

**A CIRCLE FOR
LOOKING, SAMPLING, LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING:
THE MINEOLA NATURE PRESERVE
AQUATIC LOOP**

Participating in an aquatic experience at the Mineola Nature Preserve on the Sabine River encompasses a myriad of water presentations. Thanks to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Nestle Corporation, Sky Ranch and many others, the experience will take you past stagnant ponds, flowing streams, shallow water, and deep bodies of water full of creatures of many descriptions.

The concept of a multi-faceted aquatic experience was initially conceived by Todd Witt of Sky Ranch. The aquatic features are nourished from a water well located just south of the entrance to the Preserve. Drilled by Andrews and Foster of Athens, the well draws from the Queen City aquifer and can sustain a 40 gallons/minute flow to maintain the Eastern portion of the aquatic loop.

Starting at the first feature, **(1)** Todd Pool, the feature will be a small, approximately 10 foot in diameter shallow pool with a “quick sand” texture. This feature will be stocked to encourage smaller critters such as tadpoles, crawfish, etc. to thrive. This has an easy access to remove and examine the attributes of the specimens. The first outdoor classroom “Classroom **(A)**,” is located nearby. The iron ore rocks are in preparation to construct a water fall. The classroom will consist of large boulders in a semi-circle with a picnic table near the center.

The next feature **(2)**, Bailey’s Pond, is a small 1/8 acre pond about six feet deep with very easy access. A six foot dam has been constructed to impound this small pond. The overflow from feature 2 will be a waterfall leading to the third feature. The water fall will be constructed with iron ore rocks and will feed feature **(3)**.

Feature **(3)** Wyatt’s Pond, will be a 1/4 acre pond with a six foot dam. The lengthy dam will be a part of the equestrian trail, Shetland Trail, that crosses the dam. A bridge over the spillway to allow walking/horse traffic will be built as a part of the trail. The spillway will feed a small stream which progresses toward Pullen Pond.

A stream about 400 yards in length, feature (4) (unnamed) will meander downhill to a small pre-existing pond, feature (5) Charlotte's Pond that existed prior to these improvements. The stream will flow through the pond, under a bridge (Big Foot Bridge) to Pullen Pond.

The Main Feature (6) of the aquatic loop is Pullen Pond. Almost 2 acres and a maximum of ten feet deep, this feature is highly visible from the pavilion. Texas Fisheries will stock the pond with catfish. East Texas Woods and Waters (ETWW) provided funding for the fishing pier. Pullen will be an integrated part of the walking trails that will loop from the pavilion and follow the aquatic loop route. There will be a classroom, "Classroom (B)" to facilitate the location for discussion, examination and relaxation. The same style of features as Classroom A will be used for construction. The Southern portion of the dam of Pullen Pond will integrate with Beaver Pond Trail as the loop progresses toward feature 6. "Classroom (C)" will be constructed to the west of Pullen Pond and above the water line of the senderas.

Heading West from Pullen Pond, Beaver Pond Trail crosses the senderas that are maintained as viewing areas for wildlife from the pavilion. Beaver Pond Trail is an old logging trail that is envisioned as a southern boundary of a yet to be constructed marshland area. The northern parts of the senderas are envisioned as a part of a constructed marshland rather than a wetlands area.

Beaver Pond, feature (7), is a long time existing pond incorporated into the aquatic loop. Home of an alligator or two, the pond is named for the beaver lodge at the south end of the pond. There are also remains of what was once railroad track trestles traversing the pond. The one acre pond now has a walking bridge that connects the railroad bed and is a part of the Preserve walking trails. Beaver Pond is very active with turtles, snakes, alligators, and is fed from a source separate from the prior features.

Walking North, (right) from Beaver Pond along the railroad bed, there is a viewing stand that overlooks a marshland, feature (8), has a covered rest area built by ETWW. Designated "Classroom (D)", this is an excellent overview of an existing marshland active with bird life, animals, and aquatic critters.

Continuing North on the rail road bed walking trail toward Johnnie Bendy Trail, feature (9) is Grandpa's Pond. According to the master plan for the Preserve, this feature will be approximately four acres, pending further development. Continuing east is Feature (10), Kayla's Pond which is a stock pond with a fence constructed through the pond to allow Longhorn cattle and buffalo on the North side of the fence to water without endangering pedestrian traffic on the south side. This existing pond has long been a source of excellent perch fishing.

Feature (11) is Bridge Bob Pond. Stocked with catfish by Texas Fisheries, it is a very active site for youngsters. There is a fountain to aerate the pond and also a fishing pier. Bridge Bob is adjacent to the parking area. The pavilion is the final stop for rest rooms, picnic tables and a cooking area. Port-a-potties are available with advance notice for large parties along the trail.