



Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

# Parks Maintenance: Policies and Funding

## *Session 1: Maintenance Standards and Assessments*

October 25, 2023





# Welcome!

Give us a snapshot of your parks maintenance system through this poll:

[pollev.com/christinajan159](https://pollev.com/christinajan159)

# Parks Maintenance Standards & Assessments

## Agenda:

- Workshop Series Overview
- Houston Parks Board- *Trent Rondot, Conservation & Maintenance Director*
- Breakout Groups
- Closing







## About 10-Minute Walk<sup>®</sup>

Trust for Public Land envisions a future where every community has safe, equitable access to a high-quality park within a 10-minute walk of home.

- In collaboration with cities and partners, we address pressing questions and challenges to park equity
- Launched in 10-Minute Walk Program launched in 2017 with partners National Recreation and Park Association and ULI, we have been working to expand assistance, reach and focus
- The 10-Minute Walk Program is an award-winning national effort to improve safe, easy access to parks and green spaces

# 10-Minute Walk<sup>®</sup> Mission: Closing the Park Equity Gap

**1 in 3 U.S. residents** do not have a park or green space within a 10-minute walk of home.

We call on mayors to accelerate the creation of parks that drive equitable, healthy and thriving communities.





# How We Work

The 10-Minute Walk Program helps cities expand access to quality parks and green spaces for everyone. We focus on:

- **Peer Learning & Networking**
  - Our [10-Minute Walk Community of Practice](#) provides a platform for cities to connect, workshop ideas, and learn from each other
- **Tailored Support**
  - Our [Park Equity Accelerator](#) brings resources and support to cities to test and share promising policies and practices that advance park equity
- **Policy Recommendations**
  - The [10-Minute Walk Policy Platform](#) will provide cities with high-impact policy recommendations to scale support and accelerate actions to close the park equity gap
- **City Leadership Engagement & Partnerships**
  - Our [Mayor Panels and engagement](#) work to make the case and amplify work to expanding park equity
  - Our partnerships amplify and accelerate actions to ensure residents in all U.S. cities have access to a close-to-home park

# Park Equity Communities of Practice



**Parks Maintenance:  
Policies and Funding**



**Community Power:  
Civic Engagement for a Healthy Democracy**



**Parks Plus:  
Affordable Housing**

# Parks Maintenance: Funding and Policies

## Series Overview:

- **Oct 25- Maintenance standards and assessments**
- Dec 13- Maintenance funding- traditional models
- Feb 7- Maintenance funding- nontraditional models
- April 3- Maintenance staff, capacity, partnerships
- June 5- Maintenance policies

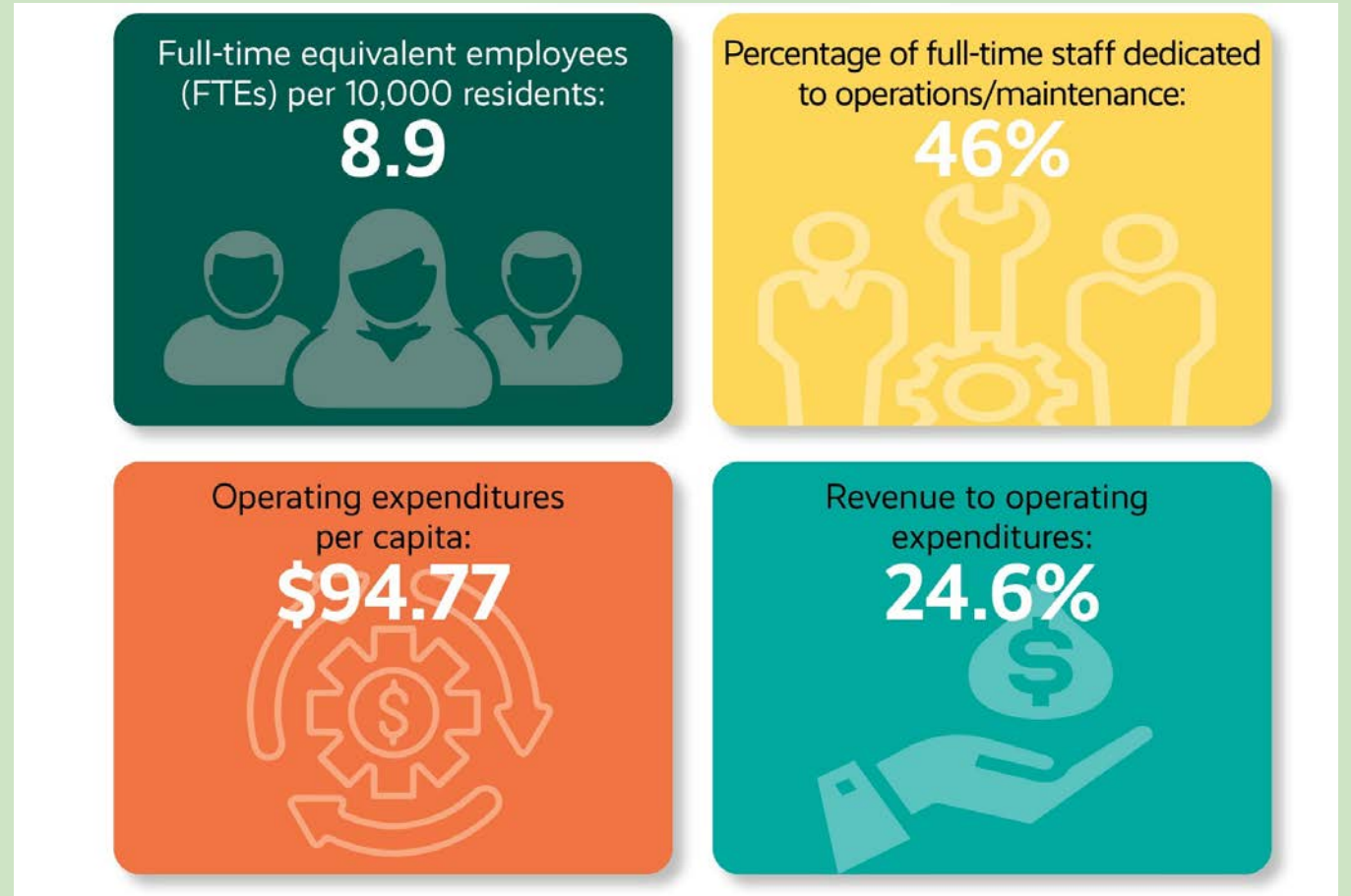




# Operations and Maintenance

## *Trends in Parks and Recreation Agencies*

- Wave of boomers retiring continues
- Decreasing numbers of younger people entering trade professions
- More opportunities in private industry, other governmental agencies, and nonprofits
- Increasing climate change challenges and impacts, such as extreme heat, wildfires, droughts, flooding, tree care, among others.



2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review

# Meet the team

## Facilitators

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**Christina Jang**  
Associate Director,  
10-Minute Walk



**Sam Savin**  
Associate Director,  
10-Minute Walk



**Jennifer Yip**  
Sr. Manager,  
10-Minute Walk



**Mike Schnall**  
Sr. Manager,  
10-Minute Walk



**Ali Goldfarb**  
Sr. Program Coordinator,  
NY Programs



**Charlie McCabe**  
Parks, Open Space and  
Placemaking



**Brendan Shane**  
Climate Director,  
Land & People Lab



**Taj Schottland**  
Climate Associate Director,  
Land & People Lab



**Kim Wolff**  
GIS Analyst,  
Land & People Lab



**Violet Jarvis**  
Op. Coordinator,  
N. Rockies



# Discussion questions

20 minutes

1. What are your top maintenance priorities and key concerns in your parks system and/or program?
2. Which standards and assessments have adjusted in your maintenance system? What has been your approach?
3. Have you seen sustained demand and usage in parks since the pandemic? What type of impact has this had on parks maintenance?
4. What climate change related challenges are you seeing in your parks system? What are you most concerned about?
5. How have you adjusted (or not) daily operations and maintenance to respond to these climate challenges? Where have you seen success?



# Thank you!

## Next session

Wednesday, December 13<sup>th</sup> – Funding models

## Contact Us

Christina Jang

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Connecting everyone to the outdoors™



# HOUSTON PARKS BOARD + YOU!

Community of Practice on Park Maintenance – October 2023





# Houston Parks Board – 501(c)(3) nonprofit created in 1976



Completed projects in more than

**250**

**PARKS**

in Houston

Added more than

**14,000**

**ACRES**

of new parkland and greenspace

Raised and leveraged more than

**\$300**

**MILLION**

for Houston's parks and greenspace



Our mission is to expand, improve, and protect parks and greenspace in the Houston region



# Park and Greenspace System Expansion



Mayor Sylvester Turner



**HPARD**  
HOUSTON PARKS  
AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT  
A CAPRA Accredited Agency



**3,000** **150** **9**

**Acres of new  
greenspace**

**Miles of  
trails**

**Bayous**

With the launch of Bayou Greenways within Houston city limits, our bayous are a network of linear parks and trails that make our lives happier, healthier, and more connected.

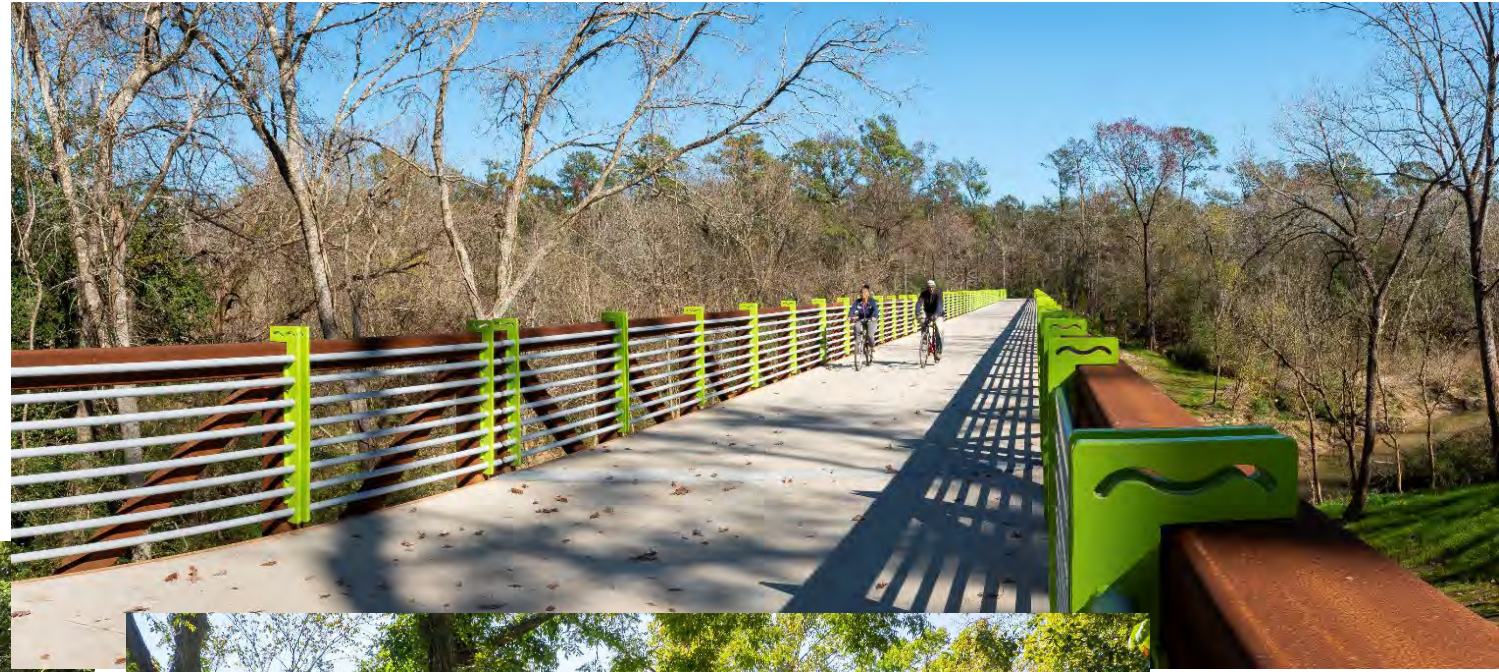


# Bayou Greenway Development





# Bayou Greenway Development





# Bayou Greenway Development







- Long-term 80-year agreement with committed funding from a City of Houston Economic Development grant
- Coordination with multiple entities
- Assurance, especially to donors, that the improvements would be maintained at a high level







- Lawns
- Prairies, Grassland Buffers and Seasonal Meadows
- Native and Ornamental Landscape Beds
- Woodland, Forests and Riparian Areas
- Wetlands
- Site Amenities/Assets
  - Parking Areas
  - Multi-Use Trails
  - Secondary Trails
  - Pedestrian Bridges
  - Seating Areas
  - Benches
  - Trash/Recycling
  - Drinking Fountains
  - Bicycle Repair Stations
  - Signage
- Natural Surface Trails
- Delitter Only Zones





# Maintenance Standards



STANDARD: Routine Maintenance - Lawn				
Landscape/Facility Type	General Maintenance Standard	Key Tasks	Minimum Frequency (More often if needed)	Comments
Lawn	Well groomed, except after flood events and during droughts. Kept usable for events. Regularly mowed and clear of litter and debris. May have tree cover, but enough light filters through to support turf growth.	Mow and trim to a height of 2-3"	28x/year. Cycles according to the following: January - February (1), March (2), April - October (3), November (2), and December (1)	Mowing frequencies are subject to seasons, periods of drought, and rainfall. During the height of turf growing season, mowing cycles in general are to be every ten (10) days, but no sooner than eight (8) days after the previous cut.
		Edge/trim along pavement edges, fences, structures, signage, etc. Do not damage trees or shrubs, fences, or structures with string trimmers.	28x/year when mowing occurs	
		Blow grass clippings, gravel, mulch, leaves, etc. from all paved surfaces, surrounding amenity areas, and the surface/openings of catch basins. DO NOT blow grass clippings, either by mowers or blowers, into landscape beds.	28x/year when mowing occurs	
		Remove litter and debris, with emphasis on immediately prior to mowing cycles	Zone A - 52x/year. Zone B - 32x/year. Cycles according to the following: January - February (2), March - October (3), November - December (2)	
		Inspect and clear leaves from surface of catch basins	28x/year when mowing occurs	
	Seed bare or thin spots	As needed, upon detection		

**Quality**

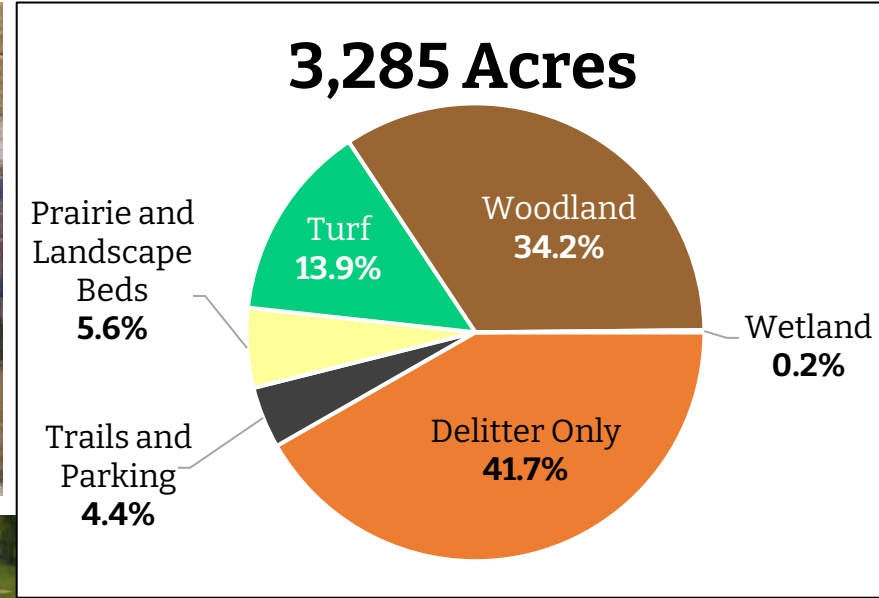
**Tasks**

**Frequency**

STANDARD: Routine Maintenance - Delitter Only				
Landscape/Facility Type	General Maintenance Standard	Key Tasks	Minimum Frequency (More often if needed)	Comments
Delitter Only	Managed in coordination with Harris County Flood Control District	Remove litter and debris, with emphasis on immediately prior to mowing cycles	Zone A - 52x/year. Zone B - 32x/year. Cycles according to the following: January - February (2), March - October (3), November - December (2)	Areas mowed by others (HCFCF, Harris County Precincts, HPARD, etc.)
		Report the development of sinkholes, slope failures, or severe erosion to HCFCF where they pose a hazard to Greenway users, adjoining properties, and at any high profile areas	As needed, upon detection	



# Routine Maintenance on nearly 100 Miles of Greenways



**Pedestrian Bridges**

**Benches and Tables**

**Kayak Launches**

**Drinking Fountain**

**Trash/Recycling Cans**

**Bicycle Fixit Stations**





# Long-Term “Life Cycle” Replacements



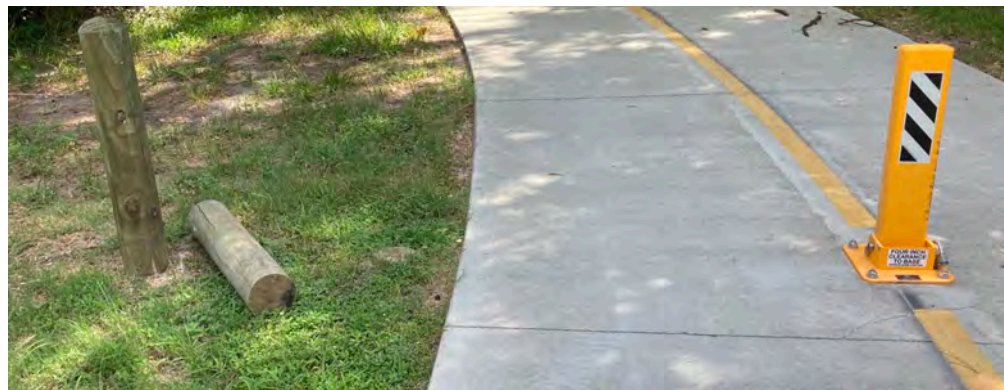
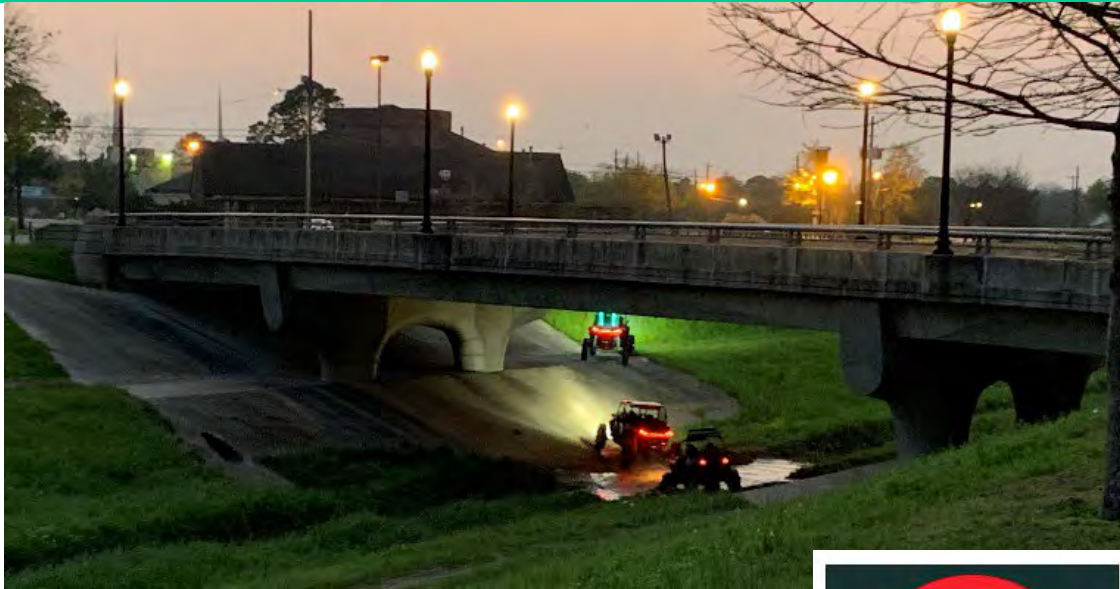


# Routine Maintenance Challenges





# Routine Maintenance Challenges





# Unanticipated Repairs and Issues







# 2021

## 3 Straight Days Below Freezing



Photo courtesy of Houston Chronicle

Photo courtesy of Click2Houston



# 2023

## 45 Days at 100° or Above





Worst single-year drought in 2011



## 2011

5 Million Trees Died



## 2023

\$320K Watering since July '23





More than

**1/3**

of the county is  
within a FEMA  
floodplain



**2017**

**100,000 Homes Flooded**

More than 1/2 were outside a floodplain



*Photo courtesy of Houston Chronicle*

**66** Flood Events since 2014

Including 6 Events with +10" of Rainfall

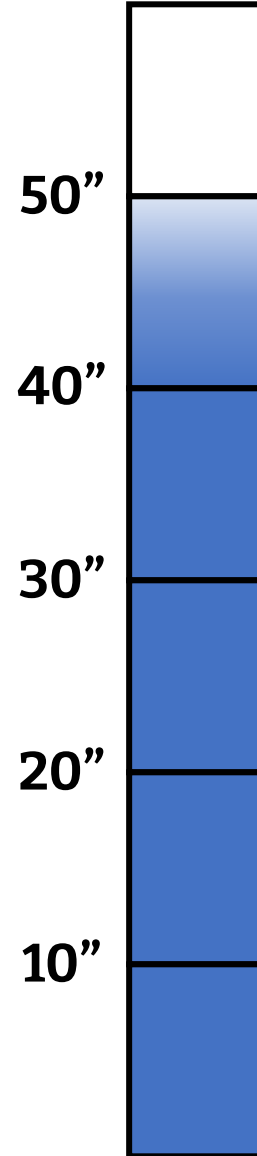
Four of the top ten flood events in the last 45 years occurred between 2015 and 2017



# Hurricane Harvey – August 25-29, 2017



Some of our trail segments go under 25' of flood waters...thankfully they are constructed to withstand it!



**\$1.3M** for Flood Cleanup



# Silt, Sinkholes, Debris and Downed Trees





# Flood Cleanup Since 2014



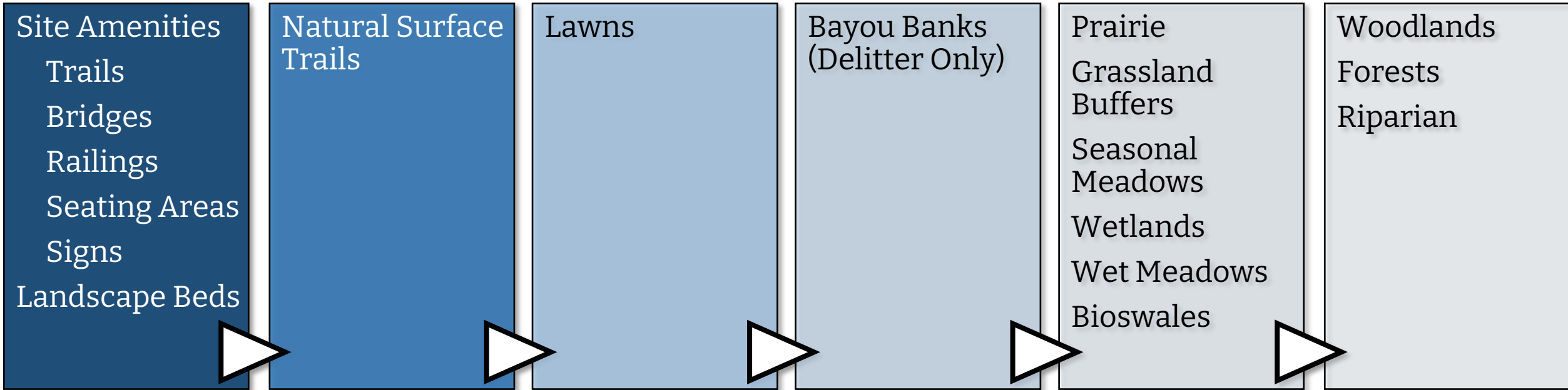
**3,016**  
Dump Truck  
Loads of Silt  
and Debris  
Removed

**\$3.3M**  
for Flood  
Cleanup





# Flood Cleanup Plan



Using the Flood Control District rain/stream gauges, we know which trail segments will flood first, and about how deep the flooding will be.

We concentrate on opening trails first, since many people use the trails to commute to work or school.





## Operating

- **Routine maintenance**
  - *mowing*
  - *litter/debris removal*
  - *graffiti*
  - *forestry and bed maintenance*
- **Conservation program**
  - *prairies*
  - *wildlife habitat*
  - *invasive vegetation removal*
- Staffing and support
- Equipment and supplies

**\$10M**

Annually

## Maintenance Reserve (20% Contingency)

- **Flood cleanup**
- Unexpected repair/replacement of capital assets

**\$2M**

Annually

## Capital Replacement Reserve

- **“Life Cycle” replacement**
  - *Trails*
  - *Bridges*
  - *Retaining Walls*
  - *Railings*
  - *Lights*
  - *Benches*
  - *Trash receptacles*
  - *Drinking fountains*
  - *Signs*
  - *Parking areas*

**\$12M**

Rollover Available for Projects





## Greenspace Management

Staff: 5

Model: Contractors

## Conservation

Staff: 11

Model: Hybrid

- In-house Crew
- Contractors
- Partners
  - TX Conservation Corps
  - Student Conservation Assoc.
- Volunteers
  - Community
  - Corporate Partners

## Asset Management

Staff: 2

Model: Contractors

Biggest Operational Challenge – No Maintenance Facility



# QUESTIONS?



Trent Rondot  
Conservation and Maintenance  
Director

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