

v1 DRAFT ACTION PLANNING FOR LAKE WORTH GREENPRINT

Background and Instructions:

This document contains ideas generated at the Lake Worth Regional Coordinating Committee (LWRCC) meeting on February 20, 2014 in response to these questions: What concrete actions can be taken by the municipalities, county, and other local or regional organizations to advance the goals of the Greenprint: **protect water quality and quantity; provide recreation access; and provide recreational connectivity to the Lake Worth Trail?** How can we accomplish these goals?

To help LWRCC narrow the list to the most actionable items that will advance the Greenprint goals, after the meeting in February, staff from The Trust for Public Land asked many local and regional organizations “implicated” by the action plan ideas to review the list (or portions thereof) and assess which ideas are feasible (who would do this and what are the financial and technical resources available to accomplish it?). This document contains the original list of ideas as well as consolidated comments of the 10 individuals consulted. Trust for Public Land staff also made minor revisions to the original list of ideas based on these comments. If you would like a copy of the unedited original compilation of ideas, please contact Kelley Hart at Kelley.Hart@tpl.org.

To help refine this list, the LWRCC and other potential action plan “implementers” are asked to select ten (10) ideas that best meet these criteria:

- Importance – Which of these are the most important for accomplishing the Greenprint goals?
- Feasibility – Which of these are most feasible? Consider: are there resources available to accomplish these ideas?

Please also identify five (5) items that should be removed from the list (not important and infeasible).

Once LWRCC and other potential implementers have identified a top tier of ideas, the next step will be to focus on further fleshing them out and estimating a time horizon for completion. Ultimately, project conveners would like to vet the list of ideas with all of the jurisdictions in the watershed (City of Fort Worth, City of Lake Worth, City of Lakeside, Tarrant County, Parker County, and Tarrant Regional Water District) and ask them to endorse in whole or part.

Note: the following acronyms are used in this document:

- NCTCOG = North Central Texas Council of Governments
- PCSD = City of Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department
- TRWD = Tarrant Regional Water District
- NRCS = Natural Resources Conservation Service
- BMPs = best management practices

Action Plan Ideas:

A. RAISE FUNDS TO SUPPORT ACTION PLAN STEPS

- **Coordinate with federal agencies to seek grant funding.**
 - *Comments: City staff often seek grant funding, but grant programs typically have local matching funding requirements so the grantee must find private or local dollars too. It's important to be able to leverage public and private dollars.*
- **Use a portion of the oil and gas lease revenue to fund actions related to the Lake Worth Greenprint.**
 - *Comments: there are other water and sewer projects around the lake that are being paid for with Lake Worth oil and gas revenues now. Future revenues from this funding source could be used for ongoing support of water quality projects and recreation. Fort Worth City Council approval may be required.*
- **Set aside revenue from stormwater utility fees for water quality protection/improvement.**
 - *Comments: Fort Worth City Council approval would be needed to increase the Fort Worth stormwater utility fee. Council hasn't yet supported an increase to address the identified backlog of storm drainage projects. A study that identifies a need for certain BMPs (and estimates costs to the city to help provide those BMPs) to protect water quality could provide a basis to ask for a fee increase.*
- **Leverage funds from existing groups that have been known to raise money for related work (examples: NCTCOG, TRWD, and Streams and Valleys).**
 - *Comments: NCTCOG does grant writing for federal grants that could be useful (e.g. TIGER grant for trail work). Streams and Valleys has helped the PCSD with private fundraising (e.g. matching a Texas Department of Transportation grant). TRWD has assisted with some projects on City-owned park property.*
- **Create an open space district that can cross city and county lines.** E.g. Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District in California has used property tax dollars to fund acquisition and maintenance/management of more than 60,000 acres.
 - *Comments: City councils of jurisdictions within the new open space district would need to approve this.*
- **Consider tax increment financing.**
- **Pass a city and/or county ¼ or 1 cent sales tax or property tax.**
 - *Comments: This is probably not realistic. The City of Fort Worth is already collecting the state-authorized additional one percent sales tax, the proceeds from which are currently split between the Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T) and the Crime Control and Prevention District (CCPD). There are very strong constituencies for both these sales tax recipients, with both agencies directly supporting City Council strategic goals. In addition, the City is already at bonding capacity, with the identified capital needs currently outstripping the capacity.*

B. START A VOLUNTARY OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION PROGRAM

- **Start a program focused on preserving riparian corridors, creating easements for new trails, or protecting open space generally that is high priority according to the Greenprint.** The idea would be to negotiate donations or purchase interests in land from landowners that want to donate or sell. An open space component of the program could be working with partners such as NAS FW JRB to purchase critical areas that preserve and protect water quality and are in Clear Zones, APZs, or high noise contour areas. This program could be run by a local government or a non-profit.
 - *Comments: Would need to raise funds to purchase property rights from interested landowners. Excellent programs exist through AgriLife extension, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and NRCS already. Would need an entity to manage the work with landowners in this area. If there was a need for additional parkland inside Fort Worth that would be something the City of Fort Worth would look at purchasing. However, PCSD's current position is that the Lake Worth area is already well served by parkland while other areas of the city are underserved by parkland. If a private organization wanted to raise funds and there was truly a need to capture a specific property (but not just to increase the inventory in that area), PCSD could potentially assist, but it would depend on anticipated maintenance costs and other factors.*

C. GATHER MORE INFORMATION TO UNDERSTAND AND ADDRESS WATER QUALITY PROBLEMS

- **Identify research/monitoring needs related to Lake Worth.**
 - *Comments: It's important that Fort Worth Water Department begin more rigorous monitoring of the lake and its tributaries. Collaborate with TRWD. Should be inventorying sediment loading from the streams themselves.*
- **Evaluate the septic systems in the watershed and review waste treatment improvement opportunities.**
 - *Comments: The City of Fort Worth is extending sewer service around Lake Worth. When someone hooks into the City of Fort Worth's sewer line they are required to decommission the septic system. What about the properties in the watershed on septic that are not likely to get serviced by Fort Worth's sewer system? Still an issue for other jurisdictions.*
- **Monitor septic system discharge into the lake.**
 - *Comments: This is already done with public properties, but not private properties. **Related action plan idea: Consider studying the effects of decommissioning septic systems on the lake.***

D. DEVELOP OR ENHANCE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS/ACTIVITIES

Generally applicable:

- **Develop a regional feral hog control program.**
 - *Comments: There have been several regional meetings to help get this underway, but nothing is compulsory yet. A regional effort would need to be coordinated by an agency like NCTCOG.*
- **Create a voluntary backyard wildlife habitat program for interested landowners.**

Ideas for realizing the “protect water quality and quantity” goal:

- **Preserve existing City-owned High Priority Water Quality Zones with a High ranking on the Water Quality Zones Greenprint map.**
- **Promote Low Impact Development (LID) for stormwater management. Have a LID design competition for City-owned land that is within High Priority Water Quality Zones.**
 - *Comments: In a sense, the Casino Beach project is an example of this as it is planned to have LID components.*
- **Do more regional stormwater detention.**
 - *Comments: In areas where the land-use is already developed, sometimes small/isolated detention ponds don't really work. Regional detention can sometimes be more effective and incorporate water quality improvement components. If flood control prioritization identifies a need for more detention, then the city can do it. It could be in the future that private entities are willing to build and manage these.*
- **Reduce the need for irrigation on City-owned lands, and use non-potable wastewater where appropriate.**
 - *Comments: The City of Fort Worth will likely address this by using drought-tolerant native vegetation in their parks to reduce irrigation needs. City of Fort Worth's new Water Conservation Plan says: "The City has implemented water conservation measures internally within City Hall and a number of its other buildings and parks and will continue to do so over the next five-year planning period. This includes...development of a landscape program in conjunction with the Parks and Community Services Department." (p. 7-3 of April 2014 plan). Regarding concept of recycling/reclaiming water, this can be controversial with the public and yet nearly all the water we use at this point in the watershed is already reused/reclaimed.*
- **To reduce runoff on public lands in the watershed that are not designated as parkland, use undeveloped savannah grassland open space range management.**
 - *Comments: Many thought this was a good idea. To meet fire hazard requirements can mow around a right-of-way and don't need to mow the whole property. Maintaining and managing the native vegetation will provide excellent first-line runoff reduction and filtration services.*

Ideas for realizing the “enhance recreation” goal:

- **Consider future recreational use for the City-owned land with a High ranking on the Recreational Connectivity and Recreation Access Greenprint maps.**
- **Improve the parking and clean the beaches at City-owned parks around Lake Worth.**
 - *Comments: A related action plan idea would be to expand the “Adopt-a Park” program. Volunteers can help with litter pick-up, mowing and plantings in parks. Re: parking – there is an unfunded capital needs list, City of Fort Worth can double check that that the estimated costs associated with improving the parking in their parks around Lake Worth are on that list so that when funding becomes available, those items can be considered.*
- **Improve existing parks around the lake by providing facilities for more diverse recreation (e.g. lawn bowling, remote controlled airplane fields, disc golf, etc.)**
 - *Comments: PCSD wants to provide a broad range of recreational opportunities city-wide. Individuals or groups should communicate to PCSD what type of amenity they are looking for, and ideally an arrangement can be worked out where the private group can take on some of the maintenance responsibility once the facilities are in place (via the Adopt-A-Park program).*
- **Work with White Settlement, Lake Worth, Eagle Mountain-Saginaw, Castleberry, and Fort Worth Independent School Districts to develop a competitive juniors (high school) rowing program housed at Casino Beach or another shoreline park.** This could be modeled after Dallas Rowing Club’s Juniors Program or the Oklahoma City Boathouse District’s Juniors Program.
 - *Comments: Like this idea. It could be done at Lake Worth. Community would need to advocate for this.*
- **Create a family friendly camp/day use site with shallow beach access.**
 - *Comments: PCSD needs to know what changes would be desired to make Wildwood or another spot a more family friendly day use site with shallow beach access: bring in more sand? Have a designated swimming area with lifeguard security? Would visitors be willing to pay a fee? (There is a spot like this at Eagle Mountain Lake).*
- **Dredge the canal that starts at Silver Creek Road and Huron and ends in the lake for fishing, boating, canoeing, and swimming.**
 - *Comments: Would likely need permitting for this type of dredging, and not a strong case to be made since these types of activities are already available elsewhere at Lake Worth.*
- **Improve systems for selling boat permits for Lake Worth – currently only available at 2 places.**
 - *Comments: There are two places where permits are available from the Water Department- Navajo Burgers and Dobbers Daiquiri - but sometimes they are out stock because those facilities have to advance purchase the tickets to resell to the public. A related action plan idea: Water Marshall to create an on-line system so people have a third option.*
- **Continue to improve existing boat ramps and invest in new boat ramps.** Example: Improve boat ramps to allow use in low water-level situations. Improve facilities to allow ease of loading/unloading, e.g. floating docks.

- *Comments: Don't feel like there is a strong need for this. The Water Department recently re-built two ramps. Also, Lake Worth's boat ramps do relatively well in low water-level situations. What would it mean to invest in new boat ramps? Does that mean more locations, more lanes or other improvements?*

E. EDUCATE/PUBLICIZE

Identify the target audience (general public and landowners in critical areas) and develop an educational outreach program. Ideas of groups to provide information to or through: Social media, websites, or members related to Fort Worth Business Press Adv.; Chamber of Commerce; Real Estate Orgs (Society of Commercial Realtors, Builders Association, and Greater Fort Worth Real Estate Council); other communities of professional practitioners (e.g. architects, landscape architects, and engineers); fitness and cycling shops. May want to include information in water bills. Related ideas:

Generally applicable:

- **Establish a communications strategy to promote the resources, to describe what we have here and what is evolving.** Work with a public relations organization or ad agency. Could be public education campaign like the 1980s Chesapeake Bay “We all Live Downstream” Campaign.
 - *Comments: Need to determine what the focus would be for the messaging campaign and how to pay for it.*
- **Have signage about good stewardship practices at places that people will go to already, like boat ramps and trailheads.**
 - *Comments: Maps are already available on TRWD's and Streams and Valley's website. Related action plan idea: if it's not already in the signage, could add QC (the bar code) that takes a cell phone user to TRWD's webpage associated with that bar code to get more information about the place, stewardship practices, etc.*
- **Approach Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine about doing an article.**
 - *Comments: Like this idea. May consider broader engagement beyond an article. How could they be an active partner in implementing the Greenprint?*
- **Have a demonstration project, such as putting pervious pavement and bioswales at an existing park.** (Note: there's already some pervious pavement at the Fort Worth Nature Center.)
 - *Comments: As described, this would be a park project in conjunction with Fort Worth Stormwater team. City of Fort Worth staff would prefer to have a demonstration linked with a new facility/development rather than a demonstration for the sake of a demonstration – likely to reach a wider audience and also more likely to get funded. Casino Beach is planned to do this in some sense.*
- **Traveling road show to visit local schools.**
 - *Comments: Not sure how this would get paid for.*

Ideas for realizing the “protect water quality and quantity” goal:

- **Have special events highlighting the importance of water quality, e.g. promote at a paddle race or fishing contest.**
 - *Comments: TRWD already has a public media campaign.*
- **Work with landowners to equip them to voluntarily enhance practices that maintain or improve the water quality.** Education with landowners on the common causes of excessive nutrients. This can be done via 1:1 personal outreach with landowners. There are good models from NRCS, Tarrant County Extension, and Texas Agri-life for this approach. Other approaches are mailings (e.g. water bills), contact through neighborhood associations, and landowner workshops. Consider Texas Watershed Stewards at Texas A&M as model for landowner workshops. Examples of activities that private landowners can/should take, as applicable: proper collection and disposal of manure; erosion control to help stabilize streams; ensure septic systems are intact/working (see also mention of this in section above), etc.
 - *Comments: City of Fort Worth can put information in water bills. Important to consult with the entities mentioned that have model programs/approaches.*
- **Create a computer based brief course about best management practices and then create an incentive for people to take the course, like by offering credit on property taxes.**
 - *Comments: Don't think this would work in practice for these reasons: How would you track and enforce this? Could there be an institution to help with the tracking? Are there state laws limiting the ability to reduce property taxes for this purpose? Consider instead expanding a related program (described in next bullet) which has this same sentiment in mind, but is done through institutions and the incentive relates to stormwater utility fees.*
- **Expand existing program: City of Fort Worth provides stormwater credits to Fort Worth Integrated School District – they do 1 hour of stormwater education per year and they get a 10% rebate on their utility fees. Over 130 schools are potential users of this program, and this year about 30 participated.**
 - *Comments: This is feasible because it's already operational. The “action” here would be expanding the program.*
- **Create development review tool for city and county offices to assist in educating developers - reference Greenprint maps as part of entitlement process and ensure proposed development is consistent with priority areas for water quality protection.**
 - *Comments: Currently, developers go through a pre-development conference and those can be opportunities for the planning department to highlight the Greenprint areas. This action item is in the “education category” because it's voluntary. Could also be approached as a rule with compulsory requirements. (see regulation section below)*
- **Educate the public about application/use of fertilizers and detergents to reduce negative water quality impacts.**
 - *Comments: Yes, some of the water quality problems around the lake can be attributed to fertilizer over use. There are already some resources for educating farmers/ranchers about prudent fertilizer application (for example, through their relationships with the*

fertilizer vendors/applicators). May be opportunity to increase education through the vendors. For more urban landowners, there is typically no relationship currently as people just buy fertilizers from home improvement and hardware stores. Could we start an education program at the point of sale, by working with the home improvement and hardware stores?

- **Coordinate with the State of Texas' existing program to promote agricultural heritage.** This program already provides education and may be able to incorporate best practices recommended from the Greenprint.
 - *Comments: Not sure what program already exists to promote agricultural heritage. Were they referring to 4-H?*

Ideas for realizing the "enhance recreation" goal:

- **Better promote the nature center.** It showcases scenic, historic and heritage of the area.
- **Have signs at the parks and Casino Beach that educate the public around history, the military, and water quality.**
 - *Comments: Like this idea. If there's a group that wants to look at doing something, PCSD can work with them. This could also be through Adopt-A-Park program.*
- **On the PCSD website, give timely updates on progress regarding the Lake Worth Trail.**
 - *Comments: This can be done.*
- **Coordinate with Streams and Valleys about proposed new trails.**
 - *Comments: We are doing this now. Note: the Streams and Valleys trail maps promote existing trails. Regarding proposed trails, the City of Fort Worth has already included most of the likely Greenprint trails on the Bike Fort Worth Plan map, viewable on City of Fort Worth website at http://fortworthtexas.gov/uploadedFiles/Sustainability/Bike_Fort_Worth/BFW_web.pdf*

F. CREATE LANDOWNER INCENTIVES

The idea here is to financially compensate landowners to undertake certain activity that would benefit water quality or some other public good.

- **Provide private landowners financial incentives to leave natural buffer strips and plant native vegetation.**
 - *Comments: Good idea, but no funds to pay for this sort of thing. Could try to establish a voluntary nutrient trading market, though those are being tested elsewhere in the country (E.g. Bay Bank in Chesapeake) and don't appear to be working yet.*
- **Develop tax incentives to keep critical land in suitable low-impact uses.**
 - *Comments: Would need to work with county on that. Has also been tried and failed at the statewide ballot box, but could discuss another attempt.*

- **Work with county tax authorities to refine the requirements around what qualifies for an ag exemption.** Urbanizing/suburbanizing area needs to be considered in terms of application for the program. If the purpose of this is to reduce agriculture production requirements to obtain an agriculture exemption to reduce the potential for animal waste or fertilizer, pesticide, or herbicide loading in storm runoff from smaller parcels, the criteria used by the Tarrant Appraisal District would probably need to be changed to incentivize water quality protection as well as agriculture production.
 - *Comments: The Ag exemptions are all given by the county, so this change would be within the purview of the county.*

G. UNDERTAKE ADDITIONAL PLANNING AND EVALUATION

Generally applicable:

- **Re-do the public surveys city-wide (i.e. park need assessment) every two years. Look at trends over time in current/recent behavior.**
 - *Comments: would be good to do this if funding exists.*
- **Add a page to the City of Fort Worth’s Comprehensive Plan with Greenprint findings, such as where the water protection areas are located.**
 - *Comments: City of Fort Worth may include the final Lake Worth Greenprint map in the 2015 or 2016 Comprehensive Plan update, either in the Environmental Quality chapter or the Land Use chapter. They may also review Comprehensive Plan policy additions or updates in these chapters or Appendix C based on the Greenprint outcomes.*

Ideas for realizing the “protect water quality and quantity” goal:

- **Develop an EPA-acceptable Watershed Protection Plan (WPP).**
 - *Comments: The primary benefit of having this specific plan is that it opens up activities to potential funding through the Clean Water Act §319. Because state and federal agencies have been charged to more closely coordinate, it’s possible that a WPP could also open doors to other resources. For example, the Texas Water Development Board recently added a question about WPPs on its State Revolving Loan applications, providing projects in watersheds with WPPs more points and making them more competitive for the loan program. However, the state and federal process for developing an acceptable WPP can be onerous, and there are only a handful in Texas.*

Ideas for realizing the “enhance recreation” goal:

- **Create a committee to create a plan to provide large scale utilization of existing parkland.**
 - *Comments: More detail needed here. Not sure what they had in mind. Note that PCSD is updating their Parks Master Plan though it will not cover activation plans for specific parks. Groups should come to PCSD if they have ideas about specific park activation for parks around Lake Worth.*

- **Ideas for how to focus future trail work:** Have multi-use trails, include some equestrian trails. Follow sustainable design practices so trails aren't contributing to water quality decline. Continue cooperating with Streams and Valleys and other organizations that are working on trail safety protocols.
 - *Comments: Recommend removing from action plan. These are not really action plan ideas, but rather suggestions related to nature of future trail planning.*

H. REGULATE

The ideas in this section involve adding a layer of regulation to existing city or county ordinances. All of the items above are voluntary in nature, meaning that private citizens or businesses could choose to take certain action. The items in this section would require private citizens or businesses to take certain action. Some LWRCC meeting participants suggested that there be consistent codes with region-wide enforcement that reflect a shared vision. While each town can come up with its own approach with respect to subdivision regulations, the City of Fort Worth could be a leader in the region by doing some initial draftsmanship that might make it easier for some of the smaller neighboring jurisdictions (who can then use as a model, if desired).

Generally applicable:

- **Establish urban growth boundaries – urban areas ringed with open space.**
 - *Comments: This would require zoning that prohibits certain land-uses in certain areas. This is not likely to be politically popular.*
- **Limit use of lake water for private drilling gas/oil.**
 - *Comments: TRWD controls the lake water so that is their jurisdiction.*

Ideas for realizing the “protect water quality and quantity” goal:

- **Develop a water protection overlay that triggers certain requirements for development within that overlay zone.** Examples of potential types of regulation: no development abutting lake or creek edge (set minimum buffer zones); landscaping requirements along lake or creek edge; or required construction practices to reduce soil run-off during construction.
 - *Comments: Denton imposed these types of restrictions for a particular specific plan. See “Rayzor Ranch Overlay District Water Quality Protection Plan Requirements and Drainage Map.” It was informed by NCTCOG’s guidance on the topic.*
- **Restrict water that is used for lawns and golf courses.**
 - *Comments: Fort Worth City Council just restricted water use to twice a week permanently and recently adopted a Water Conservation Plan. The plan recommends the City Planning and Development Department consider a landscape ordinance within the next 5 years that would “...identify drought tolerant turf, groundcover, shrubs and trees that are allowed to be planted at new homes.” (p. 7-4). Not clear whether anything is being done to restrict golf course water use.*

- **Limit use of lawn and golf course pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers; use natural and organic methods instead.**
 - *Comments: There are currently no city regulations for residential lawns around fertilizer applications. This is unlikely to pass and would be very difficult to enforce.*
- **Restrict fuel discharge (gas avail on lake).**
 - *Comments: Could prohibit boaters from refueling their boats at the docks. Casino Beach will have a marina with gas available. State rules will regulate it.*
- **Establish ordinances to protect native plant communities in conservation developments and corporate campuses.**
 - *Comments: To do this, would need to first identify old growth prairies and grasses. Ultimately, this type of ordinance won't easily be passed. Good to recognize that there are areas that are valuable for conservation, but will be hard to protect through regulation.*
- **Develop a committee of implementing jurisdictions, like the RCC, to review large development decisions (not all projects).** RCC refers to the NAS JRB Regional Coordination Committee and a development project information sharing tool hosted by NCTCOG that allows impacted jurisdictions to review and comment on development proposals in participating neighboring jurisdictions. Such a tool would need to include Tarrant County, Parker County, TRWD, and the city or town manager (or their designee) of each of the participating small cities, as well as Fort Worth. The NAS JRB RCC is made up of implementing jurisdictions.
 - *Comments: This is not likely to make sense except for really large projects so would need to think about what types of projects would qualify. One issue is that the review process could be delayed because of the coordination required, so there would need to be a streamlined program to make it more attractive to the development community.*

Ideas for realizing the “enhance recreation” goal:

- **Develop a zoning overlay indicating the conceptual location for new trails (locations determined by the Greenprint maps) and then work with developers to determine exact location of those trails through the development process.**
 - *Comments: This could be done by the Planning Department during the platting stage. Re: who will steward the easement, it might be PCSD, Water Department, Housing and Economic Development or a third-party non-profit.*
- **Limit motorized uses around the Fort Worth Nature Center and any swimming beaches.**
 - *Comments: Could have “no wake zones” indicated with buoys.*
- **Limit boat access in different parts of the lake by vessel type (E.g. sail, paddle, or watercraft).**
 - *Comments: Not recommended. The fish move around and it may be difficult to get to different parts of the lake with such nuanced rules.*
- **For jurisdictions in the watershed that don't already have one, create a parkland dedication ordinance that requires new development to set aside a portion of the land for open space or payment of a fee-in-lieu of setting aside land.**

- *Comments: for some of the study area (City of Fort Worth) there is already a parkland dedication ordinance, which is triggered by new development. It does not extend beyond Fort Worth city boundaries. New developments anticipating annexation into the city are asked to comply with the park dedication policy.*
- **Zoning to keep population growth low so access and availability for recreational lands can be preserved.** Note: there is already low density zoning for development outside of city limits.
 - *Comments: This is not likely to have widespread political popularity. It may be better to focus density where it can be most easily accommodated by existing infrastructure or limited extensions thereof, and encouraging the clustering of development so riparian corridors and other Critical Water Quality Zones can be protected.*