



# Conservation Insider

July 2021

Hello CCCA friends and volunteers!

As we put this issue together for you, we are enjoying our beautiful July rain. The Hill Country landscape looks even more beautiful this year if that is even possible.

We have a jam-packed issue this month with News and a timely Spotlight focus on Green Growth.

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## SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR JULY ZOOM PRESENTATION

**WHO:** Guest speaker Hays County Commissioner Lon Shell, speaking on “Having Growth and Green Space” (Free to the public.)

**WHEN:** Tuesday July 13, 2021, 6:00-7:30 PM

**WHERE: Go to [zoom.us/join](https://zoom.us/join), Enter Meeting ID: 821 0175 2949, click "Join"**

**Enter Passcode: 025095**

More information is available on our website at <https://www.comalconservation.org/>

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## **PARTNER NEWS**

### **DEEP IN THE KARST OF TEXAS**

The Trinity Edwards Springs Association (TESPA) and Wimberley Valley Watershed Association (WVWA) have teamed up to launch an educational campaign to celebrate and raise awareness about the unique, fragile landscape beneath our feet – our karst and caves.

“Our campaign theme jingles with a lesson, The water flows, through rocks and holes.... answered by the campaign name, Deep in the Karst of Texas for a campaign logo that virtually sings.”

Read more at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/caves--karst#karst>

### **CONGRATULATIONS!**

Congratulations to our Partner - Keep Canyon Lake Beautiful - for winning the Second Place 2021 Governor's Achievement Award. Well-deserved recognition for the group's hard work!

### **CELEBRATE THE HERITAGE MUSEUM OF THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY AT THEIR OPEN HOUSE**

July 17, 10:00 - Noon

And check out their Summer Camp

July 5 - 9 & 12 - 16

9:00 AM - 12:30 PM

### **DAVID YEATES RESIGNS FROM TWA EFFECTIVE JULY 18, 2021**

On Friday, May 28th, David Yeates announced his resignation from TWA effective July 18,

2021, following Convention. In a note to TWA staff, Executive Committee, and TWAF Trustees, Yeates states “It has been an immense honor and privilege to serve as CEO for Texas Wildlife Association and its Foundation for the last seven years.” David led TWA to many successes during his tenure as CEO, including most recently the opening of a beautiful new headquarters building, wins at the legislature including passing clean Sunset bills and eminent domain reform, and successfully navigating TWA through the trials of the pandemic.

Congratulations David, and thank you for your expert leadership at the helm of the Texas Wildlife Association over the past seven years. You will be missed.

Read more at <https://www.comalconservation.org/announcements.html>

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## CONSERVATION NEWS

### Conservation Easement Awarded for More Than 500 Acres at Spicewood Ranch

By Amy Rae Dadamo | Jul 1, 2021 Community Impact News

“Thanks to a partnership between a Spicewood family and a local conservation nonprofit, more than 500 acres of environmentally sensitive Hill Country land will remain protected and undeveloped.

Hill Country Conservancy announced June 29 that a conservation easement has been granted for 561 acres of Spicewood Ranch—a property owned by Chris and Will Harte. Together, the Harte family and HCC will ensure the permanent protection of this land and its unspoiled landscape.

According to HCC’s website, conservation easements are traditionally used to conserve land while still allowing landowners to retain ownership of the property and many property rights.

“With over 95% of Texas’ land being privately owned, we are incredibly dependent on the efforts of stewards like the owners of Spicewood Ranch for their care of the region’s water resources, iconic Texas wildlife and our unique quality of life,” HCC Chief Conservation Officer Frank Davis said in a June 29 news release.” Read more about this at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/conservation-easements#spicewood>

Sierra Martin | Managing Editor | Corridor News

March 30, 2021

**SAN MARCOS** - In 2013, the San Marcos River Foundation (SMRF) purchased the 75-acre Geiger Tract to protect the area from heavy development that was planned along Sink Creek, which flows directly into Spring Lake.

As a result of SMRF's purchase, the neighboring property, Windemere Farms, was bought from the previous owners by the Roberts family (aka Eden Farms). The Roberts family completed a conservation easement on over 200 acres of Windemere Farms in 2019, limiting impervious cover and preventing subdivision in the future.

Last week, SMRF traded the Roberts family the 75-acre Geiger Tract for a new 75 acres they call "Owl Bluff." Upon closing, the Roberts family put a conservation easement on the Geiger Tract which the Colorado River Land Trust will hold. SMRF's new property, Owl Bluff, is also located along Sink Creek and will have an additional conservation easement placed on it when SMRF sells this land to conservation buyers.

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## **MONTHLY SPOTLIGHT ON GREEN GROWTH**

This quote from Frank's column sums up our predicament: *"we are the beneficiaries and victims of the "new and thriving Texas." That current reality tells us our reflections and decisions related to best use and green space are urgent matters."*

### **Green and With Growth!**

*Frank Dietz for the Herald Zeitung*

July, 2021

Have you found yourself in a local conversation about "protecting green space and the increasing demand for housing and commerce" right here in our Comal County? I certainly find myself experiencing some form of that topic frequently!

When you are privileged to live on heritage acres that have engaged in agricultural endeavors through several generations it is difficult to realize how many others look at the trees and spread wondering if there are alternatives for this space. Weekly inquiries regarding the acreage with an eye toward development and/or commercial options get disruptive. In our dynamic Comal County, there is such an accelerating pace to find space to make way for the incoming folk who are eager to find a future among us.

As I stroll along outside with my walking stick or a young companion, I think of how fortunate we are to have this cherished space and feel the weight of its stewardship.

Continue reading at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/green-growth#dietz>

## **MORE INFORMATIVE ARTICLES ON GREEN GROWTH**

### **Green Spaces Are a Necessity, Not an Amenity.**

#### **How Can Cities Make Them Accessible to Everyone?**

*A growing body of science is demonstrating that spending time in nature — or even an urban park or garden — is good for us. But the grass isn't green for everyone.*

By Lydia Rivers

April 11, 2021

Homebound city dwellers gained a newfound appreciation for their local parks and gardens during COVID-19. Green spaces became a lifeline for people to get out of the house, relax and gather safely.

But these oases beyond our doorsteps are much more than places to hang out for a couple of hours. Researchers have long known that urban green spaces are critical to our emotional and physical wellbeing.

“[Green spaces] are not an amenity, they're a necessity — we have to have it,” says psychologist Marc Berman at the University of Chicago. Just like clean water or clean air, we have to have natural spaces in our environment for people to be able to function well.”

While pandemic lockdowns called attention to the importance of green spaces, it has also brought to light how access to nature is diminishing as more people move to cities — and oftentimes, low-income and people of color experience the greatest barriers.

Read more at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/green-growth#buda>

### **COMMENTARY: Make Room for Nature, Protect Water**

Suzanne Scott, For the Express-News

May 17, 2021

Nature's ability to boost our well-being has never been more apparent, or more desperately needed, than in the past year. During the pandemic, people reconnected with nature — spending more time in parks, walking on trails, biking or sitting in their backyards.

We found respite from uncertainty among trees, plants and wild spaces that offered something predictable — the beauty and healing force of nature.

As businesses reopen and we spend more time with friends and family, we must not forget the important role nature has played getting us through this past year. Rather than return to the pre-pandemic development status quo, we must make protecting and

preserving our natural environment a higher priority. Doing so will improve our physical and mental health — and our quality of life. Read more at:

<https://www.comalconservation.org/green-growth#commentary>

## **The Health Benefits of Small Parks and Green Spaces**

**National Recreation and Parks Association**

**April 3, 2017, by Kathleen L. Wolf, Ph.D.**

### **Health and Wellness**

**Parks are emerging as important public health solutions in urban communities. Nearly 40 years of research evidence confirms that nearby nature, including parks, gardens, the urban forest and green spaces, support human health and wellness. The research about active living and opportunities to avoid chronic diseases (such as diabetes, heart disease and respiratory problems) is particularly relevant to large parks where people can enjoy walking and bike paths, and playing fields. But, equally as important is the role of small parks and nature spaces for health.**

**In many communities, additional land for large parks is either expensive or difficult to repurpose. Every parcel or easement is ever more valuable. Creating small parks can be a productive public and private joint venture that introduces the spaces for nature encounters that benefit everyone.**

### **Co-Benefits of City Systems**

**An emerging opportunity for parks and recreation is the integration of green infrastructure and parks goals. Infrastructure systems are planned to systematically source and deliver crucial services or products, such as transportation or water systems. The term “infrastructure” usually brings to mind roads, pipes and power lines. Green infrastructure systems, however, are practical integrations of built and ecological systems that incorporate natural and constructed green spaces to replace or augment traditional gray infrastructure.**

**Parks and green infrastructure can be co-designed for co-benefits. Parks can serve their primary goals to offer recreation and aesthetic amenities, while also containing spaces that mitigate stormwater or improve air quality. Green infrastructure can achieve essential utility functions in the community, but may also be designed to create the environments that provide nearby nature experiences and support health.**

**Green infrastructure includes bioswales, rain gardens and other water harvesting features. If a collection of these small nature spaces is to be installed within a community, then a systems outlook is important. The TKF Foundation, a philanthropy dedicated to creating small, high-quality gardens, promotes a “sites-to-systems” outlook so that the sum benefit of small nature spaces is greater than the many parts. Rather than focusing**

only on the design of individual parcels or features, a broader planning approach could integrate a series of small spaces into a coherent network. Read more at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/green-growth#health>

## 4 Ways Urban Green Spaces can Benefit the Environment

By Jennifer Fabiano, AccuWeather staff writer

**Green infrastructure:** Two words that don't go together very often, but when they do, the results are extremely advantageous.

"Green infrastructure can be anything from parks to arboretums to backyards to green roofs," Carly Ziter, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said. "We really need diversity from our green spaces in our cities if we want to get multiple benefits; variety is really key here."

Ziter's research suggested that green spaces, such as parks and backyards, can provide many benefits to urban areas. Ziter explains that these "benefits" are often called "ecosystem services."

In more developed areas, neighborhood parks and people's yards store very high amounts of carbon, which helps reduce carbon emission levels in cities.

"It's really important to keep your yard green," Ziter said. Instead of paving an area, keeping green space and plants in your yard "is really important because your property is part of a much bigger ecosystem and is part of that proven fabric of the city," Ziter said.

By keeping your yard green, you provide your city with the ecosystem services that urban green spaces provide.

Here are four little known ecosystem services that urban green spaces provide to cities. *Urban heat island effect, Carbon storage, Water regulation, Economic savings.* Read more at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/green-growth#benefit>

## The Rise of 'Blandscaping,' and Why Not All Green Space is Created Equal

By Stuart Connop and Caroline Nash (FastCompany)

July 1, 2021

With skyscrapers climbing ever higher and unoccupied city areas increasingly scarce, demands on urban space are increasing. Making the most out of this space requires a careful balancing act between short-term human needs and long-term planetary benefits.

All too often, attempting this balancing act ends up in "blandscaping," the practice of creating virtually uniform green spaces that are devoid of local character or distinctiveness. These bland landscapes arise when urban green spaces are designed with an entirely human focus: making them attractive to look at and easy to manage, but

containing almost none of the valuable biodiversity that would otherwise have occupied the space. Read more at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/green-growth#landscaping>

And don't forget, there is always more information 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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