

Star. These cards join four other existing passports - Senior Partial, Senior Full, Disability and Disabled Veterans - each with their own rules, qualifying documents and benefits.

The Active Duty passport allows free entry to Texas State Parks for an individual currently serving in the United States Armed Forces. This includes the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard and Space Force, as well as Reserve and National Guard members. Applicants will need to present a valid photo identification and proof of active-duty service issued by the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD).

The Veterans passport allows free entry to Texas State Parks for a service member who was honorably discharged from the United States Armed Forces. Applicants will need a valid photo identification and either a DOD-issued veteran's identification card, state-issued driver's license or identification

card that includes U.S. military veteran designation, military discharge papers (DOD form DD214), or veteran's health identification card issued by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Gold Star passport allows free entry to Texas State Parks to a surviving spouse, parent, child or sibling of a person who died while serving in the United States Armed Forces. This also includes stepsiblings and stepparents. Grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles and cousins are not eligible. Each eligible family member must apply for their own Parklands Passport. Applicants will need to show three documents to be issued a passport — valid photo identification, service member's proof of casualty and proof of relationship to the deceased.

For more information, including eligibility requirements and acceptable documents, visit the Texas Parklands Passport page on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department website.

TPWD seeks public input on land, water plan

By Jessica Domel
TFB Multimedia Reporter

Texans have until the end of September to weigh in on a draft plan outlining the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's (TPWD) goals, objectives and strategies for the next 10 years.

"In fulfilling our mission, TPWD is committed to delivering effective natural resources stewardship and outdoor recreation programs that exemplify the highest standards of quality, service and professionalism," Dr. David Yoskowitz, TPWD executive director, said. "We view the Land and Water Plan as a critically important tool used to guide and evaluate effectiveness of the agency in delivering our mission and ensuring our programs continue to meet the needs of the state and all Texans."

The draft Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan outlines three goals for the department over the next decade:

practice, encourage and enable science-based stewardship of natural and cultural resources;

increase access to and participation in the outdoors; and

educate, inform and engage Texas citizens in support of concerns and recreation.

"Embedded under those three goals are 14 specific objectives that cover those thematic topics," Tim Birdsong, TPWD's deputy director of Inland Fisheries, told the TPW Commission. "Under those 14 objectives are 104 specific strategies that really related more to the efforts of our teams and programs. Then, we added 671 measurable actions."

The first of the 14 objectives is to "be an exemplary steward

of the public's lands and waters by using the best available science for ecosystem based management."

"For the fiscal year '24 and '28 timeframe, under the fish and wildlife management thematic area, we'll have conducted 60,000 fish and wildlife surveys (12,000 annually)," Birdsong said. "This relates to our surveys of waterfowl and other migratory birds, mule deer, bighorn sheep surveys and fisheries surveys that are conducted in reservoirs, streams and so on."

The plan calls for TPWD to perform over 1,500 project-based consultations annually though state and regulatory processes to inform the conservation of fish and wildlife resources.

"So, 60,000 surveys would be conducted over that five year timeframe, 70 applied research projects that provide the science to help refine and inform our resource management decisions, 50 science communication events and 4,000 public seminars and workshops that center on fish and wildlife conservation management efforts," Birdsong said.

Objective two is to "provide technical assistance, scientific tools and strategies to restore and protect healthy aquatic ecosystems."

Birdsong said the plan includes "7,500 regulatory consultations with other state and federal agencies, engaging



Construction Zone! Work continues on the new exhibit space and theater at Fort Chadbourne.

in processes like the Clean Water Act, permitting processes administered by the (Army) Corps (of Engineers) or other state and federal agencies, making sure there's consideration of fish and wildlife resources in regulatory decisions."

The plan includes a commitment to conservation status assessments for a number of in-peril and rare species.

"We're committing to restore five species to a portion of their native range over the next five years," Birdsong said.

TPWD's commitments for public water center around continuing fish stocking programs and investing in fish habitat restoration.

"That includes restoration of oyster reefs, large scale management of aquatic vegetation in Texas lakes, management of aquatic invasive species, expanding access through paddling trails and new fishing access areas, maintaining our urban fisheries initiatives, updating our statewide assessment of ecologically significant streams, and we're also committing to invest in voluntary water transactions,"

Birdsong said.

Voluntary water transactions includes water agreements with voluntary landowner partners or river authorities to manage lake levels or river flows "in a way that benefits recreation and

conservation of fish and wildlife resources."

The third objective is to "maintain, restore and protect healthy ecosystems on public lands."

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