



Steve Radack, Commissioner

Harris County Precinct 3

**PRECINCT THREE SECOND QUARTER REPORT
2011**

Precinct Three Commissioner Steve Radack will finish construction on a new dog park in west Harris County by the end of the June.

The new facility for “man’s best friend” will be located at Paul D. Rushing Park, 9114 Katy Hockley Road in Katy. It will feature two separate sections – a 2.5-acre area for dogs 20 pounds and under and a 5.5-acre area for larger dogs. The sections will be in two different parts of the park complex. Large dogs will not be allowed in the section for smaller canines, but park patrons with smaller dogs can take their pets into the big dog section.

Construction on the new dog park – the fourth to be built by Commissioner Radack – began April 26. The handicapped-accessible facility will feature shade canopies, dog cooling stations, benches and drinking fountains. And, when the drought allows, precinct crews will plant more trees at the site.

The innovative Precinct Three dog parks were among the first built in the nation and have quickly become one of the more popular amenities in Commissioner Radack’s inventory of parks and recreational facilities. The other three dog parks are the Millie Bush Dog Park, located in George Bush Park at 16756 Westheimer Parkway; the Danny Jackson Family Dog Park near U.S. 59 at the intersection of Loop 610 and Westpark Drive and the dog park in Congressman Bill Archer Park, 3201 State Highway 6 North.

With the completion of this facility, Commissioner Radack will have increased the number of parks in the precinct to 69. Now, Precinct Three operates and maintains 28,656 acres of park land. There is also an environmentally-friendly network of hike-and-bike-trails that covers 112 miles. When Commissioner took office in January 1989, Precinct Three had 10 parks covering 18,612 acres and 3.9 miles of trail mileage.

The new dog park, which has not yet been named, will be open to the public as soon as work is complete. A dedication ceremony will be scheduled at a later date.

In other news, historic drought conditions prompted Commissioners Court on June 21st to extend a local outdoor burn ban through October and to unanimously support a disaster declaration by County Judge Ed Emmett that forbids the sale and use of all fireworks in unincorporated Harris County.

When combined with bans on fireworks in the 34 municipalities in Harris County, the declaration means there is nowhere in the county where it will be legal to sell or use fireworks – unless they are part of an approved and permitted public display conducted by a licensed pyrotechnic operator.

The court’s decision to extend the burn ban came as firefighters in Texas battled dangerous grassfires caused by the drought. The disaster declaration banning all fireworks – aerial or otherwise – was approved as the Fourth of July approaches. That’s normally a time when fireworks business is brisk and when public safety in unincorporated areas is threatened by the amateur use of pyrotechnics.

This year, drought conditions have made the usual risks unacceptable. In fact, most neighboring counties and municipalities in other counties have already banned fireworks or their leaders are considering doing so.

Commissioner Radack, long a proponent of eliminating the danger of fireworks, voted with his colleagues to approve both of the decisions reached by Commissioners Court. He also warned residents to use common sense and caution with fires so as to avoid the loss of life and property.

Recent showers and thunderstorms will not be enough to immediately alter drought conditions, according to fire safety experts. The Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) has increased to over 700 and was approaching 750 as Commissioners Court took its action. The KBDI, which ranges from 0 to 800, is a measure of soil moisture and fire potential.

The countywide outdoor burning ban prohibits all outdoor burning with the exception of the burning of household trash in approved containers that securely confine embers and sparks. Cooking fires, certain ceremonial fires and permitted welding operations are also allowed at this point. But even with burning that is permitted, experts recommend extreme caution.

Harris County Fire Marshal Mike Montgomery will continue to monitor drought conditions and outdoor fire danger. Anyone with questions about the outdoor burning ban or fireworks restrictions should call his office at (281) 436-8030.

In other news, more than 300 people attended Commissioner Radack's annual Memorial Day Ceremony on May 30th at the Harris County War Memorial in Bear Creek Pioneers Park, 3535 War Memorial Drive.

The memorial was built more than 26 years ago during the administration of former Precinct Three Commissioner Bob Eckels. It carries the names of Harris County residents who paid the ultimate price in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the first war in the Persian Gulf and the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. This year, Commissioner Radack added the names of Merchant Marines killed during World War II to the monument. The names of those who served in the U.S. Coast Guard and died during various wars were also added.

Commissioner Radack also ordered scores of names previously not added to the memorial from World War I and World War II etched into the monument's granite walls this year. With the assistance of a military researcher, Precinct Three employees discovered that many names of Harris County residents who fell during the first two world wars were not placed on the memorial when it was originally built.

With the addition of those killed in Iraq and Afghanistan in the past year, the correction of misspelled names, those left off originally and the new sections dedicated to Merchant Marines and the U.S. Coast Guard, more than 1,000 names were placed on the memorial in advance of this year's ceremony.

More names were also placed on the monument because of a policy change. In the past, only the names of war dead killed by direct enemy action were placed on the walls. This was a policy started under the previous administration. Now, in keeping with policy at monuments and memorials around the nation, anyone from Harris County who died in a war zone during these conflicts, whether by enemy action or mishap, will have their name included.

Precinct Three staffers are now examining names listed for the wars in Korea and Vietnam to make sure all the county's fallen heroes from those conflicts were listed when the monument was first built.

Park patrons can also search the monument for names via the web by visiting www.pct3.hctx.net and clicking on the War Memorial section at the top left section of the home page. That will carry visitors to a searchable database recently completed by precinct

staff and the county's technology department. Anyone with questions about the monument can call the Precinct Three Parks Office at (281) 531-1592.

On May 11th, Commissioner Radack also formally dedicated a park in honor of former Harris County Attorney Mike Driscoll. The 46-acre facility has playground equipment and a 1.13-mile trail. It is located in the shadow of the Westpark Tollway at 13534 West Houston Center.

Driscoll, a native Houstonian, led the Office of the Harris County Attorney from 1981 to 1996. His upbringing steeped him in a passionate commitment to public service. He is the nephew of former Houston Mayor Neal Pickett and former U.S. Sen. Ralph Yarborough. His father was the head football coach at San Jacinto High School and his mother taught speech and lip reading to hearing impaired children.

Driscoll's colorful career in public service began at the age of 23, when he interned in the United States Senate in 1969. After earning his law degree from the University of Houston in 1972, Mike was elected Precinct 8 Justice of the Peace the same year. In 1979, he served as a hearing judge with the Texas Education Commission on cases dealing with the placement of students with special needs.

In other news, updates on Precinct Three road and construction projects previously featured in this report can now be seen on Commissioner Radack's county website at www.pct3.hctx.net. That data will be updated monthly since this report is now generated quarterly.

As always, Precinct Three encourages comments and questions. You can mail them to Commissioner Radack's office at 1001 Preston, 9th Floor, Houston, Texas 77002 or email us at pct3@hctx.net.