



Conservation Insider

August 2023

Hello, CCCA Friends, Partners, and Volunteers,

As many of you know, the longest summer day in Texas falls in June. However, as a boy I always remembered thinking that August was the hottest of our Texas Summer months. This August the heat matched with historic drought seems unusually cruel. Our environmental systems are under strain like never before. As I write this our region's primary reservoir, Canyon Lake, is no longer receiving inflow, the San Marcos Springs are as low as they were in the 1950's, and many of us are wondering when it will all be over and just how close to the breaking point we might get.

If there is one thing I know for certain, it is that Texans are tough. They've always had to be. We will get through this drought and the problems we face will force new conversations just in time for a historic vote on water infrastructure in November. As stewards of the Hill Country, we are in a unique position. Our environmental systems need our help now more than ever. Conserve as much water as you possibly can and set an example for your neighbors. Treat your brown lawn as a badge of honor and make strides to reduce any non-essential water use. Walking the talk in this way will give each of us some control over the current drought conditions and it will encourage our neighbors to do the same.

Thank you for your steadfast stewardship of the Texas Hill Country and for your support of the Comal County Conservation Alliance.

Ryan K Spencer

CCCA News

Thank You

CCCA thanks the Villas at Gruene, the Birdhouse, Gruene River Grill, and HEB for sponsoring our most recent "Creating a Land Legacy" workshop! We appreciate our sponsors and thank David Bezanson, Land Protection Strategy Director of The Nature Conservancy, Texas Chapter, for his presentation on how conservation easements can be used by landowners to preserve their family land legacy.

CCCA Welcomes New Partner

Welcome to our newest partner "Project Bedrock".

Project Bedrock is a non-profit initiative that provides nature-based solutions, assistance programs, and research to help Texas landowners with limestone lands (karst country) regenerate their vegetation and soil cover.

<https://www.projectbedrocktx.org>



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SAVE THE DATE

CCCA Community Program

WHAT: Katherine Romans, Executive Director of Hill Country Alliance, will describe the tools and approaches that the Hill Country Alliance and the broader Texas Hill Country Conservation Network are employing to shift the future of this region we call home. She'll talk about the role each of us can play, and why what we need more than ever is strong leadership, consistent grassroots advocacy, and a shared vision for the Hill Country we want to hand on to future generations of Central Texans.

WHEN: Tuesday, September 12, 6:00-7:30 PM

WHERE: McKenna Events Center, [801 W. San Antonio Street, New Braunfels, TX 78130](#)



Community Program

**EVERYONE
IS WELCOME!**

SPEAKER

Katherine Romans
Executive Director
Hill Country Alliance

TOPIC

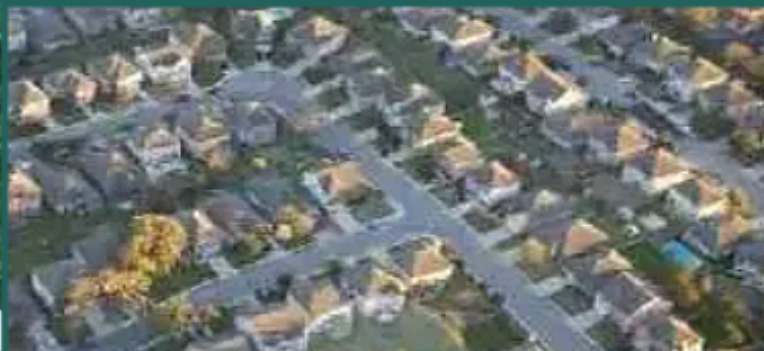
"The Long Game: Creating lasting conservation in a high growth region"

WHEN

Tuesday, September 12, 2023
6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

WHERE

McKenna Events Center
801 W San Antonio St
New Braunfels, TX



WWW.COMALCONSERVATION.ORG



2023 HILL COUNTRY LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

FROM VISION TO ACTION

THURSDAY, SEPT. 28 | 8 AM - 6 PM | THE HALL @ JESTER KING

HCA Leadership Summit: "From Vision to Action" September 28th!

The Hill Country Alliance invites you to join them in-person or online on Thursday, September 28 at [The Hall at Jester King Brewery](#) in Dripping Springs. Presentations will run from 8:45AM - 4PM, with lunch provided from 12-1PM and several networking breaks throughout the day. The event will be followed by a happy hour featuring live music entertainment from 4-6PM.

Virtual and in-person tickets are available now on HCA's website. Virtual attendees will receive additional communication in advance of the Summit, including a link to a livestream of the day's events. All attendees will also receive access to a recording of the Summit after the close of the event.

A limited number of in-person tickets for the Summit are available now - with early bird pricing available until August 20. Full agenda coming soon - get them before they are gone!

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

Climate Science: The Good, The Bad, and The Wicked

Date: Thursday, September 7, 2023 – 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Location: LBJ Grand Ballroom at the LBJ Student Center on the Texas State University-San Marcos campus

Register: <http://climate.meadowswater.org/>

View the conference agenda: <https://bit.ly/46dzKsd>

Dive into the depths of climate science at The Good, The Bad, and The Wicked conference on September 7 in San Marcos. Hear from experts, exchange ideas, and explore

interdisciplinary approaches to tackle Texas' wicked climate challenges. Limited spots available, register today.

San Marcos Group Spreading Awareness through Comal River Clean-Up

Comal River Clean Up

Hinman Island Park

picnic table & park across from the golf course!

August 19th 10:30am-12:00pm



Swim, Mingle, Clean up!

DM for attendance headcount

@mermaidwithmegan

mermaidwithmegan@gmail.com

IN OTHER NEWS

"A Comal County Ranch Owner Ponders Selling His Land, Setting Off Another Clash Between Property Rights and Environmental Concerns"

When the owner applied for a state permit that could pave the way for a subdivision, neighbors and environmentalists rallied against it in the name of protecting the area's rivers and the Edwards Aquifer.

The Texas Tribune

BY NOAH ALCALA BACH JULY 13, 2023

COMAL COUNTY — Facing a two-lane highway about 13 miles west of New Braunfels, a 546-acre ranch hugging the west fork of Dry Comal Creek has caused a stir in the community.

Behind a small gate, hills dotted with live oaks and a few freely roaming horses can be seen. But neighbors and environmentalists worry it won't remain this way.

Doug Harrison, a retired entrepreneur, and his wife have lived and raised their family on the ranch for the past two decades. But late last year, Harrison filed an application with the state to build a wastewater treatment plant on the property large enough to serve a 1,400-lot subdivision.

The permit would allow 600,000 gallons of treated wastewater per day to be discharged into the west fork of Dry Comal Creek, which connects to the Comal and Guadalupe rivers — the most popular tubing destinations in the state.

The ranch also sits over the recharge zone for the Edwards Aquifer, a vast underground lake that's the source of drinking water for more than 2 million people. And that has many local residents and Texas environmentalists concerned about wastewater and runoff from a potential subdivision on Harrison's property — even though the couple hasn't yet put the ranch up for sale.

It's another example of a conflict that has played out across Central Texas for generations between the rights of property owners to do what they want with their land — and maximize their profit when they sell it — and the desire of environmentalists and many locals to protect aquifers, rivers and the bucolic character of their communities.

Continue reading [HERE](#).

"Water Resources at Risk: Preserving Open Space in Comal County"

By: Kaitie Moore Underwood | REALTOR®, Blue Collar Commercial Group

The Texas Hill Country has long been revered for its scenic landscapes, pristine water resources, and the allure of a peaceful retreat. In fact, a survey conducted in the 1990s revealed that a staggering 80% of Texans expressed a desire to retire in this picturesque region. However, with the increasing population and development pressures, the protection of water resources in the Hill Country has become a paramount concern.

Recently, I had the privilege of attending a thought-provoking presentation by Annalisa Peace, the Executive Director of the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance. The program, titled “Open Space in Comal County: Challenges & Opportunities,” shed light on the pressing issues surrounding responsible development and the urgent need for conservation efforts to safeguard our precious water resources.

One striking revelation was that Comal County, despite its pivotal location atop the Edwards Aquifer, is the only county in the Texas Hill Country that lacks meaningfully funded conservation initiatives. This stands in stark contrast to neighboring counties like Bexar, Travis, Hays, and Kendall, which have made significant strides in protecting their water resources through various means.

San Antonio, for instance, has implemented a 1/8 cent tax that has enabled the protection of an impressive total of 161,511 acres. This initiative involves the strategic acquisition of land surrounding water resources to safeguard water quality. Similarly, Travis County has allocated substantial bond funds, such as the \$8.3 million from the 2011 bond and \$16.6 million from the 2017 bond, to purchase easements for conservation purposes. Austin, too, levies taxes on its citizens and is actively safeguarding 26,000 acres in the Barton Springs Recharge Zone. The city has allocated \$72 million for water quality and an additional \$45 million for land acquisition dedicated to conservation.

Continue reading [Here](#)

Growth and Conservation in Texas: A Primer on County Tools and Paths Forward

A coalition of Hill Country organizations including the Hill Country Alliance, Comal County Conservation Alliance, and the League of Women Voters of the Comal Area hired Gap Strategies to study how Hill Country counties are using the limited regulatory authorities given them by the State to manage growth. The final report was just released. What became clear in the report is that counties are using a patchwork of regulations and that each county has a different view of how much regulation they can legally do. The study offers an opportunity for counties to learn from each other and increase their ability to protect water, land, and wildlife.

Find the executive summary, abridged version, and full report [HERE](#):



"Nature as Infrastructure - A Legacy for the Future"

By Frank Davis and Kathy Miller

July 19, 2023

Infrastructure. The word usually brings to mind things made of metal and concrete — highways, bridges, dams, pipelines, utilities — the human-made structures and facilities of the modern world that provide us with transportation, energy, communication, flood control and water.

However, it is time to recognize that our environment provides natural structures that can serve the same purpose without moving earth and pouring concrete. This natural infrastructure does not require construction, but it definitely requires protection. Natural infrastructure refers to land, watersheds, vegetation and aquifers that can provide innumerable public benefits such as drinking water, wildlife habitat, flood mitigation, food and fiber, and recreational opportunities.

This month, the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network released the Hill Country Land, Water, Sky, and Natural Infrastructure Plan, as a resource to spotlight where and how natural infrastructure provides value to the natural resources of the Hill Country and its communities.

Approximately 95% of land in Texas is privately owned, which means most of these public benefits originate on private lands. It is critical that we help these private landowners care for the natural resources that the entire population depends upon.

Private landowners are under increasing pressure to sell or subdivide their land due to the costs of maintaining the land, development pressure and a lack of awareness that care for the water and land infrastructure of our beloved Hill Country serves us all.

Continue reading [HERE](#).

Texas County Progress on County Authority

Texas County Progress is the official publication of the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas. In the July 2023 issue, Jim Allison, Senior Counsel for the Association, listed the factors that have led the Texas state legislature to limit the authority of county authority. But he also lists ways to counteract this trend. His call to action includes citizen involvement and voting. This is a wakeup call for all of us who want good government and local control over local problems.

Read the General Counsel's Report [HERE](#).

New Braunfels Residents Invited to Join Strategic Planning Process

The City of New Braunfels is in the process of creating its next Strategic Plan, and is asking for city residents' input to help guide its programming, services, operations, and infrastructure development. The Strategic Plan will lay out the City's guiding principles, strategic priorities, mission, and vision for the future, and is a document that should reflect the values and priorities of its residents. The process will include public input through a survey as well as public meetings scheduled for August 29th and 31st.

Let the City know what's important to you by filling out the survey.

Find Out More [HERE](#)

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CCCA H-Z JULY COLUMN

"What Awaits Future Comal Youth?"

By Frank Dietz for the H-Z August 5, 2023

WHAT AWAITS FUTURE COMAL YOUTH?

These thoughts are prompted by an experience almost two decades ago. The prompting has remained with me and inspired discovery and learning curves and grown deeply rooted convictions about conservation and the fragile balances of the open, wild and natural about us in Comal County and the celebrated Texas Hill Country.

Relatively soon after we were learning our ways into our retirement haus and becoming cognizant of the challenges and gifts of the modest piece of pasture that a fence marked as our space, I got a special assignment. Our sons and their spouses were assisting Karen inside and I eagerly offered to have our very young grands join me for an outdoor adventure. Closed toe shoes, long trousers or jeans were the attire of the hiking adventure as we proceeded first to find walking sticks just beyond the yard fence. We lined those up for when we headed to a creek bed a little later, joined hands in a chain and headed into the woods. Grandpa began calling attention to most everything and cautioning that agarita leaves and prickly pear needs to be dodged. Great laughter arose when I was looking backward and knocked my hat off on a low branch which was clearing for all of theirs. Then we began to note bones, discarded antlers, scars from earlier fires, varieties and differences in the trees and understory, little creatures under a fallen limb or rock when we flipped them and so much more. I introduced them to signs of how the rainwaters drained when they came furiously, noted indentations and two karst features which brought us to the subject of waters beneath us. Some branches invited the older ones to climb up a bit, younger not so much. One of who was holding my hand looked up at me saying, “Grandpa Hub, I am listening so I can bring children on this walk when you are gone.” Startling at first and then the innocence of appreciation welled up in me. So, what about those young dear ones’ grands?

That most memorable experience fired my convictions. Indeed, Karen and her siblings are charting a good course in their determination to protect and pass on a family land legacy through conservation easement. In a much larger sense, what will the children yet to come find that we have provided and protected of our precious and fragile Comal with its rivers and springs, open spaces for exploration and discovery? The surviving and ever-changing wild component of our piece of Texas is expressive of our Texas Hill Country heritage as well. I have been thinking that the wonderful African greeting when entering another village, “And, how are the children?” might be expanded to “how are the children and your natural areas?” For this grandfather it is both principled and apt! Perhaps equally remarkable is the energy inspired by the question from my wonderful hiking group even twenty years hence.

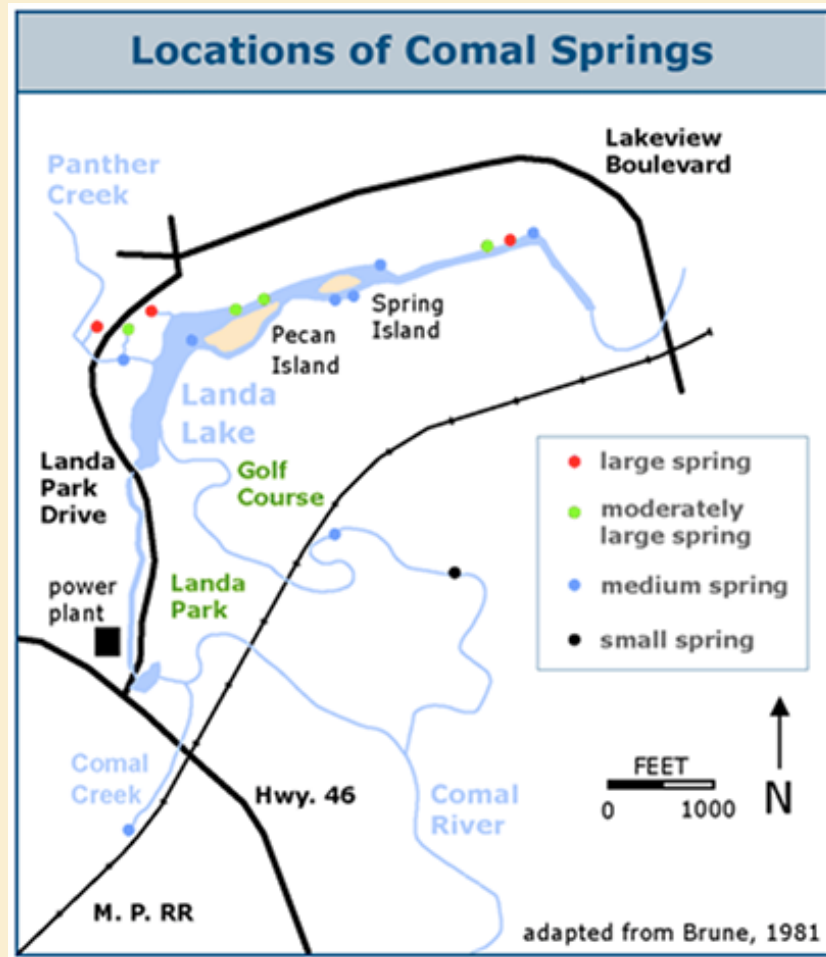
You, too, can assist and provide lift and perspective to the efforts called forth in the call and cry of our youngest for those later generations. How we protect, preserve and conserve today mightily impacts their (our more immediate!) tomorrows. Those of us allied and networking in the effort can assure you of the joy and satisfactions that come in the struggle to make a quality natural future possible and more likely. Yes, it costs in dollars and energy but oh, how it’s worth it! Check out options at comalconservation.org.

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## CCCA AUGUST SPOTLIGHT

## Comal Springs

The Comal Springs is one of the “Great Springs of Texas” and, In fact, is the largest spring system in the American Southwest. It has drawn people to this area for thousands of years, offering a meeting place for trade and rest, and providing reliable, abundant, clean water. No longer as abundant and reliable as it once was due to droughts and the growing demands on the Edwards Aquifer, its source, it is still a focal point, source of pride, and treasured asset that deserves protection.



### Comal Springs and Landa Park

#### The Edwards Aquifer Website

The Comal Springs are the largest in Texas and the American southwest. Seven major springs and dozens of smaller ones occur over a distance of about 4,300 feet at the base of a steep limestone bluff in New Braunfels' Landa Park. The Springs and the Comal River below are home for a federally endangered species, the Fountain Darter. In Spanish, comal is a flat griddle used for cooking tortillas, so the name probably refers to the flat area below the bluff where the springs issue forth. The largest and most easily visited is the one shown at left, just west of Landa Park drive.



These springs were a favorite camping place for native Indian tribes for thousands of years, and many artifacts and burial mounds have been found. In the language of the Indians the Comal Springs were called Conaqueyadesta, which means "where the river has its source" (Ximenes, 1963). The Comal River arises entirely, except after major rains, from springs in this vicinity and flows for just over two miles through Landa Park and New Braunfels before confluencing with the Guadalupe River. It is said to be the shortest river in the United States.

When Spanish missionaries arrived in 1691, they found a huge concentration of Indians at Comal Springs, some from as far away as New Mexico (Brune, 1981). In 1716, Juan Espinoza encountered the beauty of the springs and more than a few ticks:

Soon we reached the passage of the Guadalupe which is made of gravel and is very wide. Groves of inexpressible beauty are found in this vicinity. We stopped at the other bank of the river in a little clearing surrounded by trees, and contiguous to said river. The waters of the Guadalupe are clear, crystal and so abundant that it seemed almost incredible to us that its source arose so near. Composing this river are three principal springs of water which, together with other smaller ones, unite as soon as they begin to flow. There the growth of the walnut trees competes with the poplars. All are crowned by the wild grapevines, which climb up their trunks. Willow trees beautified the region of this river with their luxuriant foliage and there was a great variety of plants. It makes a delightful grove for recreation, and the enjoyment of the melodious songs of different birds. Ticks molested us, attaching themselves to our skin (Tous, 1930).

Continue reading [HERE](#).

## Comal Springs

The University Of Texas at Austin

### WHY IT'S A GREAT PLACE

- Largest springs in Texas, outlet for Edwards (Balcones) Aquifer
- Balcones Fault Zones

### DID YOU KNOW?

- The springs and surrounding area were once home to the indigenous Tonkawa people before being discovered by Spanish explorers
- The town of New Braunfels began to take shape with the arrival of German settlers in 1845, and by the 1860's the springs were powering local grist- and sawmills
- Comal Springs consists of seven major springs and dozens of smaller springs occurring over a distance of approximately 4,300 feet at the base of a limestone bluff in Landa Park
- Comal Springs and the Comal River are home to the federally endangered fountain darter—a small, reddish-brown fish

### GENERAL GEOLOGY

The Edwards (Balcones Fault Zone) Aquifer is the largest and most prolific groundwater source in Texas. It provides water for agriculture in the Uvalde, Hondo, and Castroville

area; city water for metropolitan San Antonio; and spring flow to the Guadalupe and San Marcos Rivers. A separate segment of the aquifer provides spring flow to Barton Springs in Austin.

The main natural outlets for the water in the Edwards Group carbonate rocks are Comal and San Marcos Springs. Fresh water flows generally south from the Edwards outcrop area into the confined zone (where younger, impervious rocks overlie the porous Edwards rocks). The water then moves eastward from the Uvalde and Hondo area beneath San Antonio and turns northeast toward New Braunfels and San Marcos. The flow is focused within a narrow zone on the southeast side of two large faults of the Balcones Fault Zone. The water rises along the fault planes to the two major springs. Comal Springs, in the valley of the Guadalupe River, is the larger spring, and its flow is nearly entirely from the deep confined aquifer. Some of the confined water continues northeast in the upthrown Edwards Aquifer to the San Marcos Spring (in the Blanco River Valley), where it mixes with more locally recharged waters.

Continue reading [HERE](#)

## Streamflow and Springflow at Comal and San Marcos Rivers

USGS

July 2023

### Comal River and Comal Springs at New Braunfels

Current Conditions (Daily average)

| Date      | Streamflow (ft <sup>3</sup> /sec) | Springflow (ft <sup>3</sup> /sec) |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 7/26/2023 | 78.8 <sup>P</sup>                 | 78 <sup>P</sup>                   |
| 7/27/2023 | 76.9 <sup>P</sup>                 | 77 <sup>P</sup>                   |
| 7/28/2023 | 76.4 <sup>P</sup>                 | --                                |
| 7/29/2023 | 77.8 <sup>P</sup>                 | --                                |
| 7/30/2023 | 80.9 <sup>P</sup>                 | --                                |

<sup>P</sup> Provisional data subject to revision.  
 -- See release notes for manually estimated values.

Daily Average Data (1927-present)

- USGS 08169000 Comal River at New Braunfels
- USGS 08168710 Comal Springs at New Braunfels

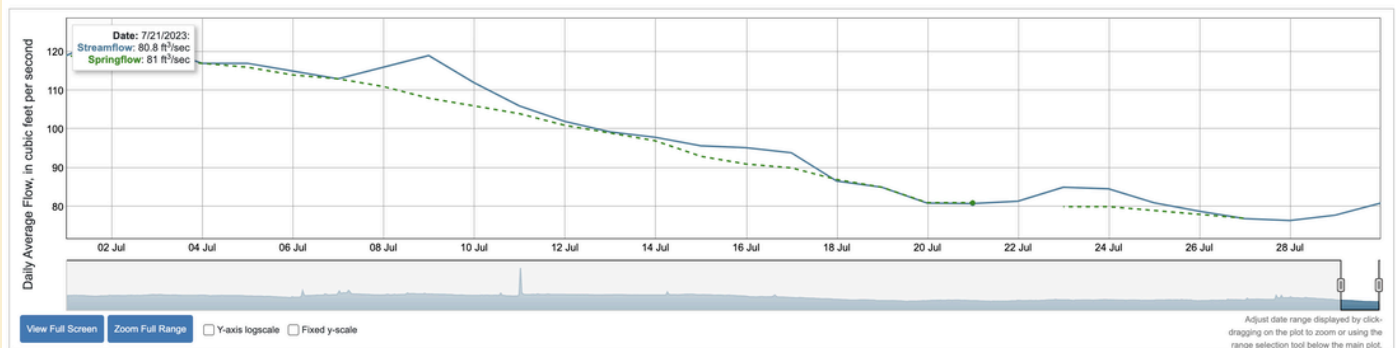
Real-time Data

- USGS 08169000 Comal River at New Braunfels

**Release Notes:** 07/31/2023 07:35 by vmendoza  
 Comal and San Marcos have missing and estimated values.  
 7/28=76, 7/29=78e, 7/30=81e. San Marcos 7/27=84e,  
 7/28=81, 7/29=81, 7/30=81. Comal Recalculations 7/23=80,  
 7/24=80, 7/25=79, 7/26=78. San Marcos Recalculations  
 7/21=83, 7/22=83, 7/23=83.

#### Daily Average Streamflow and Springflow

The interactive graph shows both the daily average streamflow and the computed springflow for the past 1,000 days.



For more interesting information about our precious Comal Springs, visit our website at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/comal-springs>

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*Stay safe, stay healthy, enjoy Nature!*

**Comal County Conservation Alliance**

<https://www.comalconservation.org/>

[Info@comalconservation.org](mailto:Info@comalconservation.org)

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