



# Conservation Insider

February 2022

**Welcome Friends, Partners and Volunteers.**

We hope our cool (and sometimes down-right cold) winter finds you all healthy, happy and warm. Perhaps enjoying a cup of tea with a stack of seed catalogs or gardening book looking for new ideas. These are the months of planning for what we will work hard to reap - the beauty and bounty that will be produced in the later months of the year. This aligns with our Spotlight Topic for February - legacy and land conservation. Just like gardening, we need to plan now to reap the benefits for our future.

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## CCCA NEWS

With the new year comes a big welcome to our new 2022 Board Members:

Director at Large – MV Poffenberger

Treasurer – Cindy Cuevas

Government Affairs Committee Co-Chair – Roxanna Deane

**Resource Development Committee Chair – Shawn Troxell**

We also extend a warm welcome to Kim Hatfield - our new Administrative Coordinator.

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And sincere thanks for the commitment to CCCA by the hardworking 2021 Directors who are stepping off the board this year. We thank them for their many contributions and friendship:

Dick Bigelow, Steve Jones and Cindy Millichamp.

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## **SAVE THE DATE**

**Tuesday, March 8, 6:00 - 7:30 PM**

**CCCA's MARCH VIRTUAL COMMUNITY PROGRAM**

"ONE WATER in Comal County" with guest speaker Jennifer Walker, Deputy Director, Texas Coast and Water Program, National Wildlife Federation.

**EVENT INFO:** If you like, use or drink water, this presentation is for you! Comal County is a land of refreshing springs, clear rivers, and magnificent aquifers! One Water is a way to make the best possible use of this amazing resource and ensure fresh water will always be available -- for people, wildlife and yes, most definitely for a prosperous Texas economy. Jennifer Walker will join us to discuss the One Water concept, and how it can help us meet our county's future water needs by changing how we use and reuse the water we have.

Free to the public - Join Zoom Meeting at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89726649214?pwd=Y0NvZ01UVmgrYUprKzZtZGhycEZ0UT09>

For more details and options, go to:

<https://www.comalconservation.org/upcoming-events.html>

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Looking for a way to help protect Nature? Use your talents to help CCCA! We are looking for an experienced Development Coordinator or Grant Writer to assist with raising funds to support the work of preserving land, water, and wildlife in Comal County.

Our Website Manager position is still open as is our Facebook Manager position! If you like to keep in touch and share news about conservation, either of these is a great project for you.

Interested candidates should submit their contact information and brief message at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/donatecontact.html>

# CCCA FEBRUARY SPOTLIGHT

## Land Legacy

This month our focus on land legacy will start off with Frank's column and continue with some articles you'll find on our website that delve more deeply into the issue and why it's important now more than ever.

### “What About Our Legacy Acres?”

by Frank Dietz

February 5, 2022

Several months ago, a Comal County resident who was isolating on family acreage during the pandemic challenge of “working virtually” reached out to me. The description was of a homestead on legacy acres that remain “in the family” to manage, use, pass on or develop in some manner. Until the lengthy working away from offices the going assumption among heirs has been that the inherited acres would be marketed at some point.

It became clear in this conversation that some “different, alternative thinking” was underway as the comments and questions were based on a deepening appreciation for how the acres had been tended through many decades and how they might have a future more natural and less developed. I thought to myself, I'd like to savor these exchanges and share anonymously some of the thoughts explored. This is my attempt to do so.

My urging was that any heirs be on the same wavelength as the conversations proceed. If there are young folks of a next generation, make certain they have an opportunity to be heard as well. Then, together to the extent possible, have some pleasurable chats about memories with good stories and then move toward options that might be available.

Continue reading at:

<https://www.comalconservation.org/land-legacy.html>

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### VIDEO - - - - - Our Lands: Looking To Our Feet For The Answers

You don't want to miss this excellent video covering land preservation, legacy, carbon sequestration, and so much more, through the eyes of a young woman rancher.

Third-generation Meredith Ellis from the G Bar C Ranch, talks about land as a national heritage. Taking us on a tour of the ranch, she talks about what the G Bar C Ranch does to provide a sustainable nature sanctuary while having 400 head of cattle to ensure profitability. She loves this land and is committed to saving it - and enhancing it for her son. View the video here: <https://www.comalconservation.org/land-legacy.html#video>

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## **Creating Landscapes of Conservation—295 Acres Protected Forever** By Ellen Gass

We are excited to announce the recent permanent protection of 295 acres in Mason County with a donated conservation easement! The newly protected Flat Tire Ranch sits in the Llano Uplift and hosts inviting granite outcrops amidst typical Edwards Plateau habitat, including grasslands, bottomland hardwood forest, and post oak woodlands.

Jane and Tom Titus contacted TLC in late 2019, interested in placing a conservation easement on their property. The owners of Flat Tire Ranch since 2002, they had originally grazed the property, then switched to wildlife management. A conservation easement fit with their long-term plans of keeping the property in its natural state and providing habitat for Hill Country flora and fauna while continuing to enjoy the unique features of the property including its landmark large granite outcrops. Read more at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/land-legacy.html#flat-tire>

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## **Moulton Waring Ranch (Texas Agricultural Land Trust)**

In Susan Moulton's experience, a ranch is the ultimate childhood playground. "As a rancher's daughter, the land shaped who I was—and who I am," said Moulton... Until she was five, Moulton lived on a family ranch near San Marcos. Her immediate family moved to San Antonio to care for her grandmother about the time she started kindergarten.

When she became a mother, Moulton raised her sons, Charlie and Will, as children of the land. Every chance she got, Moulton introduced them to the natural wonders of the Moulton Waring Ranch in Kendall County, where she'd been making memories for more than 50 years since her own childhood. Continue at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/land-legacy.html#moulton>

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## **Special Place to Practice Land Stewardship** By Errol and Susan Candy

By Texas standards, our property in the Texas Hill Country is relatively small. But for us, the enjoyment and connection to nature, we derive from living here is big. Over the years, we've invested sweat equity, some financial resources, and lots of emotion to be decent stewards of the land. It is a work in progress, and each year brings new experiences and more opportunity to learn about the wildlife and plants we share our days with. Read more at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/land-legacy.html#candy>

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## **Committed to the Dream of Land Ownership** Hill Country Land Trust

Kim and Pam Bergman pursued a shared vision of buying some property in Gillespie Country, and their story is how acquiring a ranch changed them and the land forever. In

1996 the Bergmans acquired 685 acres south of Stonewall after working for 15 years in Saudi Arabia. The ranch possessed many of the aspects Pam and Kim had come to value most, dramatic topographic relief, high plateaus with views, and valleys and wooded creeks.

With the acquisition of this parcel, the Bergmans began working on the land. Continue reading at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/land-legacy.html#bergman>

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### SO3 Ranch (Texas Agricultural Land Trust)

Gib Lewis has accomplished much in his long life. From raising a family, to building a multi-million-dollar business, to serving five terms as Speaker of the House in the Texas Legislature, Lewis has much to be proud of. Stewarding his own patch of Texas is another source of satisfaction. He's spent the last 40 years taking care of his ranch northwest of Austin in Williamson and Burnet County.

The 1,000-acre SO3 Ranch is in the San Gabriel River Watershed, providing protection for the North Fork of the San Gabriel River, which is a tributary of the Brazos River. The property includes native prairie and open space which provides habitat for a myriad of species of native wildlife. Continue at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/land-legacy.html#so3>

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### Open V Ranch (Texas Agricultural Land Trust)

Sky Lewey listens to the lessons of the land.

“Over the years, the land becomes your teacher. If you are listening and if you are paying attention, land is the best teacher you can have. It makes you who you are.”

Lewey has been paying attention to her family's land in Uvalde County since she was a girl. Her parents purchased the land in 1968 to retire from bigger rougher drier South Texas ranching.

At a time when there was little appreciation for it, Lewey's parents Marge and Elmo Jones, recognized the diversity of the plants and animals that thrive at the intersection of ecoregions and the soil richness that results from the confluence of waterways. Read more at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/land-legacy.html#lewey>

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### Financial, Ecological Benefits of Conservation Easements on Working Lands

By Alison Lund & Brittany Wegner

January 11, 2022

A recent report by the Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute, Texas Water Resources Institute and Texas Land Trust Council shows state-funded conservation easements in Texas provide numerous financial and ecological benefits.

The purpose of the 2020 Evaluation Report was to examine the benefits of conservation easements established on privately-owned lands under the Texas Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Program, TFRLCP, a state-funded program that purchases development rights from willing and interested landowners.

“Conservation easements are a voluntary agreement between a landowner and a qualified non-governmental organization or government entity,” explained Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute director Roel Lopez, Ph.D., San Antonio. “In this agreement, the landowner still owns the land and remains in charge of its day-to-day management but commits to minimize or avoid certain types of non-agricultural development on their property by selling or donating some property rights (i.e. development rights.) The land trust or public entity holding the easement monitors the property to ensure the terms are upheld in perpetuity.”

#### WHY CONSERVATION EASEMENTS ARE IMPORTANT

Lopez said Texas has one of the most diverse and ecologically rich landscapes in the U.S., much of which is open space falling under the designation of privately-owned working lands to include farms, ranches and forestlands.

The state has approximately 248,000 farm and ranch operations accounting for more than 141 million acres of land use. Continue at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/land-legacy.html#ce-benefits>

*Remember, there is much more information about land, water, and wildlife on our website!*

*Stay safe, stay healthy, enjoy nature! See you next month.*

**Comal County Conservation Alliance**

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

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