

INTERSTATE OIL AND GAS COMPACT COMMISSION
2019 CHAIRMAN'S STEWARDSHIP AWARD
CATEGORY: LARGE COMPANY

EXPLANATION OF PROJECT

The world's largest spring-fed swimming pool is located in Balmorhea State Park in Toyahvale, Texas. Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, the historic pool is the centerpiece of this Permian Basin community drawing tourists and naturalists from around the world and supporting a number of businesses. In 2018, after some 80 years in operation, 15 million gallons of water flowing through the pool daily and countless swimmers, scuba divers and nature-lovers, erosion led to the structural collapse of a pool wall. As a result, the pool had to be closed indefinitely to the public. Not only was this a disappointment to visitors, it impacted many in the community whose businesses relied on tourists and others who came to experience San Solomon Springs and the pool the springs fed.

San Solomon Springs is also home to several endangered and sensitive species, including a variety of fish, freshwater shrimp and different kinds of snails.

One growing "resident" of this region, Apache Corporation quickly stepped in to help the effort in saving the pool and preserving the springs in perpetuity. Apache has approximately 300,000 net acres in Southern Reeves County and continues to expand its operations.

PURPOSE OF PROJECT

Apache partnered with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation (TPWF) to lead a fundraising effort for this iconic Texas treasure.

Texas state parks have faced sometimes significant funding challenges for maintenance and improvements in recent years, including Balmorhea State Park. The collapse of the pool wall at Balmorhea carried a hefty repair cost, originally estimated to total approximately \$2 million. Because of the sensitive nature of the springs, heavy equipment could not be used for repairs. All of these factors contributed to the high cost of repairs.



PROCESS TAKEN TO COMPLETE PROJECT

In August 2018, Apache announced it would fund a challenge grant up to \$1 million for public donations to repair the Balmorhea State Park pool. Not only would this ensure the funds necessary to complete the pool repair be available, it made sure the repair project did not negatively impact available funding for other park maintenance needs.

With Apache's advocacy and commitment to the pool repair project, donations poured in. In January 2019, Apache and the TPWF announced it took less than six months to raise \$1 million in donations for repairs. Donations came from nearly 600 individual donors, with 60 percent of those donations under \$100. On January 24, 2019, Apache Corporation Chief Executive Officer and President John Christmann IV presented a check for \$1 million to match the public donations to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission.

With funding in hand, repair and restoration of the pool was assured and by early March 2019, Balmorhea State Park pool was once again open to the public less than a year after the pool was closed.

However, Apache's commitment to the region did not stop with its work to rebuild the centerpiece of the Toyahvale community. The company also created a \$1 million endowment through the TPWF that will be used to fund enhancement projects at Balmorhea State Park, which are above and beyond standard maintenance projects provided through state funds.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENT

San Solomon Springs is home to several endangered species, including two species of freshwater spring snails, a species of freshwater shrimp, and two species of fish unique to West Texas. San Solomon Springs is the largest spring in the Balmorhea area, and the habitat at Balmorhea State Park is very important for conserving these species. The flow of the water through 1.3-acre pool is important to managing the health of these species and is critical to preserving the harmony and convergence between people and nature in the park.

Through Apache's advocacy and contributions to park preservation and pool repair efforts, the company has helped ensure the ability of the Texas Parks and Wildlife system to maintain the health of the overall ecosystem within Balmorhea and the springs at a time the state parks system faces funding challenges.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Less than a year after the 3.5 million gallon, 1.3-acre, 25-foot deep pool was suddenly closed due to structural failure, \$2 million in funding was raised for repairs and the pool was reopened to the community and the tens of thousands of visitors from around the world. Not only did this effort contribute to the health of the ecosystem in Balmorhea State Park, it was critical to the economy in the Toyahvale community, as many businesses rely on those visitors for economic security.

Also, the Texas state parks system has critical additional resources to address the needs of the park and the world's largest spring-fed swimming pool.



Photo courtesy Texas Parks and Wildlife

APACHE CORPORATION - TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION ANNOUNCEMENT



SAMPLING OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF FUNDRAISING EFFORT AND POOL REPAIR



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