



For Immediate Release
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Cameron County Commissioners Court Approves Coastal Parks Master Plan; Votes to Increase Fees for Coastal Park Improvements

Cameron County Commissioner's Court today approved the Cameron County South Padre Island Coastal Parks Master Plan that calls for major infrastructure improvements, upgrades, renovations, and enhancements to Isla Blanca Park, Andy Bowie Park and E.K. Atwood Park. Along with the plan, the Court approved assessing a beach user fee increase of five dollars to park goers starting January 1, 2016, which will be used to pay for the improved amenities located at the parks. Included in the adoption of the fee increase are increases to thirty day, annual, and bus pass fees. The Parks System will continue to honor Veterans with the fifty percent discount in place today after the user fee increase is in place.

The members of the Commissioners Court heard a detailed presentation on the Master Plan – a process that has given the public multiple public input opportunities and a Plan that has been presented to the Texas General Land Office for subsequent concurrence and approval. “This working document will serve as a roadmap to guide us as we move our county parks on South Padre Island into the 21st century, stated County Judge Pete Sepulveda, Jr. It has been many years since our coastal parks received any major improvements and by increasing the beach user fees visitors will see a more modern park system with improved facilities and amenities.” “It is an ambitious and aggressive plan but one that we need to start developing now”, stated Parks Director Joe E. Vega.

The proposed plan calls for over \$20 million dollars in improvements. Some improvements are more near term and will take 24 to 30 months and others are more long term taking about five years. Some examples of improvements include renovations to restrooms and pavilions, shower and community rinse stations, additional and expanded low impact parking with lighting that includes better traffic circulation and access, boardwalks that meet American Disability Act (ADA) requirements, dune walkovers, renovation and construction of trails and sidewalks, improved concession areas, entrance improvements, upgrades to access points on north beach areas and landscaping.

County staff will be working to make the public aware and make presentations to show the justification along with the dire need to move forward with these infrastructure improvements.

Note: Halff and Associates worked with County Staff to develop the Master Plan.