

## **EXPLORATION GREEN CONSERVANCY NAMED TEXAN BY NATURE 2020 CONSERVATION WRANGLER**

*TxN Conservation Wrangler Program Accelerates Texan-Led Conservation Initiatives Impacting  
Texas' Natural Resources*

**April 1, 2020 – TEXAS – Texan by Nature (TxN)**, a Texas-led conservation non-profit announced today that **Exploration Green Conservancy** has been named among the 2020 Conservation Wranglers. The organization's **Conservation Wrangler** program recognizes six innovative conservation projects across the state of Texas for their science-based and results driven approach to conservation along with their ability to positively impact people, prosperity, and natural resources. The 2020 Conservation Wranglers will work with the Texan by Nature team, receiving 12-18 months of dedicated program support and tailored resources.

"Every year, Texan by Nature shines a light on conservation stewards and their efforts to take care of the state I'm proud to call home," shared former First Lady and Founder of Texan by Nature, Mrs. Laura Bush. "The Conservation Wrangler program proves that collaborative partnerships in conservation yield great benefits for Texas and its people. Congratulations to the six 2020 Conservation Wranglers, and thank you for the terrific example you've set for the rest of us."

"Representing every corner of Texas, the pool of Conservation Wrangler applications this year was beyond impressive," said Joni Carswell, President and CEO of TxN. "It is through invaluable conservation initiatives like these that our Conservation Wrangler program creates measurable and meaningful impact. While 2020 is vastly different than we imagined even a month ago, our work continues as we are inspired by our Conservation Partners, these projects, and the need for nature as a fundamental piece of our health. We look forward to sharing Conservation Wrangler learnings, best practices, and opportunities to scale conservation efforts in even BIGGER and BOLDER ways in 2020 and beyond."

Texan by Nature will recognize **Exploration Green Conservancy** and the 2020 Conservation Wranglers on October 27, 2020, in Dallas, TX at the George W. Bush Presidential Center. This diverse set of projects impacts land, water, habitat, and more, spanning all 254 counties and all 12 ecological regions of the Lone State State. The six selected 2020 Conservation Wranglers include:

### **Exploration Green Conservancy**

Every year, the Texas Gulf Coast is faced with damaging storm systems, costing Texas communities billions of dollars in repairs. Once completed, Exploration Green will provide stormwater detention for 500 million gallons of water, protecting over 2,000 nearby homes from seasonal flooding. Exploration Green is a recreation area and nature preserve housed in a stormwater detention area in southeast Houston. This once defunct neighborhood golf course turned conservation area has plans to include native grasses, 5,000 native trees, 150,000 wetland plants, 40 acres of lakes, and six miles of high-quality trails for area residents. Early phases of the project saved over 150 homes from flooding during Hurricane Harvey and completely mitigated flooding during 2019 Tropical Storm Imelda. In addition to stormwater relief, the conservation area improves water quality, provides carbon sequestration, and has doubled plant and bird diversity. Exploration Green also brings in residents of all ages and economic status to utilize trails and attend weekly community events. The project is led by two primary partners, Clear Lake City Water Authority and Exploration Green Conservancy, and is supported by 30 additional

partners from local businesses to conservation organizations. Exploration Green is embraced by the community with over 800 volunteers helping the project.

### **Respect Big Bend**

Energy development in Far West Texas is accelerating. All forms of energy – oil, gas, wind and solar alike – are central to the Texas economy. To balance energy development with the need to conserve West Texas’ unique cultural and natural resources, the Respect Big Bend (RBB) Coalition was formed to bring together government, business, philanthropy, communities, landowners, and industry leaders in a regional planning process focused on responsible energy development. The Coalition was established with primary support from the Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation and additional support from the Permian Basin Area Foundation, Meadows Foundation, and Still Water Foundation. Coalition partners include: Borderlands Research Institute at Sul Ross State University, Texas Agricultural Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, and the Bureau of Economic Geology at UT – Austin, and several others. The goals of RBB are to educate, inform, and provide resources to all stakeholders, develop a robust conservation plan, and garner support and acceptance of the plan.

### **Trinity Park Conservancy - Trinity River Conservation Corps**

The Trinity River is the longest fully-contained river in the state of Texas, flowing through 18,000 square miles of watershed and five major ecoregions, supplying tens of millions of Texans with a reliable water source. Trinity Park Conservancy and Groundwork Dallas have partnered to develop a youth employment program focused on the stewardship of the Trinity River: Trinity River Conservation Corps. The Corps program aims to enhance conservation efforts along the Trinity River Corridor, while providing education, service, and leadership opportunities to the next generation, with a focus on engaging youth from historically marginalized areas. The Corps will focus on projects such as stewardship of wetlands along the Trinity River that serve to mitigate flooding, along with projects in Harold Simmons Park, the Elm Fork, and the Great Trinity Forest. Engagement of the community, business, and conservation partners through the Corps will help to develop a cultural model of stewardship throughout the Trinity River Corridor.

### **Paso del Norte Trail**

Accessible trails connect people to nature, positively affecting their health and promoting a conservation mindset. The Paso del Norte Trail will provide greater opportunities for walking, hiking, and biking for users of all abilities to connect in the ecologically and culturally diverse border region of Texas. This project is a community-driven, collaborative effort to develop a county-wide trail in El Paso County. The goal of Paso del Norte is to create a regionally significant landmark that promotes active transportation, preserves the history and culture of the region, highlights the Rio Grande river, supports economic development and ecotourism, provides educational and volunteer opportunities, and makes healthy living the easy choice for the unique, binational community of El Paso. The roughly 68-mile span of the Paso del Norte (PDN) Trail is divided into five distinct districts, each broadly defined by their unique geographical, historical, and cultural context, as well as various amenities and attractions that help define them. Partners for this project include the Paso del Norte Health Foundation, City of El Paso, County of El Paso, El Paso County Water Improvement District #1, El Paso Water, Creosote Collaborative, Sites Southwest, and Alta Planning & Design.

### **Texas Brigades**

As families become more urban and less connected to our natural resources, conservation organizations must evolve and adapt to ensure they connect with younger generations on critical conservation issues. With a vision of creating “conservation leaders in every community,” Texas Brigades educates and

empowers youth with leadership skills and knowledge in wildlife, fisheries, and land stewardship to become conservation ambassadors for a sustained natural resource legacy. As Texas Brigades prepare to build on their legacy and plan for the future, organizational leadership is working on strategic planning, volunteer stewardship, and long-term data collection to ensure their programs meet the needs of Texas's changing demographics. Texas Brigades molds over 300 youth leaders each year with their Summer Camps and other programs, where participants have come from over 1,000 communities across Texas.. Participants leave with a connection to the land, informed and ready to make conservation a life-long passion.

### Texas Children in Nature

Children who spend time in nature are healthier, happier and smarter. In 2010 the Texas Children in Nature Network (TCiN) was created to address the growing concern of the lack of nature in children's lives. TCiN achieves its mission of connecting children with nature through regional collaboratives across the state - working with over 500 local and state partners in the health, education, community development and conservation fields. TCiN serves as a statewide networking hub, participating in various statewide leadership teams, providing resources to encourage children and families to spend time in nature, and addressing pressing issues such as equity and access to the outdoors, community development and public health policy. In 2020 TCiN will be celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a statewide summit in December – Inspiring the Next Ten Years, during which TCiN will also be unveiling a new strategic plan.

### **OPTIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL QUOTE HERE:**

The Texan by Nature 2020 Conservation Wranglers were selected, in part, based on the following criteria:

- Texan-led conservation initiative
- Benefits community by providing tangible returns for people, prosperity, and natural resources
- Reaches new and diverse audiences
- Science-based
- Measurable process and conservation outcomes
- Partnership between community, business, individuals, and conservation organizations

All will receive 12-18 months of tailored support and resources including:

- Connections to technical expertise and industry support
- Recognition and participation in annual Conservation Wrangler Summit and Celebration
- Strategic planning, program evaluation, and assistance with stakeholder engagement
- Amplification and marketing support for each individual initiative
- Professional produced content and collateral cross-promotion via TxN channels including social media, newsletters, and website

Last year's Conservation Wranglers included the [El Paso Water – Certified Water Partner Program](#), [Galveston Bay Foundation – Oyster Shell Recycling](#), [Friends of Rio Grande Valley Reef](#), [Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture – Grassland Restoration Incentive Program](#), [Ducks Unlimited – Texas Prairie Wetlands Project](#), and the [Trinity Coalition – Trinity River Paddling Trail](#).

Collective 2019 Texan by Nature Conservation Wrangler Program Highlights:

- **People:** TxN CW Projects impacted Texans across 54 counties (total of 111 since 2018)
- **Prosperity:** \$163.7 million in economic benefit

- **Natural Resources (Acreage):** 14.6 million acres =8.5% of Texas's 171.9 million acres
- **Natural Resources (Other):** 1.2 million gallons of water conserved (El Paso Water), 4.5 million ducks (TPWP), 130 miles of contiguous river trail (Trinity Coalition)), 240,000 Red Snapper (RGV Reef), 2,000ft of linear shoreline (Oyster Recycling), at least 450+ grassland bird species (GRIP)

Increasing conservation investment across Texas and working to drive and replicate innovation, Texan by Nature connects conservation partners to the resources they need to achieve greater impact. For more information on TxN partnerships and programs, or to learn how to get involved, please visit [www.texanbynature.org](http://www.texanbynature.org).

**ABOUT TEXAN BY NATURE:**

Texan by Nature (TxN) unites conservation and business leaders who believe Texas' prosperity is dependent on the conservation of its natural resources. TxN amplifies projects and activates new investment in conservation which returns real benefits for people, prosperity, and natural resources. Texan by Nature achieves mission goals through the Texan by Nature Certification program, Conservation Wrangler program, Symposia Series, and the Texan by Nature 20. Get involved and learn more at [www.texanbynature.org](http://www.texanbynature.org). Follow on Facebook @TexanbyNature, Twitter @TexanbyNature, and Instagram @texanbynature.

**ABOUT EXPLORATION GREEN:**

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