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# More land marked for Spring Creek project

Canoe launch will be ready for use in March '07

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A new piece recently was added to the Spring Creek Greenway project, which will provide the first public canoe and kayak access point from Montgomery County beginning in March.

In April 2005, Montgomery County purchased a 6,869-acre tract at the site of the old Riley Fuzzel bridge in Spring and will open it as a public preserve March 17. It is the latest addition to the Spring Creek Greenway project, a cooperative effort between Harris and Montgomery counties to build the largest park system in the area. The 8,000- to 12,000-acre park would stretch from FM 2978 in Spring to U.S. 59 in Humble.

The tract will provide a new launch site to Spring Creek and offer three canoe and kayaking routes, ranging from three hours to all day. Boats can leisurely float down calm waters to Pundt Park, the Jesse H. Jones Nature Center or the U.S. 59 bridge.

"This is the best creek in the area," said Jennifer Lorenz, executive director of Legacy Land Trust, an agency dedicated to preserving natural areas. "It is gorgeous with a lot of pretty areas to look at. It also offers white sand beaches along the creek that nobody knows about."

## Property purchase

The property recently was purchased by Montgomery County and includes a conservation easement, an agreement with Legacy Land Trust to keep the site in its natural state indefinitely. This area will be particularly valuable as a flood buffer zone as it includes evidence of the recent flooding, which spilled the creek 21 feet over its banks.

"That portion will be in South County," said Precinct 3 Commissioner Ed Chance, who is spearheading the Spring Creek project for Montgomery County. "It is another method to properly preserve the site for the long haul."

The site will be open to the public, but only can be accessed by foot or bicycle. It had been a popular location for all-terrain vehicles, but they will no longer be allowed on the site.

Dogs also are not permitted on the preserve because they would disturb the wildlife that lives there.

The tract also has been used for illegal dumping, and the Montgomery County Beautification Association plans a major cleanup this winter before the preserve officially opens.

## Haven for wildlife

During a recent survey of the property, Legacy Land Trust found large deer and bobcat tracks at the site. They also inventoried more than 30 species of native trees and bushes, including a large, brilliant red maple tree on the banks of the creek and hundreds of little brown mushrooms growing on fallen logs.

"The beautiful park tract, with its large river birches, will be a nice addition to the Spring Creek Greenway," said Robert Collins, special counsel in Precinct 3, who has been negotiating the Spring Creek tracts.

One of the most unique finds was the Carolina snailseed vine, Lorenz said. When squeezed between

the fingers, the translucent berries reveal a perfect, hard, shell-like seed that looks like a snail.

The site also is an important stop-over and wintering ground for migrating birds, such as waterfowl, shorebirds and songbirds.

## Opening set

The new park is expected to open March 17, and canoeists are encouraged to participate in the event, which will give inner city Houston students their first boat ride on the creek. The site will feature rails to guide canoes to the river along with a large, colorful map of the water trails, complements of a grant from outdoor equipment outfitter REI.

The tract also is expected to expand when the county purchases 45 adjacent acres in two weeks. The Old Riley Fuzzel Preserve sits across the creek from the Peckinpaugh Preserve, which is undergoing a \$10,000 renovation to repair damage by ATVs.

That facility is expected to open later in the spring.

The new tract provides easy access to Spring Creek and nearby off-site parking is available.



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