Texas General Land Office

Field Notes

Jerry Patterson, Commissioner ♦ April 2010

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Welcome to the General Land Office

Welcome to the spring 2010 edition of *Field Notes*, the newsletter about the state's oldest and most diverse agency—the Texas General Land Office.

When I say we're diverse, it's no exaggeration. This issue of *Field Notes* has stories related to our coast, historical preservation, public school funding and real estate activities, yet barely scratches the surface of what we do.

As the state's lead agency for the Texas Gulf Coast, we handled the removal of sunken boats and debris from Texas bays affected by Hurricane Ike. Find out how the cleanup went inside this edition of *Field Notes*.

Another coastal issue that's making the news is the planned closure of Rollover Pass, which is popular with fishermen but bad for Bolivar beaches and the health of East Bay. You can learn more in the article about Rollover Pass.

From the coast, we go to the state capital and a story about the historic Starr Building, which we bought and resold for a nice profit for the Permanent School Fund. There's also a story about the Texas Travels Essay Contest for school kids, which is proving very popular.

Of course, none of these things would be possible without the wonderful people at the Land Office. An article about our hardworking Appraisal Division sheds light on some of these folks and how well they serve you.

Thanks for taking time to learn about the General Land Office and its talented staff. If you have any questions, please refer to the last page where you'll find contact information for each department at the agency.

Sincerely,

Jerry Patterson
Commissioner

Study: Closing Rollover will Reduce Erosion on Bolivar

An exhaustive environmental study of Rollover Pass shows there would be no significant environmental impact from closing the popular fish pass.

The study shows Rollover Pass is directly responsible for high rates of erosion on Bolivar Peninsula. Florida-based Taylor Engineering Inc. conducted the study as part of the Texas General Land Office's permit application with the U.S. Corps of Engineers to close Rollover Pass.

It's the most recent of studies done since 1958 that show Rollover Pass causes erosion problems.

"We've studied this — it's time to move now and close Rollover Pass," said Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson. "What matters most now is for us to hear what the people who live out here want to replace it with."

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Study: Closing Rollover will Reduce Erosion

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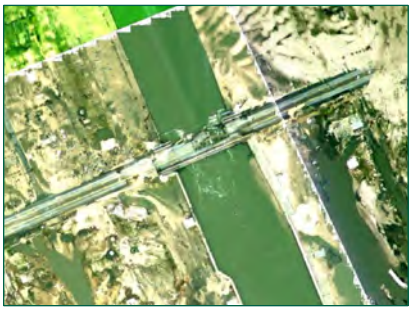
Land Office Chief Clerk Larry Laine and staff members from the agency's Coastal Resources division met in early February with members of the Gilchrist Community Association to present the Taylor Engineering report.

The report surveyed old research on erosion problems at Rollover Pass and provided new data on future salinity levels in East Bay using complex hydrodynamic models. According to the study, the pass could be closed without affecting highway traffic or disrupting nearby property owners.

"I think the most amazing thing this study shows is just how much sand Rollover Pass has diverted off of Bolivar beaches," Patterson said. "One study, done in 1989, showed that Rollover Pass dumped more than 290,000 cubic yards of sand into the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway each year—that's more than 29,000 dump trucks of sand that could have been on Bolivar beaches."



Aerial photo composite of Rollover Pass taken after Hurricane Ike. Note the damage to Highway 87 bridge.

The 81st Texas Legislature agreed with the need to close Rollover Pass, appropriating $5.85 million for the project and to build recreational amenities there such as fishing piers or boat ramps.

Rollover Pass with the Gulf of Mexico in the foreground and Rollover Bay and East Bay in the distance, taken prior to Hurricane Ike.

The Land Office also applied for $4.4 million in federal grant money, which would require a $1.45 million state match from the money already appropriated by the 81st Legislature.

Rollover Pass is an artificial pass dredged in 1955 for recreational fishing. It has increased the rate of erosion for Bolivar beaches by several feet per year, increased annual dredging costs for taxpayers and increased salinity in East Bay.

The Land Office has corresponded with public resource agencies about closing Rollover Pass, and none have opposed it. Among these agencies are the Texas Historical Commission, the State Historical Preservation Office, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the Coastal Coordination Council, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Patterson Saves Mural, Earns Millions for Schools

The Starr Building was once a showcase of modern architecture and art.

The sale of downtown Austin's Starr Building closed in late 2009, netting millions for the schoolchildren of Texas and preserving what many see as an important work of American art.

"Trying to accomplish both goals — preservation as well as profit — took some time and effort, but it was worth it in the end," said Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson. "This sale earns a significant amount for the school kids and still manages to save an architecturally unique building with the Seymour Fogel mural in place."

The Texas General Land Office bought the Starr Building from the state Comptroller's office in 2005 for about $4 million. Austin-based Kemp Properties agreed to pay $7.7 million for the building in December.

As a condition of the sale, Patterson required the buyer to take responsibility for preserving the Fogel mural by placing a permanent conservation easement on the work of art.

Patterson worked with the buyer, the Texas Historical Commission and the Texas Commission on the Arts to craft the easement. In 2009, the Starr Building was listed as one of the most endangered places in the state by Preservation Texas, a nonprofit group dedicated to historical preservation.

Kemp Properties has announced it will renovate the 75,000-square-foot building — making it more modern and energy efficient — without gutting the modern design that drew praise in 1954 when it opened for business as American National Bank.

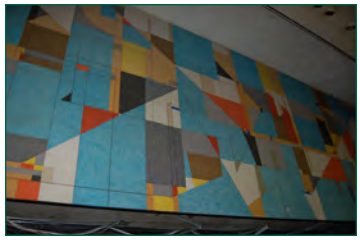
McGarrah Jessee advertising agency will move in as the building's lead tenant once the renovation is complete.

The Starr Building fronts on West 6th Street, across from the University Systems Regents Building and plaza downtown. Its other sides are bound by Colorado and 5th streets, with an alley dividing it from the landmark Scarborough Building.

"It's a prime location," Patterson said.

Once a showcase of modern architecture and art, the Starr Building introduced escalators and drive-through banking to Austin. It was used for state offices from 1980 until January 2005, when it was bought for the Permanent School Fund.

What is now the Starr Building was originally two separate buildings—American National Bank and a building that housed a dress shop. At some point, either when the bank owned it or after the Comptroller's office bought it in 1980, the two were combined into one.



Seymour Fogel's large, vividly colored 1954 mural will be preserved through a permanent conservation easement.

Seymour Fogel's large, vividly colored abstract mural was added to the lobby in 1954. Fogel once served as an apprentice to renowned Mexican muralist Diego Rivera and taught at The University of Texas at Austin.

GLO Completes Ike Cleanup in Texas Bays

The unprecedented effort to clear the Galveston-area bay system of debris from Hurricane Ike was completed on time and under budget, less than half a year after the storm crashed into the Texas coast.

"This was a huge job, but I'm proud to say that Galveston Bay, East Bay, West Bay and Trinity Bay are cleaner now than they were before Hurricane Ike," said Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson.

For years, recreational and commercial boats cluttered the bays and shores of the Gulf of Mexico. Hurricane Ike added everything from mattresses to motorcycles. After the storm had passed in mid-September 2008, the Land Office was faced with the huge logistical task of organizing the biggest beach and bay debris cleanup in state history. Patterson worked with Governor Rick Perry and Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst to obtain emergency funding from the existing state budget to begin the work.

The first priority was to clear the beach and the surf zone of potentially dangerous rubble left behind from homes blown away by the storm. When sonar was brought in to identify debris in the bays, 8,051 individual targets were identified—everything from refrigerators to ambulances to yachts. By the time the enormous cleanup was finished, the total costs came to $10.9 million to clear the beaches and $14 million to clear the bays.

"That's millions less than the initial estimates," Patterson said.

Tony Williams of the Land Office's Professional Services division spearheaded the debris removal project.

"It's been 10 months, but we're about to clean up the debris from Hurricane Ike and under budget," Williams said in August 2009. "Louisiana and Mississippi are still cleaning up from Hurricane Katrina, which was four years ago."

Overall, 136,743 cubic yards of debris were hauled from the beaches in the Hurricane Ike-affected area. More than 1 million cubic yards of sand were sifted clean and returned to the beach.

In the bays, 30,452 cubic yards of debris were removed from beneath the waters of Galveston Bay, East Bay, West Bay, Trinity Bay and Sabine Lake.

Once debris had been removed from beaches and bays, work began on identifying and hauling out every boat sunk by the storm and finding their owners. Bill Grimes from the Land Office's Oil Spill Prevention and Response Division led the vessel removal effort.

What appears to be a channel marker is removed from Galveston Bay near Texas City during cleanup efforts last year. This was one of many large pieces of debris cluttering the bay after Hurricane Ike.

Before 2005, the GLO only had the authority to drain hazardous materials from sunken and abandoned vessels.

"Fortunately, we've been working for years to gain the authority to haul up and junk sunken vessels," Patterson said. "In 2005, the Legislature gave the Texas General Land Office the authority we needed to get the job done after Ike."

Crews working for the Land Office recovered 124 boats, from small skiffs to 70-foot vessels. The efforts reunited eight lucky boat owners with their ships. Seven sunken vessels were too big or too stuck to be hauled up whole and were demolished in place. Another 116 were hauled up and sent to the landfill.

"GLO staff was efficient and responsive when Texas needed them most, leaving the bays surrounding our state cleaner and safer than before the storm," Patterson said.

About Commissioner Jerry Patterson

Jerry Patterson was born in Houston, Texas on November 15, 1946. He graduated from Texas A&M, Class of 1969 and received his commission in the United States Marine Corps. Volunteering for duty in Vietnam in 1972, Patterson was later designated as a Naval Flight Officer and served in Marine fighter squadrons until his retirement from the Marine Corps Reserve as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1993.

Five consecutive generations of Patterson's family have served our nation in time of war.

As state senator for District 11 (Harris, Galveston, Brazoria), Patterson's major legislative successes include passage of the historic concealed handgun law, a constitutional amendment allowing home equity lending, the state coastal management plan and the creation of the Texas State Veterans Home Program. A tireless advocate for his fellow veterans, he chaired the first Veterans Affairs committee in the Texas Senate.

Since his election as Texas Land Commissioner in 2002, Patterson has modernized and revitalized the Texas General Land Office, the oldest agency in Texas. He has diversified and increased the Permanent School Fund, made Texas a renewable energy leader, protected state lands and overseen the greatest expansion of veterans benefits since World War II.

Jerry resides in Austin and has four children, twins Samantha and Cole, born in 2004, and Emily and Travis. His daughter Emily is an attorney working in Kosovo for an agency funded, in part, by the U.S. State Department. His son Travis is a graduate of Texas A&M, where he was commissioned as a Marine Lieutenant. Travis recently returned from serving his 2nd tour of duty in Iraq as a U.S. Marine attack helicopter pilot.

Appraisal Division Not Afraid of a Lot of Hard Work

In FY 2009, the Appraisal staff churned out 2,430 reports on properties valued at almost $1.8 billion.

Mark McAnally has been with the Appraisal Division at Professional Services for 15 years, beginning way back in the Garry Mauro administration. McAnally heads up a team of 18 very busy appraisers who provide valuation services for Texas General Land Office program areas, mainly the Veterans Land Board and Asset Management.

With diverse appraisal projects that include the valuation of state parks, large ranches, VLB tracts and commercial properties, the Land Office is lucky to have a group of appraisers with an average of 22 years experience.

"I feel we're the cornerstone of the agency," McAnally said. "All transactions at the GLO are based on market value of the land, and that's what we do."

While veterans or others interested in purchasing property may contact various individuals at the Land Office, an appraiser is likely to be the only staff member they meet. "The appraiser is a reflection of the agency and always keeps this in mind when dealing with the public," McAnally said.

A multitude of projects take Land Office appraisers all over the state, where they come in contact with Texas property owners, some more interesting than others.

"We were appraising a VLB forfeiture tract east of Dallas and met a man named Mr. Kubota, the same family that makes Kubota tractors," McAnally recalls. "He called the agency all the time on the 1-800 number to complain about an issue on his property, so I got to know him. The funniest thing about him was, you met him and he was this regular Texas guy. But he said when he went to Japan to visit his wife's family, he was basically next to royalty."

Perhaps McAnally's proudest moment at the Land Office was when he met Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson during the latter's first term at the agency. "Mark," Patterson said, "I just want you to know, the crew might be ready for flight, but if you say the craft isn't ready, we'll all stand by."

"I've always had great support from the commissioners," McAnally said. "Commissioner Dewhurst always introduced me as 'the appraiser for the entire state of Texas.'"

With the General Land Office and Veterans Land Board involved in many high profile projects across the state, the need for accurate assessment of state land values is essential. Without it, the agency couldn't protect the state's long-term interests, maximize revenue for the Permanent School Fund or offer low-interest land and housing loans to Texas veterans.

Planning the huge amount of work Appraisal does each year is a job in itself. For example, Appraisal's annual production for fiscal year 2009 consisted of 2,430 reports on properties with a total value of almost $1.8 billion.

Of the total value of state properties appraised by the staff, VLB properties totaled more than $41 million in value and PSF assets were valued at more than $1.1 billion. Properties belonging to the Texas Workforce Commission and the Health and Human Services Commission were valued at more than $600 million.

For fiscal year 2010, the Land Office/VLB program areas are expecting appraisal services on VLB land and housing loans, two VLB forfeiture bid sales, one PSF sealed bid sale, and a review of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, one of the largest state agencies.

"We have a staff of 18, and we still have to contract private appraisers because there is just so much work," McAnally said. "We do all the appraisals for VLB land and the PSF. There are constantly rush assignments, and we just finished valuing the entire PSF, all 1,500 tracts of land. I just feel blessed with the wonderful staff I have because we get the job done. I couldn't be successful without my staff."

It's a good thing Mark McAnally loves West Texas, because that's where most PSF properties are located.

Did you know …

… Land Office employees have donated or raised more than $450,000 for charity since 2003.

South Padre Island Gets Mobichairs from GLO

Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson recently declared the beaches of the town of South Padre Island the most accessible on the Texas coast. Patterson honored the town's commitment to making sure everyone enjoys a great day at the beach by presenting it with four new surf-ready wheelchairs—called Mobichairs—that can roll across the sand and float in the water.

Chief Clerk Larry Laine gets ready to try out a Mobichair.

"The town of South Padre Island's efforts to make the beaches accessible for all shows real Texas hospitality," Patterson said. "They've made the beaches accessible, now we're taking that to the next level and making the surf accessible."

The town of South Padre Island's recent improvements included 11 special mats that allow wheelchairs to roll across the soft sand to the wet beach. The mats were installed at various public beach access points on Gulf Boulevard that didn't have dune walkovers and were inaccessible to anyone in a wheelchair. Of the 23 public beach access points in South Padre Island, 11 have the special mats.

The town has also built dune walkovers to meet ADA standards.

"The Americans with Disabilities Act doesn't apply to the beach, but we've made the extra effort so no one is left out," said South Padre Island Mayor Robert Pinkerton Jr. "These new Mobichairs are the perfect complement to our other improvements to make South Padre Island beaches the most accessible in Texas."

Amphibious wheelchairs like those awarded to South Padre Island will eventually be distributed to all of the top tourist beaches in Texas, thanks to money made available by the Land Office. They've already been provided to the city of Galveston, the village of Surfside Beach and Galveston, Brazoria, Nueces and Cameron counties.

"These chairs, when combined with everything else South Padre Island has already done, really open up the beach for anyone with special needs," Patterson said.

A wheelchair-bound South Padre Island man tries out an amphibious Mobichair.

Patterson talks to reporters at the September 2009 presentation of four Mobichairs to the town of South Padre Island.

Thousands of Students Enter Texas Travels Essay Contest

Fourth- and seventh-grade students who love Texas history have April 21 circled on their calendars. That's when the results of the 2010 Save Texas History Texas Travels Essay Contest will be announced. One fourth-grader and one seventh-grader will win a fun-filled weekend in San Antonio — including round-trip airline tickets on Southwest Airlines — for simply writing an essay.

This year's contest drew 1,447 seventh-grade essayists and 1,018 fourth-graders. The deadline for submission was extended to February 6 to accommodate the flood of entries.

Last year's contest, which was limited to seventh-graders, was such a success that Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson opened it up to fourth-graders this year.

"I was overwhelmed with both the quality and the quantity of essays we received last year," Patterson said. "The idea behind this contest was to inspire Texas school kids to take pride in our heritage as Texans, and from what I saw, it worked."

Seventh-grade contestants write a 500-700 word story about their favorite Texas city, big or small. They describe the historical significance of a community and its importance to the development of Texas.

"A good education, like a positive attitude, opens doors to success," said Christine Ortega, Manager of Corporate Community Affairs for Southwest Airlines. "Save Texas History contributes to both qualities by making children aware, self confident and proud of the beautiful spaces around them. Southwest is proud to be the official airline of this great program."

Ariel McFalls, a seventh-grader at Westbrook Intermediate School in Friendswood, won top honors in last year's contest. Her essay on the Caddoan Mounds detailed the rapid decline of the once prosperous Caddos, who built the mounds and flourished in Texas before the arrival of Europeans.

Fourth-graders are asked to write from the perspective of a well-known explorer. Looking through the eyes of Cabeza de Vaca, Francisco Coronado, de la Salle or any other explorer who charted what is now Texas, fourth-graders must explain why they are exploring Texas and what they see as they travel. Essayists explain the explorers' plans to settle the new land and what they've accomplished through their journey.

The Texas Travels Essay Contest is sponsored by the General Land Office Save Texas History program and Southwest Airlines. The contest fulfills the educational mission of the Save Texas History program to promote the study of Texas history and to serve as a teaching resource.

While all Texas fourth- and seventh-grade students study Texas history, Patterson hopes that asking students to write about the history of places close to their hearts will help make their stories come alive.

All public, private and home-schooled students of appropriate age for the fourth grade or seventh grade are eligible to participate.

Essays are judged on originality of idea, cohesiveness of thought and organization. Proper grammar, spelling and punctuation counts.

One grand prize winner per grade will receive round-trip airline tickets for four to San Antonio from any Southwest Airlines destination in Texas, hotel accommodations for two nights and tickets for additional attractions provided by the San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau. Ten finalists will win Save Texas History backpacks, a Certificate of Appreciation signed by Commissioner Patterson and a historic map replica from the Land Office Archives Collection.

The Texas General Land Office Save Texas History™ program is a statewide initiative to rally public support and private funding for the preservation and promotion of more than 35 million historic maps and documents. With the twin goals of preservation and education, the Save Texas History program seeks to conserve these documents for future generations, and educate Texans about the rich heritage found in these vital records. For more details, visit SaveTexasHistory.org.

About Southwest Airlines

After 38 years of service, Southwest Airlines (NYSE: LUV) continues to differentiate itself from other low fare carriers—offering a reliable product with exemplary Customer Service. Southwest Airlines is the most productive airline in the sky and offers Customers a comfortable traveling experience. Southwest Airlines is the nation's largest carrier in terms of originating domestic passengers boarded, currently serving 68 cities in 35 states. Based in Dallas, Southwest currently operates more than 3,100 flights a day and has nearly 35,000 employees systemwide.

SAVE TEXAS HISTORY! GENERAL LAND OFFICE PRESERVATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Agency Newsletters

Veterans Voice
http://www.glo.state.tx.us/vlb/docs/vetvoice/VeteransVoiceSpring10.pdf

On the Coast
http://www.glo.state.tx.us/coastal/pdf/onthecoast1209.pdf

FAMA
http://www.glo.state.tx.us/oilspill/pdfs/fama/FAMA_Jan2010.pdf

Saving Texas History
http://www.glo.state.tx.us/archives/pdfs/newsletters/volume6/STH%20Newsletter%204-10.pdf

Cabin Connection
http://www.glo.state.tx.us/prof_svcs/asset_inspection/ai_data/cc_05_09.pdf

Adopt-A-Beach
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