

Are we approaching the tipping point?

By Frank Dietz
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My elementary school teacher aunt was a bundle of fun. I was the first to help her achieve “aunt” status. She spent some of her off-time giving me lots of attention. I remember how much I delighted in her times with me. She had an array of little table games and floor puzzles we would endeavor to work on together. Several carried the themes related to balance, height and how far you could build blocks upward. “Oops, tipping point!” became the expression I learned early. Today, so many decades later, it becomes an apt signal for what we are experiencing for real, not just metaphorically, on a number of fronts. Do you feel it as I do?

Whether the subject is fresh abundant water, spaces across our Hill Country to explore without impediment or some of the scary statistics regarding the shrinking census of wildlife it certainly feels like those times when we were reaching the pinnacle of a stacking group of blocks before it all came tumbling down.

Early in the new 21st century I discovered Estaville and Earl’s Texas Water Atlas, a helpful snapshot of the full Texas picture of surface and subsurface waters in a region prone to periodic stretches of drought. Seamus McGraw built further perspective with his impressive discussion of Thirsty Land. The list of resources and reports going forward document that this is a very serious matter both when looking to our surface and subsurface water sources and sustaining their quality. Do we near a “tipping point?”

Drive around the Texas Hill Country and our Comal County, in particular, and you soon see documentation of what it means to be listed as first, second or third in rapid growth of population and households. It signals spacious parcels being carved into small affordable settlements and buildings. Alongside these fresh carvings across the escarpment that creates our Texas Hill Country there is a notable disappearance of green cover and the wildlife it supports.

The challenge to manage a way to honor the passionate interests for settling near our Springs and Rivers with respectful protections for open space is clearly upon us. The question basically is

whether we are now near the “tipping point” toward seeing loss of what has been so attractive to many.

On Sept. 12 from 6-7:30 p.m. at McKenna Events Center concerned citizens can gather for discovery and learning with one of the most informed Hill Country stewards and friends who seek to achieve this delicate balance. Katherine Romans, Executive Director of the Hill County Alliance, will bring a current snapshot and tools to create a careful future before the tipping point is reached. Do come and bring neighbors and family!

Along with this September opportunity for a fresh current look at our precious Texas Hill Country will be an opportunity to support the Comal Land Conservation Fund of the CCCA through the Big Give on Sept. 20. Watch for the public announcements of this important effort in league with an array of important non-profits seeking to assist folks and make a difference in lives and create a more viable future. The CCCA's Land Fund is designed to build sufficient capacity to lend a hand for landowners unable to take the several expensive steps toward creating a Conservation Easement. Once achieved, the fund's assistance can be reimbursed but the enablement can happen. Check out some of the specifics for this year's Big Give and the Comal Land Conservation Fund at comalconservation.org. Your help will make a difference!

Help sustain the delicate balance!