



## Spring/Klein/Tomball News

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### Montgomery County opens Peckinpaugh Preserve

Tract of land is part of park that will span 12,000 acres

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One of the main gateways to Spring Creek on the Montgomery County side of the waterway opened to the public April 21.

The Peckinpaugh Preserve, named in honor of a family that has sought to preserve the land since 1987, is a 25-acre tract located on the east side of the Riley Fuzzel Road bridge on the border of Montgomery and Harris counties.

The tract initially will include a one-half-mile trail that meanders above the creek and that later will be carved into the forest nearby.

"It is an extremely important tract to have at the location," said Montgomery County Precinct 3 Commissioner Ed Chance, who is spearheading efforts to build a 12,000-acre linear park along Spring Creek in Montgomery and Harris counties. "It is an early gateway point to the Spring Creek for the general public."

The Peckinpaugh Preserve is the latest addition to the general area, which is opening recreational opportunities for the public along Spring Creek. On the other side of Riley Fuzzel Road, Montgomery County recently completed its first canoe launch on the creek, providing trips of one hour to all day with take-out points further down the waterway. The canoe launch is located on the seven-acre Old Riley Fuzzel Road Preserve, which includes a two-acre pond complete with alligators.

Harris County is expected to begin construction on nearby Pundt Park in August. Pundt Park will include trails, a pavilion, picnic areas, a playground, parking lots and restrooms.

#### 'Ecological gem'

The Peckinpaugh Preserve includes 10 acres donated by Patricia Peckinpaugh Hubbard, daughter of the land owner who has pursued the county since 2000 to use the land for a passive park. The preserve also includes 15 acres donated from the Houston Audubon Society through a land swap deal.

Peckinpaugh Hubbard said her father was a rancher who owned 1,000 acres in what is now Spring Trails. He would take the family to the site every weekend, where the children would swim and canoe on the creek and horseback ride through the forest. She donated the land to honor her father because he loved it so much.

"It was a place of pleasure for me and my siblings," Peckinpaugh Hubbard said. "I hope they will love and enjoy it. It has a wonderful variety of trees, like some beautiful magnolias, and white sand beaches. I hope they have a wonderful time there."

Montgomery County Commissioners Court recently honored Peckinpaugh for her generous donation and recognized her contribution to the Spring Creek Greenway Project.

"The Spring Creek Greenway will connect and protect approximately 12,000 acres of virtually pristine forest, on both sides of the creek, in order to preserve, protect, restore and educate the public about the ecological gem — a biologically diverse ecosystem that provides important habitat for many wildlife species and aims to create an ecotourism mecca and peaceful respite from busy lives for those from Montgomery County, from metropolitan Houston, from Texas and from all over the nation and from all over the world," said Robert Collin, special counsel in Precinct 3, in proclaiming Patty Hubbard Peckinpaugh Day.

#### Diverse property

The preserve represents a best of the flora and fauna of the area, from wetlands to forests.

The site contains 45 species of trees, as well as many flowering plants. There are Carolina silverbells, which produce delicate hanging white bell-shaped flowers and the cardinal flower, identified by its brilliant red buds.

#### RESOURCES

##### SPRING CREEK GREENWAY

Montgomery County added two new preserves that will provide recreational opportunities along Spring Creek. They are part of the Spring Creek Greenway Project, a planned 12,000-acre linear park project that will stretch from FM 2978 in Spring to U.S. 59 in Humble.

##### Peckinpaugh Preserve: 25 acres

- Located on the east side of Riley Fuzzel Road bridge in Montgomery County

- 10 acres donated by Patty Hubbard Peckinpaugh

- 15 acres donated by the Houston Audubon Society

- Includes wildlife, insects, amphibians, flowering plants and 45 species of trees

- Includes half-mile trail along Spring Creek; future trails into the forest

##### Old Riley Fuzzel Road Preserve: 7 acres

- Features first canoe launch for Spring Creek in Montgomery County

- Includes signage and launch bars

- Has 2-acre pond with alligators

- Includes parking area

- Canoe/kayak rentals available from SouthWest PaddleSports and REI/Willowbrook

Source: Legacy Land Trust

Among the trees found there are eastern redbud, black gum, sumac, mockernut hickory, cherry laurel and the devil's walking stick.

"It is a really, really diverse property," said Jennifer Lorenz, executive director of Legacy Land Trust, which has a conservation easement on the county-owned properties to protect the land in its natural state indefinitely.

The tract is also home to many native birds and animals. During a recent survey, Legacy Land Trust found screech owls, hummingbirds, four species of woodpecker, blue knat catchers, white-eyed vireos and warblers on the site. Common in the area are white-tailed deer, opossum, armadillo, flying squirrels and striped skunk. Also found there are various species of insects, including dragonflies, damselflies and butterflies.

A rare, exciting find on the tract was the dwarf salamander. This species, which is generally yellow-brown in color with a dark stripe down each side to the tail, is one of the smallest, growing only 2.5 to 3.5 inches long. Unlike other salamanders, it has four toes on all feet.

### Trail restrictions

The area originally was deeded over to Montgomery County in 2005, but it has taken a while to open it to the public. In addition to the construction of the new Riley Fuzzel Road bridge, the area was popular with all-terrain vehicles.

The new site will be open for walking and hiking. Bicycling will not be permitted because the land is so sandy, and ATVs and dogs will not be allowed on the property. Lorenz said the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office recently formed an ATV Task Force to address illegal trail users in the county, and any violations can be reported to that office.

"We spent \$10,000 restoring property that had been pummeled by ATVs," Lorenz said.


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