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Texas Aquatic Science Curriculum Gets Boost from Boeing

Thanks to a grant from Boeing, more Texas schoolchildren will have access to hands-on learning opportunities in Texas State Parks. The \$15,000 grant will provide research equipment to six state parks near Dallas, San Antonio and Houston for use in the Texas Aquatic Science curriculum provided by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). The funding will pay for comprehensive field site trunks, which will include scientific field study equipment and approved curriculum guides to conduct research in the field.

“Boeing is excited to fund this comprehensive aquatic science program for middle and high school students across Texas,” said Dayni Alba, Boeing Community Investor for Texas. “Helping students understand the importance of water and their part in conservation is important for water resource protection.”

The Texas Aquatic Science curriculum is a comprehensive learning program for middle and high school students, with an online student textbook, a teacher guide, specially produced videos and supplementary materials designed to teach students about the importance of water and their part in conserving it. Activities are aligned with state curriculum standards, with some activities designed specifically for a field setting. TPWD is certifying various field sites for use in the program, including state parks. The program was piloted last year, reaching several thousand students, and will expand this year with the additional funding provided by Boeing.

“Boeing’s generosity has made it possible to place equipment in parks near major metro areas and allow Texas students to practice real science in the field with trained park staff,” said Johnnie Smith, Conservation Education Manager for TPWD. “Research has confirmed that children learn more in field-based settings, and we believe that this knowledge and awareness will lead to future conservation-minded citizens.”

TPWD partnered with The Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies and The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment to develop the curriculum and pilot the program in response to the need for interactive and engaging STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) learning opportunities. According to the National Math + Science Institute, U.S. students recently finished 27th in math and 20th in science in the ranking of 34 countries by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

State parks receiving the trunks include Galveston Island, the Johnson and Isle du Bois branches of Ray Roberts Lake, Cedar Hill, Brazos Bend and Guadalupe River. Ten middle and high schools close to those parks will be using them in the Texas Aquatic Science program in the coming school year. For more information about the program, contact Johnnie Smith at 512.389.8060, johnnie.smith@tpwd.texas.gov or go to tpwd.texas.gov/education/resources/aquatic-science

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Since 1991, Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation (TPWF) has leveraged public funds with private philanthropy to advance Texas' proud outdoor traditions and conserve our state's wildlife, habitat, recreational areas, and natural resources. Since its inception, TPWF has raised more than \$125 million to help ensure that all Texans, today and in the future, can enjoy the wild things and wild places of Texas.

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