

## Refugio Mission project wins THC preservation award

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) gave its "Award of Excellence in Archeological Research" to TxDOT for the way the department managed the Mission Nuestra Senora del Refugio site as part of a project to widen U.S. 77 in Refugio.

The project uncovered portions of the Spanish mission and adjacent cemetery (see related story Page 5).

Nancy Kenmotsu, head of the Environmental Affairs Division's Archeological Studies Staff, said "The THC felt like it was a model project."

The award, presented May 6 in San Antonio during the THC's annual Historic

Preservation Conference, went to TxDOT for the contributions of ENV, the Corpus Christi District, and the district's Sinton Area Office and Refugio Maintenance Office. The award also honors contractor Haas-Anderson Construction for rescheduling road work to accommodate the excavations, and the University of Texas at San Antonio's Center for Archeological Research, which excavated the site under contract to TxDOT.

"This illustrates that a project of this nature is very much a joint effort," Ann Irwin, director of ENV's Cultural Resources Management Section, said. "It was an important archeological discovery

that had to be dealt with rapidly under very difficult conditions."

Those conditions included difficult to dig clay soil that does not drain well, heavy rain that soaked the site and filled excavations with water, pressure to complete work so that the road widening project could continue, and a constant stream of traffic only a few feet from the edge of the site.

In announcing the award, Jane Barnhill, THC commissioner, said, "This discovery and the investigations that followed serve as a model for how complicated construction projects and

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## Two-day workshop held to work on Streamlining goals

Texas held its second streamlining meeting Jan. 27-28 to outline an action plan for developing and implementing streamlining initiatives for the state. The meeting, hosted by FHWA and TxDOT, was a follow-up to an initial agency director-level meeting held in September of last year.

The group heard Dan Reagan, FHWA Texas division office director, and David Laney, Texas transportation commissioner, outline their support of Section 1309 and agency efforts to comply

Section 1309 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) calls for a coordinated environmental review process to expedite federal highway and transit projects. The environmental streamlining section establishes a coordinated review process by which the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) would work with other federal agencies to assure that major highway and other transit projects are advanced according to cooperatively determined time frames.

with the intent of Congress. Lucy Garliauskas, FHWA Washington, presented an interpretation of what Congressional intent was in passing Section 1309 and what FHWA Washington is doing to assist states with this effort. Garliauskas is a member of a committee of representatives of the various federal agencies

that are co-signers of the national MOU on Section 1309. The committee is charged with implementing MOU commitments.

Representatives of each agency were given an opportunity to talk openly about their role in transportation project development, their relationship  
*See STREAMLINING Page 3*

# Lawyer takes up preservation career

By JIM DOBBINS

## Environmental Affairs Division

If life is like watching television, it is like changing the channel from “L.A. Law” to “This Old House” for ENV Historic Structures Specialist Steve Sadowsky.

This native of Wichita, Kansas, holds a B.A. from Vanderbilt University and a law degree from Washburn University. Sadowsky is currently working on a M.A. in historic preservation from Middle Tennessee State University. He worked for a Wichita law firm in general practice for eight years before turning to a job more in line with his true passion: historic preservation.

“Law is a very demanding profession,” Sadowsky said.

“I wanted to do other things and felt it was time for a change, which is why I joined TxDOT in October of 1992. I think the legal profession has done me a world of good, as far as communicating effectively, but I have always been fascinated by architecture and history.”

Sadowsky is a member of the Cultural Resources Management Section’s Historical Studies Branch. The Historical Studies Branch provides districts with support and expertise to resolve historic property issues for proposed transportation projects. The branch serves as a liaison between the districts,

Federal Highway Administration, Texas Historical Commission (THC), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). They oversee TxDOT activities for compliance with federal and state historic properties laws and regulations. The branch handles

concerns relating to historic buildings (residential, commercial and public), structures (bridges, culverts, etc.), objects (historical markers, statues, etc.), and districts (historic downtown and residential districts).

Sadowsky has seen an evolution in environmental work since joining TxDOT eight years ago.

“I think ENV’s role has expanded significantly over the years – we have a greater degree of latitude as professionals. The districts’ staff have been very supportive of our efforts. I think ours is such a specialized field that others rely on us to help complete their work,” Sadowsky said.

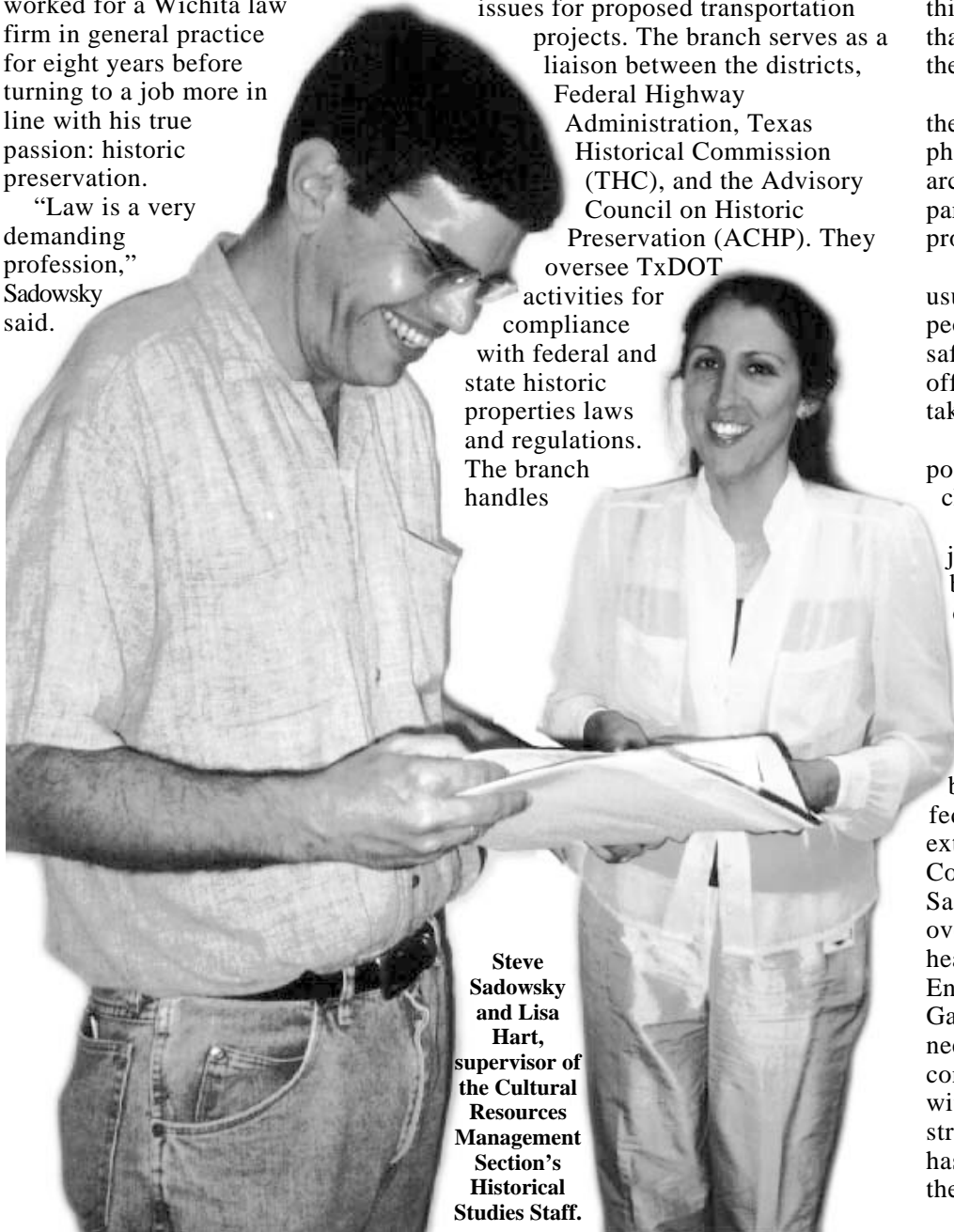
Sadowsky’s job takes him out to the field often, where taking photographs of potentially historic or architecturally significant buildings is part of the environmental clearance process for transportation projects.

“Since I’m out in the field a lot, usually walking, I get to meet a lot of people,” Sadowsky said. “The hat and safety vest make me look very official, but people wonder why I’m taking pictures of their houses.”

Like every job, Sadowsky’s position presents him with unique challenges.

“The most challenging part of my job, lately, has been the project to build the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Street overpasses in Brownsville. The project has been very controversial in the community, because many residents don’t want overpasses in a historic area. This is a City of Brownsville project that TxDOT became involved in because of federal funding. We have also worked extensively with the Texas Historical Commission on the project,” Sadowsky said. “The 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Street overpass project has been a headache,” Pharr District Environmental Coordinator Velma Garcia said. “The project really is needed, as it provides a new connection over the railroad tracks with downtown, and other connecting streets are already at capacity. There has been a change of government in the city since the funding was

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Steve Sadowsky and Lisa Hart, supervisor of the Cultural Resources Management Section’s Historical Studies Staff.

# ATLAS database aids historic research

## *Project developed by THC using transportation enhancement funding*

By **JIM DOBBINS**  
**Environmental Affairs**  
**Division**

An automation project funded in part by TxDOT has become a useful tool for ENV Cultural Resources Management (CRM) staffers.

The project, called the Texas Historic Sites Atlas, or more commonly referred to as the Atlas, was developed by the Texas Historical Commission and funded through the Design Division administered transportation enhancement program. The database contains almost 250,000 historic site records from all over Texas. These sites include historical markers, properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, museums, historic county courthouses, historic sawmills, archeological sites, and neighborhood surveys. The database first became functional about two years

ago.

The Atlas saves time for historians and archeologists by providing information on all known historic and pre-historic sites across the state. Historical searches can be conducted by county, site name, or address. Archeological searches (which can be accessed only by archeologists due to the sensitive nature of archeological sites) can be accomplished by trinomial, quad, county, universal trans meridian, or address. Once a search area has been entered, a map of the area appears on the screen. National Register sites are indicated with a blue star; green circles represent historical markers; pink squares mark museums; red triangles denote archeological sites; and orange asterisks show where a neighborhood survey has taken place. By positioning the cursor on

any of the sites and clicking the mouse, a brief description of the historic or pre-historic property appears.

Cherise Bell is an architectural historian in CRM's Historical Studies Branch who uses the Atlas regularly.

"If it were not for Atlas, I would be calling or visiting the Texas Historical Commission's library and going through their paper or computer files," Bell said. "Atlas saves me a lot of travel and search time. In a few minutes, I can locate the information that I need by using the program."

Tim Meade is an archeologist in CRM's Archeological Studies Branch.

"I use Atlas all the time. As soon as I receive an environmental assessment, I check the project area with the program. It is a good tool, very accurate, and saves me a lot of time. The

only shortfall that I have found is that the information is not updated very quickly. For example, the Camp Swift project that I worked on in 1996-7 is still not listed in the database," Meade said.

Phase I of the program cost about \$1.4 million. Under the transportation enhancement program, federal funding paid for 80 percent of the program, while TxDOT agreed to pay for the other 20 percent. Proposed phase II is expected to cost approximately \$1.1 million and will add data on cemeteries and military sites. Additional work will be done to make the Atlas more user-friendly, as well. Funding for phase II is also being sought through the transportation enhancement program.

Atlas can be viewed on the internet at:  
[atlas.thc.state.tx.us](http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us).

## Streamlining: Areas of concern named

*(Continued from Page 1)*

with TxDOT and FHWA, and what opportunities their agency could offer to streamline the environmental process.

The group then broke into five work groups to explore specific issues and areas of concern and possible solutions for streamlining the process. The group identified several items that could be done now, such as ensuring environmental commitments are included in the PS&E and carried out, agency cross-training, improved communication and conflict resolution. The primary areas of concern were:

- **Communication**, including cross-training and across-the-board knowledge of environmental commitments made for projects

- **Interagency coordination and collaboration**, including early involvement in transportation planning and project development processes

- **Programmatic Agreement and/or MOUs** between TxDOT and resource agencies, including review of existing and possible development of new agreements

- **Eliminate duplication of efforts** among the many agencies involved in the project development process

- **Build trust** among agencies involved

- **Lack of resources for resource agencies** to participate in the project development process earlier and continuously throughout

The participants of the meeting will be provided with a summary of the meeting and will be asked to choose from the items of primary concerns which to target first. From there, a steering committee, made up of one representative from each agency at the meeting, will develop an action plan for addressing the issue(s), and choose a pilot project to implement it. Additional action plans and pilot projects will be developed as results from the first pilot project unfold.

The steering committee will oversee the streamlining efforts, including the pilot project's progress. The committee will also develop a conflict resolution process to be implemented as soon as possible.

In addition to TxDOT and FHWA, other agencies attending the meeting were U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Transit Authority, Environmental Protection Agency, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, Texas General Land Office, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Historical Commission, and local MPOs.



# Odessa District takes home 1999 Environmental Achievement Award

By JIM DOBBINS

## Environmental Affairs Division

Tuesday, Jan. 25, was a red-letter day for the folks in the Odessa District, as staffers were presented several awards, including the 1999 Environmental Achievement Award.

The award presentations began at Keep Odessa Beautiful's Annual Luncheon and Award Presentation held at Odessa's Radisson Hotel. The Odessa District was recognized with ACE ("Actively Caring for the Environment") Awards for highway beautification and recycling efforts.

The Government Agency/Highway Beautification Award was presented to district staff for their Interstate 20 and South Grant Street intersection project. District Engineer Lauren Garduno and landscape architect Laurie Williams accepted the award.

The Recycling/Government Agency Award recognized the district for recycling 7.5 tons of office paper annually. Homer Martinez, the district's recycling manager, accepted the award on behalf of the district.

Following the luncheon, the awards continued with a tree dedication ceremony recognizing the Odessa District's vegetation management program that won the 1999 Environmental Achievement Award (please see "Odessa takes environmental award for vegetation management program," Winter 1999). ENV Deputy Division Director Ken Bohuslav lauded the district's environmental efforts.

"The Odessa District did not undertake this project because a regulatory agency said so or because the county wanted them to," Bohuslav said. "They went beyond the project scope to control erosion, re-vegetate with native species and beautify the right of way."

Garduno accepted the tree on behalf of the district, and promised that the district will continue their highway beautification efforts.

The tree, a relatively large Pecan,



Photo by Glen Larum

**Odessa District Vegetation Manager Robert Watts (left) and District Engineer Lauren Garduno (right) join ENV Deputy Director Ken Bohuslav (back to camera) at the unveiling of the 1999 Environmental Achievement Award sign on the district grounds.**

was planted on the site that a popular large Mulberry tree, known to staffers as the "Keebler tree" for its resemblance to the well-known tree of television commercial fame, once stood. The Mulberry tree fell victim to a construction project on district grounds.

The tree dedication ceremony received extensive media coverage. Television channels 2 and 7 had their news crews videotape the ceremony,

and the local newspaper, the *Odessa American*, had a reporter and photographer present to record the event for posterity.

The deadline for nominations for the 2000 Environmental Achievement Awards was May 5. Winners will be announced at the District Engineer/Division Director/Office Director meeting held in October just before the Transportation Conference in College Station.

# Video tells Refugio mission story

## Tape premiered to local citizens and officials April 24

By **JIM DOBBINS**  
Environmental Affairs  
Division

A bit of Hollywood came to Refugio on Monday, April 24, when the premiere of a new TxDOT-produced videotape was screened at the Refugio County

Community Center. Most of the video's stars were present, but unlike Hollywood premieres, there was no red carpet, searchlights, autograph-seekers or paparazzi.

About 100 citizens and local officials

attended the screening of "Nuestra Senora del Refugio: Road to Discovery," a joint effort of the Corpus Christi District, Travel Division and ENV. The video tells the story of Mission Nuestra Senora del Refugio (Our Lady of Refuge) and the city of Refugio. This was the last Spanish mission established in what is now Texas. The mission once stood on the site of the present Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church on U.S. 77 (Alamo Street), near the Mission River at the south end of the city of Refugio.

A project to improve U.S. 77 uncovered the mission's cemetery,

archeologically excavated in the summer and fall of

1999. Remains that may exceed 139  
See **VIDEO, Page 11**

# Award: THC honors TxDOT

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historic preservation concerns can be successfully managed. The Environmental Affairs Division of the Texas Department of Transportation served as the lead agency, and the success of the project is ultimately due to their achievements in maintaining a balance between the scientific and historical potential of the project, the concerns of Native American groups and the constraints imposed by construction budgets and schedules."

Corpus Christi District Engineer Billy Parks accepted the award for TxDOT.



Corpus Christi District Photo

**City of Refugio Mayor Ray Jaso (right) presents letters of appreciation for a job well done to Collin Martin (left), U.S. 77 project superintendent for Haas-Anderson Construction, and Vincente Ortiz (center), TxDOT U.S. 77 project superintendent.**

# Sadowsky: Lawyer turns preservationist

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approved. Noise and aesthetics issues have arisen, and the citizenry is evenly divided for and against the project. Several modifications have been made to the project design. I appreciate Steve's work on this and other projects – we have worked together for many years and he has always done a good job for us."

While still working on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Street overpass project, Sadowsky no longer is assigned other work in the Pharr District. Sadowsky now works with the staff of the Beaumont, Houston, Yoakum and Corpus Christi Districts.

"Steve is our longest tenured Historical Studies Branch staffer and is a stickler for detail," said branch supervisor Lisa Hart. "He has been instrumental in the implementation and development of our

memorandums of understanding with THC and ACHP. He will be working on our scientific service contract, and has consistently picked up the workload whenever a need has arisen. Steve is very dependable and we rely on him a lot."

What aspect of Sadowsky's job gives him the most satisfaction?

"I get the most satisfaction from my job when I see people grasp the importance of historic preservation – sometimes it is like watching a light turn on."

Sadowsky's creative mind and grinning face has been on display in the pages of *ENVision* since his "Brain Bender" puzzles first appeared in the fall 1996 issue.

When not on the job, Sadowsky has a variety of interests and activities to keep him busy.

"I enjoy disc golf, camping, snow-skiing, 'floating' at Lake Travis, the Austin live music scene and local historic preservation," Sadowsky said. "I give house tours for the Austin Heritage Society and for the Hyde Park Home Tour program. I became involved in the South by Southwest Music Festival seven years ago. I have sold t-shirts for the event and have worked the door at some of the music venues each year since then."

Does the witty Sadowsky have anything else to share with *ENVision* readers?

"Be sure to let them know that I'm 'a nice boy from a good family,' as my mother used to say."

# ENV partners with Brooke Elementary to help 6th graders create science project

By JIM DOBBINS

## Environmental Affairs Division

It was back to elementary school recently for several ENV and Public Information Office (PIO) employees, as ENV partnered with a sixth grade class at Austin's Brooke Elementary School to produce an exhibit for a competition at the University of Texas.

The seventh annual event, known as Science Fun Day, is sponsored by the University of Texas' College of Natural Sciences, and was held at the Texas Memorial Museum on the UT campus. The competition pitted 26 Austin-area fifth and sixth grade classes in a class-wide science fair project. Each class was partnered with an Austin-area business or organization that helps the class learn about a science activity closely related to an area of expertise of the partner organization. This year's event was held March 4.

ENV partnered with the sixth grade class taught by Greg Grennes of Austin's Brooke Elementary School. Grennes' class studied the environmental clearance process for a highway construction project, using proposed Texas 130 as a model. The subject is based on a free education kit developed by ENV's Communications Section called "Planning a Highway." Over 1,500 kits have been distributed since the

kits first became available last September.

During January and February, a series of six speakers talked to the class about their areas of expertise, and their roles in clearing

the class about biological issues. ENV architectural historian Daniel Harris briefed the class on historic buildings and sites. ENV archeologist Pat McLoughlin explained the archeological aspect

of transportation project clearance. ENV Environmental Quality Specialist Terry Dempsey provided students with a look at hazardous material issues. The presentations were rounded out by ENV environmental planner Melissa Neeley's discussion of social issues and the public involvement process.

"I enjoyed the opportunity to share my professional knowledge with the class," said McLoughlin. "If their understanding of archeology's role in the study of pre-history and history has broadened, then I am happy."

The class was divided into committees of experts who dealt with hazardous material, historical, archeological and biological issues. Each team constructed a diorama depicting their area of expertise.

"The committee work that the students did was a good exercise for them," Grennes said. "They learned a lot about how decisions are made by committees and how to 'give and take' – a valuable real-world skill."



Photo by Jim Dobbins

## ENV archeologist Pat McLoughlin shares his knowledge with Brooke Elementary sixth graders.

transportation projects for environmental issues. PIO's Mark Cross (formerly of the Texas Turnpike Authority) provided an overview of the Texas 130 project. ENV biologist Bill Hood spoke to



## Students: Plan a new highway

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When the big day finally arrived, the class set up their dioramas at the museum for the competition. Called "How do you Plan a Highway? – Very Carefully," the exhibit was visited by many of the estimated 4,500 people who attended Science Fun Day. Students staffed the class' booth and explained to visitors how each component fit together. A staff of judges visited exhibits to evaluate each class' efforts.

The event received considerable local publicity. TV station KXAN broadcast their Saturday morning "FirstCast" show from the museum, and the *Austin American-Statesman* ran large ads promoting the event in the days leading up to Science Fun Day. The day of the event was proclaimed "Austin Science Fun Day" by Austin Mayor Kirk Watson.

Some unplanned excitement was provided by one of the Brooke Elementary students, who sprained her ankle at the event. After an examination by EMS paramedics,



**Brooke Elementary teacher Greg Grennes (above) records the big day for posterity. (Below) Brooke Elementary sixth graders explain their project to Science Fun Day visitors.**

Photos by Jim Dobbins

the girl was transported to Brackenridge Hospital by ambulance. Doctors determined that the injury was relatively minor and she was back in class Monday morning.

"The class learned a lot about TxDOT and gained an appreciation of the vast amount of planning that goes into a highway project. The project was an excellent example of real world applications for the subjects the students are studying, such as archeology and history, and they got to meet people working in those professions. The students enjoyed the project and Science Fun Day," Grennes said.

Janice Anderson is the Dean of UT's College of Natural Sciences.

"This year's Science Fun Day was a big success," Anderson said. "I appreciate TxDOT participating in the event and enjoyed the project that the students of Brooke Elementary created with TxDOT's help."



# Pharr District road project deals with discovery of long-forgotten cemetery

By VELMA GARCIA  
Pharr District

The presence of a cemetery often is not obvious as the Pharr District found in rebuilding FM 3248, also called Alvin Gloor Boulevard, between US 77/83 and FM 1847 in Brownsville.

A hurricane had washed away tombstones and other burial features had long ago disappeared beneath a farmer's plow. When signs of the cemetery disappeared, the road had belonged to Cameron County and also had a different name, Tejon Road, named after a nearby railroad depot. Files indicate that the county acquired right of way so that Tejon Road could be rebuilt into a farm-to-market road.

After construction was completed by TxDOT in 1979, Tejon Road became part of the State Highway System, designated as FM 3248 and named Alton Gloor Boulevard.

It wasn't until a now-retired engineer, while reviewing the 1998 construction plans, recalled the discovery of graves during the 1979 construction project. Pharr District environmental and Environmental Affairs Division (ENV) staff then researched project files, old aerial photos and county maps. Files indicated graves had been discovered at the intersection of FM 3248 and Stage Coach Trail in 1979 when FM 3248 originally was built. But after digging a trench, it was determined that the graves were random and continuation of the project was authorized.

Old aerial photos and county maps depicted a curve in the road, that apparently avoided the cemetery. Because there were no apparent signs of a cemetery, the new road was realigned through this area, resulting in the roadway passing over the cemetery.

In 1998, public notices in English

and Spanish were published in national, international and local newspapers in an effort to find descendants and to identify the name of the cemetery. Several calls from people in the Brownsville area provided the name of the cemetery,



**Pictured from the left, Dennis Price, ENV staff archeologist, Francisco Gonzalez, of Rose Lawn Memorial Gardens Cemetery, and Mark Iglesias, Pharr District environmental quality specialist, examine a grave discovered by the FM 3248 project.**

Pharr District Photo

dating back to the 1900s, as "El Lucero Camposanto (Cemetery)," meaning "sacred ground, a humble place to rest." Names of those buried there were also provided, but unfortunately the district was unsuccessful in finding any records of a dedicated cemetery or death records.

After interviewing local historians and following other leads, it was determined the graves were of farm workers and their children from a nearby ranching community. Others remembered the tombstones being washed out by a hurricane, the land plowed and the cemetery gone.

In attempts to find descendants, the district succeeded in locating only one, 76-year-old Evangelina Gonzalez-Vallejo, the youngest of 14 children. Gonzales-Vallejo remembered driving by the cemetery with her mother who would tell her, "your oldest sister is buried there..."

After working with members of the

Cameron County Historical Commission, the Pharr District's environmental staff developed a plan to relocate the remains to a perpetual care cemetery to ensure this cemetery is never abandoned again.

After a little more than a year, a press conference was held prior to the disinterments, in which Gonzalez-Vallejo, accompanied, by her husband and five nieces, were present to listen to TxDOT officials' plans for the cemetery.

TxDOT removed the remains of El Lucero Cemetery and relocated them to Roselawn Memorial Gardens Cemetery between Dec. 6 and 15, 1998. An ENV staff archeologist and a licensed mortician were present during the disinterments to ensure all remains were exhumed. After completion, it was determined there had been 33 burials in 31 graves. Two more sets of remains were found than originally determined because

they had occupied the same graves as two sets of previously removed remains. Nineteen of the remains were determined to be infants and children, eight were adults and six coffins were basically empty. Of those six, five were probably adults and one an infant or child.

Boulders with bronze memorial plaques will be placed at the old and new sites in remembrance of those who were laid to rest there. The boulders will be unveiled with a special ceremony at a later date.

As an update on the roadway construction, a section of FM 3248 was built and the remaining section, which included the cemetery, received bids for construction in January 2000. The Pharr District and ENV made every effort throughout the process to provide descendants and their families the proper respect they deserved.



# Maintenance facility guidance now on TxDOT Crossroads intranet site

By DANIEL BENSON

## Environmental Affairs Division

In January, the Environmental Affairs Division (ENV), debuted a draft of its "Environmental Management for Maintenance Section Supervisors Guidance Manual" on TxDOT's intranet site, Crossroads. The manual was created by the Operations and Maintenance Branch of ENV's Hazardous Materials Management Section (HMM).

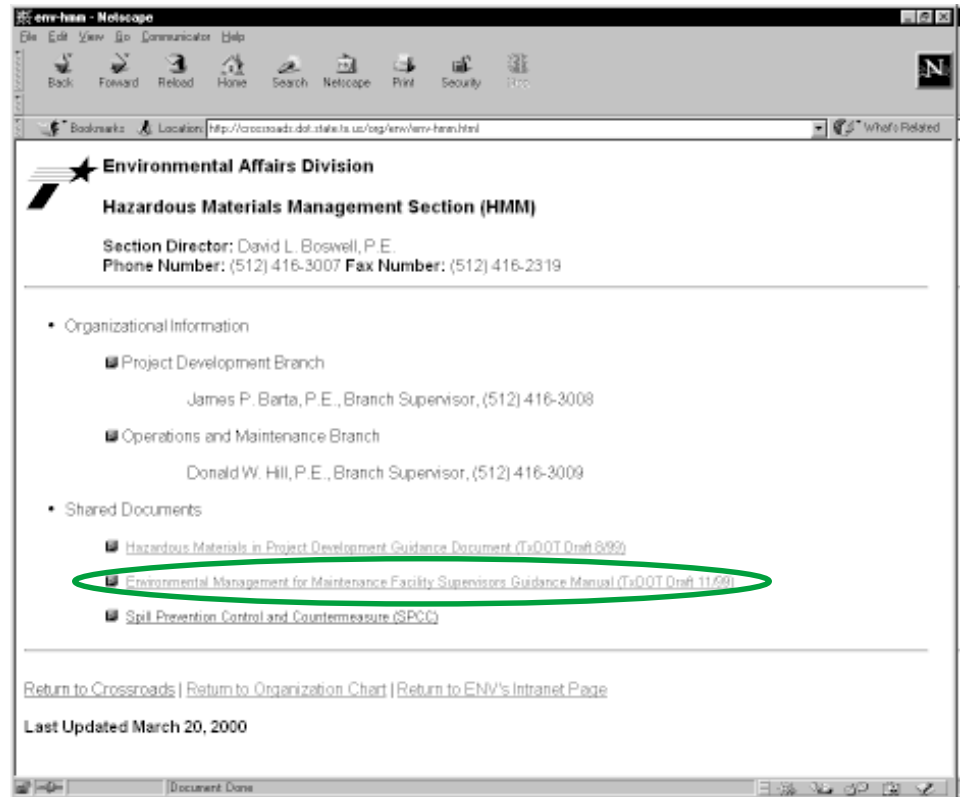
The guidance document is a source for maintenance facility managers and other district personnel involved in environmental compliance issues. The document can be accessed at <http://crossroads.dot.state.tx.us/org/env/env-hmm.html>.

Environmental compliance issues include used oil storage and recycling, hazardous waste management, vehicle and equipment maintenance waste, general housekeeping, small spill response and abandoned hazardous waste, vehicle and equipment washing, petroleum storage tanks, and spill prevention controls and countermeasures (SPCC).

Publishing the document electronically was considered the quickest and most efficient way to get the information to those who need it. Publishing on Crossroads eliminates the need to print and distribute paper copies.

Because environmental issues, regulations and liability concerns are complex and constantly changing, the information in the guidance manual will change over time. Posting the guidance document electronically makes updating the information easier and ensures that the most current information is available to readers.

The guidance manual includes, as an appendix, several regulatory guidance brochures and pamphlets published by the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). HMM sorted through the large volume of available guidance documents from



The opening page for the Hazardous Materials Management Section (HMM) page (<http://crossroads.dot.state.tx.us/org/env/env-hmm.html>). The "Environmental Management for Maintenance Section Supervisors Guidance Manual" is at the link circled in green.

the TNRCC and EPA, and posted the ones most directly related and useful to TxDOT's facility needs. Over time the look of the Crossroads page will be modified to include things like SPCC plans and a question-and-answer area related to disposal options for different types of waste streams.

Part of what HMM is trying to do is to document procedures for use at facilities to reduce potential and significant environmental impacts. Periodically, facility operations and procedures will be reviewed and changed to keep them accurate and realistic. The feedback used to initiate operational changes will come directly from the facility personnel who are using the procedures. One way of reviewing progress is through internal compliance audits.

Another thing found on the intranet

HazMat page is the TxDOT Facility Environmental Checklist. The checklist shows what aspects of facility environmental compliance HMM looks for at a facility during monthly district environmental surveys. It lays out pertinent information to facility managers and personnel in an easy to follow format.

The internal system of assessing regulatory compliance at facilities has traditionally been the monthly district environmental audit process, also called environmental surveys. ENV has conducted monthly environmental surveys for about the past four years, in conjunction with the Occupational Safety Division's safety surveys. As a result, the environmental audits have revealed a clear need to establish a guidance manual capable of

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# Bat culvert project wins Laredo District U.S.DOT design recognition award

By MARCO ALVARADO  
Laredo District

The U.S. Department of Transportation has selected a bat culvert in Laredo as the recipient of its Design for Transportation National Award 2000.



**Melisa Montemayor**

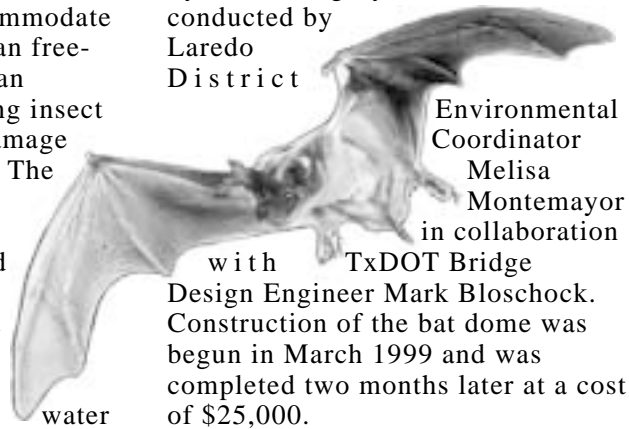
The award honors facilities and activities that exemplify the highest standards of design which have made an outstanding

contribution to the nation's transportation systems and the people they serve.

Titled "The Bat Dome Culvert: A First in the United States," the winning project is an existing drainage culvert system in Laredo that was modified to accommodate the roosting of the Mexican free-tailed bat. The bat plays an essential role in controlling insect pest populations which damage crops and irritate people. The structure on U.S. 83 in Laredo is the first large scale culvert in the United States constructed to purposefully attract and house bats while performing its intended function of moving storm

and keeping the roadway above traversable during inclement weather.

The project – which competed in the Engineering, Energy Conservation, Technology, and Systems category – was conducted by Laredo District



Environmental Coordinator Melisa Montemayor in collaboration with TxDOT Bridge Design Engineer Mark Bloschock. Construction of the bat dome was begun in March 1999 and was completed two months later at a cost of \$25,000.

## Intranet: Guidance draft published

*(Continued from Page 9)*

addressing environmental compliance issues uniformly for all districts and their maintenance facilities. Among other things, the audit process allows TxDOT to systematically identify, correct, and prevent violations. The surveys also allow us to assess the department's overall performance in environmental compliance and its effectiveness. In this way, we're able to demonstrate to resource agencies and other interested parties our commitment to proactive environmental management.

Another objective of the compliance audit is to initiate corrective actions as quickly as possible. We want to have a corrective

and preventive action process that specifies responsibilities and schedules for acting on recommendations outlined in the ENV survey report. HMM plans to review the progress regularly and follow up on any deficiencies.

One part of the guidance HMM wants to strengthen is how contractor activities can affect TxDOT's environmental performance and compliance. Some of us may have heard stories about a contractor who picked up waste material from a TxDOT yard, only to go down the road and unload it in a ditch illegally. It is important to monitor final disposition of TxDOT waste, both hazardous and non-hazardous, to reduce potential liabilities

associated with disposal company cleanup.

Eventually HMM hopes that each maintenance facility will make one person responsible for compliance oversight at that facility, much like the way OCC created safety officers. HMM's internal audits have shown that in districts where dedicated individuals are responsible for environmental compliance, significant progress has been made toward eliminating hazardous waste compliance problems.

In the past, there hasn't been much emphasis on follow-up to gauge a facility's progress on correcting deficiencies. This is an area HMM will improve.

Essential concepts to the

preventive and corrective action program are to identify the problem, identify the cause by investigation, come up with a solution, implement the solution, document the solution, and communicate the solution to other facilities. It's all part of a comprehensive Environmental Management System (EMS) that ENV is building.

So far, response to the guidance has been favorable. The biggest challenge is to improve feedback to provide better customer service in assisting facilities with environmental compliance. HMM hopes the guidance is a big step in that direction.

# Video: Mission story told

*(Continued from Page 5)*

individuals, pending final analysis, were removed for study and reburial in a more appropriate location. The video tells the story of the mission people and those who followed in Refugio.

Ann Irwin, director of the Cultural Resources Management Section, was one of those attending the screening.

"I think the video was well received," Irwin said. "'Road to Discovery' makes a substantial contribution to telling Refugio's story."

The event was also a celebration of the recent completion of the \$6.2 million project.

District 31 State Representative Judy Hawley spoke of the project in glowing terms.

"This is a wonderful project and TxDOT did a fabulous job," Hawley said.

Monsignor Robert Freeman of Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church observed that the recent renovation of U.S. 77 would have met with the approval of the mission inhabitants.

"I think (mission founder) Father De Silva would have liked to have a nice highway here," Freeman said, who noted that the friars had to cut their own paths through many parts of late 18<sup>th</sup> century Texas.

The video will be distributed to schools, museums, and other interested groups.



## BrainBender

by CRM's Steve Sadowsky



### Spring Fever!

Find the names of these Texas plants listed in the column at right in the puzzle below. Names may be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, and in reverse order. Letters may be used more than once. (Answers on Page 8.)

R A T S E U L B B L U E M A Q S P  
 I O V P I A G D G A R V E A P M R  
 M E E I S O N D E E W K L I M H I  
 A H A D K O D A D I D S D N S E C  
 Y H S E N L O S K G O E M U E P K  
 A G A R I T A I O K R T R T E R L  
 P E T L I G H N C W T B Y E U R Y  
 P C Y I E A C C O I T L M P N E P  
 L O U L N E H R T N S U T D A W E  
 E W C Y B U T L I E B E A L K O A  
 W V C A E S E A L E V F B I O L R  
 T I A F T I P A L L Y L T W C F D  
 W N H G S N N G O U A A E G A N E  
 I E T L A N A I T N E G N C M U R  
 X D A I D E A B L U E S N S U S O  
 E V D W P H W K C O R E O P S I S  
 N N E O U S I M E R A L B S D I E  
 I E E H C A S I U H O B E H O I L  
 B A D H E D T S I B E H U D O N T  
 D N T E N G E I E S U R L E W N S  
 O A A I I E R L T L G V B I G M I  
 O D C A W S I G O L D E N R O D H  
 W E A D L A A P L A T A C E D A T

- Bluebonnet
- Indian Paintbrush
- Wild Petunia
- Snake Herb
- Agave
- Spider Lily
- Sumac
- Blue Star
- Milkweed
- Agarita
- Mayapple
- Cowvine
- Catalpa
- Prickly Pear
- Lobelia
- Woodbine
- Spiderwort
- Thistle
- Coreopsis
- Sunflower
- Goldenrod
- Dogwood
- Ocotillo
- Gentian
- Blue Flag
- Red Sage
- Huisache
- Wisteria
- Vetch
- Wine Cup
- Yucca





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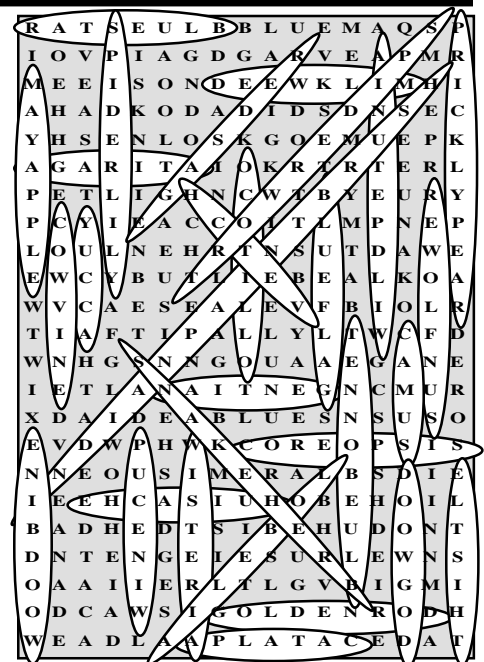
## 4th annual Environmental Coordinators Conference will be in Austin Sept. 5-6

TxDOT will hold its fourth annual Environmental Coordinators Conference Sept. 5-6 at the Hilton Austin North Hotel, in Austin. Transportation professionals from federal, state, and local governments, as well as environmental consultants, are invited to attend and learn more about how best to manage environmental issues related to transportation. The expected outcome for the conference is an increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of the environmental process related to transportation projects and programs in Texas.

The conference is free. If you have

any questions or wish to register for the conference, please contact Jean Beeman, conference coordinator, at (512) 416-3171, or by e-mail at [jbeema0@dot.state.tx.us](mailto:jbeema0@dot.state.tx.us).

The Hilton Hotel has rooms reserved for attendees at a special rate of \$70/single occupancy, \$110/double occupancy. To reserve a room, contact the hotel at (512) 451-5757 or (800) 347-0330. Be sure to tell the hotel you are with the TxDOT Environmental Coordinators Conference to get the conference rate. The cut-off date for making reservations at this rate is Aug. 15.



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We welcome ideas for stories and standing features. Submit those to the above address, attention Richard Goldsmith, phone 512.416.2743; via

GroupWise to "rgoldsmi" within TxDOT; "rgoldsmi@dot.state.tx.us" for e-mail from outside TxDOT.

Does ENVision reach the right person within your organization? Contact us to correct an address or to suggest additions to the mailing list.

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SOY-BASED INK

