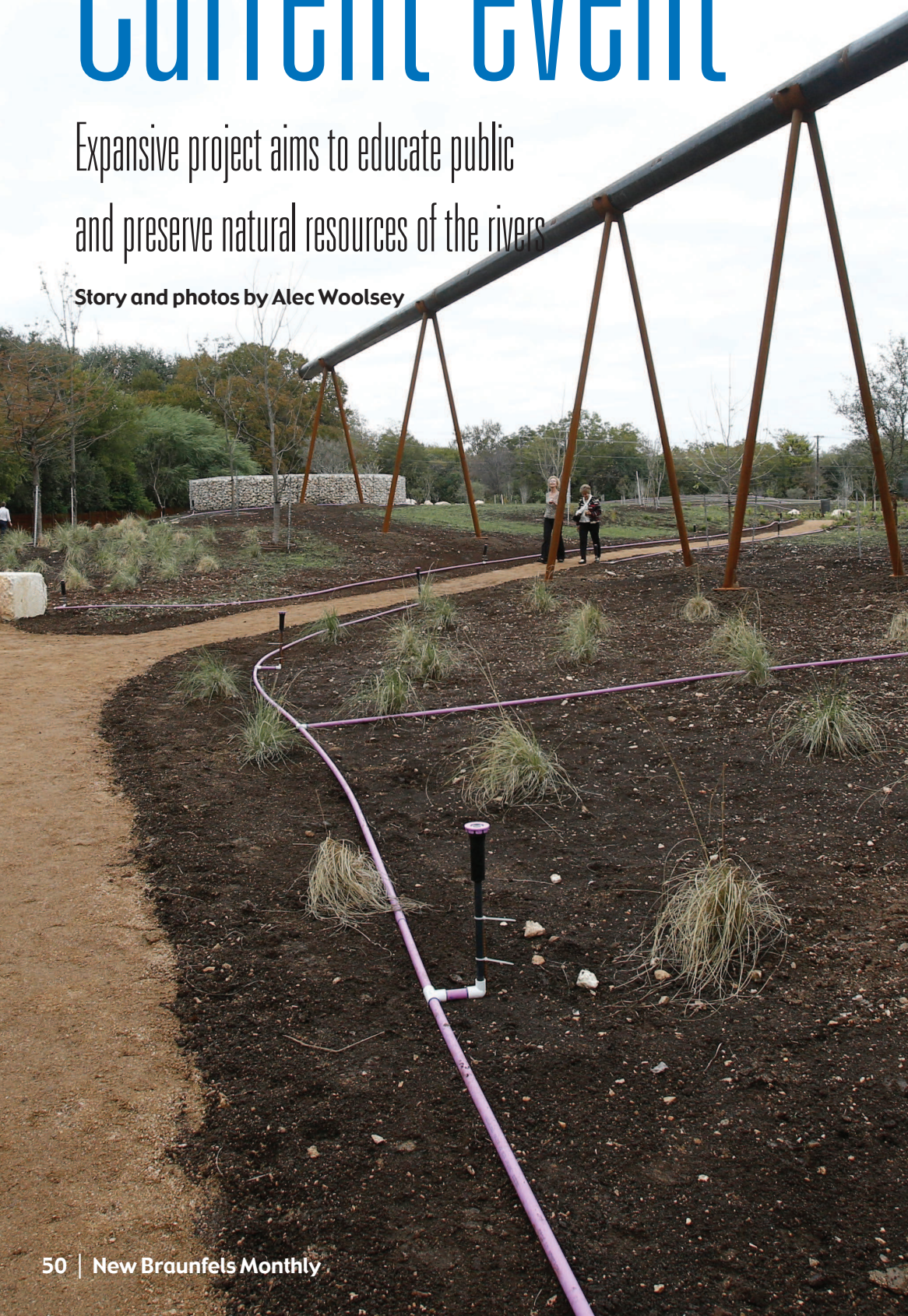


Current event

Expansive project aims to educate public
and preserve natural resources of the rivers

Story and photos by Alec Woolsey



If you head upstream on the Comal River, eventually you will find yourself in a peculiar situation — a dead end.

This spot is marked by a large tower and a cement circle, and if you were to take a look into the water below, bubbles could be seen rising up.

This area is now called the Headwaters at the Comal, and it is the origin of the river.

Headwaters at the Comal is a project that is only the latest chapter of a property with a storied past.

The significance of the site is it is where the Comal River begins, but it also plays a vital role in the utility management of the city. To this day, NBU (New Braunfels Utilities) has equipment on site that utilizes water from the Edwards Aquifer deep below the ground.

Once upon a time, it was the site for the utility company, but after the company moved to a new location on the edge of town, the site fell into limbo.

As Ian Taylor, CEO of NBU, put it, the company couldn't let loose of its control of the property with its important role in town's water supply.

"On the one hand, we have an active water plant," he said. "We have significant portions of our water management and transmissions on site, right over there behind the fence. And then all throughout the property, leaving that site are pipelines running through the property. So, it's encumbered by water assets as part of the city's water works."

So, in an effort for NBU to be a responsible owner of the property, the company made the decision to start the Headwaters



Above: Archaeological finds from revitalizing the property. Below: Name plates of individuals and organizations that donated to the project

organization.

The organization was determined to reinvigorate the property and find a way to use it for the good of the community.

On November 14, the organization held a soft opening that welcomed donors and those involved with designing and bringing to life the vision of the property.

Nancy Pappas, managing director for the Headwaters project, said the property was to ultimately be a net benefit for the community to use and love.

“We just expect to bring a project that not only can people come out and

enjoy, but this can be a real gathering place for learning and discovery and research around our water resources that we rely on for healthy and clean drinking water,” she said.

While still not open to the public, the site will open in 2018. The once forgotten property now has gravel paths lined with native plants and mounds that are designed to only prevent flooding, but clean water before it seeps into the aquifer. And archaeological artifacts were found on the site, prompting future investigation.

“There were substantial enough [archeology] finds



EWELL

KGNB RADIO

KARBACH & LEISSNER FAMILY

BRIT & NANETTE KING

CINDY & ALBERT KAUFMANN

NANCY & KURT K

SA JOHNSON

THE KELLER FAMILY
Todd, Amy, Mason, Axel and Kyle

MICHAEL & TA

ERIKA & RYAN KELSO

ROB & VANIA KONOPASH

on this site during phase one that we had to set aside areas of the project that we could have an official archeology dig here,” Pappas said. “And so, I’ll be overseeing that piece of the project, and that will happen in the spring of this year.”

The project was made possible by donations from organizations and individuals, and plaques now decorate a fence along the walkways recognizing everyone who made the project possible. Eventually, the organization will move on to phase two, which will bring more educational opportunities to the property. For now though, visitors can enjoy taking a peek into the beginning of a river. ★