship. This process will require extensive public involvement.



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Adam highlighted the floodway planning area, which was the focus of the presentation. There are various types of trails and trailheads allowing for kayaking, fishing, seasonal events (e.g., 4th of July at Panther Island), festivals, etc. Adam described the assets of the floodway in Fort Worth and that TRWD encourages people to get down and interact with the water. Adam displayed a series of photos of the various areas of interest along the Upper West Fork, Lower West Fork, Sycamore Creek, and Clear Fork.

Steve mentioned that he would like to explore an opportunity to expand the Water Trail up to Eagle Mountain Lake.

5. Update on DFW Discovery Trail – Daniel Snyder, NCTCOG Transportation Department

Daniel Snyder (NCTCOG) provided information about the DFW Discovery Trail, which is expected to be completed in the next few years. It is a 60+ mile trail connecting downtown Fort Worth and downtown Dallas and runs along the Trinity River in many places. This paved trail and the Water Trail are closely linked. Guidance for wayfinding for the DFW Discovery Trail was completed in January 2023. Five cities (Fort Worth, Arlington, Grand Prairie, Irving, and Dallas) collaborated with NCTCOG to develop unified branding, best practices, and implementation guidance.

The wayfinding initiative identified nonprofit groups, “Friends of the Trail”, active in the region that can support local governments in a grassroots approach to fund and maintain enhancements along new and existing trail infrastructure. Trinity Coalition has expressed interest in serving as a partner entity to assist local communities with the marketing, maintenance, and operations of the DFW Discovery Trail. A call with Trinity Coalition and the five cities was held recently to introduce everyone and each city agreed to work with Trinity Coalition. They are working on the next steps to implement the wayfinding initiative.

Steve Smith expressed excitement for the opportunity as Trinity Coalition has an interest in transforming the Trinity River corridor and it would make sense to connect the DFW Discovery Trail with the Water Trail. About 80 percent of the DFW Discovery Trail is along the banks of the river. Trinity Coalition is working to develop a website (visitDFW) that will have biking and paddling trail maps to also identify nearby parks.

6. Update on Panther Island Paddle Sports – Teresa Patterson, Trinity Coalition

Teresa Patterson provided an update on Panther Island Paddle Sports, which grew out of a partnership Trinity Coalition has with local paddling companies. Trinity Coalition won the bid to work with TRWD to provide paddle sports at Panther Island. Panther Island is a key point on the Water Trail in Tarrant County. The grand opening took place May 21, 2023 and was well attended. They participate in several entertainment events, such as Rockin’ the River, and cleanup events, and host several paddling events and group trips (e.g., full moon paddle, Sunday sunrise paddle, paddle yoga, etc.).

An information kiosk provides trail information and serves as a rest stop for travelers on nearby trails. Teresa mentioned that they were able to report a fish kill created by a water main break. All online reviews of Panther Island Paddle Sports are 5-star.

Brandon Morton asked if other cities are looking at Panther Island as a model to bring economic activity. Teresa mentioned Trinity Kayak Company, which operates near McInnish Park, as another example. Grand Prairie also hopes to increase economic opportunities at their planned launch site. Steve mentioned that Paddle Sports was in part created to serve as model that could be replicated



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elsewhere. Dale mentioned that there are four learning centers on the river where this could be an opportunity.

7. Task Force Roundtable – All Members

Erin Blackman introduced Susan Alvarez, NCTCOG Environment and Development Department's new director. Steve Smith and others welcomed her. Susan mentioned that she spent the last 15 years with the City of Dallas working on stormwater, water quality, and the city's climate plan.

8. Upcoming Opportunities – NCTCOG Staff

Erin Blackman provided links to where information on NCTCOG and Trinity Coalition-related events and opportunities can be found: <https://www.nctcog.org/envir/Events> and <https://trinitycoalition.org/events>.

For information related to Task Force meetings, please visit <https://www.nctcog.org/envir/committees/trinity-river-national-water-trail-task-force>.

Next Meeting: To Be Determined

Meeting Attendance. The following members participated in the virtual meeting.

Susan Alvarez, NCTCOG
Nixalis Benitez, City of Fort Worth
Erin Blackman, NCTCOG
Adam Brewster, Dunaway
Mia Brown, Dallas County
Matt Craig, Halff Associates
Robert Denkhaus, City of Fort Worth
Heather Firm, Trinity River Authority
Barry Fulfer, City of Grand Prairie
Dale Harris, Trinity Coalition
Jai-W Hayes-Jackson, NCTCOG
Hannah Johnson
Brandi Kelp, City of Fort Worth
Eric Manley, City of Fort Worth
Lexi McCalip, Tarrant Regional Water District
Brandon Morton, Dallas College
Teresa Patterson, Trinity Coalition
Erika Pelletier, National Parks Conservation Association
Catherine Richardson, NCTCOG
Rachel Richter, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Liliana Rivera, Visit Dallas
Steve Smith, Trinity Coalition
Daniel Snyder, NCTCOG
Brian Trusty, Pros Consulting
Erik van Bloemen Waanders
Kate Zielke, NCTCOG