

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

The South Texas Botanical Gardens and Nature Center is requesting \$89,000 for the installation of 3,000 feet (0.52 miles) of new A.D.A. accessible trails to increase visitor access to more remote natural areas adjacent to Oso Creek referred to as Oso Creek Ridge. The proposed caliche/granite trail will replace existing grass/mulch trails in this area which are not accessible after rain. The new 10-foot wide trail will be constructed with soil barrier (such as



Figure 12. Example of Caliche/Granite Nature Trail at Botanical Gardens

TerraGrid U-200) topped with 4-inch caliche base and 1-inch decomposed granite top, an affordable, commonly used trail option that provides a natural-look and eliminates the potential introduction of oils and chemicals associated with asphalt to sensitive native upland and wetland habitats. A soil barrier cloth will be used beneath the caliche base to reduce its incorporation into the clay soils of the area. Eventually, an additional phase of 1100 linear feet will be added to provide access to an additional bird blind overlooking large wetland if the matching grant is awarded.



Figure 13. Existing Mulch Trail on Oso Creek Ridge



Figure 14. Aerial View of South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center (8545 S. Staples Street). Existing mulch trail on Oso Creek Ridge appears as tan lines between creek and wetland.

Currently this 21-acre section of Oso Ridge is only accessible during dry periods by those with good walking mobility with trail consisting of primitive mulch and mowed grass pathway. Establishing caliche/granite pathways on the Oso Creek Ridge provides stability for wheelchair and mobility scooter access to explore natural areas, increasing access to brushland regions at our site by over 400 percent. Our existing Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail provides native habitat access to about 4.5 acres. The proposed paving of Oso Creek Ridge Trail would make an additional 21 acres of brushland/grassland accessible plus visibility of adjacent our large 52-acre open shallow wetland and Oso Creek, all of which provides great birding opportunities for nature tourists. The proposed pathway will connect to a driveway opening on S. Staples Street for vehicular access to the edge of this pedestrian walkway.

Expanding the trail also provides structured direction for visitors interested in exploring our unique South Texas ecosystem in a safe, controlled space and reducing unknowingly wandering off the established pathways which can be more dangerous with uneven ground and potential dangerous camouflaged wildlife encounters. Defined pathways also encourage additional exploration of youth groups which visit, providing easier access to more pristine section of the property. Solidifying pathways also provides opportunities to attract fitness tourists to runs and walks in natural areas as opposed to the regular events along roadways and developed urban areas.

POTENTIAL MATCH

Awarding this grant will also allow the South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center to use it as a match for a Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) Trails grant for \$200,000 with a February 1, 2020 deadline. The TPWD grant will ask for Phase 2 (1,100 additional linear feet), upgrade of the caliche/granite pathways with addition of a “Klingstone” polymer top that will hold the top-coat of granite together as a solid unit, thus reducing erosion and minimizing upkeep due to weathering. This particular product has been recommended by other members of Texas Association of Botanical Gardens & Arboreta and is proprietary with Howell Pathways. TPWD grant also will provide materials/labor for preventative maintenance and selective replacement of planks on our Wetlands Awareness Boardwalk which connects the main Botanical Gardens site to the new proposed trail on Oso Creek Ridge.

The Botanical Gardens also has \$10,000 currently available from a grant by Earl C. Sams Foundation that is available for overage/contingency items for this project.



Figure 15. Bobcats are still spotted in nature areas at the Botanical Gardens, attracting photographers and nature enthusiasts. This bobcat was photographed by Henry Nabors in Spring 2019, providing a memorable and exciting experience during his visit.

South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center - Oso Creek Loop Trail



Main Loop Trail (Yellow) is approx. 3,000 linear feet. Extension to wetland bird blind (Red) is approximately 1,100 linear feet.