

Contract Report 24-001

Partnership Report: A Vision for Water Stewardship

The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment & BlueTriton Brands, Inc.



**THE MEADOWS CENTER
FOR WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

MEMBER THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

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The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment | BlueTriton Brands, Inc.

Prepared by

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Executive Summary

In 2023, The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State University and BlueTriton Brands, Inc. celebrated the first year of an expanded three-year partnership dedicated to ensuring the long-term sustainability of Texas' water resources. Through this enhanced partnership, the Meadows Center is amplifying its community science initiatives across the Lone Star State and enriching sustainability education at Spring Lake. This initiative builds upon a five-year legacy of successful collaboration, setting new benchmarks in our joint stewardship efforts.

The nature of the state's water crisis is of such magnitude that collaboration across sectors, disciplines, and boundaries is the only way to drive lasting positive changes for our natural resources. This unique partnership shows what is possible when companies and conservationists work together to tackle our state's growing freshwater challenges.

Steering Texas Stream Team to New Heights

The Texas Stream Team, our flagship community science program, experienced a transformative year in 2023. BlueTriton's unwavering support has breathed new life into this initiative, pushing the boundaries of community engagement and education. Texas Stream Team has not only kept pace but soared to new heights, now celebrating a roster of over 12,000 trained community scientists within its ranks.

We proudly offer Texas Stream Team training programs at no cost, making them accessible to all Texans eager to make a difference in conserving our waterways. The support from partners like BlueTriton not only bolsters the resilience of the Texas Stream Team but enables our team to extend our outreach efforts, enriching our impact across the state. Through robust training programs, access to resources, and technical assistance, we're working to ensure that all volunteers are equipped to fulfill their roles effectively.

Key to our strategy is a revitalized commitment to community integration and empowerment. The added capacity has allowed us to sharpen our focus on establishing



New Horizons: Meadows Fellow

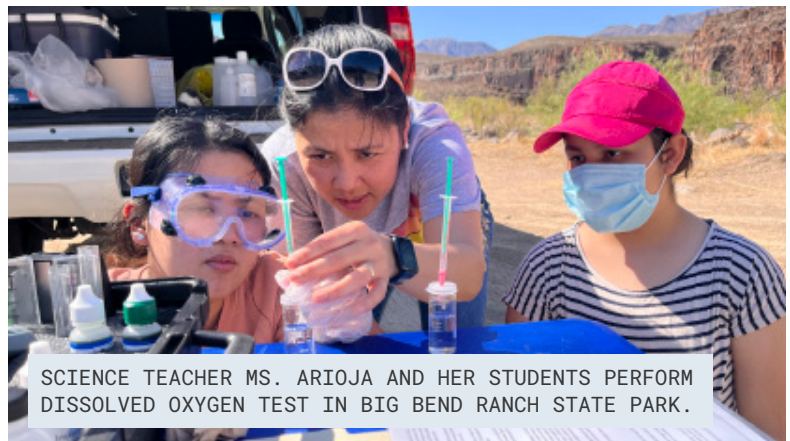
We proudly welcomed BlueTriton's Senior Natural Resources Manager, Trey W. Mixon, into our esteemed group of Meadows Fellows in 2023. Trey's expertise in groundwater sustainability is a valuable addition to our collaborative efforts and represents a significant milestone in our joint commitment to water stewardship.



TEXAS STREAM TEAM TRAINING HOSTED BY THE SAN MARCOS RIVER RANGERS.



COMMUNITY SCIENTISTS COLLECTING DATA IN LONGVIEW, TEXAS.



SCIENCE TEACHER MS. ARIOJA AND HER STUDENTS PERFORM DISSOLVED OXYGEN TEST IN BIG BEND RANCH STATE PARK.

meaningful relationships with local communities to cultivate a more integrated Texas Stream Team network. This refined, community-centric focus has created a more cohesive and committed network of partners and monitoring groups, all united by a shared passion for water conservation and environmental stewardship.

Beyond this, we are enhancing our data collection and quality control measures. We streamlined the data submission process by adopting electronic data entry, making it easier and more accessible for community scientists to contribute valuable information. Coupled with newly launched instructional resources, including videos and expanded training manuals, we ensured our community scientists are well-versed in best practices and proper protocols. We also reintroduced field audits to reinforce the accuracy and consistency of our data collection efforts, ensuring the integrity of our monitoring activities.

The following achievements by the Texas Stream Team in the Fiscal Year 2023 are a testament to the strength and impact of our partnership:

- **614 community scientists** trained to monitor water quality at **2,356 sites**
- **2,885 samples** collected by community scientists
- **4,483 hours** monitoring water quality
- **64 new monitoring sites** established at waterways across Texas

Full Throttle on Education: Shaping Tomorrow's Conservation Champions

For over 20 years, the Meadows Center's educational programming at Spring Lake has been our "boots on the ground," realizing the success of outdoor learning and environmental education and providing abundant opportunities for visitors to find a connection to the natural world through interpretive tours at Spring Lake. Each year, we engage more than 120,000 visitors in outdoor learning programs, encouraging lifelong learning about the environment—and people's relationship to the environment.

Thanks to the enhanced collaboration with BlueTriton, the Meadows Center is elevating its educational programming to new heights, enriching the educational journey at Spring Lake, and facilitating crucial upgrades to our facilities to better serve our visitors and the environment.

In 2023, we embarked on an ambitious journey to expand and redesign the environmental education exhibits along our Wetlands Boardwalk, with a special focus on water sustainability. Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems on Earth, yet according to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas has lost more than half of its wetland habitats in the past 200 years. Educating the public about the importance of protecting this critical habitat is vital to its conservation.

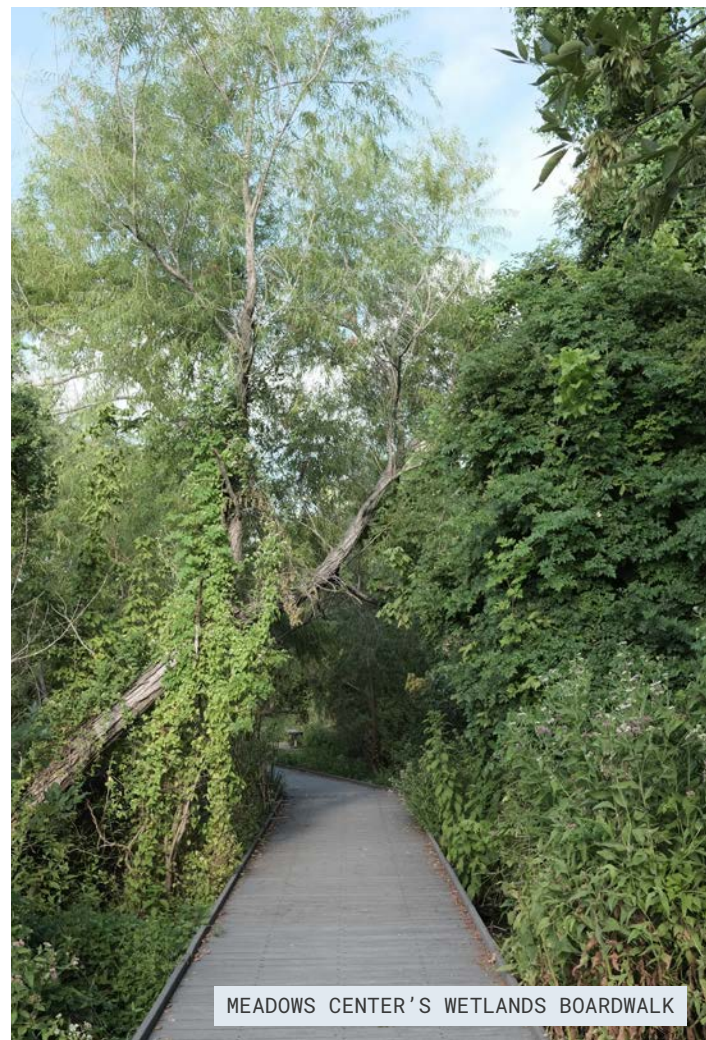
With the generous support of BlueTriton, we are poised to collaborate with interpretive design experts who can bring our vision to life by conveying both the ecological and



A CHILD EXPLORES THE WETLANDS BOARDWALK WITH A SELF-GUIDED SCAVENGER HUNT.



STUDENTS ENGAGING WITH THE "ALL THE WATER IN THE WORLD" ACTIVITY.



MEADOWS CENTER'S WETLANDS BOARDWALK

community values of wetlands to meaningfully connect people with and encourage continued stewardship of the natural world. The revitalized educational boardwalk will provide visitors with an understanding of this rapidly disappearing freshwater ecosystem and the need to protect it. Through integrating science-based illustrations and hands-on elements, we intend to enrich the visitor experience and foster an informed, engaged community of future conservation leaders.

Additionally, we are in the process of outfitting Spring Lake with cutting-edge clean water technology and bottle-filling stations. This upgrade will support the habitat needs of the spring water-dependent endangered species displayed in our aquaria and optimize the operations of our iconic glass-bottom boat tours, enjoyed by more than 35,000 schoolchildren each year. These improvements will help ensure that future generations can continue to learn from and be inspired by the pristine natural resources at Spring Lake.

Through these efforts, the Meadows Center is setting a new standard for environmental education, creating a legacy of conservation champions who are well-equipped to tackle the environmental challenges of tomorrow.

Investing in the Future: Ozarka “Every Drop Counts” Earth Science Scholarship

BlueTriton’s annual \$10,000 “Every Drop Counts” Earth Science Scholarship continues to inspire and support Texas State University students who are passionate about the environment and sustainability.

Tyler Hartwick, the recipient of the 2023 scholarship and a Texas State geography undergraduate student, is a shining example of the spirit and dedication that this award seeks to honor.

As the Vice President of the Bobcat Stream Team, the student chapter of our Texas Stream Team, he demonstrates exceptional leadership in uniting students towards a common goal of promoting environmental stewardship through outreach and water quality monitoring. Tyler’s work as a Student Research Assistant for the Meadows Center also showcases his commitment to supporting watershed services studies along the Texas coast.



ROBERT MACE AND TREY MIXON PRESENTING TYLER HARTWICK WITH HIS SCHOLARSHIP AWARD.



IN CELEBRATION OF TYLER'S ACHIEVEMENTS, THE MEADOWS CENTER HOSTED BLUETRITON'S TREY MIXON AND CATHERINE HERTER AT SPRING LAKE ON OCTOBER 2023.

Looking Ahead

As we reflect on the achievements of 2023, we stand inspired by the power of partnership. Together, the Meadows Center and BlueTriton Brands, Inc. are forging a path towards a sustainable future for Texas' water resources, nurturing a community of conservationists poised to make a lasting impact. Our journey continues, fueled by innovation, collaboration, and a shared vision for a world where every drop counts.



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