

UPDATE ON CONTRACT BETWEEN THE CITY OF AUSTIN AND HUSTON-TILLOTSON UNIVERSITY FOR LADY BIRD LAKE CAPACITY STUDY
JULY 15, 2022
PRESENTER: PATRICIA ROSSETT

Background Information:

Parks and Recreation Board and Environmental Commission Annual Concession Report Recommendations:

Contracts and Concession FY20 Recommendations



Concession Development

Provide a comprehensive contract and concessions report that includes a plan to increase concessions at park facilities.

Concession Reporting

Report expenditures and revenue on all park concessions outside of Lady Bird (Town) Lake.



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Environmental Commission Recommendations

At their November 20, 2020, meeting, the City of Austin Environmental Commission recommended that PARD do the following:

Marine Waste Disposal

- Verify that three years of records have been maintained for entities that pump waste on Lady Bird Lake; include these monthly records in the public record.
- Include waste pumpout data in both the public record and the Annual Report.

Lake Safety

- In consultation with City of Austin rescue teams, review the number of public and private boats typically on lake and if there are capacity issues, that should be considered.
- Consider physical, social, and environmental capacity issues when anticipating upcoming solicitations.

Other Concession Considerations

- Continue working on consistent terms and conditions in concessions contracts to the extent practicable.
- Provide an update on any new concessions, including the Seaholm Power Plant.



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In response to Parks and Recreation Board and Environmental Commission recommendations received as part of the Annual Concession Report, PARD staff has contracted with Huston-Tillotson University (HTU), specifically the Business Administration, Natural Sciences, and Environmental Justice departments, to conduct a Lake Capacity Study. HTU is the most qualified vendor to conduct the study and report its findings because:

- The university has an Environmental Justice (EJ) program and major, making it the only undergraduate institution in Central Texas to offer this degree at the undergraduate level. The faculty, in the EJ program, are thus uniquely qualified to conduct an environmental assessment integrated with an environmental justice analysis.
- This perspective is critical to the lake capacity study for several reasons.
 - First, environmental justice addresses the human consequences of environmental issues and how these often disproportionately impact systematically marginalized communities. This perspective mirrors a multi-lens approach to lake capacity, which must consider environmental, economic, and human parameters to understand capacity and impact.
 - Second, the economic assessments must similarly be anchored in an appreciation for the systemic factors that can lead to disproportionate economic impacts for vendors and consumers that ultimately impact opportunity and access.
 - In addition, HTU is a highly collaborative liberal arts institution that applies a multidisciplinary approach to student instruction and research.

Agreement Overview

The purpose of this contract is to work collaboratively with HTU to define lake capacity, determine the capacity of Lady Bird Lake (LBL) based on this definition, to make recommendations regarding safe recreational use of the lake and to report on current and future environmental impact of watercraft recreational activities on LBL.

The study will include:

- Environmental Study – For example, students and faculty will collect and analyze water samples before, during, and after a peak-use period for standard water quality metrics and algal toxins.
- Vendor and Stakeholder Study – HTU will survey current watercraft vendors, both PARD and non-PARD concessions, to craft inventory, usage patterns, usage distribution, customer profile and growth plans/concerns.
- Watercraft Census – HTU will conduct a watercraft census at both peak levels of recreational use and across several typical non-peak use days. Data will include:
 - Number of boats in the lake
 - Type and size of boat
 - Speed of boat (when possible)

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- Environmental Justice Analysis – HTU will report on the demographics of impacted parties, including concession vendors, concession workers, concession customers, impacted businesses, and impacted communities.
- Enforcement Analysis – Students and faculty will analyze 311 complaint data, social media advertisements/listings (such as Airbnb, Facebook, Instagram), and any available law enforcement data to identify vendors acting in violation of PARD policy.
- Articulation of Goals – HTU will assist the City to set clear goals regarding the use of the lake. To ensure the information collected meets the demands of the City, clear goals must be set according to problems with historical use and the intended nature of the lake. HTU will use the results of their stakeholder surveys, conversations with PARD staff, and research of other cities' approaches to determine an approach to carrying capacity that balances environmental and economic goals.
- Developing a Plan and Recommendations – HTU will develop a use plan that takes the factors articulated in the study elements into account. The study will be delivered at internal meetings, board and commission meetings, and Council meetings as requested by the City.

Furthermore, the collaboration between the City and Huston-Tillotson University supports the City's commitment to inclusion and equity.

Deliverables (see attached deliverables chart)

Agreement Term

This contract shall become effective upon final authorization and shall remain in effect until the earliest of when the deliverables set forth in the contract are complete or the City terminates the contract.

Implementation Timeline

May 2022 through December 2022

