

PADDLING TEXANS to RALLY on the COLORADO RIVER

On Saturday, April 11, kayakers, canoeists and stand-up paddleboarders from around the state will flood the Colorado River during 2015's Rally on the River. The prominent purpose of this annual gathering of self-powered boating enthusiasts is to celebrate all of Texas' alluring freshwater streams (i.e., rivers, creeks and bayous) and the uplifting advantages they provide to each and every Texan.

The Rally was thoughtfully designed to be a worthy part of the global observation of Earth Day by the Matagorda County Birding Nature Center (MCBNC). Thus, this water-centered activity was established as a tribute to the priceless and irreplaceable economic, social and environmental contributions of these naturally-flowing water bodies. In so honoring these liquid features, the Center also envisioned an exceptional opportunity to promote the abundant pleasures to be derived from paddling, while concurrently developing a greater understanding and appreciation for Nature and her most valuable gift...water.

The serenity and incredible beauty of the river also prompts those plying these waters to consider how Texas will effectively and equitably meet the ever-increasing demand for water as our population continues to grow, seemingly, without limits. It is hoped such stimulating mental gymnastics might, subsequently, produce practical strategies for protecting the integrity of our precious streams and, thereby, yield a richly-deserved legacy for both present and future generations.

Each year, since 2010, exuberant advocates for clean and abundantly flowing streams have assembled on the second Saturday in April for a 9:00 a.m. departure to LCRA's inflatable dam located 4.5 miles north of the host site, Bay City's Riverside Park. While underway, all boaters are closely monitored by LCRA's River Rangers in their power boats, to ensure their safety and general well-being.

Some are eager, after a long winter of physical inactivity, to test their paddling stamina and strive to go all the way to the base of this uniquely-designed water retention structure and back. While others find this 9-mile roundtrip trek to be a bit too demanding and, therefore, choose to more leisurely go as far as their energy and effort will reasonably allow before returning to the park. Regardless of the paddling style selected, this casually-structured event is truly about the 'Fun-damentals' of meaningful outdoors experiences (also known by the founders as the 5 Fabulous F's of springtime discovery). These essentials are **Festivity, Family, Fellowship, Fresh air** and the **Future** of our freshwater resources in Texas.

Those tangibly supporting MCBNC's objectives include the City of Bay City, County of Matagorda, Matagorda County Convention and Visitors Bureau and Lower Colorado River Authority. These entities clearly see Riverside Park - with its sandy beach, swimming, boat ramp, hiking trails, fishing, wildlife, wooded RV and tent campsites (with hookups), children's playground, picnic areas and concessions - as the ideal site for this floating tribute to the Lone Star State's sensational streams. So, this enlightened community of water resources stewards cordially invites visitors to bring their family and friends and make treasured memories with a laid-back weekend in this handsomely situated and designed riverside park/campground.

The daily entry fee to the park has been suspended during this special day and there is no cost for engaging in the Rally's aquatic excursion. However, all paddlers are encouraged to register, in advance, since the first 100 to do so will receive a commemorative t-shirt and other gimmees. For \$25, boat-less paddlers may reserve a kayak (single or tandem) for this morning afloat from the accommodating fleets of supporters. To enroll in this floating fiesta, and/or secure a loaner kayak, contact Willie Younger, Rally Coordinator, at 979-240-4872 or w-younger@att.net.