



Conservation Insider

June 2021

Hello CCCA friends and volunteers! Welcome to the June Insider.

We hope you are enjoying our rainy early summer. Although sometimes an inconvenience, the rain has certainly improved our water resources and helped our trees, shrubs and perennials spring back from the February freeze.

CCCA NEWS

The CCCA Board of Directors has some exciting news to share this month. We are happy to announce that CCCA has received grant funding to hire a full-time professional consultant to help us achieve our mission of working to preserve land, water and wildlife in Comal County. Our founding Vice-President, Helen Ballew has stepped off the board to take on the position of Conservation Consultant, enabling us to continue benefiting from her expertise and knowledge in an amplified way. This will be an exciting year as we engage with our current and future partners and look for opportunities to add to what has already begun in land conservation in Comal County. Here is a very brief history of Helen's lifelong work to protect the environment for current and future generations.

Helen Ballew started her conservation career in Texas working for The Nature Conservancy doing landowner contact throughout the state. While at TNC she also served as Vice President of the Biological Advisory Team of the Austin Regional Habitat Conservation Plan, (one of the first in the country) laying out a blueprint for the creation of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve and National Wildlife Refuge. Over the span of a 30-plus year career, Helen has worked primarily in the rapidly urbanizing corridor between San Antonio and Austin. In addition to helping found the Comal County Conservation Alliance, Helen is a co-founder of the Great Springs Project, Save Our Springs Alliance, and Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance and also served many years on the board of the Bamberger Ranch Preserve. Her volunteer work in her children's inner city public school earned her one of the fourteen annual "Heroes for Children Award" from the Texas State Board of Education. She has lived in San Antonio, Austin, and now New Braunfels.

Helen earned her A.B. degree in English from Middlebury College, and an M.E.S. in Environmental Studies (Field Ecology) from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies (now the Yale School for the Environment).

Please welcome Helen to her new position as Conservation Consultant for the Comal County Conservation Alliance.

We are also happy to announce our newest partner, Keep Canyon Lake Beautiful. Keep Canyon Lake Beautiful is dedicated to the education and engagement of everyone, for the responsibility of the environmental health of our community. Welcome! And thank you KCLB for the great work you are doing in the Canyon Lake area.

Read more at <https://www.comalconservation.org/partners-769106.html>

SAVE THE DATE

July 13, 2021 at 6:00 PM

CCCA ZOOM PRESENTATION featuring guest speaker Hays County Commissioner, Lon Shell, speaking on "Having Growth and Green Space."

WHERE: Go to zoom.us/join, Enter Meeting ID: 821 0175 2949, click "Join"

Enter Passcode: 025095

NOTE: Open and Free to the Public

Stay tuned and check our website <https://www.comalconservation.org/2021-events.html> for the full details.

COMAL COUNTY NEWS

How Would You Invest \$300 Million in the Transportation System?

That is the question that the Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO) is asking residents who live in the Alamo Area region, which includes Comal County.

Your feedback will help them identify what is most important when it comes to our future transportation system. Your input will also help them prioritize specific projects to award federal transportation funding.

Several projects in Comal County are on their proposed list. One project that will sound familiar to CCCA volunteers is the “Dry Comal Creek Hike and Bike Trail,” known as Project 54 on this year’s list. In order for this trail, which is on the New Braunfels Master Plan for Parks, to become a reality, pieces of it need to be funded over time. By demonstrating community support for this project, points are added, and the project moves up the list as a possibility for federal funding through AAMPO.

How you can help:

1. Log on to a virtual public meeting Tues, June 15, at 6 pm, to hear directly from AAMPO staff about the proposed transportation plan. <https://www.alamoareampo.org/yourmove/en/>

2. Or, you can provide input anytime from June 1 to June 27 at [alamoareampo.org/yourmove](https://www.alamoareampo.org/yourmove)

More information, including an interactive map and a PDF of the 68 projects that were submitted for funding is available at [alamoareampo.org/yourmove](https://www.alamoareampo.org/yourmove)

TEXAS NEWS

Newly signed bill makes firm commitment to soil health in Texas

News Release Published May 25, 2021

Yesterday, Gov. Gregg Abbott signed a bill that helps build the state’s resilience, boosting Texas’ ability to mitigate both flooding and drought, while increasing the health of plants and animals grown for food.

The bill to create an “On-the-Ground Conservation” program passed the Senate unanimously and passed the House with a vote of 143-1 before being sent to the Governor.

Read the Press release at <https://www.comalconservation.org/>

City buying land off Spicewood Springs Road to convert to nature trails, parkland in Northwest Austin

Community Impact Newspaper

By Iain Oldman | 3:35 PM May 23, 2021

When a family who owns a 10-acre plot of land off Bull Creek in Northwest Austin reached out to the city about selling the property, it was a call Randy Scott waited decades to field.

Scott, the park development coordinator with the city of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department, told Community Impact Newspaper that he has been eyeing the property as one of the last remaining puzzle pieces to finish a continuous Bull Creek Greenbelt.

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

Regreening the River City Benefits Us All

The Nature Conservancy, June: Texas Nature News

By Suzanne Scott

There's a lot to love about Texas' continued growth, but we have to balance that growth by incorporating green spaces within our communities and promoting the value of Nature....

.....Regreening San Antonio can bolster the well-being of all our city's residents, whether they've been here for decades or days — and offer a model of sustainable, equitable development for the rest of the country. When we needed nature the most, it was there for us. Now, we need to be there for nature. Read the entire commentary at:

https://www.expressnews.com/opinion/commentary/article/Commentary-Make-room-for-nature-protect-water-16182961.php?src=e.ch_tx.eg.x.gpn.0621.n.sas.loc_tx&s_src=NewSch.WJEMSA2106NPNZNZZE05Z00-ZZZZZ-ST00&lu=7908224

MONTHLY SPOTLIGHT - UNDER OUR LAND

Our CCCA SPOTLIGHT this month continues our series on the very important issue of Water. Our Monthly Spotlight is entitled UNDER OUR LAND. Let's start with Frank Dietz's latest Herald Zeitung column.

UNDER OUR LAND: Such Gifts!

Our Comal County and surrounding Hill Country region are the beneficiaries of marvelous under land sources of water and adventure! The Edwards and Trinity Aquifers are the primary source for wondrous fresh waters for community and private wells as well as Springs that flow with freshness.

It was about sixteen years ago that a discovery journey began with a series of young grandchildren. We took regular trips south to San Antonio's Witte Museum. Prior to exploring displays and exhibits of interest and playing at the HEB adventure along the

river, we regularly (sometimes twice in a visit!) went to the little theater where the Edwards Aquifer Authority exhibit invited viewers into an excursion into and through the aquifer. Quite imaginatively we were introduced to subterranean life beneath the surface as well as explanations as to the filters that brought surface waters into the great dynamic underground.

Continue at <https://www.comalconservation.org/under-our-land.html>

If you want more information about the books and authors, Seamus McGraw and Robert Macfarlane, mentioned in Frank's column, you can find out more at <https://www.comalconservation.org/under-our-land.html>

And, we have gathered numerous informative articles about this month's Spotlight topic that you may be interested in reading. They are on the CCCA website at <https://www.comalconservation.org/under-our-land.html>

But we include a taste of them here:

2021 NATIONAL CAVE AND KARST MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM

When: 11/1/2021 to 11/5/2021

Where: San Marcos, Texas United States

Contact: Jim "Crash" Kennedy, Chair 2021 NCKMS

More information at <https://www.comalconservation.org/under-our-land.html>

Endangered Species of the Edwards Aquifer

Aquatic species

Over 40 species of highly adapted, aquatic, subterranean species are known to live in the Edwards Aquifer. These include amphipod crustaceans, gastropod snails, and interesting vertebrates like blind catfish (Longley, 1986). Seven aquatic species are listed as endangered in the Edwards Aquifer system, and one is listed as threatened. The main problems for all the species are reduced spring flows caused by increased pumping, elimination of habitat, and degradation of water quality caused by urban expansion.

The seven endangered species of the Edwards Aquifer system are:

Fountain Darter (*Etheostoma fonticola*)

Texas Blind Salamander (Typhlomolge rathbuni)

San Marcos Gambusia (Gambusia georgei)

Texas Wild Rice (Zizania texana)

Comal Springs Riffle Beetle (Heterelmis comalensis)

Comal Springs Dryopid Beetle (Stygoparnus comalensis)

Peck's Cave Amphipod (Stygobromus pecki)

The threatened species is:

San Marcos Salamander (Eurycea nana)

Read more at <https://www.comalconservation.org/under-our-land.html>

Basics of Texas Water Law

written by Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist

Water law is one of the most contentious and frequent legal issues Texas landowners face. As the adage goes, “Whiskey is for drinkin’ and water is for fightin’.” Texas property owners need to understand the basics of Texas water law as well as their rights and legal limitations related to the use of water on their property.

Texas water law divides water into two broad categories: groundwater and surface water. Different legal frameworks and regulatory structures apply to each category, making Texas water law more complex than other states that follow a single legal approach for all waters.

Continue at <https://www.comalconservation.org/under-our-land.html>

Climate Minute: How we got the Edwards Aquifer

Sarah Spivey explains how climate change and plate tectonics gave San Antonians their most abundant source of drinking water

SAN ANTONIO – Let’s travel back in time to the Cretaceous Period, 100 million years ago. Dinosaurs roam the land, the atmosphere is 10-15 degrees warmer, there are no ice caps at the poles and San Antonio is underwater.

Aquifer Formation

100 million years ago, shallow seas covered a good portion of Texas, and prehistoric mollusks, corals and other tiny sea creatures thrived. These organisms, made of carbonate material, eventually died and their remains settled in the mud of the sea bed. Over time, intense heat and pressure from plate tectonics transformed the carbon-rich

mud into limestone bedrock.

Rain, which contains weak acid, eventually dissolved the limestone, creating the porous “karst” and formed caves and conduits. Today, this vast system of “holey” limestone around South Central Texas is called the Edwards Aquifer.

Read more at <https://www.comalconservation.org/under-our-land.html>

There is much more to read about water this month on the CCCA website at <https://www.comalconservation.org/under-our-land.html>

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

Comal County Conservation Alliance

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

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