

Friends of Coppel Nature Park

Strategic Plan

2017 – 2022

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I. Executive Summary

A. What is Coppel Nature Park: Within the City's Wagon Wheel Park (on Freeport Parkway) Coppel Nature Park (CNP) is a 66-acre, wooded, nature park. A spring-fed stream flows through the Park. Hawks, coyotes, bobcats, and many other animals live in the area. More than 130 different species of birds migrate through the park yearly, and more than 220 plant species have been identified. Located within Coppel Nature Park is **the Bio-Diversity Education Center (BEC)**, a unique, adaptable, sustainable facility that inspires passion for our local and global environment, promotes community involvement, and creates life-long learning opportunities. By incorporating engaging outdoor activities and innovative technologies the BEC provides fun, hands-on experiences where people of all ages explore, learn, share and celebrate nature.

B. Who is FCNP: Initiated in 2003, Friends of Coppel Nature Park (FCNP), a 501 C-3, non-profit corporation, committed to supporting the Nature Park through fund raising, publicity, education and volunteer park maintenance. FCNP is directed by a board of dedicated citizens and is host to the volunteerism **of hundreds of adults** and students. FCNP commits its annual budget to development and maintenance of the Nature Park and implementation of environmental education programs.

C. FCNP partners with the local community, the City of Coppel, and the Coppel Independent School District to serve the following needs:

1. Conservation: Conserving wilderness, wildlife habitat, and places of natural beauty for preservation and enjoyment.
2. Public education: Providing learning opportunities that empower citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to make wise environmental decisions.
3. Literacy of Science: To promote knowledge and understanding of the scientific concepts and processes required for personal decision making, participation in civic and cultural affairs, and economic productivity.
4. Coppel Independent School District program of Service Learning: A teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.
5. Water quality of Cottonwood Branch of the Trinity River: Preserving land to ensure clean drinking water runoff and to protect the natural beauty of our waterways.
6. Development of classroom curricula serving State of Texas educational curricula (TEKS) and the general public.

FCNP projects further environmental education, community service, adult-to-youth mentors, and quality of life within our community. This effort has a significant impact upon our recreational, cultural, and natural features while providing multiple public benefits. Students have learned trail design, layout, and construction; become familiar with the tools necessary for developing a Park; developed hands-on skills to improve pathways; and designed and installed trail bridges. Creation and development of the Park has taught students about natural resources, local wildlife, and how to minimize or mediate negative impacts on our environment.

II. Mission

Friends of Coppel Nature Park's mission is to nurture an appreciation of our natural environment, encourage, outdoor experiences, and foster nature education. FCNP pursues this mission by partnering with the local community, City and School District to maintain the natural environment of The Park, and provide engaging programs at the BEC. Underpinning these efforts are high conservation standards and an objective of raising a strong sense of community and environmental service for future generations.

III. Strategic Vision

FCNP will work to elevate the value of the Nature Park and the BEC **by raising** awareness, enhancing usability, and expanding programs.

FCNP will continue its efforts to fulfill this vision through:

- Ongoing preservation of the natural environs of the Nature Park and maintenance/enhancement of the trail system and nature classrooms.
- Enhancement and expansion of hands-on learning opportunities at the BEC and in the Nature Park.

In addition, FCNP will work with the City of Coppell to enhance the visibility and functionality of the Nature Park and the BEC. The following high-impact enhancements will require funding support from the City and can reasonably be completed within this Strategic Plan time horizon.

- Placement of monument signage at the Wagon Wheel Park entrance highlighting the presence of the Nature Park and the BEC, along with signage in the parking lot guiding people to the area where the Nature Park and the BEC are accessed.
- Kiosk signage near the Nature Park/BEC access areas profiling the Nature Park environs and trail system, and the BEC facility.
- Development of a 'Nature Explore' type outdoor environment adjacent to the BEC to engage families and children with the natural world.
- Enhance the usefulness of the Observation Deck for large classroom nature instruction by adding parachute-type shading.

IV. FCNP 12-18 Month Action Plans:

- A. Community Service & Volunteerism: 1) Continued trail & asset maintenance; 2) Report volunteer hours; 3) offer more volunteer opportunities to outside groups such as church groups, non-Coppell schools, scouts, NHS & YMSL; 4) Increase the recognition and appreciation for these volunteer groups; 5) Establish volunteer contact lists.
- B. Programs & Education: 1) Black Land Prairie "trunk" & program; 2) Tree ID Signage; 3) Host and support Jr. Master Naturalist program; 4) Build Wild Flower garden kiosk; 5) Expand Summer Camps; 6) Expand FCNP Guest lecture series to incorporate more hands-on speakers (possibly increase to two per month); 7) Develop interpretive CNP signage; 8) Incorporate a night CNP tour; 9) Provide Golf Cart training for Board members.

C. Park Maintenance & Improvement: 1) New “rules” sign at trail heads (possible Scout project); 2) Deck tree cut-out to be addressed; 3) creek crossing to incorporate natural looking stepping stones—i.e. big rocks (possible Scout project); 4) eliminate wasps from Deck benches; 5) BEC Garden planting & expansion; 6) BEC stone-paver walk way (possible Scout project); 7) **NATURE** EXPLOR Garden location and opportunity; 8) BEC erosion control river rock; 9) CNP Monument sign; 10) Build a Wild Flower Garden kiosk (possible Scout project); 11) Lining selective areas of trails & outdoor classrooms with landscape timbers to hold mulch (possible multiple Scout projects); 12) Table for outdoor classroom North (Scout project to be accomplished this month); 13) Erosion control project on Latta Cutoff at Hansen Trail; 14) Replace damaged trail benches; 15) Continued Black Land Prairie development.

D. Publicity & Communication: 1) Carry forward project accountability thru minutes; 2) Incorporate more meetings with partners; 3) More and efficient emails to all partners; 4) Add CNP advisors to email distribution; 5) Incorporate monthly updates to Board, Advisors & City sponsors; 6) Increase and develop Social Media usage; 7) Evaluate the use of a possible newsletter; 8) Develop a “membership” program and “associate” base of support; 9) Utilize Facebook live.