**The Big Give 2020**

At 12:01 a.m. on March 26, The Big Give – San Antonio begins its 24-hour fundraising event. There are many worthy causes vying for your support and hopefully you will donate what you can to your favorite organizations.

Comal County Conservation Alliance will be among the nonprofits asking for your support.  CCCA is urgently working to preserve land, water and wildlife in our county and our part of the Texas Hill Country, and we’re asking for your help.

Why should you donate to CCCA?

Comal County is the second fastest growing county in the nation, and in its size category, New Braunfels is the second fastest growing city. One reason our population is increasing so fast is Comal is a beautiful area of Texas in which to live. Its beauty derives from our precious land, water and wildlife. While development is a natural result of the population increase, CCCA believes that growth can proceed in smart ways, including open spaces and parks in development plans and protecting natural areas. We know that once land is developed it is gone forever.

There are many reasons preservation is so important. Our karst landscape, with its sinkholes, sinking streams, caves, and springs, serves to recharge the Edwards Aquifer. But it doesn’t do a particularly good job of filtering water because the soil covering the karst is often thin. Trees, shrubs, and grasses serve as purifiers for all the regional aquifers. Concrete and rooftops interfere with both recharge and filtration. In addition, trees and natural vegetation filter our air and moderate summer heat.

Our natural areas are also home to our precious and varied wildlife, including the Golden-cheeked Warbler. Losing these vital areas will be followed by the loss of many species. Like the land, once they are lost, they are gone forever.

Health benefits to residents are also associated with spending time in nature. Studies have shown that people living close to a park, a nature preserve, or a wooded area were less likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, and stress disorders. A University of Illinois research study found that children with ADD/ADHD had their symptoms reduced after spending time outdoors. There was a good reason for your mother telling you to go outside and play!

A prime opportunity for preservation in our county is El Rancho Cima, the former Boy Scout Ranch. CCCA is engaged with county officials to encourage purchase of tracts of remaining El Rancho Cima located in Comal County. This purchase would complement work that has already been done in Hays County to preserve and protect much of the 2,400-acre undeveloped tract, including one of our county’s gems, the “Devil’s Backbone.” This property would continue to contribute to the tourism economy of the county. The land is part of the Blanco River watershed. By preserving it in its natural state will help protect our regional water resources as well as help mitigate flooding in the Blanco River. This property is also prime habitat for the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler.

CCCA is also working to encourage large-acreage landowners to place their acres into conservation easements to protect them for future generations. Many of these landowners have had the land in their family for generations and may be land rich but cash poor. Selling their land to a developer is tempting. CCCA is working on a funding mechanism to help these landowners in their efforts to preserve and protect their land in perpetuity.

We are a 100% volunteer organization. Every dollar in our budget is dedicated to our core mission: working to preserve land, water, and wildlife in Comal County.

That is why we need your help. Land preservation is important to all Texans, and CCCA is proud to help in this important effort. Please go to [www.thebiggivesa.org/organizations/comal-county-conservation-alliance](http://www.thebiggivesa.org/organizations/comal-county-conservation-alliance) on March 26th and donate what you can. All donations will be greatly appreciated.