Texas is blessed with an incredible diversity of ecosystems that are the foundation of the lands, waters and wildlife we cherish. From the arctic to the tropics, from the moist forests of the Rio Grande Valley to the dry West Texas to the Pineywoods of East Texas, our state is rich with natural treasures that feed our souls.

A network of local, state and national parks provide places for us to escape the asphalt and constrictions of city life for respite in nature. But these recreational areas represent less than 5% of the land in Texas. As our population continues to grow rapidly, the appreciation for the outdoors and the need to invest in our parks, both the historic ones we visited as children and those that have yet to open, is more important than ever.

Creating new parks and stewarding existing parks is a priority for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission, which oversees the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The department’s chief executive, director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Anne Brown, a former executive director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, is the project lead for the Palo Pinto Mountains State Park project and the State Parks Foundation, is the project lead for the Palo Pinto Mountains State Park project and the State Parks Centennial.

The park is designed to provide recreational opportunities while maintaining the “light on the land” to keep the area in its natural form. Adams said Texas has more than 80 state parks. Palo Pinto Mountains State Park will join those in line proximity in North Texas. Comal County is west of Fort Worth, and Ray Roberts State Park is near mars Sabino. Texas’ north and you’ll hit Cleburne State Park and Dinosaur Valley State Park.

But North Texas visitors to Palo Pinto Mountains State Park will notice a stark contrast to the topography they’re used to in the Metropols, Adams said.

“Once you get out past Weatherford, you really start seeing these big, beautiful rolling hills,” he said. “You start feeling like you’re in a much wilder place when you get out there, something that is reminiscent of the Hill Country but in North Texas.”

A PARK YEARS IN THE MAKING

There’s a lot that goes into making a state park the acquisition of land, an

FROM PAGE 6A

PARK

Camping will have their choice from about 60 campites, from primitive to RV.

Workers are choreographing about 20 miles of trails for bikers, hikers and horseback riders. Tucker Lake will offer swimming and boating — though motor boats won’t be permitted. The park is designed to provide recreational opportunities while maintaining “light on the land” to keep the area in its natural form, Adams said.

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ONce i become a mother, that connection deepened. I hope to spend the rest of my career ensuring that my son, and the next generation, has access to these outdoor treasures. With the generosity of many donors, we expect to begin construction of Palo Pinto Mountains State Park in late 2022, which will lead into a year-long campaign in 2023 celebrating 100 years of Texas state parks. We will encourage all Texans to ponder what our state parks mean to them, today and for the next 100 years.

The ranch’s remaining 790 acres was recently donated to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for creation of a state park, Powderhorn Ranch. Palo Pinto Mountains State Park is one of the largest remaining tracts of unspoiled coastal prairie in Texas, and, thanks to this incredible partnership effort, it will be available to the people of Texas for generations to come.

My long-term involvement with both of these legacy projects has been deeply gratifying. When I left the corporate world decades ago to direct conservation in our state, it was for my own individual connection with the outdoors and my intellectual understanding that we all need healthy lands and waters to thrive.

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