Faulty bar codes force extra work to count ballots  

BY BRIAN LOPEZ AND GORDON DICKSON  
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Fort Worth moves forward with land conservation plans  

BY RALLEY SAMUEL  
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Environmental groups, particularly the Great Plains Restoration Council, want Fort Worth to protect and acquire natural areas for preservation, particularly in new Tarleton State campus in southeast Fort Worth.

Merged Contango, Mid-Con oil and gas firms will be based in Fort Worth  

BY CODY JONES  
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Houston’s Contango Oil & Gas Co. and Tulsa’s Mid-Con Energy Partners LP announced the merger this week. The deal is expected to close later this year or in early 2022.

The Open Space Conservation Program, a partnership between the city and land trust Fort Worth’s Conservation Trust for Public Land, was started in 2011 and has protected last year's small-growth concerns for several years.

Future acquisitions are likely to be funded through a mixture of federal grants, the city's open space conservation efforts.

Some residents are likely to be funded through a mixture of federal grants, the city's open space conservation efforts.

FORT WORTH moves forward with land conservation plans  

BY RALLEY SAMUEL  
sullivan@star-telegram.com  

The land development boom in North Texas has shown no signs of slowing down, even with the significant economic challenges posed by COVID-19. That’s why Fort Worth officials are moving forward with plans to identify and potentially acquire natural areas for preservation before developers buy up the land for housing and retail projects.

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CONSERVATION

members can vote on the disbursement of up to $16 million from the oil and gas royalties for natural acquisitions, she said.

The Open Space leaders are seeking public feedback through an online survey in English and Spanish that will close at the end of November, Dyke said. The group held its first public meeting last week and met virtually with leaders of environmental organizations and residents from North Fort Worth earlier in October.

Results from the survey, which asks Fort Worth residents for input on a permanent preservation fund, as well as feedback on how they would like natural areas to be used, will feed into the Trust for Public Land’s development of a tool that uses computer mapping and other data to help the city prioritize which properties it should pursue for conservation, Dyke said.

“They can rank the order of priority for those different benefits of open space,” she said, including ecosystem preparation, recreation, equity, cultural water, health, and many others. “The community has to say among these that they feel it is important. It will help us prioritize which parcels we think need to be conserved.”

When the program launched last winter, the Star-Telegram reported that three areas were being studied as candidates for preservation: the west shore of Lake Arlington, Sycamore Creek and part of the Mary’s Creek watershed. The Open Space group has a list of potential properties. Dyke said, but leaders are not actively pursuing acquisitions while the Trust for Public Land is in development with the city.

Jarid Manos, who founded the ecology-based Great Trinity Forest Restoration Council in 1997, recently joined the group of environmental leaders providing feedback on the Open Space project. He hopes that the city’s new-found commitment to conservation may extend to its long-term project the Fort Worth Prairie Park, a plot of less than 10 acres near Crowley, Lake Benbrook and Tarrant State’s new campus, which opened last year.

Hiring worked on the park in the early-2000s, Manos said. “We evolved as developers and learned what it means to take a piece of the prairie, including the Trinity National Park, Office’s sale of 2,010 acres to the city in 2013. The Fort Worth Prairie, ecosystem, made up of native tallgrass is, one of the most endangered in North America, Manos said, and he wants the city to take a more active role in ensuring that this small remnant is preserved.

“They say Fort Worth is where the prairie begins, and if we don’t see some of those big wide open spaces preserved, it will be where the prairie never ends,” Manos said.

There’s still a large section of this prairie left, so preserving this ahead of time with foresight would allow native wildlife and people to thrive,” Open Space leaders plan to meet at least twice to the city to figure out how do we sustain this ahead of time? Dyke said. Eventually, once the prioritization will include a tract of prairie near Lake Benbrook and the Chisholm Trail Parkway.

The Trust for Public Land will also release a policy report next June providing recommendations on how to manage the program in the long term and examples from other cities that are preserving natural areas, including Oregon, Massachusetts, and 10 other cities that are preserving natural areas, Dyke said. "We’ll find out. How do we maintain these properties and manage them appropriately for the natural resources that are out there?" Dyke said. "Should the city have policies that incentivize open space conservation? If so, really, it will be up to the city to figure out how do we want to move forward as a city.”

Zeta swirls north on path to hit New Orleans

By Katharine Alcock

Associated Press

CANNON, Miss. — Hurricane Zeta is once again under a hurricane warning, with Zeta leaving Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula on a path that could hit New Orleans Wednesday night.

Zeta, the 27th named storm in a very busy Atlantic season, made landfall as a fierce hurricane Tuesday afternoon in northeastern Mexico. It weakened to a tropical storm Wednesday morning, but it was expected to regain strength over the Gulf of Mexico.

Zeta’s top winds reached 65 mph Tuesday, and it was centered about 350 miles south of the mouth of the Mississippi River just off the Yucatan Peninsula. If Zeta makes landfall in Louisiana, it will be the fifth named storm to hit the state this year, joining Cesar, Cristobal, Laura, Marco and Delta. Zeta was expected to move into the northern Yucatan.

Zeta’s original track had forecasters Gene Jones said via Twitter on Tuesday that early reports indicated its status hadn’t changed much, nor were there reports of deaths or injuries.

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