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Trinity River National Water Trail Task Force Meeting (Virtual)

August 13, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome & Meeting Purpose

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). 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. Steve gave an overview of the agenda for today's meeting.

2. State of the Trail

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 was the first nationally recognized trail in Texas and was one of 35 in the nation (one of about 56 now). It is 130 miles long with 21 official launch sites that traverse nine municipalities, including Dallas and Fort Worth and as far north as Lewisville. All but two sections are four to six miles in length (one section is 12 miles and one is 24 miles).

Dale provided an update on any closures, hazards, and upcoming special events. Loop 12 launch site remains closed due to flood damage. Trinity Coalition has proposed to the City of Dallas to make it a takeout site only. The launch site at River Legacy is slowly deteriorating. This spring there were two drownings on the East Fork of the Trinity River. The East Fork is not part of the Trinity River National Water Trail. Currently there is little to no infrastructure to support paddlers (canoe/kayak launches, boat ramps, or public roads to/from the river). Also, several local paddlers noted that the East Fork below Lake Ray Hubbard has many downed trees crossing the river making it difficult to paddle.

Heavy spring rains mostly closed the Elm Fork and Main Stem, while the Clear Fork and West Fork remained mostly open. River flow surpassed 3,000 cubic feet per second four times, but only for a couple of days each time. The downed tree between Hebron Parkway and McInnish Park washed downstream.

Area lakes are being drained into the Main Stem causing higher water levels causing special event and river cleanup cancellations. However, river cleanups with Tarrant County College students and the Earth Day celebration in Grand Prairie still occurred. The June 1 paddle party and demo day at Panther Island was a success. Trinity Coalition also recently assisted with a Trinity River Turtle Survey.



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3. Update on Planned Launch Sites

Dale mentioned that the Trinity Coalition is focusing on the natural flow of the West Fork—this is where large gaps of the trail exist. If takeouts are placed along the West Fork, it could be the most popular part of the trail and help fill gaps. A 24-mile gap from Arlington to Trammel Crow and a 12-mile gap between Handley Ederville Road and Arlington are both along the West Fork.

Currently there are five planned launch sites in various stages of planning: Belt Line Road (Grand Prairie), Viridian Development (Arlington), Trinity View Park (Irving), Riverside Park (Fort Worth), and Gateway Park at 1st Street (Fort Worth). Construction will begin in Irving once the water level drops to a more normal range. Launch sites at Riverside Park and Gateway Park are included in Tarrant Regional Water District's (TRWD) Master Plan and City of Fort Worth's Gateway Park Master Plan, respectively.

Dale asked the Task Force if there were others planned not listed. No feedback was provided.

4. VisitD-FW.com Website

Steve Smith (Trinity Coalition) updated the Task Force on recent efforts to make the Trinity River a nationally recognized recreation and conservation area. Trinity Coalition has created a website (www.VisitD-FW.com). They believe the DFW area to have the largest collection of urban recreational experiences. Steve provided a tour of the new website where there are maps and tables related to the Water Trail as well as hike/bike trails, mountain biking trails, golf trails, nature center, and lakes in proximity to the Water Trail. Trinity Coalition has also mapped hotels close to the river at each price point and will eventually make this map interactive to allow for room reservations.

Garrett Boone (Greenspace Dallas) applauded the website and recommended it be disseminated to all the regional chambers. He also noted the importance of ensuring the infrastructure is in place and the river is clean and maintained.

Don Raines (Dallas) mentioned the branding that the City of Dallas has for the Trinity River that is still being used. The branding was voted on and has rapport with Dallas and may help to incorporate it in some way.

Garrett mentioned Harold Simmons Park to be developed along the Trinity River near downtown Dallas. The park will have play areas, prairie walks, bike and skate parks, etc.—all with views of the river and city skyline.

5. National Monument Discussion

Steve Smith explained that Trinity Coalition is seeking to elevate the designation of the Water Trail to National Monument status, which requires approval from the U.S. President. Trinity Coalition is working to highlight the historical and cultural aspects of the Water Trail, in addition to the recreational opportunities. Steve mentioned that Trinity Coalition has formed an Indigenous Peoples Steering Committee to highlight Native American experiences along the Trinity River.



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6. Trinity River National Water Trail Master Plan Update

Erin Blackman (NCTCOG) mentioned that NCTCOG staff have been working to finalize the Master Plan. The plan includes vision and mission statements and eight goals. Each goal includes an outcome, strategies, recommendations, action items, and a case study. These goals came out of the meetings NCTCOG had with individual communities and organizations from September 2023 to March 2024. The goals, outcomes, strategies, and recommendations were also brought to the Task Force for review during previous meetings and a March Master Plan Work Group meeting. The new content is related to the action items (how the goals can be achieved) and case studies (how communities along the Water Trail may already be achieving the goals). The Task Force will have another opportunity to review the text and visual elements for the Master Plan following this meeting (materials will be posted to the website) and a September Master Plan Work Group Meeting.

Taylor Hegemeyer (NCTCOG) has been providing the creative support for the Master Plan. She reviewed the visual elements of the Master Plan and opened the floor for feedback. No feedback was provided.

Erin asked the Task Force to help fill some gaps related to Goal 3: Make the Water Trail more accessible to all and Goal 4: Maintain condition and safety of the Water Trail's existing and future launch sites, including, what launch sites are ADA compliant, what launch site designs are best for the Trinity River, and what, if any, local ADA advocacy groups are active in the region?

Dale responded that Bird Fork Trail Park and three trails on Lake Worth have boat ramps that he suspects would be ADA compliant but need verification. Lewisville Kayak Launch at Hebron Way is ADA compliant, and Trammel Crow may also be. Dale mentioned that he is not aware of any local ADA advocacy groups, but the City of Irving may have some suggestions. Dale would like to identify sections of the river that are best for ADA usage.

Chris Chastain (Lewisville) said they are in the process of developing a concept design that could be used once approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for sites on the Trinity River that incorporates more natural elements.

Brandi Kelp (Fort Worth) mentioned the importance of identifying potential sites, costs, and funding sources as city capital projects take time to coordinate and include in long-range plans.

7. Task Force Roundtable

The following information was provided:

- Don Raines (Dallas): Water quality and perception is important, and we need to find ways to alleviate people's fears. Once people realize what they do outside the river affects the river, people will appreciate it more and want to be better stewards.
- Brandon Morton (Dallas College): Educational institutions may be good partners. For example, TCU offers outdoor recreational classes.
- Nathan Drozd (NCTCOG, Transportation Department): Mentioned NEPA Section 4(f) requirements are only applicable for USDOT and FHWA projects and since the project is designated as a National Water Trail it would be triggered if the project impacts the Trinity



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River. Projects in a National Monument would include a similar level of requirements.

8. Upcoming Opportunities

Erin 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>).

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

Jade Affleck, Dallas County
Susan Alvarez, NCTCOG
Erin Blackman, NCTCOG
Garrett Boone, Greenspace Dallas
Chris Chastain, City of Lewisville
Walter Council, City of Fort Worth
Nathan Drozd, NCTCOG-Transportation Department
Heather Firn, Trinity River Authority
Dale Harris, Trinity Coalition
Jai-W Hayes-Jackson, NCTCOG
Taylor Hegemeyer, NCTCOG
Joquin Hernandez, City of Dallas
Kevin Hill, City of Dallas
Dave Holl, Local Kayaker and Kayak Store Owner
Brandi Kelp, City of Fort Worth
Lexi McCalip, Tarrant Regional Water District
Brandon Morton, Dallas College
Carlos Navarro-Servin, City of Dallas
Nicholas Nix, City of Forney
Lauren Partin, City of Dallas
Teresa Patterson, Trinity Coalition
Steve Plumer, City of Grand Prairie
Ian Seamans, Environment Texas
Steve Smith, Trinity Coalition
Amy Snelgrove, Texan by Nature
Jorge Torres-Arellano, City of Dallas
Bret Wilkinson, City of Dallas
Dana Woods, City of Grand Prairie
Kate Zielke, NCTCOG