

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **The Brown Foundation Grants Friends of Blue Hole \$100,000**

Friends of Blue Hole received a \$100,000 grant from The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston for Blue Hole Regional Park Development: Water and Aquifer Education Program & Stream Bank Restoration.

The Brown Foundation, Inc. was founded in July 1951 by Herman and Margaret Root Brown and George R. and Alice Pratt Brown. Since its inception it has awarded more than \$1.2 billion in grants through the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010. The purpose of The Brown Foundation, Inc. is to distribute funds for public charitable purposes, principally for support, encouragement and assistance to education, the arts and community service.

Friends of Blue Hole, Inc. is a not for profit organization whose mission is to promote, protect, preserve, and sustainably develop the Blue Hole Regional Park in Wimberley.

From the beginning of the park planning process a strong education component about water conservation and aquifer education was contemplated. Peter Way, President of Friends of Blue Hole said "In many ways the Texas Hill Country is all about water and it seems fitting that a park developed around one of the most impressive and well known swimming holes in the country would have water and aquifer education as an important component. I want to thank the Brown Foundation for the generous help in this effort."

Throughout the design and program planning of the Blue Hole Regional Park the abstract nature of water as a vital component to the Texas Hill Country is expressed. This design was led by the Austin office of Design Workshop with lead designers Steven Spears and Rebecca Leonard. Some of the strategies include water-harvesting techniques for reuse in irrigation and toilets and storm water purification through bioswales, rain gardens, and constructed wetlands. In addition, landscape and habitat restoration has been planned throughout the site including the cypress grove, grasslands and wildflower meadows, and upland forest areas. Critically important restoration to the Cypress Creek bank has been developed and native vegetation established to protect the swimming hole for generations to come.

There are several educational objectives for Wimberley Blue Hole Regional Park. One of the initial 12 goals for the project is that "Users will understand the natural and cultural significance of the park." Strategies for this include interpretive displays regarding water harvesting and reuse (cisterns); a custom designed aquifer learning playground area; interpretive signage regarding wetlands, native restoration, old cypress trees, aquifer/limestone, prairie landscape, blue hole, and creek braid system. All together, there are in excess of 10 interpretive experiences at key locations that highlight the history, culture, hydrology, habitat, and wildlife of the site.

The park has been selected as a pilot park for the national Sustainable Sites Initiative™. Some highlights of these sustainable practices include: "green" storm water systems such as rain gardens and bioswales, less than 7 percent impervious coverage, stream bank restoration, water harvesting/reuse for toilets and irrigation, use of native materials and reuse of existing materials in construction, revegetation and restoration of native plant species, full cut-off light system, natural ventilation for the site's architecture, and only 3 percent of new disturbance with the project.

The acquisition and development cost for the park is \$ 7,423,500 of which \$ 6,383,500 has been funded. In addition to the Brown Foundation grant, the Blue Hole Regional park project has been awarded \$2.7 million from Hays County Parks and Open Space Bond Fund, \$1.9 million from the National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund administered through Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, an additional \$500,000 grant from Texas Parks and Wildlife, \$615,000 from the Friends of Blue Hole, \$200,000 from the Lower Colorado River Authority, and \$160,000 from the Burdine Johnson Foundation.