

RESOLUTION 2021-R-132

THE CITY OF LAREDO DESIGNATES THE LAS PALMAS NATURE TRAIL AS LAREDO'S FIRST BIRDING SANCTUARY

WHEREAS a birding sanctuary is a unique and protected area of land that allows close views of wild birds;

WHEREAS the City of Laredo, population 270,000, sits along the banks of the Rio Grande, a riparian ecosystem that teems with wildlife, especially bird life;

WHEREAS Laredo has no designated landmarks for the preservation and protection of nature or bird species, or promotion of ecotourism;

WHEREAS the Las Palmas Nature Trail is a city-owned riparian tract of land that encompasses approximately 36.1 acres located within the Rio Grande floodplain in Laredo, starting just underneath International Bridge II and ending less than a mile downstream at the mouth of Zacate Creek including critical riparian habitat further up the creek;

WHEREAS the Las Palmas Nature Trail is so named because of a large and majestic grove of Washingtonia palms that are located in a small and compact richly diverse ecosystem that hugs the banks of the river;

WHEREAS Las Palmas is a critical frontier of rare neotropical visiting bird species from Mexico and Central America, and provides a first migratory stopover for them in the United States;

WHEREAS past examples of such sightings at this location include the Amazon Kingfisher and Blue Bunting where 3,000 people came to see these birds and many more thousands over the years have come to view Laredo's prized bird, the Morelet's Seedeater (formerly White-collared Seedeater);

WHEREAS other uncommon South Texas birds have been frequently spotted at this location such as the Clay Colored Thrush, which has been known to roost here; the return of the Plain Chachalaca; at least 20 species of warblers, known as the colorful gems of the bird world, as they come though during their migration; and the Audubon's Oriole, Grey Hawk, Hooded Oriole, and Altamira Oriole;

WHEREAS Las Palmas features a unique blend and merging of a variety of habitat, which increases the biodiversity of the area, and is the second oldest nature trail in Laredo

WHEREAS Las Palmas Nature Trail was built as part of the Justo Penn Park project starting on Oct 15, 2001, involving tens of thousands of volunteer hours;

WHEREAS Las Palmas represents Laredo's first foray into nature trails when in the mid-1970s, under then-Mayor Aldo Tatangelo, this area became Laredo's first linear park with public accessibility with a brick paved path and neighborhood-centered amphitheater. Las Palmas is an extension of what was first done 40 years ago with this Zacate Creek park project;

WHEREAS the donation of land for this biodiverse area

was donated by the Justo Sabor Penn and Amadee Ligarde families to the City of Laredo on Sept. 2, 1997 and encompasses acreage between San Francisco Ave. and San Enrique Ave. below El Azteca neighborhood, which has a Historic District designation by the National Register

WHEREAS the land donation stipulated a plaque on-site recognizing two individuals: Amede Ligarde and Justo Sabor Penn.

WHEREAS the trail, itself, is only 3/4-mile but contains some of the most striking geology and habitat in Laredo, including high bluffs that have been carved through the eons by the Rio Grande, exposing a collection and palette of fossiliferous Eocene Era sandstone and limestone cliffs; a cascading waterfall formed by the water flows of Zacate Creek; and an adjoining 16-acre island in the river;

WHEREAS the 40-million-year-old Eocene Era sandstone bluff and lush tree canopy lend an other-worldly tropical feel to our city;

WHEREAS Las Palmas represents the southernmost downriver population and last known habitat of the federally endangered Texas Hornshell mussel;

WHEREAS in 2002, after more than 40 years, the first live Mexican Fawnsfoot, a state-listed threatened mussel species, was found along the riverbanks at Las Palmas;

WHEREAS, the establishment of this Birding Sanctuary will create a landmark designation and amenity for the South Texas region;

WHEREAS Las Palmas is a prized location during the annual Laredo Birding Festival – which is organized by the Rio Grande International Study Center, Monte Mucho Audubon Society, and Laredo Convention & Visitors Bureau – and draws in nearly 150 birders from around the country and other nations, and has helped put Laredo on the map of the birding world;

WHEREAS ecotourism is a thriving and sustainable growth industry that generates hundreds of millions of dollars annually in South Texas and should be nurtured in Laredo;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAREDO THAT based on the foregoing, the City Council of the City of Laredo, Texas declares the designation of the Las Palmas Nature Trail as Laredo’s first Birding Sanctuary that requires limited motorized vehicles and a protected trail with viewing areas of prized and rare bird species.

PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL AND APPROVED BY THE MAYOR ON THIS THE ____ DAY OF _____, 2021.

PETE SAENZ JR.
MAYOR

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

RENE C. BENAVIDES
CITY ATTORNEY

ATTEST:

JOSE A. VALDEZ JR.
CITY SECRETARY