



HAYS COUNTY

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMISSION (POSAC) RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMMISSIONERS COURT

The following recommendations are respectfully submitted by members of the Hays County Parks and Open Space Advisory Commission (POSAC) on July 28, 2020.

This document is a synthesis of the Powerpoint presentation to be made to the Court on above date and is meant to provide an easy visual overview of the projects submitted by various entities which were evaluated by the POSAC through the lens of the 2012 Parks, Open Space and Natural Areas Master Plan.

These project recommendations demonstrate a substantial need for additional resources available for parks and open space within Hays County.

The named projects below are presented by category and ranked within the tiers showing highest ratings from top down within each category. Included also are project sponsor and funding request. The numbering of projects relates to the attached project map.

TIER ONE PROJECTS ("very best"; highly recommend to fund at some level)	Amount Requested
Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat	
1. Coleman's Canyon Preserve (WVWA)	\$ 2,600,000
2. Sentinel Peak Park & Preserve (Hays County)	10,000,000
3. San Marcos River Recharge Lands (SMRF)	4,380,000
4. Regional Park, water quality/trails, 1200 acres (Hays County/COA via HCC) ¹	10,000,000
5. Purgatory Creek: habitat, clean water preserve (HCC)	17,717,500
6. Rathgeber Natural Resource Park (City of Dripping Springs)	7,500,000
Connectivity	
7. Violet Crown Trail in Hays County (HCC)	3,800,000
8. Cape's Fishing Pond (Hays County)	2,500,000
TOTAL Tier One Project Requests	\$ 58,497,500

TIER TWO PROJECTS ("very good"; strong recommendation to fund at some level)	Amount Requested
Urban Parks	
9. Dripping Springs Regional Skate Park (DS Skate Park, Inc, non-profit)	\$ 550,000
10. Dripping Springs Town Center (City of Dripping Springs)	4,480,600
11. Patriot's Hall, near Dripping Springs (PatriotsHall.org; non-profit)	1,500,000
12. Nature Center at Blue Hole Park (City of Wimberley)	3,136,425
Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat	
13. John Knox Ranch Preserve (John Knox Ranch/HCC)	2,500,000
14. Presa Grande, Sink Creek Watershed (Great Springs Project)	8,500,000
Connectivity	
15. Old Fitzhugh Road Trail (City of Dripping Springs)	1,305,000
16. Kyle Fajita Fields (City of Kyle)	14,520,000
TOTAL Tier Two Project Requests	\$ 36,472,025

TOTAL TIER ONE & TWO PROJECT REQUESTS	\$ 94,969,525
--	----------------------

¹Recommendation subject to site control.

TIER THREE PROJECTS (for consideration at a future date)	Amount Requested
Open Space/Natural Areas/Trails/Water Quality/Habitat	
Regional Conservation Fund for Jacob’s Well Groundwater Management Zone (WDWA)	\$20,000,000
Wimberley Dog & Skate Park (City of Wimberley)	450,110
TOTAL Tier Three Project Requests	\$ 20,460,111
TOTAL TIER ONE, TWO, THREE PROJECT REQUESTS	\$115,439,630
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS FOR ALL PROJECTS SUBMITTED	> \$176,000,000

ADVISEMENTS TO HAYS COUNTY

- 1) Recognize the incredible opportunities that arose within the last few months (March-July) in our County for outdoor recreation, nature experiences, trails, conservation of natural areas, access to rivers/creeks, perpetual scenic vistas, water quality protection, habitat preservation, flood mitigation – and a connection with nature and sense of place – for now and forever.
- 2) Understand that both the applicants and reviewers were functioning to the best of their abilities within a compressed time frame and during a most unusual and challenging time at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, and that further work can be done to evaluate projects and negotiate with sponsors, which may lead to some modifications of the rankings and costs.
- 3) See that there is more opportunity right now than we can fund with County tax dollars to fulfill the visionary goals of the 2012 Hays County Master Plan for Parks, Open Spaces and Natural Areas.
- 4) Be assured there is a solid community of conservationists, non-profit organizations, municipal and government partners ready and willing to invest along with Hays County in order to make sure our plentiful resources are protected, and our citizens have outdoor places to play, explore, experience and treasure.
- 5) Know that POSAC members have exerted a substantial and collective body of time, effort, thought and feeling that hopefully provides a valuable service to all Hays County leaders, residents and visitors for years to come.

- 6) Appreciate that a scientific poll was conducted among Hays County voters, in reflection of our demographics, that revealed strong support (71-77%) for \$75 million in general obligation bonds to be sold to protect our open spaces, water quality lands and natural places – especially when the county’s property tax rate would not be affected.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A BOND IN NOVEMBER 2020

POSAC recommends a total bond initiative in the range of \$75-80 Million.

Of that total, we see up to \$60-65 million to be used toward the named projects above – with Tier One projects having highest priority and Tier Two to be funded in the best way possible.

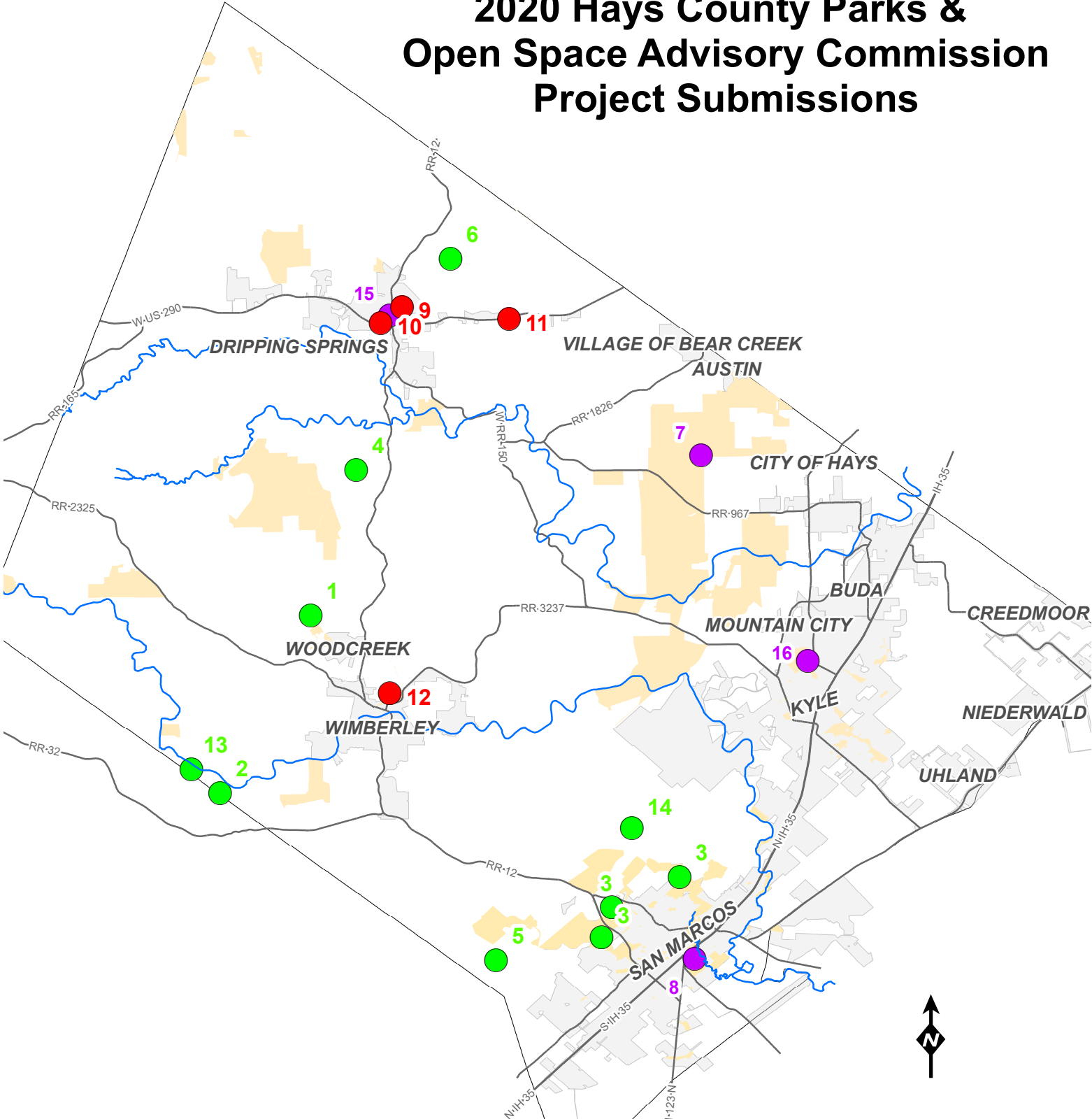
Further, we recommend that \$15-20 million be set aside in a flexible, non-specific fund to accommodate future projects in partnership with municipalities and organizations who were not able to present a viable project at this time, and for potential modifications to existing projects – as well as for unanticipated opportunities for conservation or recreation projects within the next five years.²

REQUEST FOR POSAC TO REMAIN IN ADVISORY/ SUPPORT ROLE

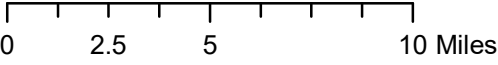
POSAC recognizes the importance of thorough project vetting, evaluation, and negotiation and would be honored to continue to serve in an advisory capacity to the Court and to County staff in order to help further successful bond project implementation. Further, it is the firm desire of POSAC to continue to receive and evaluate projects and review the financial aspects and public benefits for each project.

²One member of the commission was not supportive of having unallocated funds as part of the bond package.

2020 Hays County Parks & Open Space Advisory Commission Project Submissions



- Major Waterways
- Category A Urban Parks
- Category B Open Spaces, Natural Areas, Trails, Water Quality & Habitat
- Category C Connectivity
- Pre-existing Parks, Open Spaces and Conservation Easements
- City Boundaries



Date: July 22, 2020
Sources: HCC, TPWD, TLTC, & More
Author: Alexandra Thompson,
Hays County Natural Resources Coordinator