
February 2023

1 message



Conservation Insider

February 2023

Hello, CCCA Friends, Partners, and Volunteers,

Belated Happy New Year wishes to all CCCA Friends, volunteers and supporters! We're pleased to be sending the first newsletter of the year, starting off with a message from CCCA President, Elizabeth Bowerman.

Greetings! It's only February, but 2023 has been quite a ride so far! After starting the year with Spring temperatures, Winter blasted back with two deep dives, including an icing event that broke tree limbs and uprooted trees located in shallow soils! Not something we'll forget anytime soon! Many things haven't changed in the new year – we're still under drought conditions, development keeps gobbling up ranches and natural areas, the weather is getting less and less predictable, and cedar fever is back to cause itchy-eyes and runny noses. For CCCA, Community Programs will continue on an every-other-month schedule this year and the Conservation Insider newsletter will continue to bring you CCCA news and important information about the need for land and water conservation in the Hill Country and the progress that is being made in Comal County.

Among the things that have changed, as we step into this new year, we say goodbye and thank you to five departing Board Members: Marne' Peterson, Jane Finneran, Cindy Cuevas, Diane DeSimone, and Steven Grainger. Their dedication and hard work are much appreciated. We also welcome six new members to our Board of Directors: Leesa Brieger, Kim Hannan, Robin Nava, Doug Leacock, Heather Harrison, and James Rothfelder, and

thank them for stepping up to lend their expertise and passion to the conservation efforts in Comal County. There is even more news to come! Stay tuned for an announcement about CCCA's first-ever Executive Director, who will be coming onboard in March!

On behalf of the CCCA Board, I thank you for being a "Friend of CCCA" and look forward to your continued support in 2023. Preserving the precious natural resources and rural character of our county for future generations will take a village, and you are an important part of this village.

Wishing you a happy, healthy 2023.

Elizabeth

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## **CCCA NEWS**

### *Our 2023 Leadership Team*

#### **CCCA Board of Directors**

**President — Elizabeth Bowerman**

**Vice President — Eva Silverfine Ott**

**Secretary — Leesa Brieger**

**Treasurer — Kim Hannan**

**Resource Development Committee Chair — Dirk Davidek**

**Outreach Committee Chair – Doug Leacock**

**Government Affairs Committee Co-chairs — Roxanna Deane and Robin Nava**

**Director at Large — Cliff Kaplan**

**Director at Large – Frank Dietz**

**Director at Large – Heather Harrison**

**Director at Large — James Rothfelder**

#### **CCCA Advisory Board**

**Kathleen Tobin Krueger**

**Garry Merritt**

**Nancy Pappas**

**Annalisa Peace**

**Katherine Romans**

**Andy Sansom**

Kathleen Scott

Les Shephard

Dianne Wassenich

Jeff Weigel

### *Looking for a way to help protect Nature?*

We have some ideas! CCCA is looking for volunteers to help advance our conservation mission in the following areas:

- Communications Coordinator to share information among our various communication and social networking platforms
- Facebook Manager
- Newsletter Editor
- Website Assistant

Interested candidates should submit their contact information and brief message at: [www.comalconservation.org/donatecontact.html](http://www.comalconservation.org/donatecontact.html)

CCCA's volunteers are the heart of our nonprofit and the ones who make things happen! Whether you are volunteering special skills, expertise or experience, or offering your time and energy "where ever needed", there is a place for everyone in the work to preserve Comal's rural character and precious natural areas. As a growing group of passionate believers in the need to balance growth with the protection of the natural resources needed to sustain our communities, we invite everyone to get involved.

To volunteer for a committee or to offer help in a specific skill area, please complete the Volunteer Interest Survey [HERE](#).

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SAVE THE DATE

CCCA Community Program

WHAT: CCCA Community Program "A Dive Into Honey Creek Cave" with guest speaker Michael Cicherski, Director with the Texas Cave Management Association

WHEN: Tuesday, March 14, 6:00-7:30

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

EVENT INFO:

Michael Cicherski has been caving regularly since the late 80s. He is a Fellow of the National Speleological Society and a recipient of the National Speleological Society Certificate of Merit.

Michael has personally explored Honey Creek Cave many times, a cave described by some as being “dark, creepy, and cold!” The mouth of the cave is on the privately-owned Honey Creek Springs Ranch, which was recently placed in a conservation easement by its owners to ensure its protection in perpetuity. With 20 miles of cave already documented, it is the longest known cave in Texas.

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## IN OTHER NEWS

**Important Community Open Houses- Please plan to Attend FEBRUARY 6th - 9th**

As you know the Comal County population is growing rapidly. We need to preserve more open space and natural areas to ensure Comal County maintains a healthy balance between developed land and green space, for the well-being of our residents, to allow aquifer recharge, to protect our starry night skies, and to support our tourism and recreation economies. Please attend one of these Open Houses to let our County Commissioners know that protecting natural areas and open space is important to you!

**WHEN AND WHERE:**

- Monday, 6 February, 5:45 PM - 7:45 PM, Comal County Courthouse, [100 N Seguin Ave, New Braunfels](#)
- Tuesday, 7 February, 5:45 PM - 7:45 PM, Davenport High School ([Garden Ridge](#)), [23255 FM 3009, San Antonio](#)
- Wednesday, 8 February, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM, Mammen Family Public Library, [131 Bulverde Crossing, Bulverde](#)
- Thursday, 9 February, 5:45 PM - 7:45 PM, Tye Preston Memorial Library, [16311 S Access Rd, Canyon Lake](#)

In addition to attending one of the Open Houses, please take a few minutes to complete this very important survey by HALFF Associates to gather public input on what is important to Comal residents in regard to Comal County Parks, Open Space, and Natural Areas.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ComalParksPlan>

### Lindheimer Native Plant Society of Texas Meeting

**WHAT:** Lindheimer Native Plant Society of Texas meeting, with speaker Debbie Kyrouac, presenting “Getting Your Native Landscape Ready for Spring” **WHEN:** Tuesday, February 21, 5:30 – 7:30 PM **WHERE:** Tye Preston Memorial Library, [16311 South Access Rd Canyon Lake, TX 78133](#)

### “Fun Fish” Free Fishing Event for children ages 3-16 Sponsored by Water-Oriented Recreational District of Comal County (WORD)

**WHAT:** “Fun Fish” Free Fishing Event for children ages 3-16 **WHEN:** Saturday, February 25, 10:00 – 4:00 **WHERE:** Canyon Park, [1769 Canyon Park Rd., Canyon Lake 78133](#)  
Register at [www.wordcc.com](http://www.wordcc.com)

### New Braunfels Native Plant Society of Texas Meeting

**WHAT:** New Braunfels Native Plant Society of Texas meeting, with speaker Deedy Wright, presenting - "Xeriscaping Your Yard on Your Schedule" **WHEN:** Monday, February 27, 5:45 – 7:00 PM **WHERE:** New Braunfels Public Library, [700 E Common St, New Braunfels, TX 78130](#)

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CCCA H-Z FEBRUARY COLUMN

"Watch When it Rains, Then Act" By Frank Dietz for the H-Z January 2022

My early boyhood included long observational pauses as coastal showers frequented many days. From our city porch in New Orleans, I studied the rapid flows for better, faster navigation for little ships I prepared when drainage ditches filled. From our grandfather's porch on his farmstead, I watched the flows toward a shallow drain providing fresh water for a perimeter pond. As I grew stronger and more able, I was assigned "to not dig deep but keep channel clear" for good flow. Now, seven decades later I patiently await any break in drought across our Texas Hill Country's far more arid circumstances. Again, it causes me to wonder, observe and act.

Both on the acres that provide us with a setting for our homesite and across our Comal terrain, including our village of New Braunfels and neighboring settlements where folks love to dwell, I wonder, observe positive and impeding drainage patterns and hope to see some action or take it where appropriate. In a community that has experienced debilitating floods locally or nearby and with considerable watershed issues in terrain graced with rivers, springs and aquifers there is sustained cause for vigilance. What have you noticed or pondered? What constructive measures have you taken or would consider taking?

Our libraries and on-line resources from a multitude of sources abound with information. You can get a start at comalconservation.org. Look first around your own home and the drainage that prevails. Do you have patterns that can be enhanced with a little attention? Are there or might there be swales in particular circumstances? Could a little enhanced channeling help with flows toward a needed area? Whether your source for water is a water system or onsite well, measures for reduced water consumption abound with modified household practices and landscape irrigation. In fact, more folks are finding xeriscaping advantageously responsible.

For larger areas, there are riparian practices to filter runoff in the watersheds and before drainage heads into our region's karsts. You can find some responsible practices at the Headwaters of the Comal as well as on several demonstration areas open for discovery and learning. The region's libraries and some other public spaces are exhibiting smart rainwater capture, use and channeling. Take time and take note for some valuable lessons to replicate. An excursion out and about can inspire actions on your part. More extended regional adventures might include the Lady Bird Wildflower Center, Bamberger ranch, and numerous other such efforts. The list for such excursions is impressive and considerable. Many report that a few of these exposures lead to personal action and voluntary efforts among neighbors and like-minded colleagues.

The misfortune for our area has been the harmful region-wide drought. Hasn't it been scary to see our very locale the center of deepest red for drought monitoring maps? It brings to mind some years ago when a rancher came out of a service of worship I had led during a pastoral interim and said, "that deluge that made many of us homebound last week maybe meant we had prayed a little too hard for the rains to come, Reverend!" We had a good laugh but then talked awhile about the damages done by the extended dry and the sudden torrential downpours. Indeed, preparation is required and must be ongoing.

It is a season for us in this region to consider the shifts and changes in dry periods and rainfall interruptions. Do join the conversation! Let's ponder and discern together: wondering, observing and acting individually and together.

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## CCCA FEBRUARY SPOTLIGHT

### Benefits Of Open Space

We're focusing our SPOTLIGHT this month on the Benefits of Open Space. A few excellent articles are included here, and more can be found on CCCA's website at <https://www.comalconservation.org/open-spaces.html>

#### "BENEFITS OF INVESTING IN OPEN SPACES"

Comal County Conservation Alliance Brochure Published 2020

Numerous academic studies and the anecdotal experience of neighboring communities have clearly demonstrated the benefits of protecting open space. Protecting open space and water sources in Comal County is an investment in the future of our county that will pay dividends to county taxpayers for generations to come.

#### BENEFITS OF OPEN SPACE COME IN SEVERAL WAYS

Farming, ranching, and undeveloped natural areas generate more tax revenues than community service costs. Residential housing generates more community service costs than tax revenues. Maintaining natural systems reduces the cost of supplying and purifying water. It also helps control flooding and reduces the cost of flood damage. Proximity to parks and other natural spaces increases property values and, therefore, tax revenues. A robust natural environment helps to support the county's important tourism industry. A high quality of life is necessary to attract businesses. Access to appealing natural areas is an important part of that high quality of life. Nature is essential for our mental and physical health. Continue Reading at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/open-space.html#open-spaces-benefits>

#### "UNIQUE AND CREATIVE APPROACHES FOR CONSERVATION"

By Lon Shell, Hays County Commissioner

Opinion Editorial May 16, 2022

As our population surges, will the Hill Country retain its character? I believe it can, however it is a challenge that will require unique and creative approaches to balance that growth with preservation of the very things that drive it.

We live in a remarkable place with beautiful resources, wonderful people, and amazing opportunities. People want to live here. They want to experience the quality of life that our region provides. They want to swim in the rivers and creeks, take in the views from the hilltops, and breathe clean air—and at the same time, have access to good jobs, affordable homes, low taxes, and a safe place to raise families. Unfortunately, without careful attention, this growth will negatively affect all the things we cherish and that drew us to this region in the first place.

In the recently published State of the Hill Country report, we can see a significant percentage of this growth is occurring in the unincorporated areas of the Hill Country counties. These areas are represented by County Judges and County Commissioners that have little to no authority related to land use. A rock quarry can be established next to an existing neighborhood. A new subdivision with hundreds of homes can be built off a narrow, rural road with no shoulders or turn lanes. Read the entire article at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/open-space.html#Shell>

## "OPEN SPACES 101"

By *LandScope America*

### WHAT IS OPEN SPACE?

Open space” lacks a consistent definition, but the phrase generally refers to land that is undeveloped or lightly developed for uses other than agriculture. The State of New York offers a useful and inclusive definition of open space:

Open Space is land that is not intensively developed for residential, commercial, industrial or institutional use. It serves many purposes, whether it is publicly or privately owned. It includes agricultural and forest land, undeveloped shorelines, undeveloped scenic lands, public parks and preserves. It also includes water bodies such as lakes and bays. What is defined as open space depends in part on its surroundings. A vacant lot, community garden or small marsh can be open space in a big city. A narrow corridor or pathway for walking or bicycling is open space even though it is surrounded by developed areas. Historic and archaeological sites are often associated with significant open spaces and are a part of our common heritage.

### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

From panoramic western landscapes to urban pocket parks and from mountain to shore, open space is a cherished part of America’s national and local identities. Its ecological importance and ability to sustain our spirit have long been appreciated, but our understanding of the economic value of these lands and waters has been steadily increasing in recent years. Forests, rangelands, and other natural lands and working landscapes provide human society with a range of essential and fundamentally irreplaceable services, such as pure water, abundant wildlife, and a moderating influence on our changing climate. Read the entire article at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/open-space.html#Open-space>

## "WHY CITY PARKS MATTER"

City Park Alliance

City parks play a vital role in the social, economic and physical well-being of America's cities and their residents. As cities become more densely populated and concern about the impact of climate change increases, planners, elected officials, and community advocates are taking a fresh look at parks and their potential to help address critical urban infrastructure and public health issues. Parks are now recognized as powerful tools for urban communities and local economies. City parks provide access to recreational opportunities, increase property values, spur local economies, combat crime, and protect cities from environmental impact.

Continue Reading at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/open-space.html#city-parks>

## "THE TIME TO CONSERVE LAND IS NOW"

By Annalisa Peace for the *New Braunfels Herald Zeitung*

Dec 24, 2022

With unprecedented growth in the Edwards region, especially in Comal County, opportunities to preserve land are rapidly disappearing. We are caught in a vicious cycle where demand inflates the price of land, which leads to higher density developments and a more urbanized landscape.

It is to our advantage to act quickly to secure park land and conservation easements, not only as it relates to preserving water quality but, to mitigate the very real threats of flash floods. Land on the recharge zone is especially efficient at soaking up stormwater. Conserving this land can go a far way in negating the need for costly drainage infrastructure and loss of property due to flood damage.

Read the entire article at : <https://www.comalconservation.org/open-space.html#conserve-land>

All the above articles and MANY more are available to read in the February Spotlight section of our website at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/open-space.html#preserving-open-space>

*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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