

Messing with Texas



LUKE OVGARD
CAUGHT OVGARD

FORT STOCKTON, Texas — Few states have the accepted reputation of independence quite like the great state of Texas. After all, it was the only U.S. state to exist as its own nation before joining our own.

Of course, that reputation of independence is a bit tenuous if you dive a little deeper.

Mexico abolished slavery in 1829 — except in the colonial territory of Texas, where it remained legal for an additional year. Texan officials fought to change this, and refused to enforce the new law when the temporary stay ended in 1830.

In the five years that followed, slavery was not legal but was still widely practiced in the region.

The Mexican federal government was too focused on quelling internal rebellions and building tensions with European powers that would eventually lead to the First Franco-Mexican War to really end slavery in Texas. Eventually, they got around to addressing it, tensions built and, in 1835, Texas declared independence from Mexico, building a provision guaranteeing the

“right” to own slaves into its new constitution.

Seeing an opportunity to wrest Texas from its southern rival, numerous opinion leaders in the United States encouraged American citizens to aid the rebellion. Some notable American figures joined the Texans, including James Bowie (of Bowie knife fame) and Davy Crockett (you know, the guy from the song).

Though the doomed men of The Alamo headline studies of this conflict in the American classroom, the Texans actually won, thanks in large part to the fact that several other Mexican regions were simultaneously fighting the unpopular government for independence and numerous native tribes battled for their continued existence in the Mexican empire.

Only Texas succeeded, becoming the Republic of Texas in 1836. It would stand as that famed lone star for less than a decade before joining the United States in 1845 and precipitating the Mexican-American War. Texas would win handily, aided by the full force of the Union.

Legacy

This legacy of independence and the maverick nature of Texas is visible all over the state and is especially visible

in its towns, roads, bridges and natural landmarks, many of which bear names like “Freedom Springs,” “Liberty Hill” and “Independence Creek.”

The latter was one of many sites I’d researched as a potential location to catch the isolated headwater catfish, *Ictalurus lupus*. Though this fish looks most like a bullhead, it is found in habitats very unlike its cousins. As its name suggests, the headwater catfish lives principally in crystal-clear, cold streams in the Rio Grande drainage.

In years of searching, I’d tried more than half a dozen potential streams feeding the Pecos or mainstem Rio Grande, but couldn’t find the proper habitat.

This time, I had. I drove into my planned spot, but I was dismayed to see that the roads were public but the land private, posted heavily all around the pristine stream.

Ordinarily, a public road crossing would provide me legal access to the water, allowing me to traverse this navigable waterway tributary to my heart’s content — provided I stay below the annual high water mark. Unfortunately, there were no such crossings. I drove for miles on the dusty road, finding no clearly public road crossings.

I was far from surprised, though. Texas is one of the most heavily privatized states

in the nation, ranking No. 37 in total public lands (Oregon ranks No. 5) with just 3.12 million acres of public land. Of those 3.12 million public acres in Texas, just under half (47%) is on military bases and largely closed to the public. In practice, Texas has about 1.65 million acres of land you can actually access.

For perspective on just how little that is, there are 3.9 million total acres in Klamath County, Oregon. According to The Oregonian, 58.8% — or about 2.3 million acres — of Klamath County is publicly held.

For those keeping score, that means little old Klamath County has more public lands than the entire state of Texas. Huh.

Roads

Dejected and unwilling to risk getting shot while traipsing through private land,



Luke Ovgard/Contributed Photo
The author poses with another longtime nemefish he finally defeated in Texas, the gray redhorse. Despite being spawned out, this fish broke the world record by more than half a pound.

I drove back to the road. I had no service, but as I was driving back to civilization, I found a bridge on a public road spanning the very same creek. It was not posted, and I was able to climb down and fish the beautiful, aquamarine waters.

It took me precious little time to see headwater catfish skirting the margins of the

undercut banks, and after I caught each of the resident bass once or twice, the less aggressive catfish came out to play. I landed one. Given the Yaqui catfish went extinct in the U.S. this summer due to drought (they survived in their much larger range in Mexico), catching the headwater catfish meant I’d caught all full-sized American catfish. This was an equally depressing and exciting realization.

The day was young, so I continued fishing, catching both the diminutive round-nose minnow and another longtime nemefish, the gray redhorse. The latter was a prime specimen and marks my ninth world record.

Despite numerous failures to find my target fishes, persistence paid off, and I was glad I’d messed with Texas.

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ON THE SLATE

SATURDAY, AUG. 28
Prep volleyball
Weston-McEwen, Heppner at Grant Union Invite, 9 a.m.
Pendleton at Lewiston Tournament, 7 a.m.
Ukiah/Long Creek at Griswold, 1 p.m.
College volleyball
Blue Mountain at Bellevue, noon
College men's soccer
Blue Mountain at NW Naza-

rene University, 2 p.m.
MONDAY, AUG. 30
Prep girls soccer
Riverside at The Dalles, 4:30 p.m.
TUESDAY, AUG. 31
Prep volleyball
Enterprise at Griswold, TBD
Irrigon at Griswold, TBD
Weston-McEwen at Griswold, TBD

Pilot Rock at Nixyaawii, 6 p.m.
Stanfield vs. Riverside at Echo, 4:30 p.m.
Riverside at Echo, 6 p.m.
La Grande at Umatilla, 5:30 p.m.
Prep girls soccer
Pendleton at Baker, 4 p.m.
Umatilla at McLoughlin, 4 p.m.
Prep boys soccer
Umatilla at McLoughlin, 6 p.m.
WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 1
No events scheduled.

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101 Legal Notices

EO-11562
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
UMATILLA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED of a Public Hearing to be held before the Board of County Commissioners on Wednesday, **September 8, 2021 at 9:00 AM.**

Due to COVID-19 the hearing will be held virtually. Video & phone conferencing is available. FOR INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE HEARINGS, PLEASE CONTACT THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT PRIOR TO 4:00 PM THE DAY BEFORE THE HEARING. Planning Department staff is available at 541-278-6252.

APPEAL OF PLANNING COMMISSION DECISION, TYPE II LAND DIVISION REQUEST, #LD-4N-1054-21: RICHARD & SANDRA HUNSAKER, APPELLANTS/ OWNERS. The appellants Land Division request LD-4N-1054-21 was approved by the Planning Commission at the May 27, 2021 Planning Commission Hearing. The APPEAL is in regards to several conditions of approval regarding road naming and road improvement standards. The Land Use Standards applicable to the applicants' request are found in Umatilla County Development Code (UCDC) 152.680, Type II Land Divisions.

For further information please contact County Planner, Megan Green, at the Umatilla County Planning Department, 216 SE 4th Street, Pendleton, Oregon, 97801; phone 541-278-6246; or email Megan.Green@umatillacounty.net.

Copies of all documents pertaining to the hearing listed above, and all relevant criteria, are available for inspection at no cost and will be duplicated at printing cost. A copy of the staff report will be available for inspection or duplicated at least seven days before the hearing. A complete hearing packet will also be posted on the county website at www.umatillacounty.net. Hearings are governed by Section 152.772 of the UCDC.

Opportunity to voice support or opposition to the above proposal or to ask questions will be provided. Failure to raise an issue in a hearing, either in person or by letter, or failure to provide statements or evidence sufficient to afford the decision maker an opportunity to respond to that issue, precludes appeal to the Land Use Board of Appeals based on that issue.

DATED THIS 28th DAY OF AUGUST, 2021
UMATILLA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF LAND USE PLANNING

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