

WATERSHED WEEK IN REVIEW



You Can Still Fish



Social distancing by fishing and boating the Llano have long been popular.

Here is a recent blog by Clint Taylor for Bending Branches Website, a manufacturer of canoe paddles. In the blog, Clint and his dad try their luck upstream of the James River Crossing in Mason County.

[See how they did.](#)

Is a 15-ft Bridge at White's Crossing Such a Good Idea?

In late February, TxDot made a public presentation during the Mason County Commissioners' Court meeting regarding their proposal to construct a new 15-ft bridge across the Llano at White's Crossing, southwest of Mason. While not opposed to the bridge, the Alliance expressed concerns in writing to TxDot about maintaining public access to the river.

[TxDot's email response to our concerns.](#)

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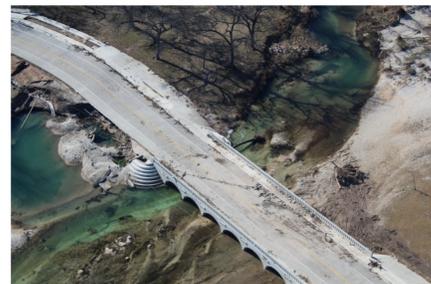
Is a 15-ft Bridge at White's Crossing Such a Good Idea?

With a little more time, thought, and research, the Alliance responded to TxDot with a letter on March 23. We acknowledged in our letter that the Alliance fully recognizes that with Covid-19, this issue is not a priority matter at this time. However, we did wish to share our concerns about the bridge design at White's Crossing and hope to fully discuss the matter when we all regain some normalcy.

The main points of the LRWA letter regarding construction of a 15-ft bridge across the Llano:

1. Geomorphology research shows that this area of the river to have significantly higher Stream Power (the ability of a stream to do work) than any other section of the river. The next highest is at Kingsland.
2. During the October 2018 floods, the low-water crossing bridges on the South Llano River above Junction were only closed for a few days following the flood (gravel had to be removed) while the Flatrock Bridge (see below), built nine feet above the water was severely damaged and still remains closed.
3. \$3.9 million is to be spent on a bridge for a road that for 20-years has averaged 164 cars daily. If the bridge were a toll road, at \$1 a car, it would take 65 years to pay off the bridge.

The Alliance is not opposed to a new bridge, but does have concerns that the bridge, as currently planned (15-feet above the river), may be not the correct design for the floods that occur at this location.



*Left : Lower Crossing of US 377 over South Llano River, October 27, 2018 - 11 days after October 16 flood.
Right : Flatrock Bridge Crossing over South Llano River, December 14, 2018.*

Other Impediments to Riparian Recovery

In last week's newsletter, we continued the discussion regarding the important nature of riparian zones and identified impairments to establishing and maintaining these critical ecosystems. Last week was Manipulation and Manicuring. This week we will look at another one.

Invasive Species (Aquatic)

Several invasive aquatic plants are having impacts on the riparian areas of the Llano. Two of the most problematic are discussed below.

Elephant Ears

Elephant ears have been documented along the North and South Llano rivers as well as the mainstem. These plants are commonly used for ornamental purposes in gardens and ponds. They spread easily through fragmentation and budding. Disturbance encourages spreading of these plants. Texas Tech University Upper Llano River Field Station, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Alliance, and landowners are working together to control elephant ears from the headwaters to Yates Crossing.



Giant Cane (*Arundo donax*)



Giant reed was introduced in the 1800s for ornamental purposes and to help control erosion. It has expanded rapidly through the western US. Treatments of *Arundo* have occurred at South Llano River State Park and Texas Tech-Junction. Texas Parks and Wildlife recently did an aerial survey for *Arundo* along the Llano and will be partnering with the Alliance in the coming months to contact landowners regarding potential treatments.