



February 2020 Newsletter

Welcome to the Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas (FOSANA) e-newsletter! We share natural areas news, the Friends' efforts, and opportunities to get involved in volunteering or educational programs at San Antonio's natural areas parks. Please check our website, www.fosana.org, for periodic updates and program information.

Water Difference You Can Make

Water is essential for life. Innately we know it is true: our human bodies are [up to 60% water](#). Water in the right place and at the right time is also critical for non-human creatures, including the plants and animals that make our Natural Areas so special. According to the [San Antonio Parks System Plan](#), "Natural Areas are park sites established for the protection and stewardship of outstanding **natural** attributes of local, regional, and statewide significance. Natural Areas are intended to be used in a sustainable manner for scientific research, education, aesthetic enjoyment, and appropriate public use **not detrimental to the primary purpose**". No wonder, then, that maintaining natural hydrology is vitally important to conserving and managing our Natural Areas while also making them such desirable places to visit.

It is important that people have access to Natural Areas, so how can this be done while at the same time protecting them? One way is to build and maintain sustainable trails. Our understanding of trail construction has evolved significantly. Older trails often followed animal paths or old roads. Too often these trails ran straight up or down hills and followed so called fall lines. Water naturally follows the path of least resistance, so when it rains these fall lines become little streams. The problem is, too often these "trail streams" do not follow the natural hydrology, but instead channel water away from naturally occurring waterways. The result is a kind of cluster reaction: water does not get to vegetation, areas erode, and animals that depend on mature vegetation leave the area as the degradation progresses. In time, areas that once had a diverse compliment of flora and fauna often suffer a decrease in native species diversity and an increase in non-native invasives.

Newer, sustainably designed and maintained trails provide a much better alternative. The goal is to find a way to give people an opportunity to meet nature on nature's terms, and to do this while leaving the natural landscape as pristine as possible. It is just like inviting people to your house—you want them to come, enjoy your home and your yard, and to leave it in as good a condition as when they arrived. Some of the principals of sustainable trail building and maintenance are:

- Prioritizing, understanding, and preserving the local ecology, including the hydrology and the composition of native plant and animal communities.
- Avoiding going straight up or straight down slopes so that fall line trails are avoided.
- Outsloping so that water is shed rather than conducted.

Building frequent “grade reversals” into the trail and adding drains so water that collects on the trail is quickly diverted off.

- Frequently monitoring trail conditions and taking necessary corrective action, including closing wet trails.

Sustainable trail construction and maintenance are a large part of the goal of keeping our Natural Areas the wonders they are. Another part is for Natural Area patrons to responsibly use those trails. This means accepting that sustainable or not, all trails are impacted by traffic, and the impact on natural-surfaced trails is magnified when they are wet. It is just a law of physics that people leave depressions and ruts on wet trails. These ruts, like the berms on the trail edges, impede sheet flow so that the trails become conduits for water. The results are erosion and debris berms.



Eroded trail at Friedrich Park

Slips and slides, exacerbated by slick trails, result in trail widening, and clumps of soil that stick on shoes essentially “walk out” of the Natural Area. Also when trail users try to avoid a puddle or a muddy spot, they often go off the trail, and the trail then splits into smaller trails, a condition called ‘[trail braiding](#)’.



Human caused trail widening

Best management practices, as well as a concern for patron safety, require that trails be closed when they are wet. Friedrich Wilderness Park, Government Canyon State Natural Area, and other state and national parks have a policy of closing wet trails. Please help limit trail damage by obeying trail closure signs.

Know that by doing your part you are helping to preserve not only the trails but, more importantly, the very landscape that makes them so desirable in the first place. Water a difference you **CAN MAKE!**

Upcoming Events

FEBRUARY

- **Wildlife Walk at Friedrich Wilderness Park (all ages)**
 - 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | Saturday, February 1 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
 - Ever wonder what lives in the park? Take a walk with Nature Preserve Officer Thomas Paine and discover signs of wildlife and unique features that make Friedrich Wilderness Park a special place in the winter. RSVP required. Visit FOSANA.org to reserve your spot. FREE. For more information, email Thomas.paine@sanantonio.gov, or call (210) 207-3781.
- **Starting Out Wild: Wild Things! (ages 1-3)**
 - 10:00-11:00 a.m. | Friday, February 7 & 21 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
 - Get up close with wildlife in this hands-on class! Southern Wildlife Rehab will bring their animal rescues, including skunks, bats, and an opossum to Friedrich. These high energy, engaging programs are a perfect way to foster an appreciation of the natural world. It is recommended that a child be walking and a parent or caretaker attend with each child. Most classes take place outdoors.
- **Animal Friends with Learn Nature & Southern Wildlife Rehab (all ages)**
 - 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | Saturday, February 8 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
 - Drop by the Friedrich Wilderness Park Pavilion between 10:00 a.m. and noon and get up close with wildlife and learn about animal adaptations! Meet some of your animal friends with the Learn Nature and Southern Wildlife crew—Rip the baby snake, her big friend Racket, Tessa and Roseanne the playful rats, Teddy and Elvis Toad, and more. Southern Wildlife Rehab will also have bats, skunks, and San Antonio's renowned opossum, Little Foot! Hands-on activity included. FREE. No reservations required.
- **Growing Up Wild: Animal Tracks (ages 4-7)**
 - 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. | Thursday, February 13 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
 - Learn about animal tracks and search for animal tracks along the trails at Friedrich. Growing Up Wild builds on a child's sense of wonder about nature and invites them to explore wildlife and the world around them.

MARCH

- **Drop in: Nature Picture Book with author Catherine Stier (all ages)**
 - 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. | Saturday, March 7 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
 - Inspired by the park's natural beauty, kids can create their own nature-themed, illustrated picture books at this drop-by event. We'll have all materials available in the pavilion, as well as a selection of nature picture books about bats, armadillos and other wildlife for families to share together. Award-winning children's author Catherine Stier will present a lively story time featuring her book IF I WERE A PARK RANGER and a Master Naturalist will lead two brief guided hikes to spark ideas for your own title. Bring a snack or lunch to enjoy at the picnic area and take the book you created home to remember your special day at the park. FREE. No reservations needed
 - **Author presentation: 11:00 a.m.**
 - **Guided Hikes: 10:15 am & 11:30 a.m.**

- **Guided Walk: Trail Sustainability** (ages: 13 & up)
 - 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. | Wednesday, March 11 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
 - Enjoy a guided walk while learning about trail sustainability with Wildlife Biologist and Naturalist Jayne Neal. Experience and learn about what makes a trail sustainable and how you can enjoy trails while also minimizing negative impacts. Jayne will share the history, science, and art of trail construction and maintenance. We will hike the Juniper Ridge trail as well as parts of Main Loop and Fern del. The walk will include elevation changes and uneven surfaces—be sure to adequately prepare with sturdy shoes and plenty of water. FREE. RSVP required.

All programs (unless otherwise noted): RSVP required. Visit fosana.org to reserve your spot. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, or \$6 per family. For more information, call 210-207-3782 or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.

FoSANA Board of Directors- Service to our Natural Areas

The Board of Directors of the Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas is a volunteer group which works to insure prudent use of FoSANA Membership funds and citizen donations in support of the Natural Area's environments, recreational uses, and education.

The Board works closely with SAPR (San Antonio Parks and Recreation) employees to:

- Support transportation for Title 1 school children visits to natural areas for education and exploration
- Provide funds for education programs conducted by Park's staff and guest experts on topics such as bees, geology, animals, reptiles, birds, and more.
- Partner with the Federal and State agencies to obtain grants for improvement of the Parks' infrastructures. One such grant resulted in doubling the trail system at Friedrich Wilderness Park.
- Support the Natural Area Biologist's monitoring programs for endangered species such as Black-capped vireo and Golden-cheeked warbler
- Provide personnel and financial support for outreach programs in Natural Areas and other City Parks, such as the Monarch festival at the Pearl Brewery.
- Assess conservation risks created by development in proximity to the parks and to represent the interests of the Natural Areas when re-zoning requests are presented to the City's Zoning Commission.
- Fund scholarship programs or supplemental hiring programs in support of the Natural Area's City operated education programs.

The Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas Board needs new members who have serious interests in contributing to these missions and who have the time to commit to monthly meetings followed by performing assigned project tasks. Next month we will detail some of the special skills that would complement the knowledge and skills of our present Board members. If you are interested, please send a brief resume with your interest in natural areas to: Friendsofsanaturalareas@gmail.com.

Are you connected to San Antonio Natural Areas on social media?

You can like us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/fosana).

Find us on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/sanaturalareas) @sanaturalareas.

Are you a member of Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas (FoSANA)?

Please support FoSANA on the preservation and educational outreach of natural areas around San Antonio by joining or renewing your membership [online](#) today.

Your membership this year will help us continue to

- offer over 400 environmental programs for families and adults at the Natural Areas.
- serve over 14,000 families and adults through education and outreach programs.
- coordinate over 400 volunteer programs and 7,500 volunteer hours supported trail maintenance, habitat conservation and restoration, and native landscapes and gardens.

Plus, when you renew your membership, you'll receive our monthly newsletter that provides updates on natural areas happenings and timely information on upcoming events.

Should you need any assistance or have any questions or comments about your membership, please feel

free to email us at friendsofsanaturalareas@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
FoSANA Board

Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas is dedicated to promoting stewardship of San Antonio's Natural Areas, and to the understanding and appreciation of nature through educational and scientific programs.

For the latest updates and more activities, please see the calendar on the FOSANA website.

[Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas Website](#)
