

Crosstimbers Trail Reopens

Chris Smith, Friends of the Nature Center President



Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price cuts the vine in a “vine cutting” event officially reopening the Crosstimbers Trail. From L to R: Nature Center Manager Rob Denkhaus, Tarrant Regional Water District Vice President Marty Leonard, Friends President Chris Smith, Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price, and Fort Worth City Councilman Dennis Shingleton. Rita Short Photo.

Hikers will be happy to know that the newly repaired and improved Crosstimbers Trail officially reopened on October 13 with a “vine cutting” event hosted by the Friends of the Nature Center, with Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price presiding.

Flooding in 1990 caused a major breach of the Crosstimbers Levee, making the trail inaccessible to the public until 2004. Several subsequent breaches occurred prior to completely closing the trail in 2015.



Installing the bridge. FWNC&R Staff Photo.

New trail improvements included creation of an intentional gap in the levee topped with a 79-foot bridge. The new levee gap now allows water to move freely in either direction without the destructive forces of floodwaters, while a new pedestrian bridge provides access to the wilder portions of the Refuge.

At the event, Nature Center Manager Rob Denkhaus thanked his staff for providing trail “extras,” including brush clearing and rehabilitation of the parking lot at the trail head, then introduced those giving remarks, including Friends President

Chris Smith, Tarrant Regional Water District Vice President Marty Leonard, Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price, and Fort Worth City Councilman Dennis Shingleton.

In her remarks, Mayor Price focused on how Nature Center trails such as the Crosstimbers Trail provide motivation for outdoor exercise, recreation, and education. “Just a little bit of outdoor activity can change the way the whole city feels,” Mayor Price said. “It can change people’s health, their mindset, and tends to make people more congenial.”

Friends President Chris Smith praised those joining forces on the trail renovation. “We continue to see more interest and public-private support for wonderful projects such as these,” Smith said. “The City, Tarrant Regional Water District, Nature Center staff, and Friends coming together demonstrates an increasing local desire to preserve and protect our beautiful natural resources, which are so vital to a growing, vibrant region.”

Trail Fun Facts:

- Crosstimbers Trail links to Todd Island, land surrounded by waters of the West Fork of the Trinity River in its original channel
- Trail length is approximately 3.5 miles
- Portions of the trail follow an old unimproved dirt road used in the late 1800s and early 1900s
- Post oak trees dominate the ancient Cross Timbers forest
- Dendrochronology research conducted in the 1980s indicated that some trees were more than 250 years old
- Todd Island is the northernmost portion of the Refuge open to the public

- Soils found in this area are mostly deep sands (typical of a Cross Timbers forest)
- Todd Island was formed as a sandbar along an ancient bend in the West Fork of the Trinity River that resulted in the deep sand soils, which, in turn, led to the development of the sand-loving Cross Timbers forest type
- Notable wildlife observed on Todd Island includes wild turkey, whitetail deer, opossum, armadillo, pileated woodpecker, and barred and great horned owls



*The completed bridge now provides access to the Crosstimbers Trail.
Rita Short Photo.*