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Flood ravaged residential area becomes County's largest park

Crescent Bend Nature Park is the crown jewel to come out of the devastation suffered by this region after the 500-year flood event of 1998. The destruction that occurred in the 200-home Lakewood Acres, a neighborhood nestled against Cibolo Creek in Northeast Bexar County, accounted for more than 80 percent of the overall damage in unincorporated Bexar County. Bexar County Commissioner Tommy Adkisson immediately saw in Lakewood Acres an opportunity to create open land in the park-deprived Northeast quadrant of the County.

Today Commissioner Adkisson, City of Schertz Mayor Hal Baldwin and neighboring residents celebrated the opening of Crescent Bend Nature Park, the County's largest park and the result of a federal buyout program to protect lives and property from the raging waters of a swollen creek.

"I am thrilled to make good on my promise to this community to have something worthwhile come out of the disaster of 1998," Commissioner Adkisson said. "Parks are essential to the mental and physical health of a community. They provide us a place away from the hustle and bustle of the city so we can relax, reflect and rejuvenate."

The property buyouts were managed by the San Antonio River Authority using Federal Emergency Management Agency grants totaling \$5.17 million and another \$2.4 million of voter-approved and flood control tax bonds from Bexar County. Using 2003 County/City voter-approved bond funds, the County then developed the park with amenities such as walk/jogging trails, restrooms, two parking areas and picnic tables.

Future park developments could include interpretive signage, pavilions, playgrounds and other nature-related areas or structures. Under the agreement between the County and the City of Schertz, the land cannot be used for sport courts or fields. That agreement also stipulates that Bexar County will lease the park to the City of Schertz, which is responsible for future improvements, maintenance and security of the park for the next 25 years.

To mark the exchange and cooperation between the County and Schertz, Commissioner Adkisson presented Mayor Baldwin with a ceremonial key to the park.

“The collaborative partnership with the City of Schertz is a win-win situation for both the County and the City,” Commissioner Adkisson said. “But the ultimate winner is the community who will benefit from this partnership.”

In addition to the 1.5 miles of trails, the park also provides waterfront access to Cibolo Creek and a close-up view of native flora and fauna, including white-tail deer and wild turkeys. Both the County and City of Schertz have agreed to encourage and develop a volunteer program that would help with the natural management of the park. Those volunteer groups could include outdoor naturalist and nature park associations, such as the Bexar County Master Gardeners Association and the Central Texas Master Naturalists. Schools in the region also will be encouraged to provide outdoor learning experiences at the park.