



## *Town Lake Trail Foundation Newsletter*

*June 2005*

### **Welcome!**

First, thanks to the 500 new members who joined the Town Lake Trail Foundation in the spring of 2005 and thanks also to the 700 hard-working volunteers who came out to join us for various trail improvement work-days. It has been a very busy spring.

If there's anything here that's of particular interest and you'd like to get more involved, please send an explanation of your interest directly to the project director or send your contact information to [volunteers@townlaketrail.org](mailto:volunteers@townlaketrail.org).

Please also consider becoming a member of the Town Lake Trail Foundation if you have not already done so. The Trail needs your support as we continue to protect, improve, beautify and expand our city's crown jewel, the Town Lake Hike and Bike Trail. We need Austinites like you who love the Trail to lend a hand. Visit [www.townlaketrail.org](http://www.townlaketrail.org) to join today. As always, thanks for your support.

Here's an update on many of the projects we're currently working on.

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### *Trail Foundation Events and Activities*



#### **Get Ready to Run, Drink and Dance at The Milago Moonlight Margarita Run**

Presented by



On Thursday evening, August 4, the Town Lake Trail Foundation will host the Milago Moonlight Margarita Run benefiting Austin's Town Lake Trail. If you have not already registered, we'd encourage you to do it now because the after-party will easily sell out by July 4.

After a shotgun start at sunset, runners, walkers, and friends of Austin's Town Lake Trail will wind their way along a 5K course through the streets bordering Town Lake. The nighttime race route begins on Veterans Drive near Austin High and runs through the Lake Austin Boulevard area finishing in front of the American Legion Hall on Veterans Drive. After we run, the Trail Foundation will host a post-race moonlight party with Tex Mex food, music and margaritas on the grounds of the Legion Hall.

Participation in the Moonlight Margarita Run is limited to 3,000 racers and just 500 tickets will be sold to the Moonlight Margarita After-Party.

Right now, tickets are just \$25 for the run, \$40 for the after-party and \$60 for both at [www.moonlightmargaritarun.com](http://www.moonlightmargaritarun.com). If tickets to either event are still available on July 16, ticket prices will be \$30 for the run, \$50 for the party or \$75 for both. All proceeds go to the Town Lake Trail Foundation, a 501(c) 3 organization dedicated to maintaining and improving the Town Lake Trail.

Contacts: Rochelle Storin, Race Director, [rochelle@townlaketrail.org](mailto:rochelle@townlaketrail.org) or Maura Nevel, After-party Director, [maura@townlaketrail.org](mailto:maura@townlaketrail.org)

### Spring Trail Volunteer Workdays

It was a busy spring and early summer. More than 700 of the finest people in Austin came out to help us clean up and beautify the trail. Trail workdays were held on January 22 and 29, February 5 and 19, April 16 and 23, May 14 and 21, and June 3. One more trail workday is planned for June 25. After that, we will take a well-deserved vacation until the Town Lake Trail Trash and Treasure Hunt on Saturday, October 1. For an invitation for you and your friends to join in any of these efforts, please send an email to [volunteers@townlaketrail.org](mailto:volunteers@townlaketrail.org).

Contact: Sara Moore, landscaping director, [sara@townlaketrail.org](mailto:sara@townlaketrail.org).

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### Corporate Trail Workdays

This year, thanks to inquiries from Deloitte, Freescale Semiconductor and Intel, we planned two special corporate philanthropic workdays.

Intel On The Trail -- On Saturday, May 14, roughly 50 volunteers from Intel gave up their Saturday and worked their butts off near Waller Creek removing particularly troublesome stands of invasive and aggressive species of trees and vines: poison ivy, privet, chinaberry, grapevine and Arunda (giant cane). Additionally, they removed truckloads of trash, clothes and rubbish that had accumulated in the area. They were joined by the construction staff building the Milago Condominiums on Town Lake and The Milago picked up the tab for breakfast and lunch for everyone.

Deloitte-Freescale Impact Day -- On Friday, June 3, more than 300 volunteers from Deloitte and Freescale Semiconductor joined forces with American Youthworks and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center for one of the largest volunteer workdays in Austin's history in Zilker Park. Two massive new flowerbeds were built; 1,000 feet of cedar guardrail was constructed; piles of brush were removed; an entire new 2000 foot trail was constructed from the Town Lake Trail to the Zilker volleyball courts; and the first ever landscape lighting pilot project was installed on a 200 foot test section of trail that was the scene of numerous trip and fall accidents. In addition to the gift of their time and energy, Deloitte and Freescale each kicked in \$15,000 to fund the improvements that were made. For years to come, we will be indebted to these two fine organizations as we enjoy this beautiful section of trail.

If your company is interested in funding and organizing a corporate team building day in 2006 that will at the same time leave a lasting impression on Austin and Austinites, please contact Dan Garrison at [dan@townlaketrail.org](mailto:dan@townlaketrail.org). We need your help!

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## Racing for the Trail

Racing for the Trail, a program to benefit the Town Lake Trail Foundation, is kicking off its second season with the Capital 10K on Sunday April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Turn your racing miles and fun runs into donations for the Trail. If you are interested in being a sponsored runner or in sponsoring a runner, please visit [www.racingforthetrail.org](http://www.racingforthetrail.org) or contact program director Jeff Burrus at [jeff@townlaketrail.org](mailto:jeff@townlaketrail.org)

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## *Trail Improvement Projects Already Underway*



### **New Mile Markers are Coming!**

At the Town Lake Trail Foundation's Mile Marker Auction in February, we offered a sneak peak at the new mile marker design and raised more than \$24,000 in funding for the program. In May, the City gave their final blessing and we began manufacturing the mile markers. We anticipate that they will be complete and installed by September 2005. Just half's and whole's will be ready initially. We hope to add  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile markers in 2006.

Eight mile markers, primarily those located between Holly Street Power Plant and I-35 on the spectacular east end of the trail, remain available for underwriting. If your family, friends or company are interested in underwriting the manufacture and maintenance of a new Mile Marker, please send a check for \$1,500 to New Mile Markers, Town Lake Trail Foundation, PO Box 5195, Austin, Texas 78763. In return, we'll send you a framed certificate with a photograph of your mile marker, a map of its location and a letter of thanks from the Trail Foundation and the City of Austin.

Contact: John Graham, project director, [john@townlaketrail.org](mailto:john@townlaketrail.org)



### **The Barton Creek Bamboo Grove**

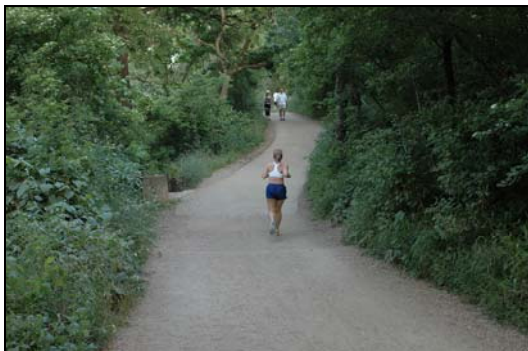
Just east of Barton Creek lies an enormous grove of bamboo. For years, this area was an eyesore and sometimes a scary place for trail users. According to City of Austin and Parks Police officers, there were a number of homeless camps housed within the grove. In addition, this form of bamboo is a troublesome invasive species that grows by its root system underground and it was spreading up and down the bluffs of Barton Creek at an alarming pace. Working under the direction of Jim Phillips of Bamboo Specialists and the Texas Bamboo Society, and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, our volunteers spent countless workdays deep in the grove removing rubbish, trash, human waste, and trimming back the bamboo. Additionally, the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department helped us install a 36" deep rhizome barrier in the earth surrounding the grove. Herbicide was used to control and eliminate stalks growing outside the barrier.

Now the garden is a safe and enjoyable place to visit and trail users can see deep into the grove so their fear of whom or what might be lurking inside no longer exists. In an interesting, and probably accurate, development, we were actually thanked by the homeless people who frequented the grove who claimed that trail users seeking a place to use the restroom were responsible for much of the waste.

Contact: Jim Phillips, project director, at [Jim.Phillips@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:Jim.Phillips@dshs.state.tx.us).

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### **Landscape Lighting Pilot Project Almost Ready for Prime Time!**



Part of the extensive project completed by Deloitte and Freescale on Impact Day (June 3) included installation of a landscape lighting pilot project along one 200' section of the Zilker trail that is notorious for its trip and fall hazards. Our intention with this test project is to mitigate the "trip and fall" hazards, and secondarily, demonstrate that the trail can be lighted in an aesthetically and environmentally sensitive manner. We do not make claim that this project will improve the safety or security of trail users from crime and firmly believe that safety is best assured via increased Park Police and APD patrols and cannot and should not be remedied via lighting the trail.

Our landscape lighting committee has been at work for over a year designing a lighting system that will meet everyone's concerns about glare, ambient light, power drain, cost, durability and sustainability. Leading up to the installation, we repeatedly tested a variety of lamps and fixture solutions via a silent power generator and extension cords.

The lamps have now been installed. The system is solar powered and a large solar mast and array has been installed at the west end of the test section. Initially this left a barren hillside and the array is a slight eyesore. However, by next year, foliage and trees we're planting will have fully come in and the array will no longer be noticeable.

Today, we are still working to optimize the system. We are now testing various filters that will alter the radiance and brightness of the light given off by the bulbs under various nighttime conditions. We're also trying to reduce or eliminate any blindness that occurs as trail users enter and leave the test area. Last, we intend to fully remediate the area with new plants, trees and landscaping. This winter, when it gets dark around 5:30pm, we'll be able to open up the test for user feedback.

If this pilot project is successful, there are a few other dark, trip and fall-prone stretches where we want to test similar landscape lighting solutions.

Contact: Bill Curra, project director, at [William.Curra@rsandh.com](mailto:William.Curra@rsandh.com)

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### **Healthy Trees for the Trail**

Throughout 2005, you'll see professional arborists and volunteers from the Town Lake Trail Foundation and Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center working in wooded areas along the trail.

Healthy Trees for the Trail is a comprehensive woodland management plan for the Town Lake Trail. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Town Lake Trail Foundation, and Austin Parks and Recreation Department are partnering to return the meadows and woodland areas along Town Lake to a healthy state and assure that care of the trees, wildlife, and flora is sustained for years to come. The activities of these trained volunteers and professionals include brush and vine removal, tree trimming, creating and administering individualized healthcare for specimen trees, elimination of poisonous and invasive species, replanting with native species to restore ecosystem health, as well as construction and installation of interpretive signage to educate us all about the significance of pristine ecosystems and the role of native plants and trees. Our work crews have been instructed not to block the trail under any circumstances

To date, we have removed roughly 250 diseased, dead or dangerous trees from the Austin High, Zilker Park and Waller Creek areas and planted more than 350 native species saplings. Due to the dangers poised by working in the trees during oak wilt season and the acres of poison ivy that can endanger workers, Healthy Trees for the Trail volunteer work has been suspended until this winter at the request of the Parks Department. However, professional arborists will begin removal of dangerous invasive species (Chinaberry, Chinese tallow, privet and grape vine) that threatens specimen trees along the south and north shores of the river between Lamar and MOPAC in August and continue their work into the winter months. We anticipate that by February 2006, we will have completed work in the first two priority sections: north of the river between Lamar and MOPAC and south of the river between Barton Creek and MOPAC. Maintenance efforts will continue through the spring and winter of 2006. As additional funding is secured, we plan to continue work in east Austin near Holly Street Power Plant, at Waller Creek, by Deep Eddy Pool and downtown.

PLEASE DO NOT BE ALARMED IF YOU SEE SOMEONE CUTTING OR REMOVING A TREE FROM THE TRAIL. IT IS EITHER AN INVASIVE OR AGGRESSIVE SPECIES THAT IS DANGEROUS TO THE ECOSYSTEM OR IT IS DISEASED AND A DANGER TO TRAIL USERS. With the help of TreeFolks, hundreds of native Texas trees and saplings are being planted to replace those that are removed. Additionally, special attention is being placed on areas that are natural wildlife habitat such as leaving dead trees in place and avoiding particularly dense areas altogether.

Contact: Dan Garrison, project director, at [dan@townlaketrail.org](mailto:dan@townlaketrail.org).

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## *Upcoming Trail Improvement Projects*

### **Lou Neff Point Landscaping Restoration**

*rendering still to come*

One segment of the trail in need of immediate repair and improvements is located at the confluence of Barton Creek and the Colorado River (along the south shore of the lake). This heavily used area, known as Lou Neff Point, is adjacent to the City's Barton Springs Pool, Zilker Park soccer fields, and duck feeding area along Barton Creek. Items in need of repair and improvement along this 1/2 mile segment include:

- Widening of the trail to decrease overcrowding and conflicts between walkers, runners, and cyclists;
- Improving the trail surface, lake edge protection and drainage facilities to minimize erosion and loss of vegetation,
- Removing and replacing timber retaining walls and steps that have rotted away
- Installing drainage culverts under the trail to reduce erosion
- Lessening the grade of the concrete portion of the trail so that it is not such a steep turn
- Installing a new water fountain and dog fountain
- Improved landscaping

In 2004, the Town Lake Trail Foundation applied for and won a grant from Texas Parks and Wildlife to fund this effort. We have hired one of the finest landscape engineering and design companies, Sitio Design, and have recently presented our plans to the Parks Department for approval. We are currently awaiting their evaluation of our plan and hope to begin work in 2005.

This project, unfortunately, is a little like a visit to the dentist: you know it will be painful but it has to be done. This section of the trail will be closed and a trail detour through Zilker Park will be in place for approximately 60 days. Unfortunately, the overhaul is just too big a project to handle any other way. Incentives are being put into the contract for rapid completion so we ask for your patience as we transform the once glorious Lou Neff Point again into one of the most beautiful spots anywhere in Austin.

Contact: Dan Garrison, project director, at [dan@townlaketrail.org](mailto:dan@townlaketrail.org).



## New Trailhead Maps

Today, if you want to find your way from the Stevie Ray Vaughn statue on Auditorium Shores to Deep Eddy Pool, you'd better already know the way or be willing to stop and ask for directions. You could not find your way using the limited signage that exists on the trail.

Interviews with visitors to Austin, hotel managers and concierges indicate that one of their primary concerns is that many first-time trail users get lost on the trail. With more than 20 miles of hike and bike trail and fewer than 7 unmarked maps along the route, it is easy to understand why. Worse still, the maps that are on the trail were placed there in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. Since then, bridges have been built, and trail extensions have been added, but the maps and directional signage has never been updated. An additional frustration we frequently hear is that the distances between the mile markers along the trail are incorrect, not to mention that the mile markers are placed in dangerous locations, and of course, they are unattractive.

Our plan is to design, manufacture and install trailhead entrance maps at the most heavily used entrances to the trail, along with a meaningful system of 20 directional signs and 21 new mile markers. Each map will show the well-known 10.2 mile loop.

Additionally, we want to install directional signage at forks in the trail that says simply: "Barton Springs this way" or "Downtown >." TLTF volunteers have mapped the entire park and its system of trails in order to establish key locations for directional signs. After completing 300 trail user surveys to assess the effectiveness of the maps, and receiving a favorable 92% approval rating, we presented our designs to the Parks and Recreation Department and are awaiting their approval.

Contact: Eddie Rash, project director, at [erash@alphagraphics.com](mailto:erash@alphagraphics.com)

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## The Rowing Center Overlook Restoration

One of the prettiest sections of trail is located between Austin High and the Colorado River on the north bank. Just east of the Rowing Center is an oval-shaped overlook with four or five benches, a few trashcans and a small garden.



In the 70's, the parks department stabilized the riverbank by dropping odd-sized rocks ("rip rap") along the edge that were glued together with concrete. They also landscaped the area with rocks, raised elevations, railroad tie retaining walls and benches. A decomposed granite trail runs along the outer edge of the overlook. People having picnics, reading books, feeding ducks, and just gazing out at the water frequently use the area.



The river has continued to erode the edges of the overlook and has slowly eaten away at the "rip rap." A local family who often visits this site has expressed an interest in funding its restoration. We have developed shoreline and landscaping designs and are in the process of routing these through the city's permitting office for approval. We hope to begin this project in the fall or winter of 2005.

Contact: John Loudamy, project director, at [loudamy@yahoo.com](mailto:loudamy@yahoo.com)

