

Bright Leaf Preserve Fact Sheet

About Bright Leaf Preserve

- Bright Leaf Preserve is a 216-acre nature preserve in west Austin currently under the ownership and management of the Austin Community Foundation (ACF).
- Bright Leaf Preserve is the legacy of Georgia B. Lucas, who acquired the land located south of FM 2222 and Mesa Drive over her lifetime. At the end of her life, she wished to preserve the land and envisioned a place for the public to take guided hikes to learn about the land's geology and ecology. Approximately 1,000 visitors are welcomed every year to explore Bright Leaf through guided hikes. Upon her death, Ms. Lucas gifted the land to the Texas Park and Wildlife.
- In 2006, Texas Parks and Wildlife could no longer manage Bright Leaf and transferred ownership and management to Austin Community Foundation as indicated in her will.
- A full-time Austin Community Foundation employee resides onsite to monitor the property, lead tours, engage volunteers, and coordinate property maintenance.

Fire Prevention at Bright Leaf

- **Coordination and Regular Assessment with Austin Fire Department.** Since acquiring the property in 2006, ACF staff and volunteers, have been consulting with and acting upon recommendations from the Austin Fire Department (AFD) to conduct regular wildfire prevention measures, including removal of non-native species, dead trees and vegetation. ACF is currently working with the Austin Fire Department's wildfire specialists and independent wildfire consultants to identify any new potential areas of risk and to review and update our process for ongoing wildfire prevention efforts.
- In June of 2019, ACF staff met with Austin Fire Department wildfire specialists to discuss our fire mitigation strategy in general and specifically along the Ridge Oak Reservoir.
- ACF met with Austin Fire Department wildfire specialists as recently as December 2019 to provide an update on our work and receive recommendations for further mitigation efforts. ACF began execution of these additional recommendations in early 2020.
- ACF maintains a strong working relationship with AFD, including meeting periodically and attending the annual AFD Wildfire Symposium to stay up to date on best practices regarding wildfire prevention and mitigation.
- **Regular grounds maintenance.** In addition to implementing the Austin Fire Department's guidance, ACF works with Heritage Tree Care arborists, with wildfire certifications, and independent consultants on large perimeter and interior cutting and hauling. Actions at the preserve must be implemented in accordance with City code and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provisions, which govern removal of certain trees and management of endangered species habitat.

- ACF staff and volunteers monitor the property frequently to remove fallen trees and overgrowth. In 2011, ACF worked with the Texas Conservation Corps on removal of dead and fallen trees and underbrush as a result of the historic drought.
- Between 2013 and 2014, ACF conducted an invasive species removal effort with the Texas Conservation Corps and Heritage Tree Care to remove underbrush.
- In May of 2019, ACF completed a fuel break clearing underbrush along Crestway Drive.
- In November of 2019, ACF worked with Austin Energy to complete a fire mitigation strategy by cutting trees and underbrush near power lines along FM 2222.
- ACF completed two shaded fuel breaks, one along Bull Creek Road in February of 2020 and another along the entire Bright Leaf property line on Mt Bonnell Road in March of 2020.
- During the 2020 Golden-Cheeked Warbler nesting season (March 1-August 31), ACF completed wildfire fire mitigation work to the property using hand tools in compliance with wildlife protection standards.
- ACF is continuing to identify and perform wildfire mitigation work throughout the property, including along Crestway Drive, Old Bull Creek Road, Mt Bonnell, and areas around the buildings internal to the property. This work includes removal of invasive species and potential fuel internal to the preserve and along the trail system. The target completion for this work is Oct. 30, 2020.
- Building on our past and ongoing efforts, ACF is creating a comprehensive Wildfire Mitigation Plan with the guidance from AFD and independent wildfire consultants. Once the plan is completed, it will be publicly available.
- **Regular ground patrol.** Trespassing is prohibited in Bright Leaf. Staff and volunteers patrol the property daily surveying for trespassers, potential fire risks and other potential hazards. A full-time staff member lives onsite to help monitor the property.