



George Mitchell Nature Preserve

Resource Management Plan

Management framework for natural resource stewardship, public use and sustainable trail use.



Table of Contents

Executive Summary

1. Site Information

1.1 Identification of the Property.....	Page 5
1.2 Ownership / Lease Context.....	Page 5
1.3 Existing Township Resource Allocation.....	Page 5
1.4 Land Use and Public Use Context.....	Page 6
1.5 Recent Use Indicators.....	Page 6
1.6 Conservations Easements.....	Page 6
1.7 Trail Count Summary (March - April).....	Page 7

2. Conservation Values

2.1 Natural Resource Value.....	Page 7
2.2 Greenway and Connectivity Value.....	Page 7
2.3 Community Value.....	Page 8
2.4 Wildlife and Habitat Value.....	Page 8
2.5 Public Stewardship Value.....	Page 9

3. Management Objectives.....Page 9

4. Management Direction

4.1 Tree Removal and Forest Management.....	Page 9
4.2 Wildlife Management and Removal.....	Page 10
4.3 Habitat Enhancement and Restoration.....	Page 11
4.4 Trail Development and Alignment.....	Page 12
4.5 Visitor Use, Education and Enforcement.....	Page 13

5. Implementation Program (2026-2030).....Page 13

6. Monitoring, Coordination and Annual Obligations.....Page 14

Attachment A - Lease Exhibit.....	Page 15
Attachment B - Trail Agreement with Bayou Land Conservancy (BLC).....	Page 16
Attachment C - Conservation Easement Map/Easement Language.....	Page 17
Attachment D - Map of Current Trail System.....	Page 20
Attachment E - Selected Source References.....	Page 21

Executive Summary

A Resource Management Plan (the “Plan”) is a policy and operations guide that defines how a natural area will be protected, maintained, improved and used over time. It establishes the purpose of the site, identifies the resource values that should guide decision-making, outlines appropriate management practices and sets a measurable implementation program so that stewardship actions are intentional rather than reactive. For George Mitchell Nature Preserve (the “Preserve”), this Plan is intended to balance conservation, public access for recreation and long-term operational sustainability in a way that protects the character of the Preserve while accommodating growing public use.

The Preserve is a large, multi-parcel preserve within The Woodlands Township (the “Township”) that connects to the broader Spring Creek Greenway and includes lands in both Harris and Montgomery Counties. The Preserve functions as both a conservation landscape and a recreation asset, with access from the Flintridge, Dr. Ann Snyder (Creekside West), Rob Fleming Lodge and Rob Fleming Recreation Center trailheads. The document also recognizes that the Preserve is operated under a long-term lease structure, with Howard Hughes retaining fee ownership while the Township has broad authority to preserve, improve, maintain, program and operate the site as a public nature preserve and recreation corridor, including trails, habitat areas, parking, restrooms, signage, utilities and related improvements.

The Plan identifies the Preserve’s primary value as the protection of a large, connected forest and riparian corridor within an urbanizing area. It emphasizes that the Preserve is more than a stand-alone park; it is a regional ecological link, a wildlife corridor, supports flood control and a community asset that supports walking, hiking, biking, birding, nature interpretation and volunteer stewardship. This importance is reinforced by recent use data showing total trailhead activity increasing from 26,439 users from January through February 2025 to 37,527 in the same period in 2026, a 41.9% increase. That rise in visitation confirms the Preserve’s growing community value, while also underscoring the need for proactive management of erosion, forest health, informal trail creation, habitat disturbance, safety and visitor behavior.

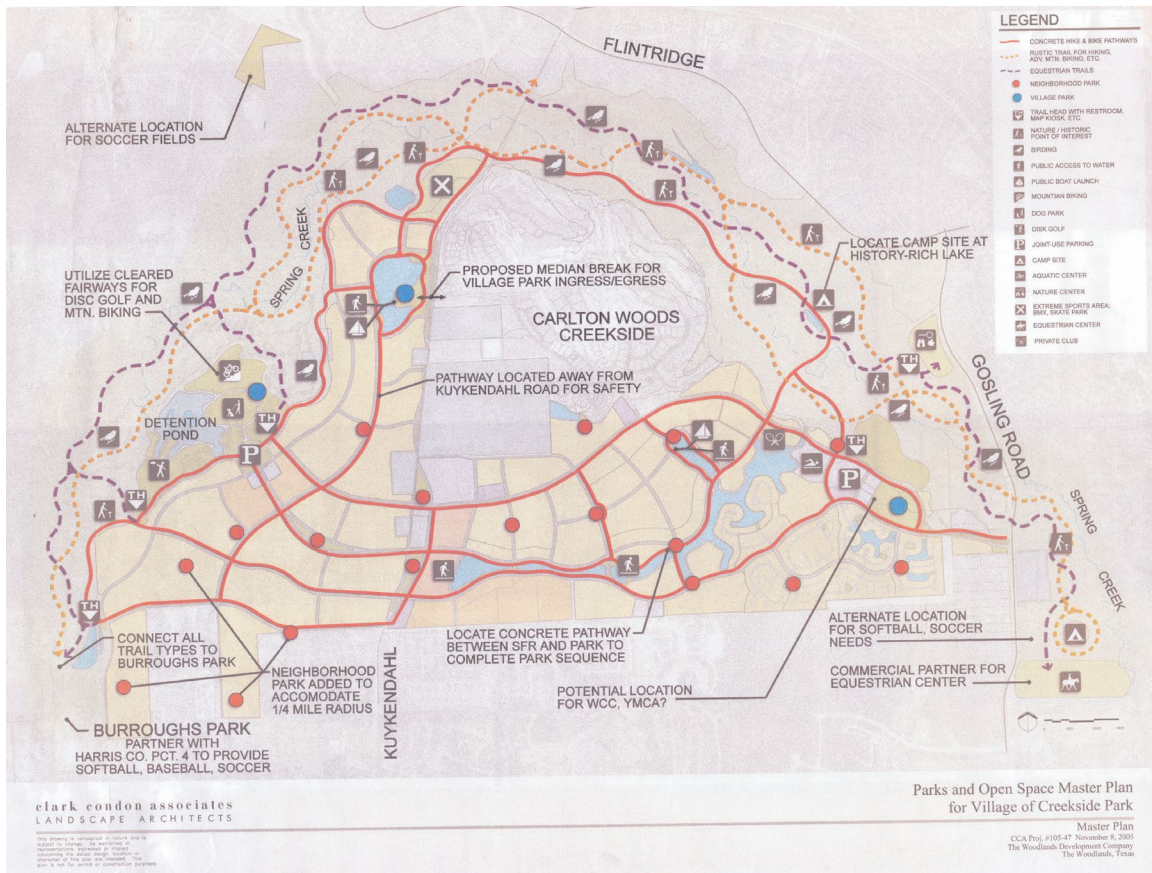
The management techniques outlined in the Plan are designed to protect the Preserve first and improve access second. In that light, the following recommendations are key to the preservation of the Preserve:

- Tree removal is to be selective, documented and justified by safety, storm damage, invasive species control or habitat restoration needs rather than aesthetic clearing.
- Wildlife management favors co-existence and education, with removal primarily to invasive species such as feral hogs, documented safety threats or situations requiring regulatory response.
- Habitat restoration is organized around phased invasive plant treatment, native replanting, soil and water stabilization, and protection of riparian, wetland and forest-edge conditions.
- Recreation/trail development shall be guided by low-impact alignment principles, prioritizing natural-surface interior trails, closure and restoration of unauthorized trails, and concentrating more durable public-use infrastructure at trailheads and designated nodes. Education, signage and graduated enforcement are also treated as core management tools because long-term site protection depends heavily on user behavior.

Over the next five years, the Plan recommends a phased implementation program. In the first six months, the Township should confirm parcel and lease boundaries, map formal and informal trails, assess trailheads and establish emergency tree and wildlife response protocols. During the following six to twelve months, priority actions should address hazard trees, drainage failures, wayfinding, rules signage, emergency markers, counter maintenance and feral hog response at the highest-use trailheads. In Year 2, the focus should shift to invasive-

plant control, closure and restoration of unnecessary social trails, native replanting and chronic erosion repair. In Years 3 and 4, only the most justified structural improvements such as boardwalks, bridges, overlooks, kiosks and accessible trailhead features should move forward, while restoration expands into secondary zones. In Year 5, the Township should evaluate trail counts, restoration performance, invasive cover, wildlife incidents and storm response, and then update the Plan for the next management cycle. This phased approach creates a realistic, data-informed roadmap for protecting the Preserve's natural systems while maintaining safe, sustainable public access.

2005 George Mitchell Nature Preserve/Village of Creekside Park Master Plan



1. Site Information

1.1 Identification of the Property

The Preserve is a large, multi-parcel nature preserve in the Township that connects to the larger Spring Creek Greenway. The Preserve is accessed from the Flintridge Drive trailheads near Rob Fleming Park and Texas TreeVentures, Dr. Ann Snyder Way, Rob Fleming Lodge and Rob Fleming Recreation Center. The Preserve straddles Spring Creek and includes parcels in both Harris and Montgomery Counties. Additionally, portions of the overall the Spring Creek Nature Trail (operated by BLC through a Trail Maintenance Agreement with the Township) and the Spring Creek Greenway (built in cooperation with the Township and Harris County) parallel the parcel.

1.2 Ownership / Lease Context

A mixed management structure includes the Township having a long term (50-year) Lease Agreement (Attachment A) on the parcel(s) fee title owned by Howard Hughes. The lease permits the Township to preserve, improve, program, maintain and operate the Preserve as a public nature preserve and recreation corridor, including trails, trailheads, habitat areas, support facilities, parking, restrooms and other nature-oriented public improvements, while also giving the Township authority to manage utilities, collect program fees, manage nuisance wildlife and maintain the land during the lease period.

1.3 Existing Township Resource Allocation

The Township is already providing a meaningful base of operational, financial and programmatic support to the Preserve. Most fundamentally, the Township serves as the Preserve's operating entity under the long-term lease structure and is authorized to preserve, improve, maintain, program and operate the site as a public nature preserve and recreation corridor. That authority includes management of the trails, trailheads, parking, signage and maintenance-related functions.



Currently, a .5 Full Time Equivalent

(FTE) position is allocated to the Preserve in the form of a part-time Trail Specialist, reflecting at least a partial staff commitment already associated with Preserve management. Additionally, the Township manages a Trail Maintenance Agreement (Attachment B) with BLC which provides a base level of maintenance for the portion of [the Spring Creek Nature Trail](#) that lies within the Township and an Adopt A Trail Program group. BLC has been a partner with the Township for several years outside of base maintenance, including bridge and boardwalk maintenance and construction. Finally, Harris County and the Township's Parks and Recreation Department have been the lead groups managing the development of the Spring Creek Greenway, which is a 14 foot wide asphalt path that will bisect the southern tier of the Preserve.

1.4 Land Use and Public Use Context

The Preserve functions as both a conservation landscape and an outdoor recreation asset which includes, but is not limited to, walking, hiking, biking, wildlife observation and nature-based education. Included in the tract of land are BLC Conservation Easements. This easement (Creekside Park Preserve) permanently protects 228 acres

from development by the Creekside West trailhead. Overall, management decisions should favor low-impact recreation that reinforces conservation, rather than recreation that drives unnecessary clearing, soil compaction or hardscape expansion.

1.5 Recent Use Indicators

Staff of the Township's Parks and Recreation Department maintain four counting devices at the Preserve's named trailheads. The greatest total activity occurred between January and February 2026 at Flintridge Trailhead, while the strongest percentage growth occurred at the Rob Fleming Recreation Center Trailhead during that same time period. These patterns support a management strategy that concentrates visitor-support improvements, monitoring and wayfinding at the most active access points while keeping interior habitat disturbance as low as practicable. If further trailheads are developed, a counting mechanism should be included for management purposes.

1.6 Conservation Easements

The Preserve already includes conservation-related third-party interests that must be recognized as part of its legal and operational framework. The lease states that the Township's rights are subject to matters of record and that any future conveyance of Preserve lands will remain subject to easements already granted to BLC and to Harris County for pathways, trails, and similar uses. The draft Plan also recognizes that a portion of the Spring Creek Nature Trail associated with BLC lies within the broader Preserve area and that implementation should be coordinated with corridor partners, including BLC, where trail stewardship or conservation coordination is involved.

For management purposes, the BLC easements, which are understood to be concentrated largely within the western portion of the Preserve, should be treated as an existing conservation layer that supports the Preserve's broader habitat, trail and riparian protection goals. Township actions in those areas should therefore be planned with awareness of recorded easement rights, trail obligations, access limitations, restoration objectives and any restrictions affecting grading, clearing, structures, utilities, or public use. This approach helps avoid conflict, supports legal compliance and reinforces coordinated stewardship across the Spring Creek corridor.

Howard Hughes may consider additional conservation easements or other environmental designations on portions of the tract where such tools would strengthen habitat protection, riparian preservation, floodplain function, or regional greenway continuity. The lease anticipates this possibility through a joint Conservation Working Group between Lessor and Lessee to evaluate conservation easements, protected-land status, water rights and stream or land credits. That process should be used to ensure any proposed designation advances conservation value while remaining compatible with the Preserve's role as a public nature preserve and recreation corridor.

Any future conservation easement or environmental designation should not be more restrictive than the lease rights already granted to the Township and should not materially impair the Township's ability to carry out stewardship, public access, maintenance, habitat restoration, trail management, signage, safety response, nuisance-wildlife management and limited structural improvements otherwise permitted by the lease. Additional easements should strengthen the Preserve's conservation purpose without creating conflicts with the Township's existing operating authority. Before any additional easement is granted, the Township should review the proposed language for consistency with the lease, existing trail and access commitments, planned habitat restoration, emergency and maintenance access and the long-term implementation program in this Resource Management Plan. Please see Attachment C for a map of existing conservation easements and easement language.

1.7 Trail Count Summary (March - April)

Trailhead	2025 Total	2026 Total	Change
Ann Snyder Trailhead (Creekside West)	9,640	9,121	-5.4%
Flintridge Trailhead	15,405	15,157	-1.6%
Rob Fleming Lodge Trailhead	2,922	3,031	+3.7%
Rob Fleming Recreation Center Trailhead	2,523*	6,247	+147.6%
Total users / clicks	30,490	33,556	+10.1%

*Counter malfunction in April 2026

2. Conservation Values

2.1. Natural Resource Value

The Preserve's central value is the protection of a large, connected forest and riparian landscape inside a rapidly urbanized area. These resource areas also perform important ecological functions that extend beyond recreation. Forest cover helps moderate temperatures, improve air quality, sequester carbon, reduce erosion and protect the integrity of soils. Wetlands, ponds and low-lying drainage features provide stormwater storage, water filtration improving water quality, groundwater recharge benefits and habitat diversity for amphibians, reptiles, insects and birds. The Preserve includes various natural resources including a pine/oak forest, ponds, wetlands, natural grassy areas and stream-side habitat that supports hiking, biking, birding and wildlife observation. The Spring Creek corridor further increases the Preserve's value by supporting riparian function, wildlife movement and long-term ecological resilience. As surrounding lands continue to urbanize, the Preserve serves as an increasingly important refuge for native plant communities and wildlife species that depend on a relatively undisturbed habitat.

2.2 Greenway and Connectivity Value

Because the Preserve connects with the broader Spring Creek Greenway and Spring Creek Nature Trail system, it functions as more than a stand-alone park. It is an ecological link, a recreation corridor and a piece of a larger regional habitat continuity. This connectivity allows the Preserve to serve multiple roles at once: it links users to a broader trail experience, provides continuity for wildlife movement and strengthens the ecological health of the corridor as a whole. Connected landscapes are significantly more valuable than isolated open-space tracts because they reduce fragmentation and support migration, breeding, foraging and seasonal movement patterns for birds, mammals, reptiles and pollinators. From a public-use perspective, the Preserve also expands the Township's ability to provide longer distance trail experiences, nature access and low-impact recreation that feels immersive and regionally significant. Its value therefore lies not only in its acreage, but in how it connects people, habitat and open space across jurisdictional and parcel boundaries.

2.3 Community Value



The Preserve helps carry forward George Mitchell's original planning vision of living in harmony with nature. It provides a setting for daily recreation, volunteer stewardship, bird walks, educational events and nature interpretation close to neighborhood populations. In that sense, the Preserve is both a natural asset and a community-building asset. It gives residents access to a quieter, less programmed outdoor experience that complements traditional parks, athletic fields and recreation facilities. It also creates opportunities for residents to develop a stronger understanding

of local ecology, watershed function and habitat stewardship through hands-on involvement and informal learning. The Preserve's accessibility to nearby neighborhoods makes it especially valuable as a place for walking, reflection, physical activity and family exploration without requiring long-distance travel. Over time, that regular connection to nature can strengthen quality of life, health/wellness benefits, encourage stewardship ethics and reinforce the Township's identity as a community where conservation and public use are intentionally balanced.

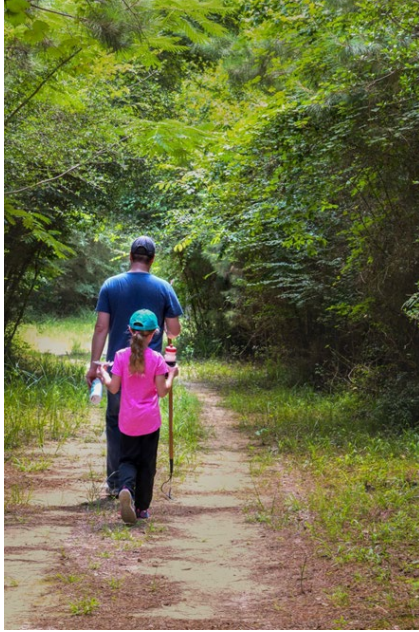
2.4 Wildlife and Habitat Value

The Preserve and associated open space reserves serve as important habitat for a diverse wildlife population. Management should therefore treat habitat quality, vegetative cover, water access, movement corridors and breeding-season sensitivity as core resource values rather than incidental considerations.

In southeast Texas, preserves of this type commonly support deer, raccoon, opossum, armadillo, fox squirrel, eastern cottontail, bobcat, coyote and beaver. In suitable riparian areas, preserves also support bats and a wide variety of reptiles and amphibians such as alligators, turtles, skunks, snakes (venomous and non-venomous), frogs and toads. Bird life is typically one of the Preserve's most significant ecological assets and may include resident and migratory songbirds, owls, woodpeckers, hawks, vultures, wading birds, waterfowl and other riparian and bottomland species associated with the Spring Creek corridor. Pollinators and other beneficial insects, including butterflies, bees, dragonflies and native beetles, also contribute meaningfully to ecological health and habitat function.

Because the Preserve straddles Spring Creek and includes a mix of forested, riparian and open space environments, it should be managed as a connected habitat system rather than as isolated land parcels. Management decisions related to clearing, mowing, tree removal, understory treatment, trail alignment, lighting, drainage and public access should account for wildlife cover, nesting areas, denning and roosting opportunities, seasonal migration patterns and the need for undisturbed refuge areas. Particular care should be given to preserving native canopy, midstory and understory structure, protecting stream buffers, minimizing fragmentation and controlling invasive species that reduce habitat quality. The overall objective should be to balance public access and recreation with long-term ecological function, so the Preserve continues to serve as both a community asset and a resilient habitat refuge for native southeast Texas wildlife.

2.5 Public Stewardship Value



The Preserve's rising trail counts show that it is not only ecologically important but socially important. The more heavily it is used, the more important it becomes to manage erosion, informal trail expansion, wildlife disturbance and visitor behavior to ensure the Preserve retains its highest value and services to the community for a sustainable future. Increased visitation is a positive sign that the Preserve is serving the community, but it also means that management must be proactive rather than reactive. Without clear stewardship practices, repeated off-trail use, shortcut creation, soil compaction, litter, pet impacts and unmanaged bicycle or pedestrian conflicts can gradually diminish both habitat quality and visitor experience. For that reason, public use should be paired with visible stewardship measures such as trail marking, periodic restoration closures, user education, volunteer engagement, monitoring of high-impact areas and consistent maintenance standards. In this way, the Preserve can remain both well-used and well-cared-for, reinforcing a shared community expectation that access to nature also carries a protection responsibility.

3. Management Objectives

- A. Protect and perpetuate the Preserve's native forest, riparian, wetland and edge habitats.
- B. Provide safe, legible and sustainable public access without compromising conservation values.
- C. Use tree removal, grading and structural improvements only where justified by safety, habitat restoration, drainage stability or long-term operational need.
- D. Manage invasive plants and invasive wildlife that degrade habitat, destabilize soils or threaten the visitor experience.
- E. Support reforestation and habitat restoration with native species appropriate to floodplain, bottomland hardwood, upland edge and pollinator-open-space conditions.
- F. Concentrate public-use infrastructure at trailheads and designated nodes rather than extending unnecessary hardscape into sensitive interior areas.
- G. Establish a measurable monitoring and adaptive-management program tied to trail use, forest health, invasive species, wildlife incidents, flooding and storm response.

4. Management Direction

4.1 Tree Removal and Forest Management

Tree removal should be selective, documented and justified, i.e. potential for disease and pest infestation. The Preserve should not be managed by broad aesthetic clearing, casual line-of-sight clearing, or generalized thinning intended simply to "open up" the woods.

Removal is appropriate when a tree is dead, failing, structurally unsound, storm-damaged, diseased beyond recovery, causing repeated trail or structure damage, blocking safe passage after flood events, or when the tree is an invasive species, whose retention undermines long-term habitat quality. These removals should mainly occur near trails and heavily trafficked areas for safety purposes. Snag trees may be retained as they are beneficial for the environment and can provide wildlife, particularly birds, with a perch and potential food source.

Consistent with the Township's forest-management guidance, hazard-tree decisions should focus on the presence of a target (trail user). A tree becomes a true public-safety issue when a defect exists, and the tree or its failing part can strike a trail, trailhead, bridge, overlook, utility, sign, parking area or other place where people or property are regularly present. The Township staff utilizes the Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ), a risk assessment tool to guide these determinations.

Recommended direction. All non-emergency removals of canopy trees and all removals greater than six inches in diameter at breast height should be reviewed and approved by the Director or Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation (Operations). Emergency removals needed to reopen a trail or remove an imminent threat should be documented afterward with photographs, location, date, reason and disposition.

Retention direction. Where no public-safety target exists, standing dead wood, downed coarse woody debris, and naturally fallen timber should be retained when practicable, because they contribute to habitat complexity, nutrient cycling, soil moisture retention and erosion resistance. However, retained debris should not obstruct designated trails, constrict drainage structures or create avoidable flood-related hazards.

Reforestation direction. Any planned tree removal outside of invasive-species eradication should trigger reforestation planning. The Township's forest-management guidance calls for planting at least twice the number of trees removed each year; that ratio is a useful minimum benchmark for preserve operations, with species selection based on site hydrology and existing community composition. Due to access issues, seedlings and smaller species may be used in larger quantities.

4.2 Wildlife Management and Removal

Native wildlife should generally be managed through coexistence, education, seasonal protection and site design rather than through routine trapping or relocation.

Wildlife removal should be limited to three conditions: (1) invasive wildlife causing material ecological damage, (2) native wildlife posing a documented public-safety threat, or (3) a disease, depredation or regulatory situation requiring intervention by the appropriate authority. For removal requirements, review applicable County, Texas Parks and Wildlife and Federal laws and permitting requirements.

Feral hogs. The Township's wildlife guidance identifies feral hogs as an invasive species that destabilize riparian areas, compact soils, increase erosion, spread invasive vegetation, degrade water quality, prey on young wildlife and disturb ground-nesting birds. Within the Preserve, feral hogs should be treated as a priority invasive-fauna issue. Management should emphasize whole-sounder trapping or other coordinated control methods through qualified wildlife professionals, rather than piecemeal pursuit that simply displaces animals.

Coyotes and other native predators. Coyotes, bobcats, raptors, snakes and other native predators are part of the Preserve's ecological function and should not be removed merely because they are observed. When coyotes exhibit concerning behavior, Township guidance favors hazing and attractant reduction.



Protected birds and pollinators. No active nests, rookeries or breeding colonies should be disturbed. Vegetation work in likely breeding areas should, when practicable, be scheduled outside sensitive

nesting windows or be preceded by a field check. Swarms or hives located at trailheads, structures or high-use nodes may require professional relocation or removal when public safety is affected.

Alligators. Because the Preserve includes riparian habitat, ponds, wetlands and areas influenced by Spring Creek, alligators may periodically be present and should be managed through awareness, education and risk-based response rather than routine removal. The mere presence of an alligator should not, by itself, trigger intervention. Alligators are native to southeast Texas and are part of the broader ecological function of wetland and creek systems. Management should focus first on reducing conflict by discouraging feeding of wildlife, maintaining clear public messaging at trailheads and water-adjacent areas, keeping pets leashed and away from the water's edge and monitoring locations where repeated human-wildlife interaction may occur.

Removal or relocation should be limited to situations in which an alligator shows documented aggressive behavior; repeatedly occupies a high-use public area in a manner that creates a clear safety concern; has lost its natural fear of people; or otherwise meets the threshold for response by the appropriate wildlife authority. Staff should document reported sightings and note location, estimated size, behavior, and proximity to trails, overlooks, trailheads or other visitor-use areas. Where practical, temporary warning signage or short-term area management measures may be used while the situation is evaluated. Coordination with the appropriate county, state or contracted wildlife professionals should occur when an alligator presents a verified public safety issue or when removal is otherwise required by law or professional wildlife guidance.

Operational rule. The Township does not provide full animal control services. Animal control response for aggressive wildlife, bites and related incidents are handled by Harris County or Montgomery County, depending on location.

4.3 Habitat Enhancement and Restoration

Habitat work should prioritize ecological function over ornamental appearance. The Preserve should look like a preserve, not a park that has been over-styled into ecological simplification. Restoration should be organized by habitat type: riparian edge, floodplain/bottomland hardwood forest, wet depressions and ponds, upland forest edge and small managed meadows suitable for pollinator and native grass enhancement.

Invasive plant management. The Township's forest management materials identify species such as Chinese Tallow, Chinese Privet, Bamboo, Asian Jasmine, Nandina, Japanese Climbing Fern and escaped ornamentals as management concerns. The Preserve should use phased invasive species treatment, focusing first on priority corridors: trailheads, trail edges, creek crossings, wetlands, restoration openings and areas where invasive plants are advancing into otherwise intact native communities.

Treatment approach. Use the least disruptive effective method. Hand-pulling and mechanical removal are appropriate for small infestations and sensitive areas; cut-stump, basal bark, foliar or spray herbicide methods may be needed for woody invasives and should be performed in accordance with label requirements and applicable licensing rules. Follow-up is essential because resprouting and seed banks are expected.

Native replanting. After treatment, revegetation with native species suited to the site rather than leaving disturbed areas open to recolonization by invasives. At trailheads and other prominent public spaces, larger container-grown trees and shrubs are appropriate. In remote interior restoration zones, native saplings, plugs and seedlings may be more practical if protected from browse, flooding and drought stress during establishment.

Soil and water stabilization. Use live staking, native grasses and sedges, biodegradable erosion control, selective grade repair and hydrologically compatible drainage improvements to stabilize eroding trail edges, creek approaches and disturbed banks. Routine mowing should be limited to trail shoulders, sight triangles, trailhead safety zones and specifically designated managed openings.

Volunteer stewardship. Volunteer days, corporate stewardship events, bird walks and citizen scientist should be used to build ownership and visibility for restoration work, but all volunteer activity should occur under clearly defined work plans approved by the Township’s Parks and Recreation Department to protect sensitive habitats and avoid ad hoc trail building.



4.4 Trail Development and Alignment

Trail development should follow a “protect first, access second” philosophy. The Preserve can accommodate structural and natural improvements, but those improvements should be intentionally sited, low impact and justified by user need and ecological compatibility. See Attachment D for a map of the current trail system (May 2026).

Formal trails should be hierarchical: primary access routes from trailheads, designated secondary connectors and limited specialty features such as overlooks, birding nodes, bridges or boardwalks where ecological conditions warrant them.

Alignment principles. New or rerouted trail segments should avoid wetland interiors, steep creek banks, active erosion zones, large critical root zones and fall-line alignments that accelerate runoff. Prefer contour-based alignments, grade reversals, rolling drainage, out sloped tread and armored crossings only where natural-surface solutions are not durable.

Surface selection. Natural-surface trails should remain the default in the Preserve interior. Stabilized or hard-surface treatments should be reserved for trailhead interfaces, accessibility improvements, repeated failure points, boardwalk transitions and limited areas where hydrology or anticipated use makes a natural surface unsustainable.

Unauthorized trails. Social trails and illegal cut-throughs should be mapped, evaluated and either formalized or closed. The default response should be closure and restoration unless the segment provides a compelling, sustainable and low-impact connection that the formal system truly needs.

User conflict management. Wayfinding, speed management, sightline pruning at conflict points, directional controls where needed, and clear “stay on trail/no motorized use/yield” signage should be used to reduce conflict among hikers, runners, cyclists, dog walkers and birders.

Trailhead improvements. The strongest candidates for visitor-support improvements are the higher-volume trailheads identified in the uploaded data set. Improvements may include defined parking edges, kiosks, emergency markers, bike racks, benches, map panels, trail counters, waste and pet-waste infrastructure, drainage repair, native screening and restoration of compacted edges.

4.5 Visitor Use, Education and Enforcement

Education should be treated as an essential part of resource management, not an optional extra. The Preserve's long-term condition will depend, in part, on whether users understand where to go, what to avoid and why sensitive areas matter.

Interpretive signage should reinforce trail etiquette, floodplain realities and benefits, wildlife coexistence, the value of native habitat and the Preserve's role inside the Spring Creek Greenway.

Recommended visitor rules emphasis. Recommended rules include: Stay on designated trails; do not create new trail connections; do not dump yard waste; do not feed wildlife; leash and clean up after your pet; report feral hog activity and aggressive wildlife; avoid entering flooded areas and respect temporary closures for storms, flooding, nesting or trail restoration.

Enforcement posture. Use a graduated response: design and signage first, education second, maintenance and closure tools third and enforcement through applicable Township, county or partner mechanisms when behavior causes repeated or material harm.

5. Implementation Program (2026-2030)

Priority work should be phased so the Township first builds a reliable baseline, then addresses the highest-risk ecological and public-use issues and finally expands restoration and durable access improvements.

Phase	Timeframe	Primary Actions	Intended Result
1	0-6 months	Confirm parcel map and lease exhibit; map formal and informal trails; assess trailheads; review/revise emergency tree and wildlife response protocols.	A verified operational baseline
2	6-12 months	Address hazard trees and critical drainage failures at top-use trailheads; install or refresh wayfinding, rules, emergency markers, and counter-maintenance plan; initiate feral-hog response protocol.	Enhancement of public safety and reduction of resource-damage risks.
3	Year 2	Implement invasive-plant treatment zones; close and restore unnecessary social trails; begin native replanting in treated areas; repair chronic erosion points.	Visible habitat recovery and better trail discipline.
4	Years 3-4	Construct only the most justified structural improvements such as boardwalks, bridges, overlooks, kiosks or accessible trailhead features; expand restoration to secondary zones.	More durable access with limited ecological footprint.
5	Year 5	Evaluate trail counts, restoration survival, invasive cover, wildlife incidents and storm response; update plan and reprioritize the next 5-year program.	Adaptive management supported by actual preserve data.

6. Monitoring, Coordination and Annual Obligations

This Plan should be implemented as an adaptive-management program. Site conditions in a preserve organized around a floodplain corridor will change because of storms, flooding, drought, vegetation succession, wildlife activity and rising public use.

At a minimum, the Township should complete two formal site reviews each year: one routine review and one review timed after the highest flood/storm-risk period. Additional inspections should follow major storm events, wildfire threats or documented wildlife incidents.

- Trail counters at each major trailhead should be maintained and summarized at least annually, with trend review used to prioritize staffing, restoration and trailhead improvements.
- Hazard-tree and storm-damage logs: Record date, location, action taken, photographs and whether the issue affected a trail, bridge, sign or other public-use asset.
- Invasive monitoring should use permanent or repeatable plots/polygons in representative habitat types, with percent-cover estimates tracked across time.
- Wildlife incidents should be logged by species, location, type of behavior, season and response taken, with feral hog activity tracked separately.
- Restoration sites should be checked for survival, browse pressure, flooding damage, invasive reinvasion and maintenance needs at 6, 12 and 24 months after planting.
- The Plan should be reviewed and updated at least every five years, or sooner if major changes occur in lease authority, trail use, flood response or preserve footprint.

Coordination. Implementation should be coordinated with the Township’s Parks and Recreation Department, Environmental Services, county agencies, as applicable, trail partners and organizations active in the Spring Creek corridor, including the BLC where trail stewardship or conservation coordination is involved.



Selected Source References

- The Woodlands Township Parks & Recreation, George Mitchell Nature Preserve page
<https://www.thewoodlandsparks.com/Parks/George-Mitchell-Nature-Preserve>
- The Woodlands Township / Parks & Recreation, Forest Management and 2025 Integrated Forest Management Plan <https://www.thewoodlandsparks.com/Discover-More/Forest-Management>
- The Woodlands Township Environmental Services, Wildlife page
- <https://www.thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov/Departments/Environmental-Services/Wildlife>
- Visit The Woodlands, George Mitchell Nature Preserve page
- <https://www.visitthewoodlands.com/things-to-do/outdoors-and-recreation/george-mitchell-nature-preserve/>
- Bayou Land Conservancy, Spring Creek Nature Trail page and bird-walk information page
- <https://www.bayoulandconservancy.org/spring-creek-nature-trail>