

# Bastrop seeks funding from Preserve America



Bastrop City Councilman Dock Jackson, right, met with Congressman Lloyd Doggett during a recent trip to the U.S. Capital. During the visit, the two discussed the importance of parks and recreation facilities in local communities. Jackson is director of the City Parks and Recreation Department.

The City of Bastrop and community partners are one of 27 applicants across the country for funding to Preserve America through the National Parks Service. The grant project, "Heritage Trails of Bastrop, Texas," responds to a key purpose of the Preserve America objectives in that it combines both historic preservation and nature tourism by promoting and celebrating 175 years of heritage.

Denise Rodgers of Rising Phoenix Adventures, who is leading grant writing initiative, discovered the grant potential while looking for funding for the Texas Paddling Trails project, an official designation process through the Nature Tourism Division of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department.

The Texas Paddling Trails project will assist Bastrop in a variety of ways including surveys, kiosk design, highway signage, promotion and website development for designating 24 miles of the Lower Colorado River as official paddling trails.

The 24 miles will comprise three separate trails beginning at the 969 Utey Bridge and ending at ColoVista Country

Club. The "flagship" paddle trail, named "El Camino Real River Crossing Paddle Trail," will be the six-mile stretch from Fisherman's Park to Tahitian Village.

If funded, the "Heritage Trails of Bastrop, Texas" project will link the natural and historical aspects of the community by helping to promote the paddling trails, Bastrop State Park, the Lost Pines and Main Street. To generate more tourism, the funding must be used exclusively for marketing and advertising the heritage that exists in and around Bastrop County.

According to Rodgers, this particular federal grant funding potential is only available to communities which have received prior Preserve America designation.

"Fortunately for us, Bastrop received this designation in November of 2004, largely due to the efforts of Kay Wesson, Chairman of the Bastrop County

Historical Commission. To a great extent, this prior designation helps to weed out the competition, thanks to Kay's foresight," said Rodgers.

The Preserve America grant funding requires a dollar-for-dollar match from the community. In other words, the city and community partners had to pledge \$150,000 of support already flagged for marketing in order for Preserve America to provide \$150,000 in cash for a total budget of \$300,000.

"The Lower Colorado River flowing through the middle of historic Bastrop has been sorely overlooked and under-utilized for nature and recreational tourism, as well as the lesser known Bastrop Springs. Noted favorably by Stephen F. Austin on his first visit to Texas, both the river and springs were key elements in making a decision to build a town here," Rodgers said. "And that's not even taking into consideration that the El Camino Real crossed the river in this same general area back in the sixteen and seventeen hundreds. For the traveling public, the nature tourism aspects of the river and old historic downtown remain largely unknown, tucked away in history. This grant could help us to advertise and market Bastrop more extensively," said Rodgers.