

September 21, 2011

Hello Friends,

First let me send out my sincerest condolences to all of those who lost their homes or were affected by this tragic event. I'm still in awe as I see the devastation this fire has caused. I was asked today by a reporter if I have suffered any personal losses. I looked him in the eye and said absolutely. My house may have been saved, but my home has been definitely been affected. Bastrop is my home, this state park is my home. I'm sad, angry, tired, resentful and yet hopeful that one day this place will re-grow and we will, someday, be able to look out and once again see the beginnings of the new forest.

The outpouring of support has been a tremendous inspiration for me during these difficult days. I am amazed at the resiliency of our community. Unfortunately, the hard work now begins and people want to help now. Probably the hardest part of this recovery effort is slowing people down. This will be a very long process and we must be good stewards and restore this forest to its most natural state. We cannot do this by just haphazardly planting various types of trees and grasses. Just because something is native to Texas or Central Texas does not mean that it is appropriate for the Lost Pines. There is a reason why the Lost Pines is such an ecological icon. There is a reason why several other species of pine trees don't grow here. We are working with several other agencies within Bastrop County to formulate a plan to restore this entire forest, not just within the state park, but we must do it the right way. Some of our immediate concerns are still the many trees which will need to be cut, significant erosion problems and public safety. We are still estimating that Bastrop will be closed at least through October. This is still a very fluid date. I know people want to come and explore but we must ensure it is safe to do so. In the meantime I encourage folks to visit Buescher State Park. This magnificent park is fully open and had no direct impact from the fires. People can hike the trails and still become immersed within the lost pines.

I thank all of those willing donors who have contributed thus far. We will need so much more in order to tackle the enormous task ahead.

Hang in there, keep your head up and I will once again see you in the park soon!



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