



THE TRAIL CONSERVANCY

Mile Marker

Q2|2024

CONNECT **The Butler Trail**



Gathering Together Members to Enjoy Wildflowers and Views

April 2024

The Cypress and Conservation Circles gathered in April for a Spring Garden Party to kick off the year and enjoy delicious food, drinks, and incredible views. Guests heard updates on exciting Trail projects and programs from Board Chair Claire Hempel and Interim CEO & COO Hanna Cofer against the backdrop of the Austin skyline and the Butler Trail. The highlight of the evening was the exquisite wildflower garden bursting with colorful natives in peak season. Thank you to Cypress Circle members Ruthie and Gene Burrus for generously hosting TTC at their beautiful home.



Celebrating Earth Day Trail-Style

April 21



trash from Lady Bird Lake and the Butler Trail. The most obscure piece of trash pulled out of Lady Bird Lake? An abandoned shopping cart!

Earth Day marks an important moment each year for learning and acting, and TTC is creating opportunities for our community to do both. On Friday, April 19, we teamed up with our partners at the Rowing Dock and Epic SUP to activate a clean-up crew of monumental proportions — on land and on lake! Nearly 2,000 corporate and community volunteers removed over 14,000 pounds of

PROTECT **The Butler Trail**



Building a More Resilient Park Ecosystem Ongoing

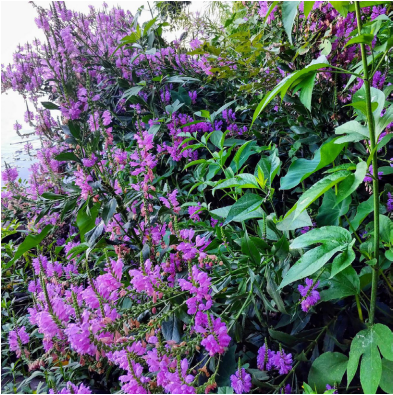
With the help of our 257 volunteers, TTC just wrapped a successful spring planting season, installing 3,788 native plants and saplings at key locations around the Trail. This puts us well on our way toward the more than 8,000 we add to this urban forest and parkland annually. This work is a critical step in our ecological restoration process, which aims to increase biodiversity, rebuild natural ecosystems and processes, and mitigate climate change impacts on the Trail. The tools and techniques we implement include:

- Habitat restoration through activities such as reforestation and wetland creation;
- Invasive species management that controls and removes invasive species, preventing them from out-competing native species and disrupting ecosystem dynamics; and
- Soil restoration to improve soil health and fertility through practices such as erosion control, organic matter addition, and soil amendments.

Ecological restoration plays a vital role in building a more resilient future. Through collaborative efforts and adaptive management, we can achieve sustainable landscapes that benefit both nature and society in the heart of downtown Austin.

Protecting and Sharing a Rare and Endangered Species

Ongoing



Correll’s False Dragonhead (*Physostegia correllii*) is a rare plant related to mints, with only 15 historic occurrences across the Gulf Coast region of the South. This rare plant can most easily be found around Lady Bird Lake, where it blooms profusely in pink during summer in shade with permanently wet soils. Lady Bird Lake contains 22 known genetic individuals, which predominantly reproduce vegetatively, resulting in small colonies (mostly on the east side of the park) that attract hummingbirds and native bees.

TTC is utilizing the colony-forming aspect of Correll’s False Dragonhead to create clones of several easily accessed colonies. Clonal reproduction allows us to spread this endangered plant quickly and easily across additional locations. We are pleased to have donated clones from three locations in our

park with four local partners, including Austin Water Wildlands Conservation District, The Contemporary Austin - Laguna Gloria, Pease Park Conservancy, and a Greenstar Wetland Plant Nursery. We plan to share these beautiful plants with other local groups with riparian habitats or permanently moist soils.

Excitingly, TTC is beginning to reproduce these rare plants through seeds (as opposed to cloning), which should result in greater genetic diversity in the population and greater stability of this species in the future.

ENHANCE The Butler Trail

Building a New Pocket Park at Rainey Street

Coming: Summer 2024

The development of a new Rainey Street Trailhead is well underway, with completion of the community park estimated in June 2024 and the adjacent floating dock later in the summer. Highlights of this pocket park include:

- A nature play area featuring reclaimed oak and cypress trees that were found already dead onsite;
- A quarter-acre grass lawn that will be utilized for gathering and free community programming;
- More than 130 new large shade and flowering trees planted in the park and along the Trail’s edge;
- Over 4,000 native flowers and shrubs between the existing mature trees;
- A serene seating area overlooking the Trail and Lady Bird Lake amongst a grove of mature live oaks; and
- A floating dock to provide convenient water access for kayakers, stand-up paddleboarders, and more!



Unveiling a Comprehensive Signage Plan for the Trail

Coming: Spring 2024

TTC’s 2018 Safety & Mobility Study recommended designing and installing a cohesive signage system throughout the Trail. TTC plans to release the full Comprehensive Signage Plan, which is the result of extensive community engagement, to the public this summer. Our goal is to enhance wayfinding, safety, and compliance, improve connectivity to other trails, parks, and districts, decrease the overall number of signs on the Trail, and elevate awareness of TTC programming and brand.

We want to know what you think of the proposed new signs! Be on the lookout for a pair of pilot signs at Auditorium Shores and Festival Beach, on the Trail during May, for the final phase of community engagement. Look for these “TTC Orange” signs on your next walk along the Trail and share your feedback.



Bringing Public Art Back to the Trail

Ongoing

Following a decade-long ban on new public art along the Butler Trail, TTC worked with the city’s Art in Public Places (AIPP) and Parks and Recreation (PARD) departments to create a new Arts + Culture Plan that will allow TTC to curate thoughtful and representative exhibitions of public art in the park. To kick off this new initiative, TTC is proud to host TEMPO on the Trail, a temporary exhibition of eight visual artists. Sculpture, murals, land-based works, and light installations comprise the eight works that began popping up along the Trail in March and remain up for one year. More details on the works’ artists, concepts, and locations can be found on our website.

