

# THE FOREST REPORTER

HISD Outdoor Education Center @ Forest Glen Newsletter

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## Linking Students to our National Parks

The [National Park Service](#) (NPS) is one of the great resources our country has to offer. The NPS preserves and protects public lands for the enjoyment of current and future generations and is a favorite of the OEC.

These public lands are some of the most culturally significant and breathtakingly beautiful places on U.S. soil. Unfortunately, travel distances and entry fees can be restrictive for visitors. Knowing that, we thought we would highlight some ways to make our National Parks more accessible, especially for education!



### Finding Parks in Texas

A myth is that all parks are very far away from civilization. While this is true for some areas, other NPS sites are much closer and some are even within city borders!

Here are just some of the sites that can be found in Texas:

[Big Bend NP](#) is a jewel of Texas with many different things to offer. Exploring desert life, navigating the Rio Grande, or climbing a mountain are just some of the attractions of this Western site.

Two is better than one! Discover the wonders of life in a cave at [Carlsbad Caverns](#) or put your hiking shoes on for a trek in the [Guadalupe Mountains](#). These neighboring parks are located on the New Mexico/Texas border.

The history of the Alamo is well known, but the [San Antonio Missions](#) are also full of Texas history and information of the many cultures that have called it home.

If you enjoy history, [Palo Alto Battlefield](#), located in Brownsville, is the first battle site of the U.S. - Mexican war.

A trip to Waco will let you visit one of the newest National Monuments at the [Waco Mammoth](#) site. Explore the paleontological dig site that is home to the only recorded discovery of a nursery herd of Colombian Mammoths!

Find the full listing on the [NPS Texas](#) site.

### Affordable Access

A majority of the 408 NPS sites do not usually charge an entry fee, and for the ones that do, there are free days available. Check out the NPS [website](#) for details on free days and sites that do not charge fees.

### \* Every Kid in a Park \*

This [initiative](#) was put in to place early in 2015 by President Obama as a way to get more children park access. While details are still limited, the immediate goal is to provide free access to **every 4th-grade student** and their families during the 2015 - 2016 school year. A voucher will be needed, so keep an eye on their [website](#) for more information and access to updates so you don't miss out on this unique opportunity.

### Teacher Resources

Our public lands hold many educational opportunities in disciplines ranging from geology and ecology to history and social studies. Each park often has fantastic programming put on by NPS employees. Also available are [resources](#) that can be used in and out of the classroom by educators who want to use the park as a classroom, or bring these ideas back to their own space.

Can't make it to a National Park with your class? There are over 100 distance learning programs that bring the park to your classroom. Think of it as an online field trip! Check out your favorite park website for more information. Follow the link for an [example](#) from Denali National Park.



All photos courtesy of the NPS. (Clockwise from top right - Big Bend National Park, Mission Concepción @ San Antonio Missions, Guadalupe Mountains National Park, and a sea turtle on [Padre Island National Seashore](#).)