Boardwalk Progress

If you have made your way along the southeast section of the Butler Trail, we hope you have seen the Boardwalk construction coming along. Pier construction is nearing completion and installation of concrete decking has begun (as seen in photo above).

Completing the Trail includes both the over water boardwalk sections and several sections that are on land. Two on-land sections are nearing completion and the decomposed granite trail surface in these areas will be placed soon.

Please remember the area of Boardwalk construction remains an active work site and be cautious of boats and barges working on the lake - thank
you! Photos from November 2012 (construction start) through August 2013 can be seen [here].

Great Parks Keep Austin Thriving

The Trail Foundation and key Austin parks groups (including Austin Parks Foundation, Tree Folks, Keep Austin Beautiful, Shoal Creek Conservancy, and Pease Park Conservancy) have come together as Great Austin Parks (GAP) to advocate for a $4.75 million increase in the Parks and Recreation Department's 2014 annual budget. Four major categories are targeted: trees, trails, pools and maintenance.

TTF as a private partnership will continue to use private funds to deliver needed enhancements to the Butler Trail but the City funds the basic Trail maintenance for forestry, trail grading, trash pickup, restroom cleaning, etc.

As we all know, parks and libraries are the first to be cut in hard economic times. Parks cuts have not been restored in economic upturns like the current one. Forestry in the Parks Department had 28 employees in 1992 for 6,900 acres of parkland and yet in 2012, Forestry had just 24 employees for 19,500 acres. This means that the professional forestry staff has little time to do preventive tree care and focuses on cutting down dead and dangerous trees. And last Saturday's sad Trail injury incident shows the importance of this needed funding.

Austinites may be surprised to learn of the inadequate forestry funding situation given the importance of trees for shade, habitat diversity, and beauty as well as mitigation of the urban heat island effect. Austin is in the bottom third of major American cities in spending on park maintenance per capita according to the Trust for Public Land's "City Park Facts". This does not befit our Austin community that prides itself on being a conservation leader.

YOU can help by e-mailing Austin City Council members NOW and letting them know that you want them to FUND OUR PARKS NOW!

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bill.spelman@austintexas.gov
Have You Seen Me?

Neon skimmer (Libellula croceipennis), Shoal Creek, Austin, TX, by Ted Eubanks

A variety of these lovely dragonflies are all about town these days. Unfortunately, they only live for a few short weeks and will be gone soon. As you make your way around Lady Bird Lake, take a little time to enjoy them while they last. You can learn more about these lovely and fascinating creatures here.

THIRST at Lady Bird Lake

A temporary art installation by Women and Their Work will be on display at Lady Bird Lake from September 29 - December 20, 2013. The installation titled, THIRST, memorializes over 300 million trees that were lost during the 2011 drought. The project acknowledges the devastating impact drought has on our environment and aims to encourage conservation and sustainability.

Women and Their Work was one of 80 arts organizations from around the country invited to apply for an Artistic Innovation and Collaboration Grant from the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation and one of the nine chosen for grant support. To learn more about the project and the artists, click here.

There is Still Time...

While early bird pricing ended last week, there is still time to register for the 2013-14 Austin Fit Magazine Distance Challenge. We are honored to be the series beneficiary.
and grateful for all the runners that give back to the Trail.

The challenge includes the following six races:

- IBM Uptown Classic - 10/6/13
- Run For The Water - 10/7/13
- Decker Challenge - 12/8/13
- Rogue Distance Festival 30/10k - 1/5/14

Click here for additional information about the Austin Distance Challenge including the Full and Half Track options.

Thanks, Volunteers!

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped clean Lady Bird Lake on Saturday, August 10th! We appreciate Keep Austin Beautiful for organizing the clean-up and Zilker Boat Rentals for donating the canoes.
A BIG thanks to Grayco Partners, developer of the South Shore District, for their generous support of the Trail! Not only did they donate $225,000 to support the Boardwalk project, they also rolled up their sleeves and helped clean-up litter along the southeast shoreline of the Butler Trail - thank you!

15-minute Trail Survey

A UT research team has already completed a Trail user count and is conducting an online survey of Trail users to gather additional data and they could use your help. If you haven't already, please take 15 minutes for the survey. Thank you!

Volunteer Opportunities

Lady Bird Lake clean-up: Saturday, October 19 from 9 - 11 a.m. There are plenty of open slots to help pick-up around Lady Bird Lake, click here for more information and to register.

Trail Tale from Memory Board

Following is another memory left on the Trail Memory board this past February. Thanks to all of you who shared your memories and stories.

I find the trail to be a divine inner city escape coupled with the feelings of community, fellowship and connection to nature!