

RIO BOSQUE NEWS

A newsletter reporting on events at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

Center for Environmental Resource Management
The University of Texas at El Paso



No. 84

April 2024

CLOUDS ON THE HORIZON

Rio Bosque Wetlands Park is a small island of natural river-valley habitat in a highly modified, biologically degraded landscape. Given these circumstances, the park is very fortunate to have a significant parcel of undeveloped open space, owned by the City of El Paso, still present immediately east of the park in a broad corridor between the Riverside Canal and the Franklin Drain.

That land occupies 99 acres, all zoned Ranch & Farm District, a designation “*designed to protect, stabilize and enhance the development of agricultural resources and to prohibit those activities that would adversely affect the urban-rural characteristics of this district.*” The land has a valuable relationship with Rio Bosque—as a buffer, as wildlife habitat similar to that found in upland areas of the park, and as an avenue for wildlife movement between the park and other areas.

The future integrity of this open-space corridor is not guaranteed. Two projects that could affect it are currently under consideration. One, at the north end of the corridor, involves a concrete batch plant Jobe Materials installed last year ¼ mile north of Rio Bosque to provide concrete mix for the construction work now in progress and planned for coming years at the water-treatment plants north of the park. The

other involves an extension of the Border Highway east from Loop 375 for 18 miles to the new Guadalupe-Tornillo port of entry.

Batch Plant. Jobe Materials can operate its batch plant in the Ranch & Farm District under a Special Use Permit, if it is a temporary facility providing concrete mix for a public-works project. But Jobe wants to make it a permanent facility with a broader base of customers. That requires a change in the zoning for the plant site from “Ranch & Farm” to “Light Manufacturing.” The El Paso City Council will hold a public hearing on this requested change at its meeting **May 7**. If City Council approves the change, it would set a bad precedent. It would potentially encourage other incursions into the open-space corridor east of Rio Bosque in the future.

Border Highway East. The Border Highway extension is further in the future—a 2033 projected start date—but more ominous. It would be a 4-lane divided highway initially, but with wide inner shoulders to allow future conversion to a 6-lane divided highway. On March 27, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) unveiled three conceptual alternative routes for this project. Two would traverse the open-space corridor east of Rio Bosque. One would be along the west edge of the park. All three would have significant negative impacts on the park.

Friends of the Rio Bosque Membership Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

- Life Member \$1,000
- Wetlands Society \$500-\$999
- Restoration Patron \$250-\$499
- Cottonwood Commando \$75-\$249
- Bosque Booster \$50
- Family \$20
- Individual \$15
- Student or ___ Senior (62+) \$10
- Bosque Buddy (12 and under) \$6

Please make checks payable to *Friends of the Rio Bosque* and mail to: Friends of the Rio Bosque, CERM-UTEP, 500 W. University Ave., El Paso, TX 79968-0684.



FRIENDS OF THE

Next Meetings

Wed., Apr 24
Wed., May 22
Wed, June 26
6:30 – 7:30 p.m.
206 Kelly Hall
UTEP

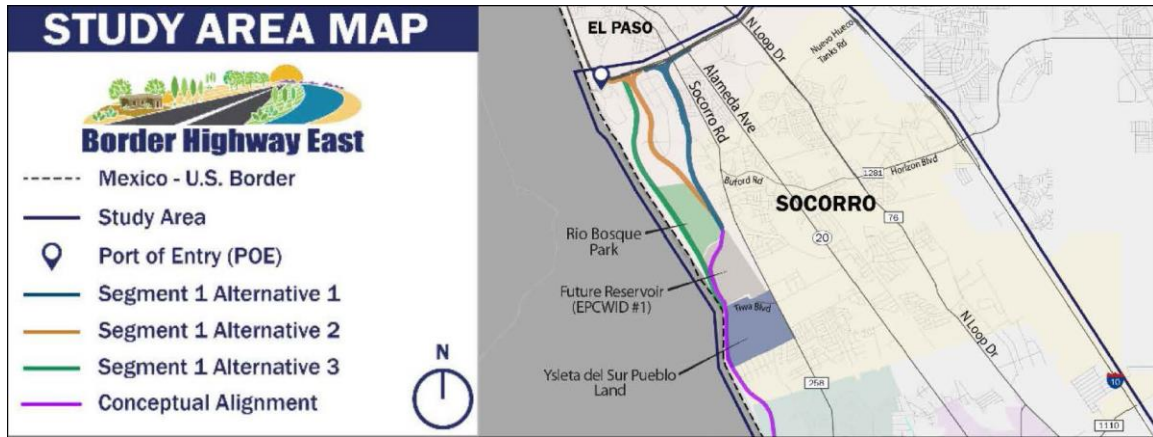
Info: 915-747-8663

TxDOT has scheduled two upcoming public meetings to introduce the alternatives and gather input:

- **May 1, 5 p.m.**, Clint High School (13890 Alameda Ave. in Clint)

- **May 2, 5 p.m.**, Western Tech College (9624 Plaza Circle in El Paso, off Pan American Drive)

TxDOT will also have planning documents and maps available on its [website](#)—a virtual meeting—for study and comment from May 1 through May 16. ✂



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The University of Texas at El Paso
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El Paso, TX 79968-0684

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

RIO BOSQUE CALENDAR

Join us for a free walking tour or to help with habitat management or park maintenance. Comng up:

APRIL			MAY			JUNE		
20 (Sat.)	Workday	8 a.m.	12 (Sun.)	Birding Tour	7 a.m.	9 (Sun.)	Introductory Tour	8 a.m.
21 (Sun.)	Introductory Tour	5 p.m.	18 (Sat.)	Workday	8 a.m.	15 (Sat.)	Workday	8 a.m.
27 (Sat.)	Birding Tour	8 a.m.	25 (Sat.)	Introductory Tour	8 a.m.	22 (Sat.)	Birding Tour	6:30 a.m.

Meeting place for all activities is a bridge crossing the Riverside Canal. From I-10, take Americas Ave. (Loop 375) to Pan American Dr., turn left onto Pan American and travel 1.5 miles to the bridge. Please be prompt.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.riobosque.org

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Want to help support Rio Bosque?
Make a tax-deductible contribution to the
[Rio Bosque Wetlands Park Gift Fund!](#)