



# EL CORREO



WINTER 2021 - 2022 EDITION

## Table of Contents

### **ElCaT Updates:**

- 2** Letter from the President
- 3** Meet Our Team
- 3** Austin-Area October Events
- 4** Onion Creek Metropolitan Park Project
- 5** ElCaT Annual Meetings Moved from October to April
- 5** Signage Efforts Along the Trail
- 6** Interpretive Wayside Project to Benefit Multiple Trail Sites
- 7** Outreach Efforts and Activities Along the Trail
- 7** New Bridge Dedicated at Travis County - Old San Antonio Road Crossing of Onion Creek
- 8** We Have A Traveling Exhibit
- 9** Central Texas Chapter Outreach Effort

### **Model Trail Community Chapter Updates:**

- 10** Rancheria Grande Chapter Report for 2021
- 10** Trail de Flores Model Trail Community Chapter

### **Agency Updates:**

- 13** Texas Historical Commission Update
- 15** Texas Historical Commission Real Places 2022 Conference

## Letter from the President

Greetings ElCaT Community,

Earlier this year a working group of board members joined Executive Director Steven Gonzales in creating a new strategic plan for the Association. Thank you John Kisalus (Chair), and contributors Jesse Treviño and Adam Adams for your insights and time spent on the project. We reiterated our mission: “The Association seeks to protect the historic integrity of the trail, to educate and engage the public about its significance, and to promote resource development, interpretation, and tourism along its path.” Simply put, our focal points are Protect, Educate, Engage, and Promote. How convenient that there is a brand called “Peeps” to provide visual aids at our board meetings! In order to support our overall mission, we have three goals, focusing on Capacity, Identity, and Protection.



Cindy Freeman, President

In the area of Capacity, with leadership from our Development Committee, a key goal is to increase funding to support our mission. Examples include hiring a Development Director and establishing an Endowment Fund that is intended to provide long term funding by distributing a fixed percent of invested assets on an annual basis. One of our board members has contributed seed money, and we will be encouraging friends of the Association to add to the endowment over time. We are also formalizing a strategy for increased federal and state funding, including activities timed to coincide with the state legislative sessions, and more robust outreach to federal elected officials for increased support of the trail.

Regarding Identity: with our Community Relations committee, we are working to expand the number of chapters, or Model Trail Communities, with an initial focus on central Texas. Currently we have chapters in Milam County and Wilson County. We will work with local partners to host events such as hikes, presentations about the trail, and arts activities. We plan to reach out to eco-tourists and naturalists to share areas of interest. We have also created a YouTube channel for select videos.

Regarding Protection: With our Resource Protection Committee, our efforts include identifying threatened resources, evaluating the potential acquisition of buffer zones, and considering the possibility becoming a Land Trust. Part of our efforts in this area involve deepening relationships with willing land owners.

We welcome Association members who are interested in serving on our Development, Community Relations and Resource Protection committees, to help us further our work in the areas of Capacity, Identity, and Protection.

If you would like to learn more about the Association, please follow us on Facebook or Instagram, or become a member and subscribe to our email newsletter that includes activities along the trail, such as our recent hike and picnic at McKinney Falls in Austin, followed by a crankie musical performance.

For membership information, visit <https://www.elcaminorealdelostejas.org/support-us/>

We hope to see you along the trail very soon!

Cindy Freeman

## Meet Our Team by Elaine Sullivan



Elaine Sullivan

Elaine Sullivan is working with El Camino Real de los Tejas National Trail Association towards various graphic design projects this year. She previously worked with us a couple of years ago on our traveling exhibit (which you can read about on pages 8-9). Currently, her efforts include working to revamp our Association brochure, designing an interpretive panel for the City of Austin - Matthew Brown House, and the creation of the report you are currently reading! These products will provide trail insights to a wide array of visitors via multiple traditional and electronic formats. In 2022, Elaine will also be helping with logistics for Model Trail Community chapter outreach efforts and an international workshop between the National Park Service, Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, and state agency partners such as the Texas Historical Commission, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and Louisiana State Parks.

## Austin-Area October Events by Steven Gonzales

On October 23rd, a number of activities to celebrate and promote the trail took place in the Austin-area.

The day started out with a walk at the Estancia development along the Travis County Old San Antonio Road (not to be confused with the OSR that largely mirrors Highway 21 within Texas). The walk was led by Immediate Past-President Tom Byrd and attended by about a dozen people. Attendees were informed about the history of the location and development potential within it, including interpretive opportunities and pedestrian and roadway signing.

Later in the day, focus shifted to McKinney Falls State Park and trail resources within it. A guided-hike was led by Steven Gonzales and ElCaT member Brian Beattie. Attendees explored the Lower and Upper Falls crossings within the park and viewed swales and rock-walls cataloged at the site. After a luncheon for guests, activity moved to the Smith Visitors Center where a new Camino Real exhibit has been recently revealed. Guests were able to view the exhibit prior to an original artistic performance by Brian Beattie and his wife Valerie Fowler. Known as the Camino Crankie, the performance consists of Brian singing and playing guitar while Valerie cranks a crankie box with her unique and beautiful images portraying various scenes and histories along the trail. Currently the performance takes viewers from the Rio Grande to Austin, but will be a complete journey across the Camino once it is finished.

Much was learned throughout the day and new friends and associates were made. We thank all who participated and look forward to other events in the future.



ElCaT Immediate Past-President Tom Byrd speaks to attendees of the walk at the Estancia property.



Brian Beattie and Valerie Fowler performing the Camino Crankie



ElCaT board members and staff pose with Brian Beattie and Valerie Fowler

## Onion Creek Metropolitan Park Project by Steven Gonzales

We have been working on a study-route of the trail between Menchaca Springs and McKinney Falls State Park, which crosses through Onion Creek Metropolitan Park (OCMP). We have been looking at OCMP as being along the route that would have led to the crossing of Onion Creek at McKinney Falls State Park. McKinney Falls currently does not have the official trail-line crossing through it, though it is recognized by the NPS as an official site on the trail. If the research and archaeology within OCMP demonstrate a link to the Camino Real, another route of the Congressionally-designated trail could be added to our understanding of the road. Developments such as signed hiking trails with interpretation about the NHT could be installed at the Metro park and create a deeper understanding of the trail and its history in the area.

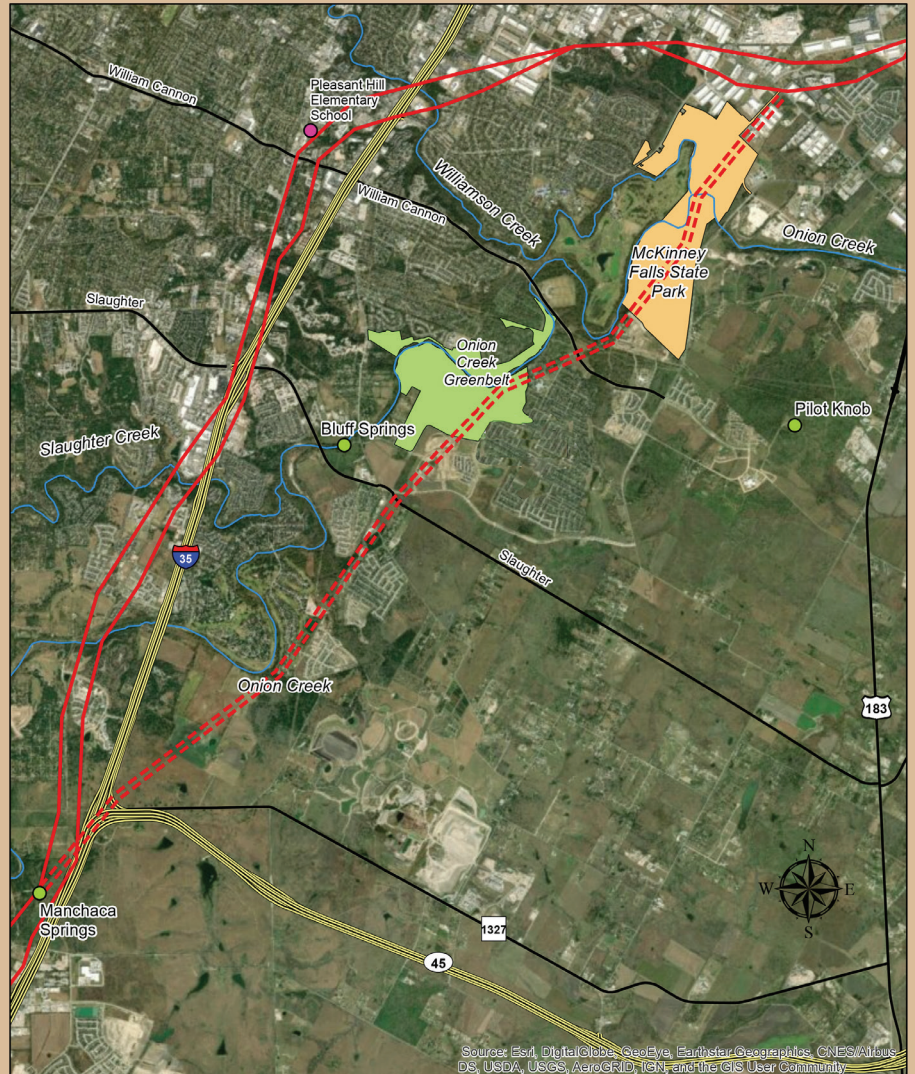
As part of the effort, and in order to determine the link of OCMP to the National Historic Trail, we have initiated a Community Activated Parks Project (CAPP) with The City of Austin – Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) to conduct historic and archaeological research within the park. The estimated cost of the project is \$84,996 and to-date about \$34,000 has been raised. At this

time, we are working with GTI Environmental, LLC and PARD to obtain an Antiquities Permit from the Texas Historical Commission to conduct the archaeological work at the site.

We have received multiple donations to let the initial historic research into the site and its connection to the trail to begin. The historic research is the first phase of a two-phase project, which will lead to on-the-ground archaeological investigations. Both phases will be conducted by GTI Environmental, LLC.

A Go Fund Me page has been setup by EICaT member and volunteer Brian Beattie for the fundraising effort. All donations are 100% tax-deductible and will go exclusively to the work in OCMP.

### Onion Creek Metro Park & Potential Camino Resources



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Author:  
Alexander Boest-Petersen  
Datum:  
D\_North\_American\_1983  
Coordinate System:  
GCS\_North\_American\_1983



- Pleasant Hill Elem. School/TxDOT Noted Location
- NHT Line
- Recognized Camino Resource
- Potential Camino Resources
- Bluff Springs, Manchaca Springs, Pilot Knob
- - - Study Route
- Onion Creek Park System

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

<https://gofund.me/69b8f447>

## ElCaT Annual Meetings Moved from October to April by Steven Gonzales

On October 29, 2021, an electronic vote of the general Association membership came to a close. Within the vote was a bylaws amendment that allowed for ElCaT's annual meeting to be moved from October to April. The measure passed with the full support of voting members, so beginning in April 2022, annual meetings will take place in April of each year!



2019 Annual Meeting at Apache Pass



2017 Annual Meeting in Goliad, Texas

The reasons for the shift were many including a desire to have increased membership presence at events occurring in the Spring versus the Fall, when so many other activities are taking place. And to allow for meetings in odd-numbered years to occur in Austin during the Texas Legislative session, so that Association members can visit with their representatives in order to seek their support for the Camino and its development.

Our first April Annual meeting will occur in Floresville, Texas on April 22 - 23, 2022. Stay tuned to our social media accounts and website for more information as it becomes available.

## Signage Efforts Along the Trail by Steven Gonzales

There are multiple signing efforts taking place along the trail in places such as Austin - Travis County, San Antonio - Bexar County, and Sabine County. There are also projects moving forward in Nacogdoches, Cherokee, Houston, and Atascosa Counties.

Meetings have taken place with Travis County Commissioners Ann Howard and Margaret Gómez who have expressed their support for the effort. Additional meetings are scheduled with other Travis County officials and members of the Austin City Council.

In *Sabine County*, County Judge Daryl Melton and County Historical Commission Chair Weldon McDaniels have asked that we move forward with signing the remaining unsigned routes in Sabine County. There are three routes in the county and currently only the main corridor, Highway 21, is signed. An Advanced Funding Agreement (AFA) has recently been signed with TxDOT to install roadway signing on the two remaining routes in the county. These are the Kings Highway and Carter's Ferry



Signage in Robertson County



Signage in Nacogdoches County

installation will begin. When Cherokee and Houston Counties are signed, the entire East Texas - Caddo Region of the trail will have official roadway signing!

roads. The county is eager to install the signs and to celebrate the history of the Camino in the area!

New sign plans, which meet updated Federal Highway standards, have been created for the San Antonio - Bexar County area. The plans will be shared with local historic experts with knowledge of the routes of the trail to ensure they accurately guide trail users along roadways mirroring the historic route of the trail.

In *Nacogdoches County*, the county received replacement panels for signs along Highway 21 in late 2020. The county is working to obtain an AFA with TxDOT, so that the installation can occur. It is expected that the work will be completed in early 2022.

Cherokee, Houston, and Atascosa Counties have expressed interest in signage being installed in their counties. The NPS is working to create sign plans for each locality, and once they are done, the process towards their

Wilson County has also completed signing efforts at Helton Park and interpretive panels in Floresville. For more information see page 12-13 for the Trail de Flores Model Trail Community Chapter Update

## Interpretive Wayside Project to Benefit Multiple Trail Sites

by Steven Gonzales

Over the last year, ElCaT has partnered with the National Park Service – National Trails office and the Section 106 Group to design interpretive panels for four sites across the trail! The sites are the Rio Grande Overlook at Arroyo San Francisco in Zapata County, Apache Pass in Milam County, Mission Dolores State Historic Site in San Augustine County, and Los Adaes State Historic Site in Natchitoches Parish. The sites are owned by two agencies of the State of Texas, Louisiana State Parks, and a private landowner in Texas.

The panels have custom artwork illustrations and interpretive content both in English and in Spanish. They were created as a template, so that interpretive and orientation panels across the trail will have the same look and feel and provide a uniform experience for visitors to trail sites.

The panels have been shipped to their respective destinations and Zapata County and the River Pierce Foundation have recently worked to install their panels at the Rio Grande Overlook at Arroyo San Francisco, giving visitors a prime location for an international experience of the Camino and the lands it crosses through.

Look for more to be installed soon at a site near you!



Interpretive signage at the Rio Grande Overlook

## Outreach Efforts and Activities Along the Trail by Steven Gonzales

In order to generate interest and activity towards our MTC outreach effort, we conducted various outreach efforts in multiple locations across the trail. The first occurred on the Floresville El Camino Real Trail on March 27th. A group of supporters walked the entire length of the trail and discussed local activities and trail development possibilities in the area. In May, the Association had a guided-hike at The Medina River Greenway in San Antonio to raise awareness about the trail. The walk was led by Sergio and Melinda Iruegas of GTI Environmental, LLC because of the archaeological efforts they conducted in conjunction with us at the Perez Jacal, which is in the greenway. Also in May, Melanie Butler hosted a table in Milam, Texas in Sabine County for the annual Sale on the Trail. Situated at El Camino Park in the community, Melanie spoke with dozens over the two days she was there, provided informational materials, and sold merchandise for the Association. On National Trails Day, the first weekend of June, the Trail de Flores MTC chapter conducted a successful NTD event which included viewing of ElCaT's traveling exhibit and a hike on the trail with city and county officials. In October, ElCaT had multiple walks in the Austin area to celebrate the trail and to welcome in the Fall



Attendees in Floresville March 2021

## New Bridge Dedicated at Travis County – Old San Antonio Road Crossing of Onion Creek by Steven Gonzales

On December 4th, Travis County, City of Austin, and federal officials came out to show their support for El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail during the dedication of a new bridge that crosses Onion Creek on the Travis County – Old San Antonio Road. At the edge of the Estancia development, which ElCaT is working to get interpretive, pedestrian, and roadway signage installed at, the new bridge replaces the nearly 100 year old low-water bridge that has become overwhelmed by growth in the area.

County Commissioners Ann Howard and Margaret Gómez, Austin councilwoman Ann Kitchen, and Congressman Lloyd Doggett of the US House of Representatives were on hand

to recognize and to celebrate the new roadway and celebrate the history of the Camino that came before it centuries ago. All are committed to working with ElCaT to develop the trail for visitors in the Austin area, and with their support, the Estancia area is envisioned to be a prime place for the public to learn about and experience the trail.



Onion Creek Bridge Dedication - December 4, 2021

The dedication ceremony was devised by ElCaT Immediate Past-President Tom Byrd and it was a successful event that brought many together to support their National Historic Trail!



## We Have A Traveling Exhibit! by Elaine Sullivan

### About the Exhibit

We worked with the National Park Service, researchers, and multiple funders to create a traveling exhibit on the trail. Our goal with this project is to raise awareness of the trail and encourage protection of this irreplaceable historic resource.

The exhibit, titled El Camino Real de los Tejas: Its History, People, and Places, has three themes that focus on: 1) The role of the trail in cattle drives to support the American Revolution, 2) Its influence on settlement patterns throughout Texas and Louisiana, and 3) How to see and experience the Camino today.

The exhibit begins with an introduction to the Camino and its beginnings as an American Indian footpath, which was later traveled and adapted during Spanish exploration. The exhibit also discusses the use of the road for cattle drives by the Spanish into the Mississippi Delta in support of the American Revolution against the British. The exhibit narrative also discusses settlement patterns along the trail and how ecoregions influenced settlement. And it closes out by illustrating to the viewer how they can see and experience the trail in modern times.



The exhibit's format is seven retractable, free-standing vinyl banners each with dimensions of 33.5" W x 86" H.

### Policies, Guidelines, and Rental Information



The exhibit on display at Franklin Carnegie Library, November 2019

The fee to rent the exhibit is based on the current or most recent overall budget of the organization that would like to house it. We feel this is the fairest way to provide an opportunity for a wide variety of organizations with varying financial means to host it.

The sliding scale for hosting is as follows and includes ground shipping via Lone Star Overnight to the host location: Hosting locations are responsible for return shipping costs.\*

<u>Organizational Budget:</u>	<u>Rental Cost:</u>
• \$0.00 to \$50,000:	\$200.00
• \$50,001 to \$100,000:	\$250.00
• \$100,001 to \$150,000:	\$300.00
• \$150,001 to \$250,000:	\$350.00
• \$250,001 to \$300,000:	\$400.00
• \$300,000+:	\$600.00

\*Shipping to locations outside of Texas will result in increased overall costs due to use of alternate shippers with higher rates.

## TEKS Standards

El Camino Real de los Tejas: Its History, People, and Places traveling exhibit is designed for a 7th grade reading level and contains various pictures and maps to demonstrate a variety of information. The TEKS Standards for 4th through 8th grade Texas history classes are listed below.

### *Knowledge and Skills for :*

#### Grade 4

1. History – Caddo Indians, colonization
2. Geography – patterns of settlement
3. Government – Spanish colonial government

#### Grade 5

1. History – colonization, American Revolution
2. Geography – settlement patterns, adapting to the environment

#### Grade 6

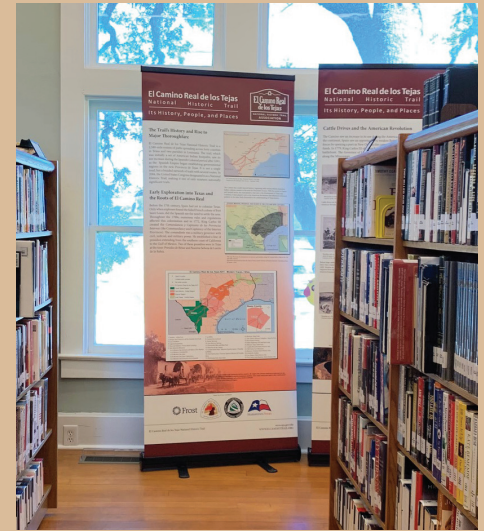
1. History – colonization, various cultures
2. Geography – geographic factors, economic development, interaction with physical environment
3. Culture – conflict and cooperation among cultures

#### Grade 7

1. History – Spanish Colonial Texas, Spanish settlement, founding of San Antonio
2. Geography – adapting to the environment, transportation
3. Culture – Spanish influence

#### Grade 8

1. History – exploration and colonization
2. Geography – geographic factors: landforms, transportation, settlement patterns
3. Economics – economic activity: cattle ranching
4. Culture – relationships between various groups through colonization



The exhibit on display at Franklin Carnegie Library, November 2019

***If you are interested in learning more or hosting the exhibit, please contact us at [staff@elcaminorealdelostejas.org](mailto:staff@elcaminorealdelostejas.org) or call 512.850.9073***

## Central Texas Chapter Outreach Efforts

by Steve Gonzales



Association Members on Sugarloaf Mountain at the 2019 Annual Meeting

We have been awarded a \$9,285 grant from the Partnership for the National Trails System to provide funding for an intern to help coordinate our Model Trail Community outreach events in Central Texas. The grant was approved in late January and work towards the effort is underway. We are currently coordinating with the NPS – NTIR to determine a time for the outreach to begin, and we are looking at potential partners. The effort will focus on the San Antonio to Austin trail corridor and seeks to establish a chapter in each community, in addition to New Braunfels and San Marcos.

A lot of preparatory progress has been made towards the MTC effort. We have: 1) researched potential venues for the events in San Antonio, New Braunfels, San Marcos, and Austin, 2) created promotional graphics and a press release for outreach in each community, 3) developed a Model Trail Community page for our website with a subpage about the Central Texas initiative, 4) created registration pages for each event, and 5) created Zoom meetings for online participation in each meeting.

We have determined that conducting the initiative around our January board meeting would be best for all involved. We are anticipating a May 2022 time-frame for the meetings to take place. Stay tuned to our social media and website for updates!

## Rancheria Grande Chapter Report for 2021 by John Pruett

The most significant project completed in 2021 by the members of the Rancheria Grande Chapter was a narrated PowerPoint and mp4 video of the historical resources in Milam County during the period of the El Camino Real Historic Trail. The PowerPoint/video is a virtual tour of Milam County following the footsteps, hoof prints, and wagon ruts of the 1716 expedition of Domingo Ramón. For the most part, travel is on modern highways well marked with National Park Service directional and information signs.

The tour includes images and narration of historic resources such as Apache Pass, located in the Western portion of the County just northwest of Rockdale, TX, as one travels from west to east across the County.

*The San Xavier Mission Complex of 1748-1755*, with monuments for the three missions, is also located near Apache Pass. The Spanish missionaries constructed the mission complex some 40 years following Ramón's expedition.

The *Rancheria Grande*, a region located North of Gause, TX, was home to the indigenous peoples of some twenty-two tribes. These villages were lived in and occupied for thousands of years before the incursion of European people. Archeological investigation has revealed village sites and trail remnants (swales). The region was an important for intertribal trade and cultural exchange.

*Sugarloaf Mountain* is a prominent navigational landmark for early travelers along this route to East Texas. The people of the Tonkawa tribe refer to the mountain as La Tortuga and consider the site sacred as their creation site. Sugarloaf Mountain is located near the confluence of Little River with the Brazos. It is near here that the Ramón expedition crossed the Little River and then the Brazos upriver from the convergence of the rivers on their travel eastward. Subsequent travelers describe these river crossings as Brazos de Dios in respective journals.

## Trail de Flores Model Trail Community Chapter by Dave Regan

### Creating a Local Identity

The Trail de Flores Chapter was excited to lead the effort within the Model Trail Community Task Force that led to the approval of chapter-specific logos and logo design guidelines. Chapter logos provide each chapter an opportunity to identify with its local trail history while making a strong branding tie to the Association.

The Trail de Flores Chapter worked closely with the Association, following its recently published design guidelines, to develop the first chapter logo within the Association. The design captures the historical connection



Trail de Flores Chapter logo



Floresville El Camino Trail Trailhead

between Rancho de las Cabras in Wilson County (depicted by its historic brand design) and Mission Espada in Bexar County. It also depicts the chapter's aspiration to create a retracement route that reconnects these important historical sites.

### Connecting the Trail to History

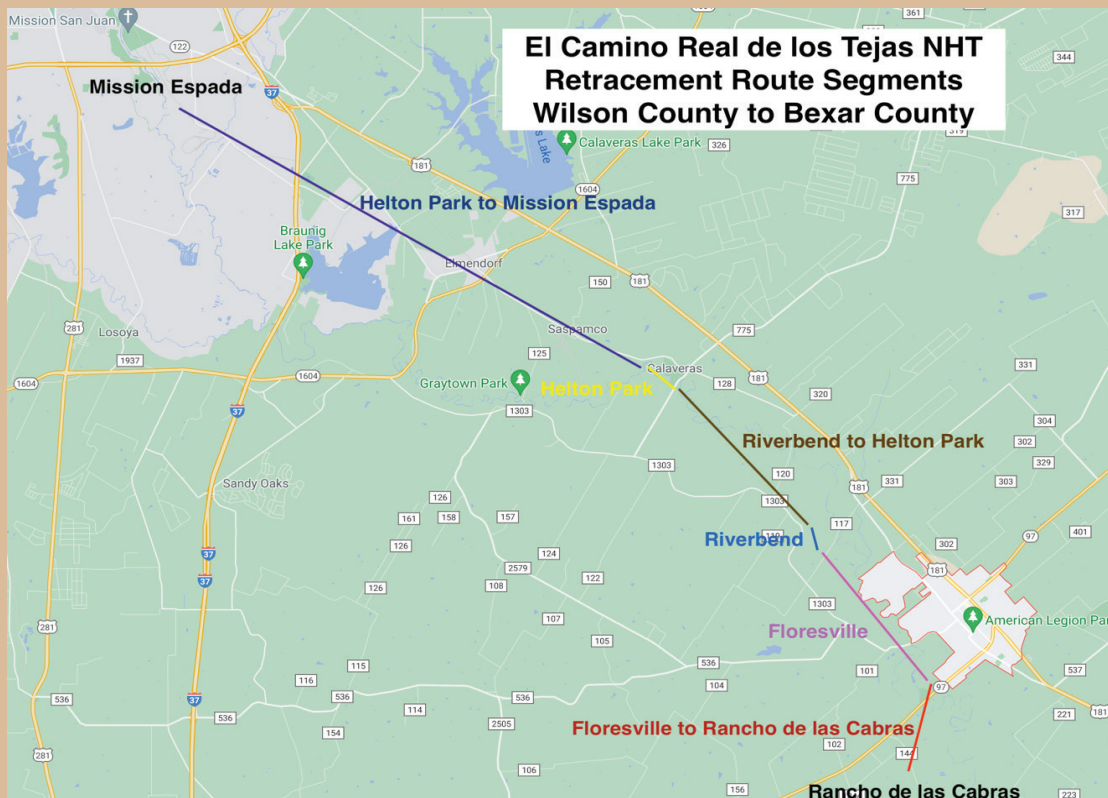
The Trail de Flores Chapter and the Floresville Hike and Bike Trail Committee worked together to propose a new name for the Floresville Hike and Bike Trail to better reflect its designation as part of the El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail. After considering many name options, the committee proposed "The Floresville El Camino Trail" to its city council, and on May 27th the council formally adopted the new name.

### Realizing the Vision - Connecting Rancho de las Cabras to Mission Espada

As detailed in the National Park Service 2013 feasibility study titled "A Vision of Opportunities," a vision was established to connect the Rancho de las Cabras to Mission Espada with an actual retracement trail that follows closely to the historic trail route using, for the most part, the old San Antonio Aransas Pass Railroad rail bed – last used by Union Pacific.

The Trail de Flores Chapter has taken on the project of realizing this vision as one of its primary focus areas. This is a challenging project for our small chapter, and our approach is to take it on in small bites, one section at a time.

This vision can be broken down to 6 parts:



Floresville (2.5 miles): The city of Floresville established a trail along this route in 2014 using the abandoned rail corridor. This continues to be the longest section of walkable trail within the El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail system.

Riverbend (1 mile): Riverbend is a golf course and housing community located at the northern end of the Floresville section of the trail. The abandoned rail corridor bisects this community. An agreement was struck in 2018 with the housing developer to incorporate an extension of the Floresville El Camino Trail through the golf course and housing section currently under construction. A significant portion of that housing has been completed. We will soon be meeting with the City of Floresville and the housing developer to ascertain what needs to be done to make this trail section a reality.

Riverbend to Helton Park (6.5 miles): This section of the proposed retracement trail runs along the abandoned rail corridor. We have begun the process of exploring the feasibility of creating this section of the trail. We have had discussions with the Association, Union Pacific (presumed “owner” of the abandoned rail corridor), Wilson County officials, the National Park Service, and the Rails to Trails Conservancy. We have also developed a vision and roadmap document using guidance from the Rails to Trails Conservancy’s trail building “toolbox” to help craft a way forward.

Helton Park (1 mile): Historical records clearly show the historic trail route ran directly through the area now known as Helton Park. Helton Park is owned and managed by the San Antonio River Authority and is a very natural setting along the San Antonio River complete with hiking trails. The Trail de Flores Chapter led the effort to have trails within the park designated as part of the El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail system. This project came to fruition this year culminating in the installation of NHT signs along the trail within the park.

Floresville to Rancho de las Cabras and Helton Park to Mission Espada: These sections are at the far northern and southern ends of the proposed retracement trail and will be explored at a future date.

## Promoting the Trail



The traveling exhibit display at the National Trails Day event with the Trail de Flores Chapter in collaboration with the Floresville Hike and Bike Trail Committee



National Trails Day event hike with the Trail de Flores Chapter and the Floresville Hike and Bike Trail Committee

The chapter was busy this year promoting the trail via two separate trail events.

In March, the chapter partnered with the Association to organize a hike on the Floresville El Camino Trail. This event provided us an opportunity to educate the public about the history of the trail and surrounding areas, as well as to discuss future trail development plans. A Facebook live event was broadcast during the hike.

In June, the Chapter organized a National Trails Day event in collaboration with the Floresville Hike and Bike Trail Committee. The event included a trail hike, information tables from both the Trail de Flores Chapter and the Floresville Hike and Bike Trail Committee, the Association’s impressive educational traveling exhibit,

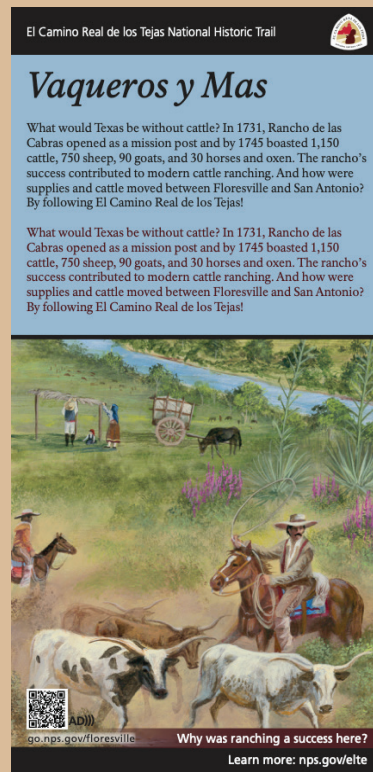
and remarks by local and chapter officials. The chapter was grateful for the support from and attendance of the Floresville Mayor, City Council members, and City Manager, as well of the leadership team from the Floresville Economic Development Corporation. The Chapter estimates approximately fifty community members attend the event, and all appeared enthusiastic about the renewed emphasis on making the trail a part of the community fabric, and for the foresight of those involved in seeing the potential for the trail to be a stimulus for city growth.

## Improving the Trail User’s Experience

The chapter has worked diligently with the National Park Service to complete the design and production of trailhead interpretive panels and mini exhibit signs. The interpretive panels will be located at each end of the Floresville El Camino Trail and will provide trail users navigational information and historic context. The mini exhibit signs provide trail users specific insight into the history along the trail. These trail enhancements will not only improve trail access, but give the trail user a locally unique vicarious experience. The interpretive panels should be installed in early 2022. The mini exhibit signs should be completed shortly thereafter.



Trail Head Interpretive Panel



Mini Exhibit Panel Example

## Texas Historical Commission Update by Justin Minsker

### Mission Dolores State Historic Site

On October 9, the Texas Historical Commission’s Mission Dolores State Historic Site reopened after a two-year restoration!

Mission Dolores was a Spanish mission built in 1721 in what is now San Augustine County, just 20 miles west of the Texas-Louisiana border. The site tells an important history about the Native American experience with Texas’ earliest European settlers.

As with other Spanish missions, the goal at this site was to convert the local Indigenous People—the Ais, a group related to the Caddo—to Christianity and assimilate them into Spanish culture and control.

The new museum exhibits focus on this cultural crossroads between the Ais, Spanish, and French and their lasting historical impact. Located in the newly remodeled 1,900-square-foot gallery, the space highlights objects found during archeological excavations, including stone, ceramic, and metal artifacts that help illustrate the story of the people who lived at Mission Dolores in the 1700s.

In addition to the historical exhibit, visitors can enjoy a new museum store featuring items unique to the site. Mission Dolores also features walking trails, a disc golf course, campgrounds, and group pavilions.



New Mission Dolores Museum Exhibit

## Caddo Mounds State Historic Site

In 2021, Caddo Mounds reflected on two years of healing as they look ahead to the future.

April 13, 2019—that year’s Caddo Culture Day event—should have been a time of celebration at Caddo Mounds State Historic Site. Instead, the festive event turned into a catastrophe when an EF3 tornado hit the site, killing one visitor and injuring dozens. Among the injured were many members of the Caddo Nation, descendants of the same Caddo who constructed the namesake features of the site 900 years ago.

In addition, the tornado destroyed the site’s museum and unique grass house, which was built in accordance with Caddo tradition by tribe members and volunteers in 2016.

Since that time, the tribe, the site, and the community have been processing and recovering from the sha-ho—the Caddo name for the tornado experience. Survivors made a tile memorial mural that is now on display at the site, each tile representing an individual’s personal experience.



Caddo Mounds Visitors Center Construction

Snake Woman’s Garden (Keekah Nattee Toots’ah Naht’ooh) continues to thrive, providing a bounty of traditional food and medicine, along with space for educational programming. Many generous supporters have donated to the rebuilding effort through the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission. And rebuilding is underway. Construction continues on the new museum. Plans are in place to begin rebuilding the grass house in 2022, again relying on Caddo tradition passed down through time.

Meanwhile, there are two other projects on the horizon: a virtual tour program and a crisis response toolkit.

The “Caddo Voices: Caddo Mounds Virtual Experience” will highlight the stories of the site and the lives of contemporary Caddo people and their ancestors, connecting tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

The crisis and trauma response toolkit, which is being funded by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, will grow through participation by Caddo people, local community members, and site staff. The resources developed through this project will be published for use at historic sites, museums, and public places across the state and beyond.

## Texas Historical Commission Real Places 2022 Conference

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) hopes you will join us February 2–4 in Austin for the sixth annual Real Places Conference, presented in partnership with Phoenix I Restoration and Construction!

Hosted by the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, the conference provides an opportunity for preservationists and officials to network and learn with County Historical Commissions, Main Street managers and participants, historic preservation officers and design review boards, architects and engineers, historians, archeologists, curators, interpreters, managers of museums and historic sites, as well as THC staff, Texas Heritage Trail Regions, and many partner organizations.

In addition to the regular conference schedule, Real Places 2022 will include pre-conference workshops for various audiences on Wednesday, February 2.



PHOENIX I RESTORATION AND CONSTRUCTION PRESENTS

**REAL PLACES**

2022 CONFERENCE  
PRESERVING TEXAS HISTORY

**FEBRUARY 2-4**  
DOUBLETREE BY HILTON HOTEL, AUSTIN

[thc.texas.gov](http://thc.texas.gov)

[www.thcfriends.org/realplaces](http://www.thcfriends.org/realplaces)



## Thank you to ElCaT's Sponsors!

### Partner (\$1,000+):



Lucinda Freeman  
Judge Bob Perkins

### Preservationist (\$500-\$999):

Adam Adams



Jim Neal  
Rob Peterson

John Pruett  
David Regan  
Andrew Voudouris

### Pioneer (\$100-\$249):

Stephanie Anderson  
C. Lynn & Linda Braswell

Nancy Byrd  
Tom Byrd  
Shawn Carlson  
Ann Davis  
Chief Davis  
Glynn Donaho  
Lucile Estell

Steven Gonzales  
Robert Harris

La Salle County Historical Commission  
David Leal

Duke Lyons  
Henry Mayo

Carl and Tara Mica  
Milam County Historical Commission  
Margaret Musselman

Betty Oglesbee  
Brenda Pruett  
Joan Ratliff  
Brandon Reynolds

Elizabeth Snell  
Raymond Starr  
Maureen Winn  
Lynn F. Young

De La Zerda Historical Cemetery

### Board of Directors

Lucinda "Cindy" Freeman - President  
John Kisalus - Vice-President  
Lynn F. Young - Secretary  
Dave Regan - Treasurer  
Tom Byrd - Immediate Past-President  
Adam Adams  
Rebecca Blankenbaker  
Frank "Chip" Briscoe  
Bob Perkins  
Jesús "Jesse" Treviño

### Executive Director

Steven Gonzales

### Contact Us

P.O. Box 41286  
Austin, Texas 78704  
P: 512-850-9073  
F: 512-451-3110  
E: [staff@elcaminorealdelostejas.org](mailto:staff@elcaminorealdelostejas.org)

### Connect With Us

Visit our website: [www.elcaminotrail.org](http://www.elcaminotrail.org)



Facebook:  
[@elcaminorealdelostejas](https://www.facebook.com/elcaminorealdelostejas)



Twitter and Instagram:  
[@elcaminotejas](https://www.instagram.com/elcaminotejas)



**El Camino Real de los Tejas**  
**National Historic Trail Association**  
P.O. Box 41286  
Austin, Texas 78704

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FORM

Salutation: Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr. First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization/ Business: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
County or Parish: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Organization Website (\$100+ Levels): \_\_\_\_\_

**TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP** (Please check all that apply):

RENEWAL  NEW MEMBER AND  INDIVIDUAL  BUSINESS

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS: NOTE - ALL MEMBERSHIPS ARE FOR ONE FULL YEAR AND ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE.

- PARTNER: \$1,000
  - Partner Sponsorship Recognition at all Events Trail-Wide
  - Displayed in Interactive Map into this area
  - Special ECR Homepage Recognition with Logo and Link to Your Website
  - Recognition in ECR Email Newsletter
  - Partner Window Sticker
  - Certificate of Recognition
  - Personalized Membership Card
  - Quarterly Email Newsletter
  - Trail Map
- PIONEER: \$100
  - Website Recognition - Prominently listed on the Wall of Pioneers
  - Invitations for You and a Guest to Special Events
  - Personalized Membership Card
  - Bumper Sticker
  - Quarterly Email Newsletter
  - Trail Map
- PRESERVATIONIST: \$500
  - Special Recognition with Logo and Link to Your website in Interactive ECR Trail Map
  - Recognition in ECR Email Newsletter
  - Certificate of Recognition
  - Personalized Membership Card
  - Bumper Sticker
  - Quarterly Email Newsletter
  - Trail Map
- PATHFINDER: \$50
  - Personalized Membership Card
  - Bumper Sticker
  - Quarterly Email Newsletter
  - Trail Map
- TRAILBLAZER: \$250
  - Special Recognition and link to your website in Interactive ECR Trail Map
  - Certificate of Recognition
  - Personalized Membership Card
  - Bumper Sticker
  - Quarterly Email Newsletter
  - Trail Map
- EXPLORER: \$35
  - Personalized Membership Card
  - Bumper Sticker
  - Quarterly Email Newsletter
  - Trail Map
- STUDENT: \$10
  - Same benefits as an Explorer
  - Membership at a Student Rate