



Tom Holden/Times Photo Editor, photo@dailytimes.com

Vern Crawford touches a piece of saw grass held by Martha Miesch during an educational seminar that included a tour of a section of riverbank in Kerrville on Tuesday afternoon.

The river's edge

*UGRA, AgriLife, help
spread knowledge
about riverbank
management*

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A retired biologist led an assemblage of people down the banks of the Guadalupe River on Tuesday, paused and gestured to a strand of tall switchgrass sprouting up through the rocky floodplain.

"A good, healthy creek in the Hill Country might be solid switchgrass mixed in with sycamore, willow and other stuff," said Steve Nelle to the 15 or so onlookers. "We would like to see more little cypress seedlings and button bush and willow, but we do have some new plant growth. ... But all in all in all, it's pretty healthy; it is pretty good the way it is."

A biologist and range specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service for 35 years, Nelle's presentation on river vegetation was among other courses held Tuesday to help landowners with river property learn more about how to protect riparian areas from erosion and contamination by pollutants. The workshop also offered continuing education credit to various professionals such as engineers.

In all, about 30 people toured an area hidden near the 200 to 500 block of Guadalupe Street. Lowry Park's 6 acres of undeveloped city land are about as close as a person can come in Kerrville to seeing what the floodplain should look

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like in its natural state, said Tara Bushnoe, a UGRA natural resources coordinator who helped organize the workshop.

Monday's rains widened that area of the river by at least 6 feet and deepened it by about 2 feet, said Barbara Burton, who owns adjacent land and tagged along for the tours. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reported Kerrville received just less than 3 inches of rain Monday night, not including light showers before 7 a.m. Tuesday.

"This is my sanctuary," Burton said. "It's a very special area down here."

Tuesday's event, part of the Texas Riparian and Stream Ecosystem Education Program offered statewide, was sponsored

by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office in Kerr County and the Upper Guadalupe River Authority.

"We hope that people will be able to look at these areas maybe a little bit differently than they had before," Bushnoe said.

Bushnoe said a riparian area is a complex community of plants functioning to hold the riverbank in place and filter contaminants. The plants also absorb water and slowly release it back into the river when it doesn't rain and slow down water during floods.

"It would be good for people to start to see those qualities when they look at the vegetation and not expect areas along the river to always look like a manicured park," Bushnoe said.



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Along the river

Dan Gaskin with Texas AgriLife Extension Service leads a seminar on wildlife to a group during a field trip along the Guadalupe River Tuesday in Kerrville.