

...West of 98

(Continued from previous page)

Finally, Wendeborn Park's acreage includes both the seasonally-available swimming pool and Wendeborn Field, the city-owned, school-managed baseball field that is only publicly available on a limited basis.

That leaves Stamford with just under 7 park acres per 1,000 residents before we factor in approximately 100 acres at College Lake, a historically undeveloped recreational area that has not always been treated as a city park (but which we intend to treat accordingly in the future). Without College Lake, Stamford's park acreage is substandard. With College Lake, Stamford could be a shining example of a rural community committed to parks and their attendant benefits to quality of life.

What is my point, besides showing off my Google Earth measurement skills? NRPA writes that a measurement of parks-per-1,000 people should be a starting benchmark for discussion and planning. A local community's needs and resources should drive the conversation from there. It is interesting to compare statistics for some larger American cities. Los Angeles and New York City each boast almost 40,000 acres

in parks, per the Trust for Public Land. That's an impressive 9.5 park acres per 1,000 residents in Los Angeles, but a mere 4.7 acres per 1,000 residents in New York. And yet, the average New Yorker might actually be closer to a park in that densely-packed city than the average resident of sprawling Los Angeles. One of the most inspiring examples is Minneapolis, with 12.4 acres of parks per 1,000 residents. According to TPL, Minneapolis has reserved almost 15% of its area for parkland. 95% of its residents live within a ten-minute walk of a city park! How cool is that?

I have received a lot of great feedback on this series, as much as any series I have ever written. Rural citizens value their parks and place a high priority on park development. Rural leaders should take notice and invest accordingly. Next week, I hope to conclude this series with the following discussion: what kind of parks do we need and where should we build them?

James Decker is the Mayor of Stamford, Texas and the creator of the West of 98 website and podcast. Contact James and subscribe to these essays at westof98.substack.com and subscribe to West of 98 wherever podcasts are found.

Supply chain complications remain in 2022

The supply chain and shipping are major areas of concern right now for both consumers and farmers and ranchers.

The global bottlenecks continue to have a significant impact on the economy and agriculture, Coke County Farm Bureau President John Ross Copeland said.

Crop protectants, fertilizers, tires and more are all in short supply. That demand is helping drive up the cost.

"Everything is going up - fertilizer, seed costs, agrichemicals, fuel," John Ross said.

But there's also an issue

getting parts for equipment.

"Some items are backordered, but others are just not coming at all," John Ross said. "Electronic components like computer chips for tractors and other farm equipment, and also parts to repair equipment, are just difficult to find right now."

It's a crucial time for agriculture as planting season gets underway across the state. Soaring freight costs, labor shortages and tight inventory have left the supply chain vulnerable.

Russia's attack on Ukraine also has affected Texas agriculture, driving up prices for consumers and farmers and ranchers.

"As farmers and ranchers, we



Story Time! On Wednesday, April 13, RLARestoration hosted Story Time at the Coke County Library. "The Beeman" by Laurie Krebs was read and the children colored and painted their own bees. There were approximately 14 children and 6 adults in attendance. The next Story Time will be held on May 11 at 11 am.

were already dealing with the rising prices before the war started, and now those prices are going to keep climbing, especially for fertilizer and fuel," John Ross said.

Farmers and ranchers hope prices and conditions will stabilize soon.

Challenge encourages citizen scientists to record nature observations

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), through the Texas Nature Trackers program, invites Texans to participate in the seventh annual City Nature Challenge, Friday, April 29 through Monday, May 2. This global community-based scientific effort, co-organized by San Francisco's California Academy of Sciences and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, invites current and aspiring citizen scientists of all ages and backgrounds to observe and submit pictures of wild plants, animals and fungi using the free mobile app iNaturalist.

The 2022 City Nature

Challenge will be a friendly competition between the 15 Texas metropolitan areas. Whether joining a group event or exploring nature with your family or on your own, participants are encouraged to embrace the collaborative aspect of sharing observations online with a digital community and celebrate the healing power of nature safely as they document their local biodiversity. You are also invited to join the effort to help identify those plants and animals found during the challenge by helping with identification from May 3-8, 2022.

For the past five years, TPWD, through the Texas Nature Trackers program, has promoted Texans' participation in the City Nature Challenge. In 2021, more than 5,000 participants contributed almost 134,000 observations of some

6,800 species across 88 counties. A record number of 14 project areas representing 78 counties across Texas host the City Nature Challenge, including: Abilene, Amarillo, Austin, Bryan-College Station, Corpus Christi, Dallas-Fort Worth, El Paso, Houston-Galveston, Lower Rio Grande Valley, Lubbock, Mustang Island, San Antonio, Wichita Falls and Waco. This year we are pleased to add Tyler/East Texas, representing another 10 counties.

Even if you do not live in one of these areas, you can still participate by joining the City Nature Challenge 2022 Global Project and entering your observations on iNaturalist. Texans are invited to explore nature in their immediate surroundings: outside their front doors, in their yard or anywhere nature is found which they can safely and responsibly explore.

(Continued on page 6)

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