



April 29, 2024

National Park System Advisory Board
Department of the Interior, Room 5160
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Re: National Parks Service National Natural Landmark Designation Nomination for The Nature Conservancy's Independence Creek Preserve

Dear Chairwoman Ward,

I am writing this letter in strong support of the National Parks Service National Natural Landmark designation for TNC's Independence Creek Preserve (ICP). TNC has been working in Texas since 1964. Our mission is simple: to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. When we get this done, we can shape a brighter future for our people and our planet. This year, we're celebrating our 60th anniversary AND a massive accomplishment: protecting 1 million acres of land in Texas. Part of those million acres is Independence Creek Preserve.

ICP is a significant piece of West Texas' natural heritage. The 20,000-acre nature preserve is host to spectacular vistas of flattop mesas and dramatic canyons, woodlands, desert scrub, and honey-colored prairie grasses. The pristine waters of Independence creek flow 8 miles through the preserve, sustaining diverse flora and fauna including several rare and endangered species. The flows from Independence Creek as well as the springs that feed it, contribute to the Pecos River, improving its water quantity and quality. Most rivers are dependent upon consistent, high-quality freshwater inflow to maintain ecological stability for the species they support, and the Pecos River is no exception—especially in the arid West Texas landscape where freshwater sources are becoming increasingly scarce and precious commodities.

What makes Independence Creek so unique is its perennial flow upstream of the Pecos River. Most spring fed streams in the desert are ephemeral – only flowing when the groundwater is plentiful enough to support the stream. Independence Creek is no different for much of its 60-mile course, yet the six to eight miles upstream of the Pecos flows year-round thanks to a system of high-volume springs. The springs and perennial flow of Independence Creek make it one of the most important freshwater tributaries to the often-saline Pecos River.

As it has been identified by the National Parks Service, Independence Creek Preserve represents a true oasis in the desert. The spring system that supports both Independence Creek and the Pecos River transforms the arid environment into one that supports native fish, migratory birds, and the flora and fauna of the Chihuahuan Desert. Thank you for your time and consideration of this designation.

Hillary Lilly
Director of External Affairs

The Nature Conservancy in Texas • Celebrating the protection of 1 million acres of Lone Star land

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