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Trinity River National Water Trail Task Force Meeting (Virtual)

Tuesday, February 14, 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) reviewed the purpose and history of the Water Trail. In 2020, the Trinity River Paddling Trail was awarded the National Water Trail designation by the National Park Service (NPS). As a result, the Water Trail must be kept up to National standards within three to five years of the designation and we are halfway through this timeframe. Steve detailed the map of the Water Trail and identified the 21 canoe/kayak launch sites.

Steve further explained that Trinity Coalition is responsible to the NPS for the designation, and it is important to have open channels of communication with the communities along the Trinity River. This Task Force was created to support the Water Trail, with quarterly meetings designed to keep partners updated on its status and coordinate improvement/expansion efforts. Trinity Coalition also communicates and coordinates efforts outside these Task Force meetings to accomplish its goals.

2. **State of the Trail.** Presentation on the current state of the Trinity River National Water Trail, including river events, sites that are open, closed, or in need of attention, and opportunities for expansion. – *Dale Harris, Steve Smith, & Teresa Patterson, Trinity Coalition*

Dale Harris (Trinity Coalition) gave a brief overview of the facts about the Water Trail for the benefit of those in the meeting who may be unfamiliar (e.g., 130-mile trail; one of 35 national water trails in the U.S., traverses nine municipalities, etc.). All but two sections are four to six miles in length. The new expansion sites will shorten some of these distances. Currently 19 of 21 launch sites are open – one launch site is difficult to use and the Loop 12 launch site is closed due to flood damage and safety concerns. The access path to the Dimension Tract launch in Carrollton got washed out and became unusable, but the City of Carrollton quickly repaired the site and added steps. Thank you, Carrollton!

Dale mentioned that several new launches/opportunities for expansion are on the horizon, which will shorten some of the distances between launch sites. Water Trail expansions include new locations at Beltline in Grand Prairie, Viridian in Arlington, Riverside Park in Fort Worth, Trinity View Park in Irving, and Lewisville Lake Paddling Trail. There are also ongoing talks with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) about adding their area lakes to the National Water Trail.

Dale identified four social media sites that Trinity Coalition maintains: website, Facebook page, meetup page, and Trinity River Paddling Trail Association's Facebook group page. Trinity Coalition is very active in getting the word out and keeping the paddling community in the loop. Trinity Coalition also hears about problems with any launch sites and sections of the river through these social media sites. Trinity Coalition then passes that information on to the appropriate community.

Trinity Coalition's website provides tools to help paddlers plan their trip along the Water Trail. The interactive map provides details about each launch site and what to expect (e.g., launch description,



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distance and take-out, trail description, and a link to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) water flow gauge). Steve indicated that the USGS recently added turbidity data to its water flow gauge locations, and so that information is now available for each launch site. This is important because the Trinity Coalition, through a study with the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), discovered that there is a close relationship between bacteria levels and turbidity. While bacteria levels in the Trinity River are on average safe to paddle in, levels can spike after a large rain event. If the water level is high, so may the water flow and bacteria levels. Trinity Coalition plans to work with UTA again to verify this close relationship.

Dale provided an update on the Water Trail usage and events that have occurred. Overall, the Water Trail had limited interruptions in the last year (one day in April 2022, about three weeks in May/June 2022, and a few days in August 2022). There is a section between the Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area and Hebron Parkway that has a tree blocking the river making it unpassable during very low water flows.

Teresa Patterson mentioned a few past and upcoming events. Trinity Coalition hosted an educational seminar on February 11th. Many attendees stayed for the cold weather paddling and camping out of your canoe/kayak events that followed. Trinity Coalition is partnering with organizations on upcoming events, including the Cowtown Cleanup (March 25), Greater Dallas Planning Commission Cleanup (April 8), EarthX Expo (April 21-23), and Walnut Creek Cleanup (May 20). Dale added that they are working on an agreement/guide to assist with corporate cleanups (e.g., needed supplies, cost, etc.).

3. Lewisville Lake Paddling Trail Update. *Chris Escoto, City of Denton*

Steve introduced Chris Escoto and provided context to his update. The Lewisville Lake Paddling Trail is not currently part of the Trinity River National Water Trail but connecting to this trail is the goal. Christ Escoto mentioned that the City of Denton and a number of cities have been working on this trail since 2021. There are 43 launch sites located over 100 miles of trail. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department visited the paddling trail to assess it as part of the process to become an official state trail program. There were a few challenges that came out of this assessment, including logistics related to signage that will need to be worked out. Chris identified fall as the target date to begin opening launch sites, likely as a phased approach.

Steve further explained that if the National Water Trail is to connect with the Lewisville Lake Trail, ways to go around the Lewisville Lake dam will need to be identified as the NPS does not allow a discontinuous trail. Dale has identified a way to portage around the dam but will need to continue conversations with USACE on options since they manage the lake. There could also be further opportunities to connect to Lake Ray Roberts. The Lewisville Lake Paddling Trail is able to connect to the Trinity River (Elm Fork) as it runs through the Greenbelt to reach the base of the dam at Lake Ray Roberts. Dale said there may be a way to portage around this dam as well.

Dale indicated that they would also like to expand the Water Trail south; however, there is one major hazard (Lock and Dam #1) that would need to be mitigated. They are having conversations outside of these meetings with the appropriate contacts to explore that effort.

4. Trinity River National Water Trail Master Plan. NCTCOG staff are working on a small-scale Plan that compiles information, documents project implementation goals, potential cost estimates, etc. A presentation will identify key aspects of the Plan. – *NCTCOG Staff*



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As part of the Inter-Departmental Agreement NCTCOG's Environment and Development (E&D) Department has with the Transportation Department, E&D staff are charged with developing a small-scale Master Plan in partnership with Trinity Coalition and other stakeholders. Jai-W Hayes-Jackson (NCTCOG) presented a broad overview of what this could look like. Jai-W has been researching other existing master plans (regional, local, and other water trails) and shared a common general framework to consider following. This could include: overview (history and background), planning process (e.g., communicating with partners/public, quarterly meetings, launch site information, etc.), and goals (education and safety, stewardship and conservation, community engagement, maintenance, planning, funding strategies), inventory of existing parks/trails, and Task Force recommendations (e.g., for expansion, design concepts, etc.).

Jai-W identified mapping needs that could be integrated to create a more robust map, including bike paths, hiking trails, nature preserves, nature centers, points of interest and services along the Water Trail, DFW Veloweb, and DFW Discovery Trail. Steve commented that this would be a great opportunity to transform the Trinity River corridor into a recreation center, by integrating the on-land pieces that Jai-W described to also provide river access through the Water Trail.

5. National Park Service Best Management Practices. Presentation on NPS' guidelines for building and maintaining canoe and kayak launch sites relevant to the Trinity River Water Trail designation with local examples. – *Dale Harris & Teresa Patterson, Trinity Coalition*

Dale identified two resources that can assist communities with building and maintaining canoe and kayak launch sites – [National Water Trails System \(NWTS\) Best Management Practices \(BMPS\) document](#) and [River Management Society Guidelines for Assessing, Designing, and Building Access Sites for Carry-In Watercraft](#). Dale opened and navigated through the NWTS resource, which outlines BMPs to “actively engage local communities and trail users, who provide support and advocacy for the maintenance and stewardship of the water trail.” Each BMP was identified (community support, conservation, education, maintenance, planning, public information, and recreation). Dale mentioned that local communities have done a great job with the education and public information BMPs. More work needs to be done on a clear method to support the maintenance BMP. In the interest of time, Dale directed attendees to the second resource and identified Chapter 3: Launch Design Types/Concrete Ramps (pages 146-151) as the most relevant. For the Trinity River and its tributaries, boat ramps should be pointed slightly downstream and adequately armored.

6. Task Force Roundtable. The attendees will discuss regional opportunities, community goals, concerns, partnership efforts, and economic development projects along the Trinity River National Water Trail. – *All Members*

Duane Strawn (City of Grand Prairie) gave an update on the Beltline Canoe Launch. He mentioned that they had a meeting with NCTCOG to discuss the design and funding for the project, and that NCTCOG agreed to the project as designed. Grand Prairie anticipates upgrading the original design to provide better access, but these details are to be announced.

Edith Marvin (NCTCOG) commented on the idea to expand the Water Trail further south, and that there would be a great opportunity to tie in John Bunkers Sands Wetland Center. In addition, it would be worth exploring opportunities with Kaufman County, Ellis County, and the City of Seagoville.



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Dale reiterated the importance of mitigating Lock and Dam #1 and doing so would open up all kinds of opportunities to expand south. There are many sand and gravel bars along the banks of the southern stretches of the Trinity River for kayakers/canoers to stop and rest.

Bud Melton (Halff Associates) identified an opportunity to coordinate with developers along the Trinity River corridor to install a canoe/kayak launch as part of any planned developments.

7. Upcoming Opportunities. A list of upcoming committee meetings, webinars, and other events relevant to the state of the Trinity River. – *NCTCOG Staff* (5 minutes)

Erin quickly identified upcoming NCTCOG-related meetings/events/opportunities that may be of interest. They are listed in the presentation (slides 37-40). Items of interest include several upcoming [bacteria Total Maximum Daily Load-related meetings](#), [Trash Free Waters resources](#), [North Texas Community Cleanup Challenge](#), and [CLIDE Awards 2023](#).

The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for May 2023 and members will be notified of the date once determined.

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

Erin Blackman, NCTCOG
Mia Brown, Dallas County
Chris Chastain, City of Lewisville
Matt Craig, Halff Associates
Chris Escoto, City of Denton
Heather Firm, Trinity River Authority
Dale Harris, Trinity Coalition
Jai-W Hayes-Jackson, NCTCOG
Noreen Housewright, City of Grand Prairie
Rachel Jenkins
Brandi Kelp, City of Fort Worth
Kristi Kerr Leonard, Trinity Coalition
Matt Lepinski, US Army Corps of Engineers
Edith Marvin, NCTCOG
Bud Melton, Halff Associates
Valerie Miller
Alexander Neal
Tina Nikolic, Tarrant Regional Water District
Teresa Patterson, Trinity Coalition
Erika Pelletier, National Parks Conservation Association
Rachel Richter, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Liliana Rivera, Visit Dallas
Jennifer Rovezzi, City of Dallas
Lissa Shepard, Dallas County
Steve Smith, Trinity Coalition
Joshua Spencer, City of Dallas
Duane Strawn, City of Grand Prairie
Patrick Strong, City of Arlington
Kate Zielke, NCTCOG