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## A NEW PRESERVE IN WALKER COUNTY

Michael and Marilyn Pawelek had spent a great deal of time looking for a very special piece of wooded land. It needed to be land that they would enjoy returning to often for relaxation from their busy life in Brookshire, Texas...land that they could explore year after year with the expectation of finding new and exciting plants, animals and mushrooms.

Two years ago they found this dream land near Richards, Texas southwest of Huntsville, and since then they have come to treasure their retreat more with every visit. It soon became apparent that a place that was so precious to them should be protected from any kind of tree felling, drilling, or development forever.

Michael and Marilyn have now granted a conservation easement on their 22 acres to Natural Area Preservation Association to insure this protection.

This is a very interesting site. It shows no evidence of ever having been cut, but, while the trees are very large, they are not the monsters one might expect from an old growth area. Previous to development and farming the land to the west of Richards had been a savanna; the land east of the Pawelek's preserve is in Sam Houston National Forest. It appeared to us that this area is in transition from savanna to forest and is showing all the characteristics of an ecotone with many species not found in either of the adjacent ecosystems. The species diversity is certainly greater. In a leisurely one hour walk over only part of the acreage, we found fifteen species of hardwoods, and numerous species of vines, shrubs and herbaceous plants. The ferns and mushrooms were outstanding. It will be fascinating to watch this site develop through time.

The Paweleks are very busy right now hand watering thousands of poinsettias in their Brookshire nursery, but they have assured us that the signed conservation easement will be in our hands by the end of November. Thank you Michael and Marilyn! We will treasure your preserve as much as you do!

## NAPA BOARD MEMBER PRAISED

A lengthy article in the Dallas Morning News lauds NAPA board member Claude Albritton, his wife Susan and her family for their generosity in making it possible for Dallas to have a contemporary art museum and alternative spaces to accommodate avant-garde exhibits, theater, dance, music, film and video. The McKinney Avenue Contemporary, or MAC as it is called, is a state-of-the-art facility that is open now with an impressive list of events.

## NAPA OBTAINS OPTION TO BUY FINAL LINK IN WINTERS BAYOU AREA

By Ned Fritz

On November 8, the private owners of the final 52-acre wedge into Winters Bayou Scenic Area signed an agreement to sell the beautiful forest to Natural Area Preservation Association.

We have six months to raise the purchase price of \$62,891.00 for the 52 acres, shown on the map in this issue.

Please send to NAPA your contribution toward this purchase. Contributors of \$1,000.00 or more may designate themselves or others to be listed on a permanent memorial market that NAPA will erect at the site.

Member Joe Pumphrey, Dallas real estate attorney, conducted the negotiations for NAPA pro bono over an eight-month period.

The U.S. Forest Service had designated Winters Bayou, a unique natural ecosystem, as its only Scenic Area in the National Forests in Texas. It is open to the public without charge and contains 565 acres. Two private parcels penetrate the bayou in the shape of a big bite. The agency proposes to acquire them, but is not likely to obtain funds.

This parcel thrusts like a plug all the way to Winters Bayou itself, the heart of the Scenic Area, along the west side of another private tract that NAPA bought in 1991. Large pines and hardwoods form a high-canopy forest here with a rich diversity of other native species including at least six orchids. Numerous birds inhabit the plug, especially neo-tropical migrants, which are suffering severe declines because of the logging of old-growth forests. By working with the scattered owners of the 52 acres, NAPA has forestalled logging here for many years.

A footpath winds the length of the 52 acres, beginning at a house and trailer home at the southern boundary where James Jackson, a professional forester, and his daughter reside as tenants of the private owners. A skilled guide, James has shown this and other parts of the complex to those who wish to enjoy and preserve it, and had protected the property from others who would harm the natural ecosystems. Under NAPA's plan, he would continue to reside there and to exercise caretaking functions.

Accessible by paved road only two turns from U.S. 59 out of Houston, Winters Bayou Scenic Area is ideal for dispersed recreation, mainly nature study and walking. The population of Houston and the region is in need of such recreation, including for youths. Visits to this area strengthen people physically and mentally, and, as to urban youths, it provides outlets that tend to reduce violence and crime.

Preserving this wedge tract along with Winters Bayou Scenic Area also serves one

of the principles of conservation biology, namely that the larger the area protected and the less fragmentation of its parts, the more species and plant communities will endure. Then too, integration of the protection of the private portions will tend to keep the Forest Service equally protective of the portions which it is managing. Natural Area Preservation Association began this process by acquiring an adjoining 26-acre plug in 1991, containing the State Champion Laurel oak (the largest). The 52-acre parcel is notable for its large Laurel oaks, part of an unusual plant community.

If we let this opportunity go by, the private owners will probably sell the timber from the 52 acres for about the same price as our agreed option price, thus setting back the entire Scenic Area by 100 years or more.

#### Project Budget:

Purchase Price	\$62,891.00
Memorial Marker	\$ 1,000.00

It is anticipated that members and friends of NAPA will contribute \$20,000.00. NAPA is requesting 10 Houston foundations, selected for field of interest, to contribute the remainder.

Memorial Marker - NAPA will purchase and erect at the site a permanent memorial marker with a brief message and acknowledgement of the names of all donors who contribute \$1,000.00 or more. The message will relate a theme like this:

A preserve by Natural Area Preservation Association, Inc.

"Humans have constructed so many mighty works and occupied so many lands that the most momentous achievement remaining to accomplish is to preserve examples of the plant and animal communities which remain unimpaired. This preserve contains examples of riparian, floodplain, and terrace communities of Southeast Texas."

A separate letter about Winters Bayou will be coming to you soon.

# AREA MAP



