

Horseshoe Bay, Texas, Named International Dark Sky Community

HORSESHOE BAY, Tex. (19 November 2015) – In recognition of its exemplary efforts to preserve its naturally dark nighttime conditions, the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) announced today that it has designated the City of Horseshoe Bay, Texas, as an International Dark Sky Community. The city is only the eighth Dark Sky Community ever named in the United States, and it joins the City of Dripping Springs as the second International Dark Sky Community in Texas. Along with two nearby International Dark Sky Parks, the area boasts one of the highest regional densities of IDA International Dark Sky Places in the world.

“We are pleased to welcome Horseshoe Bay into the International Dark Sky Places family,” said IDA Executive Director J. Scott Feierabend. “Today’s designation represents another important stride forward in the movement that has made the Texas Hill Country an emerging leader in dark-skies awareness in the United States”

Horseshoe Bay is a community of 6,500 people located in the Hill Country along the shore of Lake Lyndon B. Johnson, some 50 miles west of the state capital, Austin. Incorporated as a city in 2005, the site began as a private resort development in the early 1970s. Since then it has become a nationally-known retirement destination offering a variety of recreational activities in a pleasant and temperate year-round climate.

“Our residents cherish the rural atmosphere and the accompanying night skies,” Stan R. Farmer, Horseshoe Bay city manager, explained. “Star gazing is much valued in this esteemed planned residential resort community. Horseshoe Bay residents choose to retire here to escape the traffic and light pollution of larger cities.”

As part of the process of applying to become an International Dark Sky Community, local officials undertook a comprehensive evaluation and modernization of the city’s outdoor lighting code. In parallel, the city organized a campaign to build public support for lighting practices that help maintain a dark nighttime character as an important element of the quality of life in Horseshoe Bay.

Resident preferences for more natural conditions have resulted in conditions that supported the city’s application for IDA accreditation. The city currently has no streetlights, nor plans to install them other than in specific, future instances where street lighting is deemed critical to public safety. Similarly, the city hosts little in the way of commercial property and none of the “big box” retail outlets seen in area cities such as Austin, and no schools that might build future sports lighting installations.

Horseshoe Bay has implemented a program of outreach to residents and local homebuilders stressing the importance of dark skies and informing residents on how to comply with the lighting code. It has also engaged with local property owners’ associations to help further disseminate the information.

Images



Sunset over Horseshoe Bay, Texas. (Credit: City of Horseshoe Bay)

URL

About the IDA Dark Sky Places Program

IDA established the International Dark Sky Places conservation program in 2001 to recognize excellent stewardship of the night sky. Designations are based on stringent outdoor lighting standards and innovative community outreach. Since the program began, 12 Communities, 30 Parks, nine Reserves and one Sanctuary have received International Dark Sky designations. For more information about the International Dark Sky Places Program, visit <http://darksky.org/idsp>.

About IDA

The International Dark Sky Association, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Tucson, Arizona, advocates for the protection of the nighttime environment and dark night skies by educating policymakers and the public about night sky conservation and promoting environmentally responsible outdoor lighting. More information about IDA and its mission may be found at <http://www.darksky.org>.

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