



City of San Marcos

City Council Work Session

October 8, 2025



Presentation Item #1

Receive a staff presentation regarding the 2025 Summer Season in the Riverfront Parks and provide direction to the City Manager.



Purpose

Provide the City Council with an update regarding the 2025 summer season in the Riverfront Parks System.

We will cover:

- Previous City Council Direction
- 2025 Summer Season Experience
- River Access Fees for Out-of-Town Visitors
- Brief update on City Park Paid Parking since July 1 implementation

The Past

Previous Parks Related Direction



- Single-Use Beverage Container Ordinance adopted February 2024, went into effect May 1, 2024, with the first year being education only. Year one education period expired April 30, 2025.
- City Council provided Consensus on September 17, 2024, to explore measures to generate new revenue to support costs to provide a safe environment and clean up riverfront parks.
 - Support of staff researching the installation of aesthetically-pleasing perimeter fencing along our riverfront parks and creating specific managed access points.
 - Support charging non-residents to enter through the managed access points.
 - Support of permits for picnic spots.

Previous Parks Related Direction



- City Council provided consensus on May 20, 2025, to implement staff recommended Managed Access Test Plan at Rio Vista Park beginning Memorial Day Weekend and operating weekends and holidays until Labor Day 2025.
- City Council also provided consensus in exploring the creation of a river access fee for out-of-town visitors during the time that managed access is active, weekends and holidays from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

The Present

2025 Summer Season Experience



There are four dedicated City teams, one contractor and the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (Texas State/City funded) Conservation Crew who are on-site in our riverfront parks during the Summer Season.

- **Parks & Recreation Department**
 - Park Ambassadors
 - Parks Maintenance Crews
- **Marshals Office**
 - Deputy Marshals
 - Park Rangers
 - Contract Officers
 - Parking Technicians
- **ESPI (formally known as Easter Seals)**
- **EAHCP Conservation Crew**
- **Public Works – Traffic Control on Holiday Weekends**

The Present & The New

Managed Access Test Plan



- Installed temporary chain link fencing with gates that served as managed access points.
- Park Ambassadors operated managed access points on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from Memorial Day Weekend - Labor Day.
- Did not operate managed access points Monday – Thursday (except during extended holiday weekends).
- Managed Access allowed for Park Ambassadors to educate park patrons about park rules preemptively to reduce violations.

Managed Access Test Plan



- Outreach strategies were immediately implemented to help educate about the plan.
 - Prominently displayed on our home page and secondary pages
 - Press Releases and media interviews
 - Continued promotion of accidental litter videos created by the Destination Services team
 - Parks and Recreation Staff created an all-encompassing San Marcos River Parks Recreation story map to guide residents and potential visitors through everything they needed to know about changes, park rules and other commonly asked questions
 - Ran Social media ads educating potential visitors
 - Installation of park rule signage on fencing in English and Spanish



Closed to traffic Holiday
Weekends & Holidays

Children's Park

Entry Point

Rio Vista Park

Staff/Emergency Access-
Closed every weekend

Entry Point

ADA Parking only-
Every weekend

Exit Only Area

Entry Point

Entry Point

William &
Eleanor Cook
Park

New Gates Installed on Cheatham Street and Sidewalk Improvements



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New Gates Installed on Cheatham Street and Sidewalk Improvements



Before Managed Access Test Plan



Photo taken by David Zambrano, Eyes of the San Marcos River – Monday, May 19

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After Managed Access Test Plan



Photo taken by David Zambrano, Eyes of the San Marcos River – Monday, June 9



Photo taken by Tod Miller, Eyes of the San Marcos River – Monday, June 9

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2025 Summer Season Operations Plans



All Weekends

- Operated Managed Access Test Plan with Park Ambassadors.
- Utilized contract peace officers to supplement on-site Deputy Marshals.

Holiday Weekends

- Close Cheatham Street between Riverside Street and CM Allen Parkway.
- Ramon Lucio Baseball Fields and Rio Vista pavilions usage and rental dates were blocked out for use.
- Children's Park parking lot used for staging and emergency vehicle ingress/egress.

The Present & The Experience

2025 Summer Season Experience - Park Ambassadors



- Third year of this program.
- Added 10 additional personnel for a total of 20 seasonal staff members from mid-May through September 7.
- Attended a 3-day training developed by the City Marshals Office that built upon and expanded previous training developed by the Parks and Recreation team.



2025 Summer Season Experience - Marshals Office

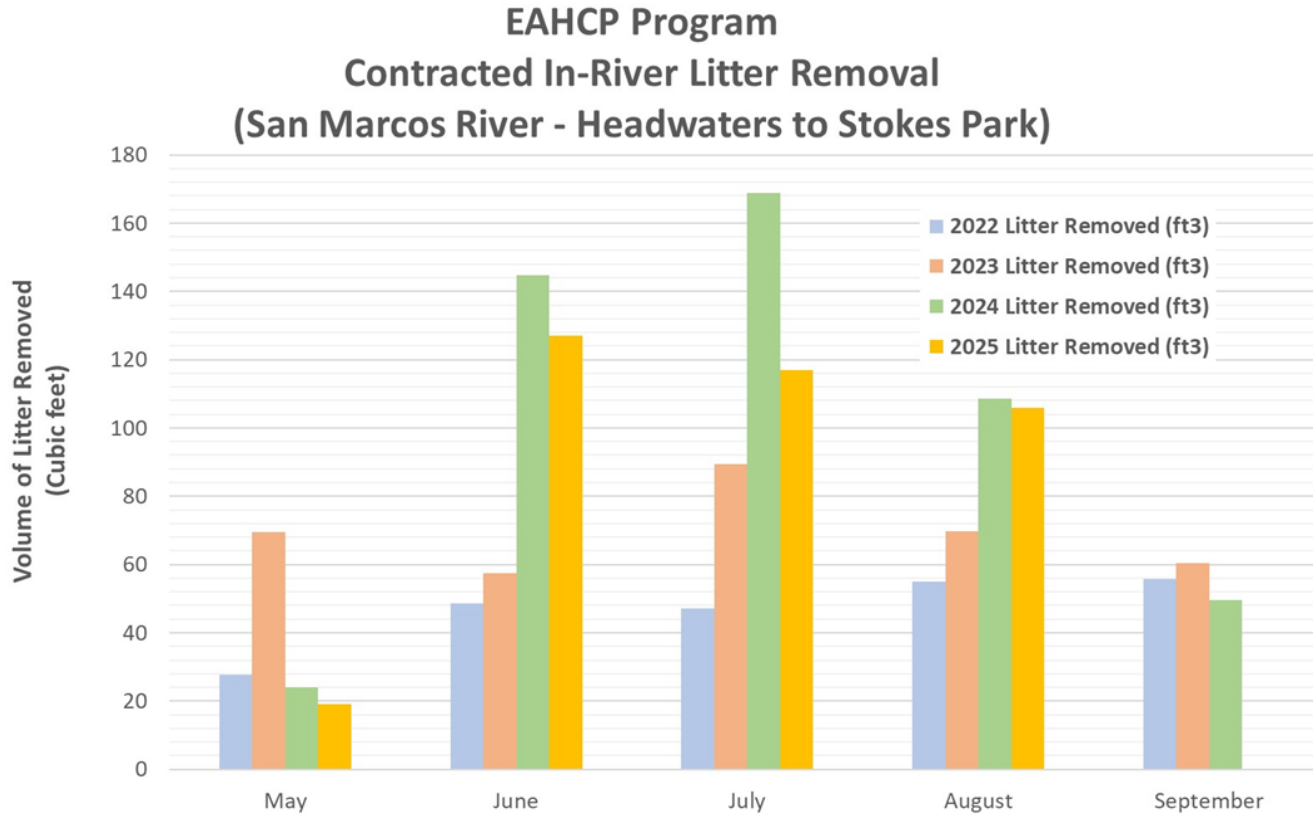
- **Chief City Marshal** – Oversaw daily operations and Holiday Weekend Operation Plan Implementation
- **Deputy Marshals** – Staffing levels varied throughout season and were supplemented with contract officers
- **Park Rangers** – Three (3) part-time staff
- **Parking Technicians** – Two (2) full-time and two (2) part-time



2025 Summer Season Experience - ESPI (formally Easter Seals)

- On site from May through September weekends and holidays from 2pm – 11pm
- Primary duties included:
 - Empty on-site trash cans and bagged trash areas.
 - Remove litter that is not properly placed in trash cans.
 - Assist with sanitation services for park restrooms

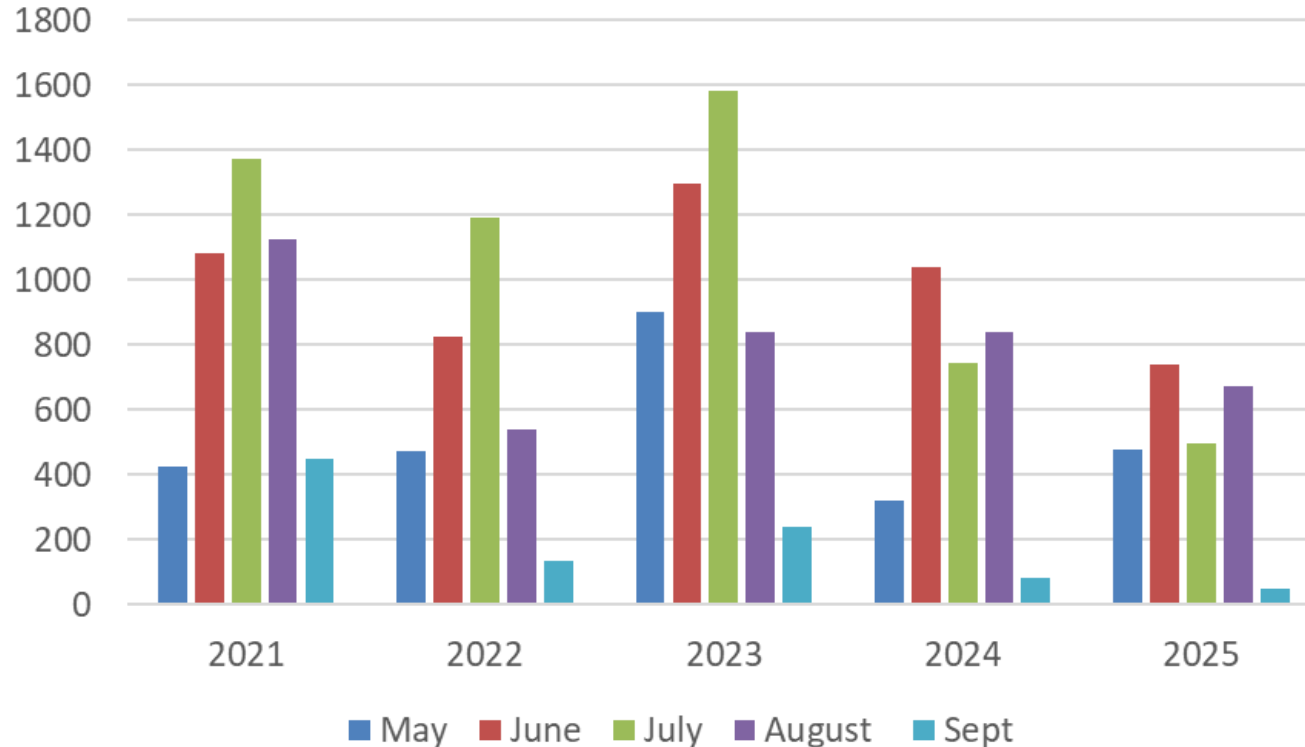
Environmental Impacts - Litter



Environmental Impacts - Litter



Litter Boat Trash Removed (cu ft)



*Sept 2025 reported through
Sept 1, 2025

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2025 Summer Season Experience



Staff Insight:

- Crowds were lighter compared to the 2024 season
- Managed Access provided the opportunity to inform patrons of park rules as they entered the park which led to reduction in common violations such as glass, styrofoam, charcoal, tables and alcohol.
- Reduction in life-safety and intoxication related injuries
- Litter was more manageable, but still experienced lots of glass, micro-trash and other litter
- The number of vehicles continued to exceed the number of parking spaces available

Resident/Business/Visitor Insight:

- The riverfront parks felt safer and more peaceful
- The weekend and holiday crowds seemed more manageable
- Temporary fencing used was not aesthetically pleasing
- Volunteer groups saw less trash, but still room for improvement



Questions Regarding 2025 Summer Season Experience?

The Future

Managed Access Fencing



- Staff recommends continuing Managed Access with the use of more aesthetically pleasing temporary fencing with gates that served as managed access points.



Council Direction - Fencing



- Does Council support continuing Managed Access at Rio Vista?
- Does Council support staff acquiring temporary fencing as recommended?

Access Fee for Out-of-Town Visitors



- Previously staff recommended the creation of an Access Fee for out-of-town visitors to generate revenue that will offset the annual cost for securing, cleaning and maintaining our riverfront parks.
- Staff compared other communities with riverfront parks or lakes for further consideration
- The proposed fee previously presented:
 - \$25 per group (up to 10 people of any age)
 - \$5 per individual (age 6 and older)

Access Fee



City / Park	Fee Type	Resident Rate	Non-Resident Rate	Season Pass	Notes
New Braunfels - River Access	Tubing Wristband	Free (with Resident River Pass)	\$2/day	Resident River Pass	Resident River Pass valid for 3 years
New Braunfels - Individual Picnic Space	Picnic Space - includes tables, blankets, chairs and/or canopies	Waived with proof of address for first space. \$25 if second space is used.	\$25/space	No	Fee charged Easter weekend through the first weekend of October. Free outside of those times.
Wimberley - Blue Hole	Half- Day Swimming Pass (4 hrs.) 9am-1pm or 2pm -6pm	\$6 / Half-Day 78676 Zip Code Only	\$12 Adult (ages 13-59), \$8 Youth (ages 4-12), \$8 Senior (60+), \$8 Military (with valid ID), Free (Ages 3 &	Yes; Limited to 400 passes per season. Wimberley Residents (all ages): \$100 Adults (ages 13-59): \$150	Season pass holders can swim all open swim hours (9am-6pm) sanmarcostx.gov

Access Fee



City / Park	Fee Type	Resident Rate	Non-Resident Rate	Season Pass	Notes
Wimberley - Blue Hole	Picnic Table	\$20	\$20	Not included in Season Pass	Limestone tables on swim lawn
Wimberley - Blue Hole	Umbrella	\$20	\$20	Not included in Season Pass	In fixed locations on swim lawn

Access Fee



City / Park	Fee Type	Resident Rate	Non-Resident Rate	Season Pass	Notes
Austin - Barton Springs Pool	Entry (Spring Break - October 3)	\$5 Adult (ages 18-62), \$3 Junior (ages 12-17), \$2 Senior (62 +) & Child (ages 1-11), Free Honorably Discharged Veterans & Children under 1	\$9 Adult (ages 18-62), \$5 Junior (ages 12-17), \$5 Senior (62 +), \$4 Child (ages 1-11) , Free Honorably Discharged Veterans & Children under 1	Resident: \$190 Adult \$125 Junior \$65 Child \$65 Senior (62 - 79) Free Senior (80+) Free Honorably Discharge Veterans \$370 Family of 4 (2 adults and 2 children/juniors) * Non-Resident: \$280 Adult \$155 Junior \$95 Child \$95 Senior (62 - 79)	Free Nov-mid-March; Non-Resident Season Passes for Seniors (80+) & Veterans are not available. Unknown if Season Passes are limited to a specific number. *Additional family members are required to purchase 32 the individual pass

Access Fee - Staff Recommendation



Fee Type	Resident Rate	Non-Resident - Daily Rate	Non-Resident-Season Pass	Notes
Group Rate	Free with Resident River Pass	\$25 (Up to 10 People of any age)	N/A	
Individual	Free with Resident River Pass	\$5 Adult (ages 12-59) \$2 Child (ages 3 –11) \$2 Senior (60+) \$2 Military with valid ID Free Children (2 & under)	Adults (ages13-59): \$100 Child/Senior/Military: \$75	Season Pass calculated based on 48 days of managed access operation (Memorial Day – Labor Day)

Council Direction Requested - Visitors



- Does Council support charging out-of-town visitors to enter through the managed access points?
- Does Council want to consider an exception for those with a San Marcos zip code outside of city limits?
- Does Council support the proposed rate structure?
- If yes, staff will draft the fee ordinance and bring it back to Council for adoption along with implementation plan.

City Park Paid Parking



- Went live July 1, 2025.
- To date we have over 3,500 active resident parking permits and receive new applications daily.
- Revenue received as of 09/29/2025: \$156,907.40.
- We will begin issuing citations for non-payment this month.
- Following implementation staff received comments from ETJ residents with San Marcos zip codes.

City Park Paid Parking



- Parks and Recreation Staff will be presenting the proposed River Benefit District application and boundaries to the Parking Advisory Board this month.
- The Parking Advisory Board will then hold a Public Hearing and provide a recommendation on the request to create the Benefit District.
- City Council will then hold a Public Hearing and consider the creation of the Benefit District by Ordinance.

Council Direction Requested - Parking



- Does Council want to consider an exception for those with a San Marcos zip code outside of city limits?
- If yes, would Council like to establish a permit that could be purchased annually or see another solution recommended?
- Any other direction related to City Park Paid Parking?



Questions