



City of Wimberley

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(WIMBERLEY) – Work crews are making significant progress on planned improvements to the swimming area at the Blue Hole Regional Park. That's according to Wimberley City officials who today announced the popular natural swimming area could be ready for swimming and ring jumping in early June.

"It is our hope that Blue Hole enthusiasts will be able to enjoy almost a full summer of swimming and ring jumping this year," said Wimberley City Administrator Don Ferguson. "We are pleased with the progress being made by the City's construction contractor."

The improvements to the swimming area include enhanced landscaping, construction of a bathhouse and parking spaces along with construction of a walkway down to the swimming area and two (2), four (4) foot wide limestone paved paths to picnic areas and water access areas.

"The concrete pads for the limestone paved paths and water access areas were poured this week" said Ferguson. "Great care was taken in the design and construction of these paths so as to protect the root systems of the existing Cypress trees which line the bank of the Cypress Creek."

In addition to providing safe access for all users of the swimming area, project architects note the limestone paved paths and water access areas will help stabilize the bank of Cypress Creek which has experienced significant erosion in recent years.

"The Blue Hole swimming area has been experiencing creek bank erosion because swimming hole users were allowed to get in to and out of the water wherever they pleased," said Steven Spears with the Austin office of Design Workshop – the nationally recognized architectural firm hired by the City to design the various improvements to the Blue Hole Regional Park. "On numerous occasions, it was observed that users would literally use underwater Cypress roots or the edge of the bank to get out of the water."

To help minimize erosion, four (4) water access areas are being created, based on historical usage of the swimming area. Each of the access areas will be connected with an ADA compliant limestone paved path, approximately four (4) feet wide.

"These access areas were strategically placed with limited disturbance to root systems and will, in fact, provide stabilization to the creek's edge (the source of the erosion)," said Spears. "Where the concrete pad below the limestone surface of the path and/or access area engages an exposed root, the concrete will span or cantilever over the roots (with an air gap) and small holes will be drilled in the concrete to allow for water and oxygen to

make it to the roots. This only occurs in a handful of places.”

In addition to constructing a limited number of limestone paved paths and water access areas, additional vegetation will be planted along the bank of Cypress Creek.

“The most important aspect to the creek bank restoration effort is the abundant space in between the four (4) access points to the water,” said Spears. “Significant native creek-bank restoration plantings, including the replanting of locally collected Cypress trees, will occur in these areas, providing a much richer ecological edge to the Cypress Creek in this area than what has been seen in decades.”

When planning the improvements to the swimming area, several bank restoration alternatives, such as the use of crushed granite trails, were explored by City officials and Design Workshop. It was determined that a combination of limestone paved paths and water access areas and restoration planting was the most practical and cost effective approach to bank restoration and preservation.

The improvements to the swimming area are just a portion of \$3.1 million worth of improvements being made to the 126-acre Blue Hole Regional Park. Other improvements, outside of the swimming area, include the construction of two (2) soccer fields, six (6) tennis courts, community pavilion, amphitheatre, playground and several miles of walking trails. These improvements were identified in the Blue Hole Regional Park Master Plan adopted by the City Council approximately four (4) years ago. Utilizing an extensive public involvement process, a community stakeholders group developed the Master Plan with a goal of protecting, restoring and developing the Blue Hole Regional Park as a recreational, educational and ecological resource for present and future generations.

The public was re-engaged by the City approximately two (2) years ago when it came time to design the various park improvements. Input was gathered from community stakeholders and other members of the public in a well-publicized public input process.

To learn more about the design of the Blue Hole Regional Park and to monitor the progress of construction, interested persons can log on to www.wimberleybluehole.com.