



## AGENDA MEMORANDUM

Action Item for the City Council Meeting of January 28, 2025

**DATE:** January 28, 2025

**TO:** Peter Zaroni, City Manager

**FROM:** Robert Dodd, Director of Parks and Recreation Department  
[RobertD4@cctexas.com](mailto:RobertD4@cctexas.com)  
(361) 826-3133

### Texas Parks & Wildlife Department Grant Application for Recreational Trail Improvements to the Hans & Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge

#### **CAPTION:**

Resolution authorizing submission of a grant application to the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department under its Recreational Trails Grant Program in the amount of \$240,000.00, with a required cash match of \$60,000.00, for improvements to the Hans & Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge.

#### **SUMMARY:**

The Parks & Recreation Department (PAR), in coordination with Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) propose to submit a grant application to the Recreational Trails Grant Program for necessary improvements to the recreational trails at Hans & Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge.

#### **BACKGROUND AND FINDINGS:**

The Hans & Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge, located at 6001 Ennis Joslin Road, is a well-known park for observing and exploring the diverse, coastal ecosystem of Oso Bay. The Refuge serves as an important resource for tourism, education, and recreation. The Refuge has a 1.3-mile nature trail (12,000 square feet) and an 800-foot boardwalk which allows for remarkable views of the bay, grassy marshes, woodlands, and mudflats. The Refuge highlights how migratory birds/waterfowl can thrive in an urban development. The Refuge is a highly visited park and is popular among birdwatchers and local conservation groups.

A strategy of the 10-year Parks & Recreation Master Plan is to utilize partnerships with birding businesses to promote/advertise birding activities and tours. The Refuge provides a unique opportunity to use the area's natural resources and variety of flora/fauna for a successful, nature-based recreation and tourism program. Nature-based recreation/tourism strategies can increase revenues and strengthen economic development by creating/supporting local nature businesses and hospitality industries.

The proposed improvements include substantial repairs to the current asphalt trail. The last significant improvements to the Hans & Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge took place in 2010. The current trail (1,500 linear feet) is in much need of repair, and it is proposed to resurface/convert the trail to an 8-foot-wide, concrete trail (ADA accessible). Any existing asphalt or other previously placed walkway materials will be demolished and removed. The new trail will improve safety and

resiliency to sustain inclement weather; improve accessible tourism and recreation in all seasons. The concrete also makes this more accessible as wheelchairs, strollers, and other mobility tools will be able to use the trail and widen the audience the space can serve.

The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department will notify awarded recipients the first week of June 2025. Funds will be available for reimbursement beginning June 2026, after the one-year, environmental review by TxDOT and Federal Highways. TPWD allows four years for project completion after the environmental review is complete. Construction bids for the trail improvements will follow to avoid damage to the trail that can be caused by the heavy equipment that is used for erosion improvements.

The funding for these improvements is a shared project cost between TPWD and the City. Upon execution, the City will provide a cash match of 20% and TPWD will reimburse 80%. The total grant amount is \$300,000 which includes \$240,000 from TPWD Funds and a remaining City match of \$60,000.

Additionally, a grant in the amount of \$346,991 was previously awarded to PARD in 2023 by the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program to fund similar improvements to the Refuge (Ord#033223). This proposal to apply for the TPWD grant is an effort to secure additional funding for the construction phases.

**ALTERNATIVES:** The alternative would be to not apply for the grant. However, not applying for the grant will cause further damage to the Refuge, if not addressed, and the City will need to use operating funds for the improvements.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** There is no fiscal impact for the application process. However, if awarded, a cash match of \$60,000.00 will be appropriated through the Park Development Fund in FY 2025.

**FUNDING DETAIL:**

Fund:	4720 Park Development
Organization/Activity:	21456 Manhattan Estates
Department:	27 Parks and Recreation
Account:	550910 Construction Contract

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the Resolution to apply for a grant from the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department for funding in the amount of \$240,000.00 with a required cash match of \$60,000.00 for improvements to the Hans & Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge.

**LIST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:**

Resolution  
Presentation  
Application