

# TOWN



# NEWS

## Dallas Chapter – December 2025

*Christmas Party*

*4-???*

*Faith and Kay's home*

*7816 Kristina Dr*

*Frisco, TX 75034*



# TOWN ACTIVITIES

## *Mark your Calendars!!*

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Saturday Jan 3rd, 2026 9:45 am

First TOWN Hike

Arbor Hills Nature Preserve

6701 W Parker Road  
Plano, TX 75093

[Link to Map](#)

Meet at the Restrooms

Shirley Meurer 972-890-2791  
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Weekday Hike, Friday Feb 20th 10 AM

Woodbridge Soft Trails in Sachse, 3-3 1/2 miles

3703 Woodglen Ln, Sachse, TX 75048

Shirley Meurer 972-890-2491  
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March 5th-8th

Camping at Inks Lake State Park

Contact Shirley Meurer to reserve your spot

972-890-2491 [sameurer@yahoo.com](mailto:sameurer@yahoo.com)  
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March 18th-22nd

Camping at Goose Island State Park

Reserve your own site and

Contact Judy Shaw for more details

[jshawtx@aol.com](mailto:jshawtx@aol.com)  
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March 26th-29th

Camping at Huntsville State Park

Contact Nancy Lee to sign up

nlee002@tx.rr.com 469-264-4643  
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April 16th-18th

Camping at Dinosaur Valley State Park

Contact Sharon Fahlberg to sign up

sfahlberg@aol.com 214-991-1234  
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Kayaking/Rafting Trip on the Rogue River in Oregon

Contact Shirley for details 972-890-2491  
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Monthly Meetings 6pm – 7:30pm

2nd Monday of the Month

Contact Shirley to host  
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Christmas Party

Saturday December 6th

4 pm -???

Faith and Kay's House

7816 Kristina Dr

Frisco, Tx  
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**It was a beautiful day for our hike at Cedar Ridge Preserve.**

Melissa, Marie, Sharon, Ann, Janet, Cathy, Mary and Shirley had a good time.



## **Camping at Pedernales State Park**

Hiking and exploring the trails at Pedernales River

Karen T., Karen K., Cindi, Mary, Suzi, Sharon, Rosie and Marie





Karen, Marie and Shirley



Marie led us on a great hike on the Jones Spring, Wheatly and Madrone Trails for about 6.5 miles in Pedernales Falls State Park.

We stopped at the ruins of a historic rock house and then visited Jones Spring a short distance from the house.

Historic Rock House - Rosie





Festive Fun House

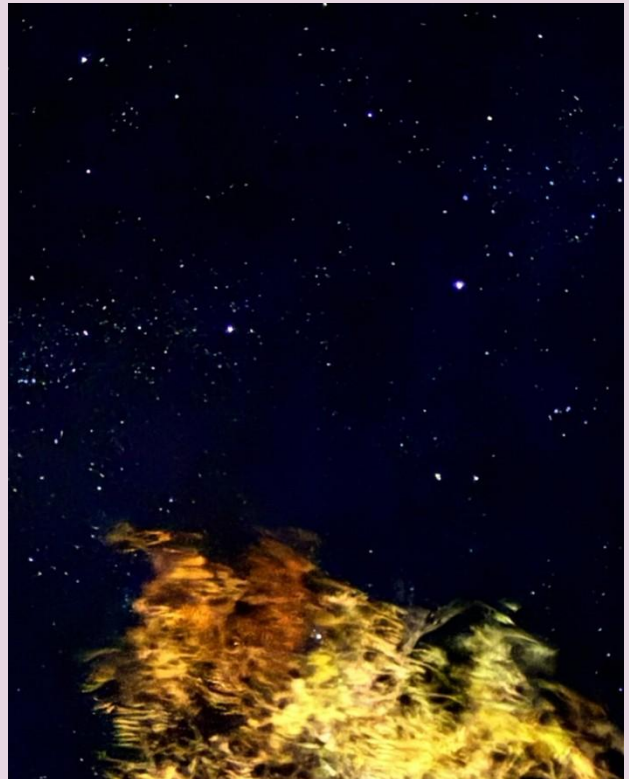
Halloween night dinner crew - Dale, Karen T. Karen K., Nancy and Rosie

## **PALO DURO CANYON SP CAMPOUT, NOVEMBER 12-16, 2025**

*By Riley Adair Garret and Melissa Brown*

We had a great time! What stands out the most about this trip are the extremes. While we were there, the nights were extremely cold (well, in the 40s, but it FELT extremely cold). Late morning when the sun broke the ridge, it became extremely hot (well, in the 80s—which is even hot for November in Texas—but it FELT like it was 100! Or maybe that was the hot flashes). All-in-all, it was DEFINITELY worth the drive. The campsites were dry and sandy with lots of leaves everywhere (another extreme). You know when you go to the beach and the sand sticks to everything? Well—think of a leafy beach. The leaves stuck to EVERYTHING and EVERYONE (but they seemed to have a special affinity for Dale 😊 ).

At night, the skies were dark (extremely dark!), and the stars were bright! (yeah, you know the drill). Debbie Hughes took this fabulous shot!



**STARS AT NIGHT ARE BIG AND BRIGHT!**



**EVERYONE ENJOYED THE FIRE PIT!**

The day before the trip, Faith discovered there was a burn ban at the park. Fortunately, she and Kay came to the rescue with their Camp Chef propane-fueled fire pit! It was a great stand-in for the real thing; even better, in fact, because we weren't constantly escaping the smoke!

## Campsite

We camped in the Hackberry Loop, sites 14-18. They were beautiful and wooded and not too far from the restrooms. In fact, if they were any closer we would have been inside them (and at times it smelled like we were 🤢, but only for a few minutes at a time, thankfully!). Wildlife was abundant. We were visited by a gaggle of turkeys, a curious roadrunner, a seemingly blind armadillo (fun fact: an armadillo's poor eyesight is compensated by a highly developed sense of smell), and at least one great horned owl. Although we did not see Wile E. Coyote we heard him and his friends at night (along with some other weird and eerie sounds in the distance 😬). Fun fact: The E. in Wile E. Coyote stands for Ethelbert (courtesy of Melissa, I think 🤔).



**ROADRUNNER WAS A FREQUENT VISITOR TO THE KITCHEN**





**TURKEYS VISITED OUR CAMPSITES EVERY DAY EXCEPT THE LAST DAY.**

## **Meals**

We ate well thanks to Shirley, Nancy and Dale. We supped on chicken vegetable soup, beef stew, and tortilla soup. Breakfasts were prepared by Allison (pancakes), Kay (egg casserole), and Melissa (oatmeal with toppings). We were **EXTREMELY** well fed!! Special thanks to Debbie H, Karen B, Debbie S and Riley for helping with prep and clean up!



**KAY WITH HER YUMMY EGG CASSEROLE**



## Hiking:



**ALONG THE LIGHTHOUSE TRAIL (MUST BE EARLY IN THE HIKE BECAUSE EVERYONE IS STILL SMILING)**

Day 1: The Lighthouse trail. Kay and Tink (our ferocious mascot 🐕), Karen B, Riley, Allison, Shirley and Melissa ventured out on a 6.5 mile hike (but it SEEMED like 20) on the Lighthouse Trail to see, none other than . . . wait for it . . . the lighthouse! A natural wonder made of stone. Very cool!! After some scrambling (and we mean SCRAMBLING. OR you might want to call it rock-climbing without the equipment), Melissa, Karen B, Kay and Tink, and Riley made it to the

base of the Lighthouse. Special thanks to Shirley for keeping Riley alive with her water. In fact, everyone looked out for one another by sharing water, poles, and encouragement! It was (extremely) exhausting, but we all survived! Elevation gain: 300 feet



**OUR DESTINATION ON THE LIGHTHOUSE TRAIL**



Day 2: Paseo del Rio & Rojo Grande trails. Allison, Debbie S, Debbie H, Karen B, Shirley, Riley, Kay along with our ferocious mascot Tink, Dale and Melissa refused to be held down and therefore hiked either one or both of the above-named trails. They spent time exploring the "Cowboy Dugout" which is a replica of the dugout home used by pioneer Charles Goodnight when

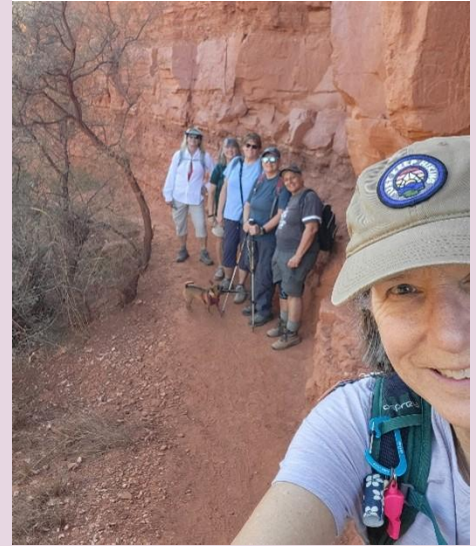




**RIO TRAIL**

he settled in the area in the late 1800s. It is located on a short trail (they think EVERY trail is “short” there) and is designed to give visitors a glimpse into early ranching life in the canyon. Fun fact: the dugout is a replica because the original was washed away by storms over time. The dugout was much cooler (but not extremely) than the outside

**ALONG THE ROJO GRANDE TRAIL.**



temperature and much roomier than expected. Mountain Bluebirds were spotted flitting just ahead of our group on the trail. Tink was almost taken out by a cyclist along the way (which we spent dodging each day on the trails), which was our first clue that a bike race was scheduled for the next day. The trail was 2.4 miles total (but don’t believe it, it was probably longer 😊). Elevation change: 50 feet.



**SHIRLEY ON THE UPPER COMANCHE TRAIL**

Day 3: Melissa, Shirley, Karen B, Riley, Debbie S, Faith and Tink ventured off again to conquer the Upper Comanche Trail (because that was the only one the cyclists weren’t using for their race). After hiking about 100 feet up we were able to view our campsite from the rim above. Debbie S and Faith turned back at the window rock (which was a rock that looked like a window). Riley ventured a bit further before turning back (because her toes were extremely

sore), but Melissa, Shirley and Karen B didn’t turn back until the Upper Comanche met up with the Lower Comanche Trail, for a total of 2.31 miles.





**MELISSA, DEBBIE S, RILEY &  
KAREN B AT THE WINDOW ROCK**



**WE SAW INTERESTING ROCK  
FORMATIONS ALONG THE UPPER  
COMANCHE TRAIL**

## **Final Day**

And finally, on our last morning we had a grab-and-go breakfast, courtesy of Melissa (I think 🤪), packed up and managed to get a group photo before we all dispersed. A great time was had by all! STAY TUNED FOR A REVIEW ON THE TENT COT!!

**ALL OF US!**





## CHRISTMAS PARTY DECEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup>

TOWN will provide a ham. Please bring a side dish or dessert to share with everyone. BYOB. There will be a gift exchange. If you'd like to participate please bring a wrapped gift about \$20 in value with an outdoor theme.

### Texas Is in the Midst of a Great Public Land Boom

Texas Parks and Wildlife is going on a spending spree to open new parks to the public, a welcome development in a state where some 95 percent of land is privately owned.



By [Forrest Wilder](#) Texas Monthly

One of the pleasures of a great view is the chance to share it with others. Today, I have this Hill Country vista mostly to myself, but I can't help but think of the thousands of Texans who will someday stand in this same spot, an oak-studded ridge with a peaceful valley below.

Until recently, this was a family cattle ranch. Now it's slowly taking shape as [Post Oak Ridge State Park](#), a 3,118-acre spread of crags, spring-fed creeks, and ancient woodlands—part of a recent renaissance in state-park development. The public won't have full overnight access to Post Oak Ridge until 2029, but by the grace of Texas Parks and Wildlife, I'm getting an early look.

Up here, there's little in the way of man-made things—roads, rooftops—to interrupt my reverie. I note how the land falls away at my feet to one of those classic Hill Country savannascapes, the lush grass and prickly pear shaded here and there by evergreen cedars and shapely oaks. The green flat-topped hills create subtle curves against the blue September sky, and I spy the Colorado River valley a mile to the west, its unseen waters marked by a thick corridor of trees and steep embankments.

The approximately 5,320-acre [Colorado Bend State Park](#), a popular destination for campers and kayakers that shares a stretch of the river with Post Oak Ridge, lies to the north. Before me stands one of the property's signature ridges, a rocky holdfast that contains an oak-juniper woodland. Parks and Wildlife has dated some of the oaks at roughly four hundred years old and the cedars are among the oldest in the state. "When Jamestown was founded or Galileo was around, these trees were just getting started," said Post Oak Ridge superintendent Kacey Sloan, my guide for the day.

It would be hyperbolic to say this land is "pristine"—nearly every square mile of Texas has been tinkered with or rendered unrecognizable by man. Indeed, this portion of Post Oak Ridge was recently grazed, fenced, and partially cleared of timber. (The bowl below



me, called Cracker Neck, is so named, local legend goes, because a cowboy once broke his neck by riding into an overhead tree branch.) Outside the gates of the park, signs promise a new subdivision. Still, in a state that is becoming more concrete than caliche, Post Oak Ridge is a rugged remnant of the Hill Country preserved in perpetuity.

The park is “out there,” says Sloan, who is just a month into her new job. An hour and a half northwest of Austin, this part of Lampasas and Burnet Counties still lies largely beyond the suburban sprawl. “There are no outside sounds. You are really in it.”

Recent rains have damaged the steep road that leads from the ridge down to the river, so Sloan, who grew up in a ranching family in nearby San Saba, suggests we make the mile-and-a-half trek by foot rather than car. I’m glad of it. As we follow a ranch road, which Sloan explains may someday be a hiking trail, we discuss the park’s wonders, among them a view of Post Oak falls, a travertine cliff that hosts a waterfall; a robust population of endangered golden-cheeked warblers; Guadalupe bass in spring-fed Yancey Creek, a perennial stream with exceptional water quality; the presence of the increasingly scarce [bobwhite quail](#); jackrabbits and roadrunners; and dark, star-filled night skies. As we hike I stop to inspect a pile of porcupine quills, inadvertently planting my foot in a pile of fire ants, a reminder, if one was needed, that in Texas, nature stings.

Parks and Wildlife is already hosting public hunts and plans to organize day hikes and picnicking by next fall. The property is in remarkably good shape thanks to its two previous stewards. The rangeland is thick with native grasses, which are evidence of proper grazing techniques, and plenty of woodlands are intact. In January, Parks and Wildlife bought the roughly 2,020-acre Vann River Ranch, which the eponymous family had owned since 1889. A few months later, the state closed on the approximately 1,100-acre Big Spring Ranch, just to the north. Together, the two properties cost \$47.1 million.

Post Oak Ridge is part of an exciting new chapter in Texas outdoors history. For the first time in decades, Parks and Wildlife has the money to buy significant amounts of land and develop new parks. Just in the past year, the department has acquired or is in the process of acquiring enough land to grow the state-parks system by 10 percent. [Enchanted Rock State Natural Area](#) is set to triple in size. [Garner State Park](#) will get a sister park just down the Frio River: the approximately 1,720-acre Bear Creek, which was purchased this year. Parks and Wildlife is on the cusp of obtaining a 54,000-acre southwest Texas ranch, which could become a major wilderness destination. In addition, new parks are on the verge of opening to the public after years or even decades of waiting. [Palo Pinto Mountains State Park](#)—most of which was acquired in 2011—will give partial access in January of 2026 to some of North Texas’s only canyons and mountains (well, hills). Texans will have to hold out a bit longer for other pending openings. [Chinati Mountains State Natural Area](#)—some 39,000

acres in the Big Bend region—is set to welcome visitors in 2032. (See map at the bottom of this story.) This is quite the turnaround. Starved for resources, the state-parks system got by for decades on couch change, with barely enough funds to keep existing parks from falling apart or closing. Even as the state boomed, few new sites have opened over the past thirty years. As a result, the most popular of the state’s ninety parks—Enchanted Rock and Garner, for example—have been in such demand that campsite reservations for weekends or holidays often must be made months in advance. The renewed interest in outdoors escapism during the COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated the overcrowding problem.

“We were running and operating the state parks on baling wire and bubble gum, and we didn’t have two nickels to rub together for land acquisition,” Carter Smith, who served as Parks and Wildlife’s executive director from 2008 to 2023, told me. Survival was the goal, not expansion. Then, in 2023, the Legislature proposed—and voters enthusiastically approved—the \$1 billion [Centennial Parks Conservation Fund](#), an endowment whose income is solely dedicated to acquiring and developing new parks. “In my wildest dreams, I couldn’t imagine something like that coming to fruition. It was a very farsighted investment in the quality of life and outdoor heritage of Texas. And it’s a gift that will keep on giving for many generations to come.”

**Nature lovers have** long lamented the lack of public land in Texas. Unlike in other western states, the vast majority of our land—some 95 percent—is privately owned. This can be traced, in large part, to Texas’s entry into the union in 1845. Saddled with massive debts from its tumultuous nine years as a republic, the state spent much of the rest of the nineteenth century [selling off millions of acres](#) to promote growth.

When Texas was a rural state, the lack of public land was hardly an issue—the goal was taming nature, not playing in it. But as Texas urbanized, the desire and need for access to the outdoors grew. Rivers were dammed, forests chopped down, and prairies paved, and there was an urgency to save rapidly disappearing landscapes and habitats. Texas’s parks system was founded in 1923 without any state funding; land came into the public trust through donations. The late sixties ushered in a golden age of land acquisition. Voters approved a \$75 million bond measure in 1967 (more than \$725 million in today’s dollars), and the number of state parks more than doubled by the late eighties. It was in this era that Enchanted Rock, Caprock Canyons, and Big Bend Ranch State Park came into the public portfolio. By the turn of the century, population growth had far outpaced land acquisition. An oft-cited [2001 report](#) commissioned by Parks and Wildlife found that Texas would need to add 1.2 million acres by 2030 to keep pace with the population boom. Needless to say, that hasn’t happened. The state-parks system currently holds roughly 650,000 acres, almost half of which is Big Bend Ranch, more than a six hours’ drive from most Texans’ homes. Meanwhile, Texas [loses undeveloped land](#) at a rate of more than twenty football fields an hour, according to the conservation nonprofit Environment Texas. With so many people and relatively



little public land, we trail most other states in state-park acreage per capita based on [an analysis](#) by the same group: We're ranked thirty-seventh, between Maryland and Arkansas.

But several efforts should change that. In 2019 voters overwhelmingly approved Prop 5—a constitutional amendment that dedicated the sales tax from sporting goods to its original purpose, the parks system and historic sites. (Previously the Legislature had used the tax revenue to help balance the state budget.) The Centennial Fund was even more transformational. Many Texans had perhaps looked around the country and wondered, “Why can’t we have nice things too?” Now other states are envious of what we have: a permanent public-lands endowment that’s earning about \$4 million a month in interest. Even in a state with soaring land prices, that’s real money. Among advocates, the mood these days is exuberant. The parks system is now entering a “new golden age,” said Luke Metzger, executive director of Environment Texas. Jeff Francell, the associate director of land protection at the Nature Conservancy in Texas, said the new money is like “jet fuel. It’s really an awesome present for the people of Texas.”

Rodney Franklin, the director of state parks for Parks and Wildlife, reported that the agency is on track to acquire several properties by the end of 2027. As many as a dozen new parks could open in the next decade. Of course, it’s not cheap. The average cost to open a new park is \$100 to \$140 million, most of which is spent on acquisition and construction. Development is also logistically complicated. Even with the department’s commitment to an accelerated process, it will take four years to fully open new sites to the public.

Franklin’s team essentially has to turn private ranches into state parks, which are almost like little cities—they need water and wastewater systems, roads, housing for staff, visitors centers, hiking trails, campsites, and the personnel to oversee it all. And there are all sorts of head-scratching decisions to be made: What to do with swimming pools in a state natural area? Or a vineyard? Or a fully furnished guesthouse appointed in the previous owner’s idiosyncratic style?

Franklin said the agency is prioritizing acquiring properties within a ninety-minute drive of the “Texas Triangle”—the core of the state bounded by San Antonio, Dallas–Fort Worth, and Houston. Some 70 percent of Texans live there, but only a quarter of state-park acreage can be found within. Another top priority? New public land for the Rio Grande Valley. More than 1.4 million people call the Valley home, but within an hour’s drive of most of the region’s residents there are only three small parks totaling fewer than 2,500 acres—around 75 square feet per person, a walk-in closet’s worth of nature. Among those three parks, there are just five overnight campsites.

The state hasn’t announced any new deals in the Valley. But the Moody Foundation [reportedly](#) plans to donate some 50,000 acres two and a half hours west

of San Antonio. The vast tract of land in Kinney and Edwards Counties would become the second-largest park in the state's portfolio after Big Bend Ranch. It features live-water creeks, a seven-and-a-half-mile stretch of the West Nueces River, a 30-acre lake, and mountainous terrain at the intersection of three bioregions: the Edwards Plateau, the Chihuahuan Desert, and the Tamaulipan thornscrub country of South Texas. The opportunities for mountain biking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, and backpacking certainly spark the imagination. I am told there are occasional black bears and mountain lions in the area.

Francell at the Nature Conservancy notes that the scale will allow for "a wilderness experience" lacking in most Texas state parks, which tend to be small, crowded, or both. "You could have a multiday backpacking trip with designated camping areas," he told me.

Old favorites are also growing. Parks and Wildlife is eyeing 1,120 acres to add to [Caprock Canyons State Park](#), in the Panhandle, and a 1,750-acre property to bolt onto the [Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area](#), in southwest Texas. Central Texas's Enchanted Rock is tripling in size. That's thanks to two recent purchases at a total cost of around \$62 million: Comanche Rock, a 630-acre game ranch on the south side of the park that was slated for a residential development, and North Rock, a sprawling 3,073-acre ranch to the north.

In September, park superintendent Doug Cochran gave me a tour of both. Each boasts water features: Sandy Creek runs through a corner of Comanche Rock; the bigger North Rock contains a few ponds stocked with bass. There are areas of open grassland and granite boulder fields. (And one random donkey.)

Visitors will be rewarded with some of the best views of the Hill Country I've ever seen. At the north property, Cochran led me on a short ramble up to a rocky promontory. From this vista, I could see the spalled eastern face of Main Dome, the 425-foot granite batholith that improbably rises out of the hills north of Fredericksburg like a half-buried billion-year-old alien egg.

The new land offers vital protections to the relatively unpolluted landscape around Enchanted Rock. Texans can enjoy the Hill Country in all its glory, unmarred by encroaching development. Cochran pointed out a hillside at Comanche Rock, some six miles away. "When you think about the Hill Country and views," he said, "I can't think of a better one than this."

**In a sense**, Texans are buying back what they once sold away. That's just fine with the private landowners doing deals with the state. They get paid for their land, and some are happy to share their love of a particular place with thousands of others.

For years, Paul Rich didn't want to let go of his place. He bought Big Spring Ranch in 1999 after making good money in the grocery business. He ran a small herd of cattle,

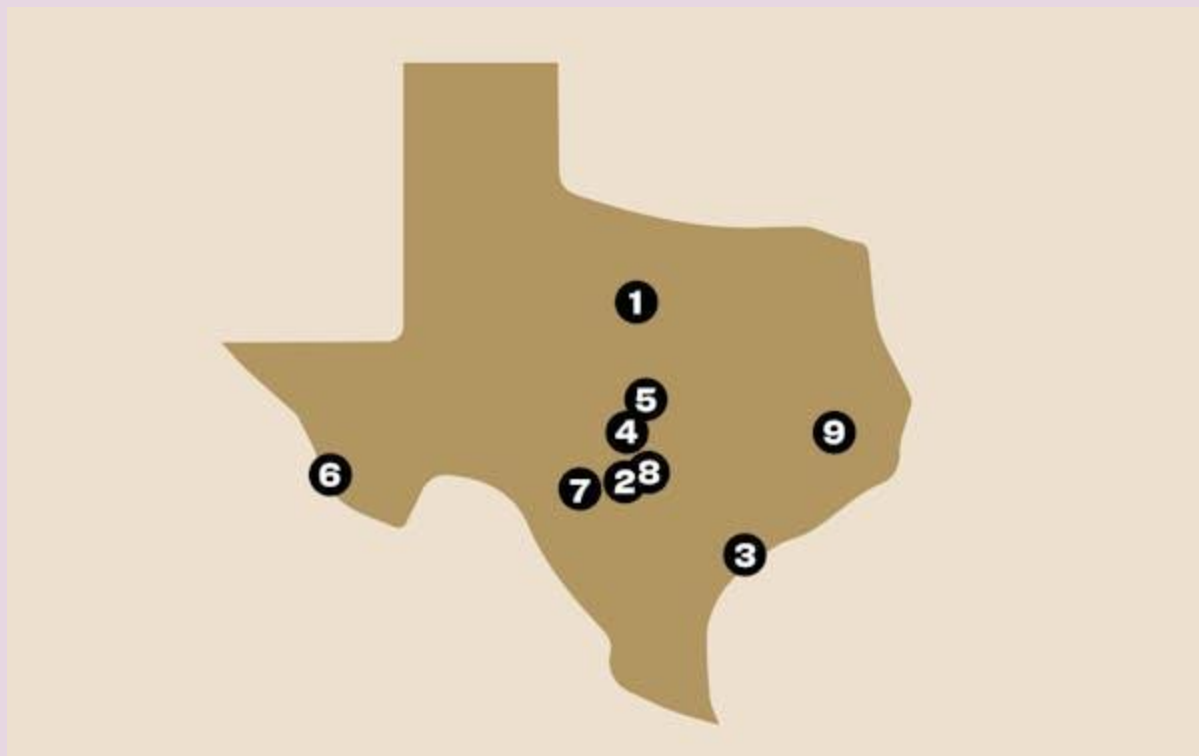


but mostly it was an escape for his family, where they could fish for white bass and hunt deer—“probably the best twenty-five years of our family’s life.”

He knows the land’s caves and Indigenous artifacts, its seeps and springs, its seasonal moods. He said the namesake spring is the “best spring in the county,” pumping hundreds of gallons a minute into Yancey Creek. “My dad always told me, don’t ever fall in love with a piece of real estate. Sure enough, I did it anyway.”

I asked Rich what I should see when I visited his old stomping grounds. Feel the cold water ushering forth from Big Spring, he said, and then hike a half mile down Yancey Creek to a “honey hole” beneath a limestone cliff, a pool favored by beavers, porcupines, foxes, and coyotes. Good fishing there too. “It was paradise,” he told me.

A few years ago, though, he knew it was time to sell. He was in his early seventies and living in Missouri to be close to his daughter. He put the property on the market with trepidation; he didn’t want to see it turned into yet another subdivision. He was watching as big ranches in the area were being chopped up into ranchettes—a statewide trend that is harmful to ecosystems and wildlife. So when Parks and Wildlife expressed interest, Rich was elated. “I was glad to sell it to them because it’ll never be cut up,” he said. “It’s in good hands.”



**Texas Monthly**

**New Public Lands Coming Soon**

1. Palo Pinto Mountains State Park. 4,871 acres. Rugged hills, sheltered canyons, and woodlands. Guided hikes available January 2026. *Full opening fall 2026.*
2. Albert & Bessie Kronkosky State Natural Area. 3,757 acres. Hill Country camping and hiking. *Full opening winter 2026.*
3. Powderhorn State Park. 2,253 acres. Coastal wetlands with fishing, kayaking, and birding. *Full opening winter 2029.*
4. Enchanted Rock State Natural Area expansion. 3,703 acres. Hunting and guided access ongoing. Hiking and picnicking available fall 2026. *Full opening 2029.*
5. Post Oak Ridge State Park. 3,118 acres. Hunting and guided access ongoing. Hiking and picnicking available fall 2026. *Full opening spring/summer 2029.*
6. Chinati Mountains State Natural Area. Roughly 39,000 acres. Wild and scenic desert mountains in Big Bend country. *Full opening 2032.*
7. Bear Creek State Park. Roughly 1,720 acres. Frio River frontage and Hill Country vistas. Guided access available fall 2026. Hiking and picnicking available spring 2027. *Full opening fall/winter 2029.*
8. Honey Creek State Natural Area expansion. Roughly 515 acres. One of the purest spring-fed streams in the Hill Country. Guided access ongoing. Hiking and picnicking on newly acquired acreage available fall 2026. *Expanded access projected by 2029.*
9. Davis Hill State Natural Area. 1,700 acres. One of the tallest hills on the coastal plain and a white-sand beach on the Trinity River. *Full opening 2034.*