

Government Canyon treasures include a stand of tall live oaks with long strands of Spanish moss, cliffside seeps from which ferns emerge in shady splendor, ragged bluffs with distant views of downtown San Antonio. It has lush riparian zones dense with sycamore and willow, and bands of ancient limestone where three-toed dinosaur tracks are exposed. Much of the environment is being restored to a more pristine state through the removal of feral hogs and non-native vegetation. There are over 35 miles of trails through the park allowing the hiker/biker to enjoy nature and consider the history:



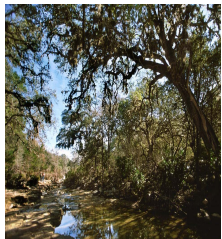
➤ Before 1882: Evidence of Apache and Comanche hunting parties.

➤ 1882 - Government Canyon's name is said to derive from its strategic positioning on a 19th-century supply trail that led from San Antonio to Camp Verde and other military forts. They did so following the main freshwater stream that cut through the canyon. A stone farmhouse was built in 1882 by the Zizelmann family, a pioneering family. Cattle ranching by private owners continued on the property for nearly a century.



➤ 1967 - Was sold to investors. The subsequent collapse of the savings and loan industry resulted in the federal government acquiring the land through its Resolution Trust Corporation, an agency formed to dispose of foreclosed real estate. As with other properties, the RTC was eager to auction that parcel to the highest bidder. Community activists and grassroots advocacy groups, then focused on acquisition of another bankrupt tract nearby, took notice.

➤ 1991 - Formed an alliance of about 40 local entities called the Government Canyon Coalition. Participants included churches, neighborhood associations, birders, architects, scientists, and even a few conservation-minded ranchers and developers. The group soon became the "Friends of Government Canyon" you see today, but at the time garnered political support from Bexar County Commissioner Paul Elizando and then-mayor Nelson Wolf. Among other helpers were the Trust for Public Land and Bexar Land Trust (Green Spaces Alliance today).



➤ 1993 - This multi-faceted group purchased the bulk of what was to become the Government Canyon State Natural Area. They then convinced the Edwards Aquifer Authority and the San Antonio Water System to pay 75% of the purchase price. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department provided the remainder of the funds and took over title and management of the 4,717 acre property. (The slow-moving collaborative effort to protect Government Canyon has had a downside, however. Reaching consensus and raising money don't happen overnight, and the price of land in the area nearly doubles each year. Parcels adjacent to the park that were acquired for about \$2,000 per acre in 1999 cost more than \$3,750 in 2000.)



➤ 2009 - The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission voted to take all steps necessary to transfer more than 3,000 acres from the city of San Antonio to Government Canyon State Natural Area. It is now 8,624 acres with a possible expansion to 11,000 at a soon date.

Although the property is owned by the state of Texas, its management is bound to legal partnerships with SAWS; the Government Canyon Natural History Association (a nonprofit group evolving from the original coalition of pro-canyon activists); and the Edwards Aquifer Authority.