



Winter 2016 [corrected to 2015] NEWSLETTER

Friends of Guadalupe River, Honey Creek, Inc.

A non-profit organization

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

by JW Pieper

Winter came in slowly this year in the Texas Hill Country, but the rains in October and November kept the Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area green later into the year. The clearing of underbrush from two years ago, especially the ashe juniper (mountain cedar), and then the prescribed burn of a year ago opened the area for a huge increase in the amount of native grasses and forbs. Knee high or even hip-high green grasses have provided a welcome-to-the- park signboard for all of our visitors to the Park and the Saturday hikers to Honey Creek.

That leads me to tell you about our new trail at Honey Creek for the Saturday morning at 9:00 AM hikers to enjoy. In October approximately 50 volunteers from Scout Troop 285 in San Antonio, Friends of GRSP, and members of the Park staff created a new trail that is being enjoyed by the hikers. The clearing of the trail involved cutting mountain cedar, stacking it, and shredding it to create mulch for the trails, removing heavy rocks, and clearing the grasses with weed-eaters. The new trail was positioned along the old road from the Rust House to the Weidnar House to add a level of history to the weekly hikes.

Halloween in the Park which normally is held on the Sunday before October 31st was a victim of the heavy rains this year. This weather marked the first time since the beginning of the event that weather forced us to cancel the fun filled event for the many young costumed ghosts, goblins, firemen, angels, princesses and space cadets from the area that enjoy the 30 to 35 candy stations along the lighted trail through the woods, as well as the hot dogs, chips and drinks awaiting them at the end of the trail.

Craig Hensley, Park Interpreter, has scheduled many wonderful outdoor events for kids and kids-at-heart to learn about nature and observe nature at work at Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area.

There is a program every Saturday night and many morning and afternoon events scheduled. Some of the most popular are Craig's "Prowling for Owls", "Animal Tracking", "Geocaching", and a new one this year on New Year's Day he is calling his "First Day Bird Walk and Survey." Check out the schedule on the internet and plan to visit to see what a treasure we have in our back yard!

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2016 Homesteader Homecoming

Mark your calendar...for 2:00 on Sunday, April 3

At the *Kendalia Public Library* (2610 FM 473, Kendalia)

Learn about Kendalia and the earlier settlement of Curry's Creek from Kendalia Library Director Donna Jonas.

As usual, Friends of Guadalupe/Honey Creek will supply the drinks and guests and friends members, are asked to bring a sweet.

Any questions please call Bryden Moon @ (830) 336-3375 or e-mail bemoonjr@aol.com.

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Board of Directors

- | |
|---|
| President
J.W. Pieper
jwp1@gvtc.com |
| Vice Pres. / Maintenance
Dave Kibler
djki@gvtc.com |
| Secretary
Bob Gray
RGrayTX@gmail.com |
| Treasurer
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bill.beach@sbcglobal.net |
| Director / Discovery Center
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rjmizanin@yahoo.com |
| Saturday Night Program
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craig.hensley@tpwd.state.tx.us |
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Holly Camero
chcamero@aol.com |
| Director / Hikes
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grayabbott@aol.com |
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Bryden Moon
Bemoonjr@aol.com |
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wshawjr888@aol.com |
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capted@gvtc.com |
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Trails to the Past

by Bryden Moon

At the Doorstep of St. John's Hall St. Joseph Catholic Church – Honey Creek

A small metal-sheathed structure sits quietly on today's St. Joseph Catholic Church – Honey Creek parish's Highway 46 campus, nearly stilled by time and purpose. Many of the church's older buildings are tied to St. Joseph's first permanent priest, Father Vigilius Draessel, who was assigned in 1898. This humble building was no exception, as it too is linked to their early dedicated spiritual leader, but in a unique way. Today, St. John's Hall has air-conditioning, insulation, and dry wall, courtesy of a 1984 make-over, but



that is not how it started out. We'll learn about its origins from a couple of eye-witnesses, St. Joseph Catholic Church – Honey Creek's Alfred Engel and Alfred Scheel. Alfred Engel (born May 10, 1895 in the Schiller area), was the son of Andreas Engel, founder of Bergheim. **On October 22, 1922, the greatest celebration ever held in Honey Creek was under way. This was the Golden Jubilee (50 years) of Father Draessel's ordination to the priesthood. Hundreds began to gather at an early hour...** Father Draessel had served as the parish's first and only resident priest (to this point for 24 years) so this was a big event. Another old-timer, Alfred Scheel (born July 30, 1885 in the Honey Creek area, the



Scheel family sold St. Joseph its first acre of land on Hwy 46) adds an additional element: ***In 1922 our parish hall was built, his Golden Jubilee was celebrated and debt was about paid for by this occasion...*** Church lore holds that in 1922, the St. John's Men's Society erected the parish hall in honor of Fr. Draessel's Golden Jubilee and it was dedicated with the name of St. John.

The building was created in dance hall fashion with exposed tin on the roof and the sides. For ventilation the tin window flaps held away from the openings with pieces of wood. All of these features can be seen in this interior photo (1956 - Father Strobel – right). St. John's Hall is not the first place you would think of when Hill Country dance halls are mentioned... as western Comal & Blanco Counties/eastern Kendall County region is sprinkled with antique yet active historic dancehalls: Anhalt, Twin Sisters, and Kendalia. Most folks don't even know it exists. But at one time, dances were held for the young adults and couples of the parish and



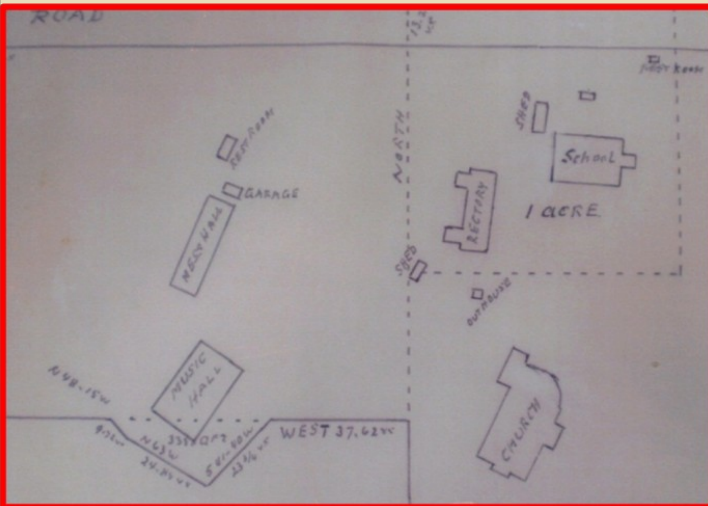
Trails to the Past

by Bryden Moon

other parish churches joined in, dodging the pot-bellied stove in the middle of the floor. An annual dance was a staple at St. Joseph's Fall Festival. And while "the locals" - parishioners and non-parishioners alike - reminisce of warm evenings in a classic dance hall, it doesn't serve that purpose anymore, as church dances are a thing of the past. Today, St. John's Hall is used for Knights of Columbus fish fries during Lent, summertime Vacation Bible School sessions, and other family gatherings, including receptions for weddings and baptisms, and in its early days it hosted many of the same types of functions. There aren't many items in the parish's archives that are related to St. John's and none that support its role as a part-time dance hall. That heritage comes from those folks who still remember coming to hear and dance to bands.

What is archived is a 1974 insurance inventory, which describes St. John's Hall: ***The Hall is a tin building with a tin roof. It is built on a post foundation. The interior is tin with wood floors. The building is approximately forty years old and is in fair condition.*** Yet ***forty years*** does not square with Alfred Scheel's 1922 date, which would

put its age at over 50 years old in 1974. So who is right? Developing the answer to this question also explains a puzzling land acquisition. By 1905, through 4 land deeds, St. Joseph – Honey Creek's campus totaled an even 50 acres. Yet many years later there was a fifth transaction for .076 of an acre, only 3330 square feet. The answer to both the question and the puzzle resides within a couple of St. Joseph documents: an old campus plot plan and Honey Creek's deed records. So let's take a look at a portion of a



pre-1950 plot plan. The ***Music Hall*** at the bottom left is St. John's Hall (by the way, ***Music Hall*** happens to be the only reference in the church archives that alludes to its dance hall days). You'll notice that there is a small bump-out in the form of a ***V*** on the southern lot line. The ***V*** appears to accommodate St. John's Hall (***Music Hall***) and if you look closely you see ***3300 SQ FT*** penned in – so this tells us where the tiny land acquisition is located. Our second source, the St. Joseph – Honey Creek deed records goes on to provide the date of acquisition: ***3330 square feet...donated by Simon Laubach to the Catholic Church of Anhalt...November 6th, 1923.*** Thus Mr. Scheel, not the insurance company, was right about the date of construction. And while we'll never know if the acquisition of the small land parcel was preplanned or executed to remedy the misplaced construction of St. John's Hall, we do know that St. John's Hall served as a dance hall, as several "locals" - parishioners and non-parishioners alike - reminisce of warm evenings in a classic dance hall, with the metal flaps raised and music pouring out into the remote hillsides.

There are more stories to be told!

News from the Park

By Craig Hensley, Park Interpreter

A Fall of Flooding

October brought the Park and Honey Creek nearly twenty inches of rain over a four-week period. After a flood over Memorial Day weekend that brought the water in the river to the top of the stairs in day use, the floods of October, while not as dramatic, were still impactful, particularly at Honey Creek.

The first rain, which occurred after a summer of virtually no rain, saturated the ground. A week later, another major rain had nowhere to go, thus much of it was run-off, creating impressive if short-lived waterfalls along the cliff in the day use area. Honey Creek saw a 15-foot rise in water level, with amazing amounts of debris carried downstream, including two picnic tables as seen in one of the photos.

As a result of the last flood, the floor of Honey Creek was literally “scrubbed” of silt and a great deal of aquatic vegetation. It’s as though the floor of Honey Creek got a “do-over.” It will be interesting to watch how the creek transforms itself over the winter and next spring. Long-term the creek will recover just fine as Mother Nature has ways of resetting itself that may be difficult to grasp at first glance, but reveals the reasons down the road.

Trail Talk

With all the rain in October, the trails of the park experienced a great deal of run-off that created gullies through significant erosion. In addition, with saturated ground and cooler temperatures of fall and winter, our trails stay muddy for longer periods of time.

One of the challenges of managing our park is to balance recreation with conservation of the resource. Trails are particularly challenging, especially when they are utilized by hikers, bikers and horseback riders. Saturated, muddy trails with scattered rocks can be potentially hazardous when walking on them with mud-coated shoes. Bikes and horses can tear up trails contributing to erosion and gully formation.

Additionally, our natural inclination when encountering standing water or excessive mud is to go around the wet area, over time creating ever-widening trails. This impacts trail-side vegetation and trail aesthetics. Each of these issues is factored in to the decision-making when we close trails. The decisions are never easy because we know our visitors and guests enjoy getting out on those same trails. Please know that the GRSP staff works hand-in-hand to balance user access and trail conservation for the ultimate benefit of both the user and the Park.

As we go through what is predicted to be a cold and wet winter, please be sure to check our Facebook page and website for updates regarding trail use status, particularly following rain events exceeding two inches. Or, of course, give us a call at the park.

Welcome Our Newest Staff Member

We are pleased to announce the hiring of Jennifer Monzon as our new Maintenance Specialist II/ Park Ranger. Jen arrived in Texas this past June, working at the Park as our Seasonal Interpreter. After a brief stint with the City of San Antonio, Jen is thrilled to be back at the Park. A native of New York, Jen has a solid background in park maintenance. We look forward to her contributions to the success of the Park.



New Staff Member Jen Monzon



Habi-scape Volunteers (from left to right): Joel Dunnington, Glenna Dunnington, Susan Bogle, Darlene Varga, Sara Riggs, Valerie Lefebvre. the water receded during the October flood.

The Habi-scape Takes Shape

Perhaps you are wondering what a “habi-scape” is, exactly. Well, first of all the word was coined by Master Naturalist and garden guru Susan Bogle. It is a garden that is not exactly a garden in the sense that it will host only native wildflowers that grow wherever (mostly) they want. This garden features a variety of different species of milkweeds so important to spring migrating – and egg-laying – monarchs, and a diversity of other native wildflowers popular among a host of pollinators, from native bees to butterflies. The Habi-scape will also serve an educational function in that it will be used to show visitors and guests what plants are both good for pollinators and resistant to deer depredation.

We are very thankful to Susan, Darlene, Val, Sara and the other volunteers that assist with weeding and other duties. If you are interested in

volunteering with the garden, please send Park Interpreter Craig Hensley an email at craig.hensley@tpwd.texas.gov.

SERVICE PROJECT AT THE PARK

By Dave Kibler

10 OCTOBER 2015

On Saturday, 10 October, a group of forty-seven enthusiastic volunteers from Boy Scout Troop 285, sponsored by Coker Methodist Church in San Antonio, returned to the park for the sixteenth time since 2007 to perform service work and to make improvements at the park. The primary target for the morning's work was the creation of a new trail, about one-quarter mile in length, in the Honey Creek State Natural Area, for the use of the Saturday morning guided nature hikers. Scouts and adults cleared Ashe juniper thickets, removed rocks, and cut grass in the new trail route. With the leadership of park staff, all the debris caused by the activity was chipped. After completing the work, all hands were treated to a super lunch of sausage and all the trimmings prepared by Roy Schultz of Troop 285. The food was again donated by the Friends of Guadalupe River State Park/Honey Creek State Natural Area. And later that afternoon several adult members of the Scout group continued the on-going project of removing Ashe juniper growth in the field near the Doepenschmidt House in the Honey Creek State Natural Area. The Scouts then completed the event with a pleasant overnight campout near the Doepenschmidt House.



All volunteers again displayed their spirit of cheerful service in performing this work for the park. The boys and adults of Troop 285 always look forward to this semi-annual service project as a way to demonstrate their Scout Spirit and will return to Guadalupe river State Park in the spring of 2016.

Visitor Services at GRSP: Getting Your Visit Off to a Great Start

by Craig Hensley, Park Interpreter

Any of you visiting Guadalupe River State Park (GRSP) is greeted by the large, colorful logo of our Park. Your next stop will include an encounter one or several of our truly wonderful Visitor Services employees, each one sharing a welcoming smile; each with a true customer-oriented desire to get your visit off to a positive beginning.

Guadalupe River State Park is fortunate to have Sandra, Susan, Layla, Robert and Sherry serving at the front desk, or headquarters. Overseeing the operation is Office Manager Sandra, just recognized for completing five years with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). Sandra began her career with TPWD at Lost Maples State Natural Area, joining GRSP approximately two years ago.

Sandra is our go-to person for purchasing and all other things financial, as well as serving as the conductor of the Visitor Services orchestra. From personal experience, Sandra, loves the fact that for a nature fix when she is up to her eyeballs in paper, all she has to do is look out her window or just step outside for a break. Speaking from personal experience, she is a God-send when it comes to figuring out everything from purchasing to navigating the seasonal hiring maze we all go through periodically.

Susan is the longest tenured person in the front office, serving guests and the Park for 6.5 years. As the Administrative Assistant II, she is Sandra's right-hand person. Susan splits time between direct customer assistance and dealing with reports and other paperwork. Susan enjoys the interactions she has with guests, particularly the children, knowing that she is helping to prepare the children and their parents for a positive outdoor experience.

Layla (2 years), Robert (1.5 years) and Sherry (2.5 years) are each Customer Service Representatives. They are the primary points of contact for the majority of our day-users and campers. If you have a question, whether face-to-face or over the phone, they are the ones who will most likely know the answer.

Layla joined us first as a seasonal person and, when the opportunity arose, was selected to join us on a full-time basis, a fortunate thing for fellow staff and our guests and visitors. She has a natural smile and easy-going way that immediately makes for a friendly encounter, and is proud to be part of a team that is providing meaningful and worthwhile outdoor experiences.

Robert, an avid hiker and camper, brings a life-long love of the Guadalupe River to the Park. He truly enjoys giving people useful information about the Park and local area, doing everything he can to provide each guest and visitor with a complete and positive experience.

Sherry is the most recent staff person to join Headquarters, formerly serving at Pedernales Falls State Park. She brings a helpful attitude and a desire to interact positively with all of our patrons.



Headquarters Staff (from left to right): Sandra, Robert, Layla, Susan, Sherry.

Speaking personally, I have spent time in the back office of Headquarters on days when there are 20 cars lined up with anxious visitors waiting their entrance to the park, when at the same time five or six families are trying to check in to campsites, and the phone is ringing off the hook with questions – the same questions – asked over and over. To my eyes and ears, this team not only has a patience level that would test anyone, but an ability to continue to smile and answer those questions, check in those campers and process park passes, all with the desire to provide a consistently positive interaction while giving everyone information on programs, river levels and the rest.

I am extremely proud to work with these wonderful people and thankful for the support that provide for the work I do – Discovery Center and program attendance is enhanced due to their support and efforts in the midst of all else they are doing. And seriously, you couldn't pay me enough to do their jobs – it is truly impressive to listen to and witness, and I am proud to call them friends and colleagues.

Upcoming programs at Guadalupe River State Park

by Craig Hensley

Join us for one or more of these programs and look for more throughout the winter months by checking the Park's web page: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/guadalupe-river>.

Nature Explorers: Animal Tracking and Geocaching

Friday, December 18

9-11 a.m.

Looking for a way to engage your homeschoolers in the natural world? Then join Guadalupe River State Park's Ranger Craig and volunteers for a year-long, monthly series during which your children will be immersed in the nature of the Park and Honey Creek. Each two-hour session will feature a topic for exploration. In December we'll teach your younger children the skills of animal tracking and head out in search of clues. The older children will learn how to use a GPS unit and then help us solve the Mysterious Case of the Guadalupe Fledermaus. Nature Explorers is designed for children ages 5 to 10. For more information about Nature Explorers, please email craig.hensley@tpwd.texas.gov. **Reservations are required for this popular program.** This program is free with a Park Pass or a \$7 daily pass (children ages 12 and under are free). Please meet at the Discovery Center.

Bird in the Hand

Saturday, December 19

9 a.m.-Noon

Looking for a great way to introduce your children to the wonder of birds? Then join Park Ranger and bird bander Craig Hensley at Guadalupe River State Park for a morning of nose-to-beak looks at our native songbirds. From cardinals to goldfinches, you and your children will learn about the science and art of bird banding and how you can help. Meet us at the Discovery Center. This program is free with a Park Pass or \$7 daily pass (children ages 12 and under are free).

Stories in the Stars

Saturday, December 19

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Head out to Guadalupe River State Park for an evening of stargazing with members from the San Antonio Astronomical Association. Following a presentation at the amphitheater behind the Discovery Center, you'll get a chance to check out seasonal constellations, the Moon and other celestial wonders through our telescopes. Meet at the amphitheater behind the Discovery Center. This program is free with a TPWD Park Pass or after paying the \$7 entrance fee (children ages 12 and under are free).

Prowlin' for Owls

Saturday, December 26

6:30-8 p.m.

We're heading out for a hootin' good time as we call and listen for Barred and possibly other owls that inhabit Guadalupe River State Park. Join the Park Ranger to learn about owls and their amazing adaptations as well as who's whooooo among the owls of Texas. This program will be held at the amphitheater at the Discovery Center and is free with a Park Pass or a \$7 daily pass (children ages 12 and under are free). Be sure to bring a flashlight and dress for the weather.

First Day Hike: Honey Creek at Midnight

Thursday, December 31, 2015-Friday, January 1, 2016

11:30 p.m.-2 a.m.

kick off 2016 with a celebratory toast along the banks of Honey Creek as the clock turns to a new year. We'll meet at the Rust House promptly at 11:30 p.m and head to the creek. Be sure to dress for the weather and bring a flashlight. We'll provide snacks. Please email Ranger Craig at craig.hensley@tpwd.texas.gov to register for this special hike.

An Invitation to Help the Friends Build a New Bird Observation Station!**First Day Bird Hike and Area-wide Survey**

Friday, January 1, 2016

7 a.m.-7 p.m.

Want to help us learn what birds are on the park and natural area, raise money for the Friends group to help build a new bird blind, and explore all that is Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area? Then make plans to join us for this day-long adventure.

We'll begin before the crack of dawn and finish after the sun sets as we conduct our first ever First Day full-day bird survey of both the park and Honey Creek State Natural Area. Join us for part of the day or for the entire adventure. We'll meet at the front gate to the park promptly at 7 a.m. in the hopes of hearing or seeing an owl or two and then bird the park during the morning. You are welcome to join us for part or for the entire day.

Following lunch (be sure to bring a sack lunch), we'll head into Honey Creek and do the same, ending there in search of any owls we may have missed in the morning. Bring your binoculars, a field guide and dress for the weather -- along with your senses of fun and adventure. This is for ages 12 and up. Birders of all levels are welcome. Please contact Ranger Craig at craig.hensley@tpwd.texas.gov to sign up and for more information.

And here's how you can help. We encourage you to contact your friends and family to seek sponsors for each bird species we find. It could be ten or fifty cents, a dollar or more per bird, depending upon what you would like to donate. We anticipate finding between 25 and 50 species of birds. All proceeds will go to a fund with the Friends group for a new bird blind.

If you are interested in making a donation, please contact the Friends Treasurer Bill Beach at bill.beach@sbcglobal.net.



Upcoming programs at Guadalupe River State Park

by Craig Hensley

Upcoming Trainings/Workshops

Interested in becoming a volunteer at the park? Check out these opportunities and contact Craig.hensley@tpwd.texas.gov to let him know which ones you would like to participate in.

Discovery Center New Volunteer Training

Sunday, January 24

1-4 p.m.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer for the Discovery Center, this training will give you the basics and instruction necessary to get started.

Bird Banding Training

Friday, February 12

9 a.m.-3 p.m.

If you enjoy birds, join us for a training session that will introduce you to the science and art of bird banding as well as spend time gaining practical experience. This training is for people that really want to get involved with our banding program.

Golden-cheeked Warbler Survey Training

Wednesday, February 24

9-11 a.m.

Golden-cheeked Warbler surveys are conducted each March-April at the Bauer Unit and Honey Creek. This training will get you up to speed on our methodologies and allow us to schedule participants.

School Program Training

Wednesday, March 2

9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Join us to learn about the school programs we offer each spring and to be trained in the various components for our children.

2016 Dues

by Bill Beach

2016 Membership Dues Are Now Payable

It is a time of renewal, and if you have not renewed your Friends of GRSP/Honey Creek membership for 2016 it is time to do so. As you know, this newsletter keeps you current with the activities at the Park, but the costs of sending out the newsletter are continuing to increase.

As a reminder, we are a 501 (c) 3 organization which means that contributions to the Friends organization are tax deductible. Just use the application on the inside back cover of this newsletter and mail your check to the official address for the Friends, 3350 Park Road 31, Spring Branch, Texas 78070 or drop it off at Park Headquarters on your next visit.

The Board of Directors has authorized the cancellation of subscription privileges to the Quarterly Newsletter in February for all members who are in arrears.

Friends of Guadalupe River / Honey Creek, Inc. Membership

(Membership Renewal date is January 1st)

Name(s): _____ Date _____

Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Email _____ Phone: _____

Membership Type: New Member Renewal Change of Address

Level of Membership: \$5 Education or Youth Organization \$50 Sustaining Member
 \$5 Student (under 18) \$100 Contributing Member
 \$10 Individual (over 18) \$500 Corporate Partner
 \$15 Family \$1000 Life Membership

I would like to help the Friends by volunteering for:

Interpretive hikes Outdoor Ed. Programs Trail Maintenance
 Historical Drama Evening Programs South Island Beautification
 Trail Ride Event Fundraising Other _____

Send checks payable to "Friends of GR/HC, Inc. Mail to:
 3350 Park Road 31, Spring Branch, TX 78070

Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc. is a 501(c)3 organization.
 All donations are tax deductible.

**Friends of Guadalupe River
and Honey Creek, Inc.**

3350 Park Road 31
Spring Branch, Texas 78070

We're on the web!
www.honeycreekfriends.org

**The Friends of Guadalupe River and
Honey Creek, Inc. is a
non-profit organization working with
Guadalupe River State Park and
Honey Creek State Natural Area.**

**The "Friends" meet monthly at the Park.
Please join us on the first
Thursday at 6:30 pm.
And bring a friend!**