

DOW WOODS REPORT

By Neal McLain

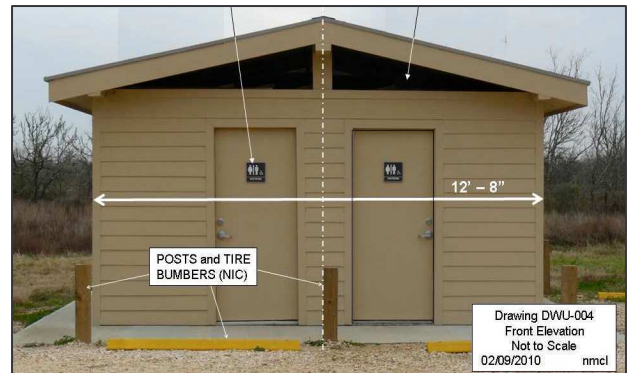
Here's another monthly report about our Chapter's efforts on behalf of US Fish & Wildlife Service in support of the new Dow Woods Unit of San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge.

The Dow Woods Unit is located in Lake Jackson, north of FM2004 near Old Angleton Road. The entrance gate is off Old Angleton Road about a half mile north of FM2004. This property was donated to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service by The Dow Chemical Company in December 2008. Volunteers from the Cradle of Texas Chapter and Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges are working with USFWS personnel to develop the property for public use.

Three separate projects are now under way:

Restroom and storage building. This project is under contract, but construction hasn't started yet. We expect that construction will start within a month.

When it's finished, It will look like the existing restroom near the Bobcat Woods Trail at San Bernard NWR (photo at right), but with an extra storage room of mowers and other equipment.



School Bus Entrance and Parking Lot. The original parking lot and gate were designed for relatively small vehicles — cars and pickup trucks — but they're too small for school busses. USFWS staff has installed two larger gates and a circular driveway so that busses can drive in and out without backing up. There will be parking space for three school buses.



Dow Woods Parking lot, looking southeast. Note the two new entrance gates and the circular school bus driveway.

Trails. We're currently working on two trails, the John Tveten Trail in the northeast part of the Unit and an as-yet-unnamed trail in the southeast part of the unit. Both trails meander along the eastern bank of Bastrop Bayou. The water is clear, and the views in several places are spectacular.



Bastrop Bayou. Photo by David Plunkett.

The John Tveten Trail will be about half a mile long and six feet wide. In order to ensure safety for visitors in wheelchairs, we plan to construct it of concrete stained in an earthtone color.

We are currently preparing the procurement specifications for the concrete work so that we can solicit bids from local concrete contactors.

After the concrete has been poured, but before it sets, we plan to recruit volunteers to impress images of animal footprints and leaves in the surface. The photos at the right show similar impressions along a walkway at the headquarters building at Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge near Austin.



A notable feature of the John Tveten trail is a large Live Oak we call the “Burl Oak.” From a distance, it looks like any other Live Oak. But get up close and you can see how it got its name.



The “Burl Oak” along the John Tveten Trail.

Work of the southeast trail has already begun. This trail will have a crushed granite surface over a crushed concrete base, with steel siderails to prevent the crushed material from eroding. Like the Tveten Trail, the southeast trail will be six feet wide.

Work on this trail began with a bang (actually, lots of bangs) on May 8. Several volunteers from TMN-COT and FOBWR joined USFWS staff to place the siderails and the base course.



The Southeast Trail, under construction, May 8, 2010. Only the crushed concrete base course and the siderails had been installed when this photo was taken.

Photos from Southeast Trail Construction Day, May 8, 2010.



Setting the siderails

Ellis Burkhardt, Barbara Burkhardt, Don Rosebury, Billy Heck, Jim Payne, Archie Pratt, Roy Morgan.



Hauling crushed concrete.

More photos from Southeast Trail Construction Day, May 8, 2010.



Roy Morgan banging one of the siderail stakes into place.



Aaron Sanchez, back for another load of crushed concrete.



Ed Barrios gets lunch ready for the hungry mob.