



Looking toward a canyon wall at Palo Duro State Park.



Watch a video of other TCEQ volunteers at [youtube.com/user/TCEQNews](https://www.youtube.com/user/TCEQNews).

TCEQ EMPLOYEES VOLUNTEER IN THEIR COMMUNITIES



The view from atop the Fortress Cliff formation in Palo Duro Canyon, looking down on the south end of Comanche Trail.

Working for a state agency is an act of service. Employees at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality work hard every day to help make Texas a better place for its residents. But many are going above and beyond by adding volunteer service to their lives.

And, for many, the volunteer work they perform falls right in line with the TCEQ's commitment to protect the environment.

Chris Podzemny

A four-year TCEQ employee, environmental investigator Chris Podzemny in Amarillo looks after the public water supply, surface water quality, and sewage facilities. But his other passion is bicycling through the Texas outdoors. That's why his position as president of the Palo Duro Canyon Corps of Engineers is so fitting. He puts in hours of volunteer work building bridges and developing trails throughout the park—and it's a big job. Palo Duro is the second largest canyon in the United States, and its state park is one of the larger ones in Texas.



The work doesn't just benefit cyclists like him. Building and maintaining bona fide

trails means that activity from runners, hikers, and bikers won't be tearing up the landscape. In fact, according to the International Mountain Bicycling Association, off-trail riding can lead to soil erosion, disruption of wildlife, and degradation of water quality.

Podzemny also works to build relationships with local businesses, nonprofits, and governments, such as the City of Canyon.



Chris Podzemny and his team, all members of the Palo Duro Canyon Corps of Engineers, build a new pedestrian bridge on North Comanche Trail.

He and the city worked to develop the [Canyon Trails at Buffalo Hill](#), an open-space park on the site of a former dairy farm. The park features five miles of cycling

and running trails. A local nonprofit, the [Children's Home](#), which owns a property containing another set of trails, has also benefited from his hard work.

Podzemny says he loves seeing others enjoy the fruits of his labor.

"Most of my volunteer work is aimed at providing access for hikers, runners, and cyclists to properties so that they can enjoy the outdoors and experience nature," he says. "Being out in nature and seeing people enjoying the same places that I enjoy makes all the time and hard work worth the effort."

Carol Moulton

Also an environmental investigator, Carol Moulton inspects wastewater-treatment plants and responds to complaints and fish kills out of the TCEQ's Dallas-Fort Worth regional office. For the past six years, however, she has volunteered her time to the [Botanical Research Institute of Texas](#).



There, she catalogs herbaria, which is to say she systematically categorizes dried plants. Preparing the specimens involves mounting a dried plant on archival paper and affixing a label that contains descriptive data. These specimens then serve as reference material for other researchers who wish to study more about the specific plant species.

Moulton participated in the institute's Neighborhood Plant Bio-Blitz, an event in which researchers and volunteers set aside plots of land to study plant life. The in-depth, urban landscape study is a chance to gain more understanding of urban ecosystems—helping people get in touch with nature. By seeing the diversity of plant and insect life that exists in these environments, humans gain a better appreciation of the natural world.

The institute holds an event called First Saturday, which exhibits once a

month, and allows visitors to discuss local plants and prairies with its staff and volunteers.

In addition to BRIT, Moulton also volunteers during the [Trinity Trash Bash](#) with the Tarrant Regional Water District, an annual event where volunteers cleanup portions of river banks previously identified as problem areas by the water district.

Moulton says she really enjoys giving back to the community through her volunteer work.

"Not only do I get to meet lots of interesting people," she says, "I also learn more about what I'm working with, whether it be new plants from South America or a new location along the Trinity that I've never visited before."

Moulton says interacting with the public is also a big thrill.

"I always leave the events with a smile on my face. I love seeing people come together, especially families and kids! I love seeing excited children showing their parents something awesome and walking around with a huge smile. To me, volunteer work is very rewarding."

Brian Spry

Like Podzemny, the Waco office's Water Quality Environmental Investigator Brian Spry constructs hike-and-bike trails for Texans to enjoy. His main area of work is Colorado Bend State Park, which contains approximately 32 miles of multiuse trails. He also participates in periodic river cleanups in the park.



Waco's [Cameron Park Zoo](#) is also a beneficiary of Spry's help. He helped resurface the herpetarium aviary. That doesn't sound like a big deal until you realize that it involved moving gravel without tractors or other equipment. Spry and another man took turns shoveling gravel into five-gallon buckets and carrying those buckets into the facility by hand,

while two women used rakes to spread the gravel throughout the building. In all, the volunteers moved more than six tons of gravel in five hours.

In addition to his hard work at the herpetarium, he also pulled weeds at the shorebird exhibit. Spry has also donated his time to teach water-conservation classes to Boy Scout groups.

"The feeling of gratitude and camaraderie shared amongst the volunteers and seeing other people learning and enjoying the fruits of my efforts is what I enjoy," explains Spry. "It gives me a sense of achievement knowing that work is appreciated."

Evan Goldstrohm

Sometimes, volunteer opportunities come about from networking—even within one's own family.



Evan Goldstrohm's wife, Natalie, works for the Abilene office of the [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department](#). Since the staff is small, he helps out whenever he can.

"Sometimes they need a hand, either with sampling or during outreach events such as kids' fishing events," he says.

In addition to his qualifications as an air environmental investigator with TCEQ, he also holds a bachelor's degree in wildlife and fisheries science. He puts his degree to work when he collects data on fish populations in a particular body of water, or teaches kids about fishing and wildlife conservation.

Goldstrohm is often called in for larger events where his education is particularly helpful. TPWD staffers appreciate having such a volunteer who does not have to be taught before teaching the children, and he enjoys answering fishing questions.

"I like being able to promote fishing to younger generations and to get them interested in being outdoors and away from the video games," he says. "I also

enjoy conducting the sampling activities because the work that TPWD does makes fishing better for the anglers in my community.”

Volunteering means working for something greater than oneself. You can

find TCEQ employees contributing to their communities in a variety of ways throughout the year. These are just four examples of valued TCEQ employees who have each done their part to make the Lone Star State a more beautiful place. 🐾



For More Information

Canyon Trails at Buffalo Hill
www.canyontx.com/index.aspx?nid=438

Children's Home
www.myrootsandwings.org

Botanical Research Institute of Texas
www.brit.org

Trinity Trash Bash
<http://trashbashfw.com>

Cameron Park Zoo
www.cameronparkzoo.com

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
tpwd.texas.gov

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