

## The Team Approach

Comal Park renovation and modernization was the first challenge to be taken on by the Little River Project. A planning team was assembled including specialists in recreation, resource management, and engineering/construction. Both project staff and district staff were represented on the team. Public input was also solicited. Positives and negatives of the park were discussed and a complete park plan was developed. It was presented to the Lake Manager, the Operations Manager and the Chief of Operations, all who approved the plan.

## Construction and Re-Opening

Funding for the first phase of construction came from all the Ft Worth District lakes, who contributed a portion of their own O&M budget to get the work launched. After a year of construction, the new Comal Park was opened with both design and operational changes in place:

### Design Changes:

- Improved roads, traffic circulation and parking areas
- Expanded beach and added playground
- Upgraded waterborne restrooms
- Modern entrance complex and night exit lane

### Operational Changes:

- Converted to a day use only park
- Implementation of a day use fee program
- Upgraded service contract standards - A cleaner park
- Adopting a "no loitering in parking areas" policy
- Strong law enforcement and ranger presence the first year
- Immediate repair of any damaged/vandalized facilities

## The Result

After only one summer of operation, it was clear that the changes worked. Incidents and accident rates in the park plummeted. Citations written dropped to near zero and law enforcement officers in the park made only one arrest the entire summer. Visitors were delighted with the new facilities and the safer family atmosphere.

Operational costs were reduced while park revenues more than doubled. Ranger and visitor safety increased since the rowdy park visitors vanished.

### The Low Cost "Quick-Fix"

Once a plan for Comal Park had been developed and construction under-way, serious management problems were still occurring at Canyon Lake's other six parks including overuse, unlimited access due to lack of gate controls, vandalism and other criminal behaviors. This was especially true at the three non-fee areas of Jacob's Creek Park, North Park, and the Canyon Beach area. A low cost "quick-fix" plan was implemented at these areas to address those problems.

The quick-fix included:

- Construction of three low cost gatehouses at the parks
- Conversion of areas to either day use only or camping only
- Implementation of night closures at all areas
- Initiation of a fee program at Jacob's Creek, Canyon Beach and North Parks
- Increasing the service quality standards for park cleaning
- Enforcement of carrying capacities in day use areas
- Minor upgrades to park restroom facilities
- Repair of any vandalism/graffiti immediately

These steps were relatively low cost and it did solve many of the operational and visitor safety problems in the parks. It is hoped that funding will be available in the future for a more complete modernization and upgrading of these areas.