



## STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2025 - 2027

As Comal County experiences unprecedented growth, we stand at a pivotal moment for conservation. The decisions and actions we take in the next three years will shape our region's environmental legacy for generations to come. This strategic plan charts an ambitious course forward, built on three foundational pillars: stewardship of our precious natural resources, meaningful connections with our community, and organizational sustainability to ensure lasting impact.

Through transformational partnerships and innovative collaborations, we will work to protect the land, water, and natural heritage that makes Comal County special. Our vision extends beyond preservation – we seek to foster a deep sense of stewardship among both longtime residents and newcomers to our rapidly growing region. By engaging developers, landowners, county leadership, and community partners, we will demonstrate that conservation and thoughtful development can work hand in hand.

Education and outreach lie at the heart of our mission. From young students discovering the wonders of nature to homeowners learning water conservation practices, we will create meaningful pathways for every resident to connect with and protect our environment. Our expanded programming will bring people closer to the land through hands-on experiences, while building a shared understanding of why conservation matters for our future.

To achieve these vital goals, we are committed to strengthening Comal Conservation's organizational capacity and sustainability. By developing robust systems, expanding our dedicated team, and deepening community engagement, we will build an organization capable of meeting the growing conservation needs of our region.

The path ahead requires bold vision and steady commitment. With the support of our board, staff, volunteers, and community partners, we will work tirelessly to ensure that the natural treasures of Comal County endure for future generations. Together, we can create a legacy of conservation that matches the beauty and significance of the land we serve.

Roxanna Deane  
President - Comal Conservation

Ryan Spencer  
Executive Director

## **PILLARS:**

## **STEWARDSHIP**

## **CONNECTION**

## **ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY**

- 1. Foster a sense of stewardship for our natural resources through transformational partnerships and innovative collaborations in a rapidly growing county**
  - 2. Connect local residents to the mission, issues, and place through education, outreach, access, and programming**
  - 3. Sustain organizational and operational growth and stability to ensure Comal Conservation's ability to sustain the environment**
- 1. Foster a sense of stewardship of our natural resources through transformational partnerships and innovative collaborations in a rapidly growing county**
    - A. Strategically partner with government agencies and nonprofit partners to support conservation easements
      1. Apply for \$25M Texas Ag Land Trust Grant with RCPP – July 2025
      2. Restart Landowner Assistance Program to support RCPP objectives
      3. Build relationships with additional land trusts
    - B. Identify practical ways that developers can support conservation goals
      1. Host collaborative "Developers' Workshop" – February 26, 2024
      2. Work with HOAs to remove requirements for lawns and watering
    - C. Provide clear, informative, compelling information to residents about environmental issues
      1. Increase awareness of water supply issues, conservation objectives, environmental flows, and population growth
      2. Expand "Welcome to Comal County" program to give newcomers to our county and new homeowners the tools to manage their water use responsibly
      3. Develop "Welcome to Comal County" parallel program for businesses
    - D. Partner with county leadership to make conservation a priority
      1. Assist county in implementing POSNA and ensuring its continued relevancy and adherence
      2. Collaboratively establish Land Stewardship Award
      3. Develop Conservation Easement Recognition with county leaders
      4. Work with Commissioners on land conservation funding
      5. Help create annual Long-term Water Supply Report (need name) for Comal County providing an overview
      6. Encourage county to include One Water Systems in proposals for all new county buildings
    - E. Strengthen community relationships and recognition
      1. Continue to recognize conservation leaders through the Jensie Madden Conservation Award
      2. Develop vignette for landowners from landowners
      3. Develop Business Partnership Program
  - 2. Connect local residents to the mission, issues, and place through education, outreach, access, and programming**
    - A. Create initiatives to engage young people
      1. Create – Texas Children in Nature Collaborative: Hill Country
      2. Lead the collaborative's effort to connect with youth serving organizations in Comal County and expand service to all children in our region.
      3. Create Comal County Jr. Ranger Activity Kit (Online & Print)
      4. Assemble a group of young people who are interested in Conservation Work (18-29)
      5. Develop conservation-mindedness and ownership in school-aged children

- B. Support public access protection, helping people find their way to the river organically and easily
    - 1. Prepare for Great Springs initiatives
    - 2. Leverage social media to highlight opportunities for access and activity
  - C. Cultivate an active and meaningful presence at community events with conservation information and activities that draw attention to our work
    - 1. Develop interesting content, captivating banners, and memorable materials for tabling
    - 2. Train volunteers to engage with community in meaningful ways
    - 3. Attend community events with a outreach table and relatable activities
  - D. Host ongoing education programs to help residents and businesses become stakeholders
    - 1. Host at least 6 public meetings per year on topics related to our mission
  - E. Host outdoor activities that target a variety of audiences and build awareness of the importance of being in nature
    - 1. Partner with private outfitters to develop programming including kayaking, canoeing, SUP
    - 2. Host clean-up campaigns engaging individuals and groups
    - 3. Introduce people to local places of interest with special access and insights
- 3. Sustain organizational and operational growth and stability to ensure Comal Conservation's ability to sustain the environment**
- A. Develop policies, practices, and systems that facilitate efficient and transparent operations
    - 1. Develop a process to support efficient and effective grant research and submissions
    - 2. Establish a reserve fund to support organizational resiliency
    - 3. Maintain commitment to financial transparency and accountability
    - 4. Develop a record and file management plan that supports appropriate board and staff access
  - B. Develop and implement Communications Plan to engage locals, build our name recognition, and become the clearinghouse for conservation information in the county
    - 1. Identify all target audiences and develop messages for key groups
    - 2. Use tools and channels according to urgency and audience to reach audiences in timely and meaningful ways
    - 3. Enhance website content regularly to maintain relevance and utility
    - 4. Develop communications infrastructure, leveraging communications tools available for nonprofits when possible
  - C. Engage donors meaningfully in uniquely Comal Conservation ways
    - 1. Cultivate giving society like Comal Conservation Champions with special incentives and engagement opportunities
    - 2. Sustain successful annual fundraiser "Keep It Country Music Jam"
    - 3. Participate in Big Give and other local fundraising events to connect with donors
    - 4. Build online store
    - 5. Retain donors through meaningful cultivation and stewardship
  - D. Recruit volunteers to facilitate smooth and successful programming, fundraising, events, and outreach
    - 1. Develop an easy-to-use yet robust system to track volunteer engagement
    - 2. Create volunteer onboarding workflow to ensure clear expectations and consistent training
    - 3. Retain volunteers through meaningful recognition and stewardship
  - E. Expand staff and board capacity to prepare for and support growth
    - 1. Thoughtfully build and hire new staff positions to track priorities of strategic plan and complement existing team
    - 2. Engage Advisory Board
    - 3. Ensure all board members are well-prepared and meaningfully engaged through ongoing education and support
    - 4. Cultivate staff development, retention, and success through helpful feedback, recognition, and meaningful benefits

**Goal 1: Foster a sense of stewardship of our natural resources through transformational partnerships and innovative collaborations in a rapidly growing county**

**Strategy A:** Strategically partner with government agencies and nonprofit partners to support conservation easements

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Apply for \$25M Texas Ag Land Trust Grant with RCPP	Apply July 2025 Notified October Begin work in 2026	CC receives Operating Revenue (IDC)	Based on application increase landowner workshops
2. Restart Landowner Assistance Program to support RCPP objectives	2026	Host 6 Landowner Workshops across the county highlighting the new funding opportunity.	
3. Build relationships with additional land trusts	2025 - 2027		Preferred partners, Work with additional land trusts to bring more funding to Comal County

**Strategy B:** Identify practical ways that developers can support conservation goals

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Host collaborative "Developers' Workshop"	2025: once per year 2026: once per year in Comal County	50 developers attend Scaffolding Documents Received by 50% of attendees \$5,000 sponsorship	
2. Work with HOAs to remove requirements for lawns and watering	2025-2027	2025 Collect HOA Deed Restrictions, Identify Officers of HOA'S in Comal County, 2026 – Meet with 6 HOAs that have watering and landscaping requirements 2027 – Host HOA leadership Conference	Jen Crownover is a resource for this item.

**Strategy C:** Provide clear, informative, compelling information to residents about environmental issues

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Increase awareness of the about the water supply issues, conservation objectives, environmental flows, and population growth.	2025-2026	Study and create a Comal Water Landscape Report Publish on Website supported by public program	Homeowner Focus, Grant Dependent
2. Expand "Welcome to Comal County" program to give newcomers to our county and new homeowners the tools to conserve land, water, and wildlife on their property.	2025: Develop 2026: Online 2027: Publish	10 speaking engagements at HOAs 500 online downloads 1000 print copies distributed 75% people say it was informative	Online, in print, and in person Connect with schools, businesses, and key local stakeholders

**Strategy D:** Partner with county leadership to make conservation a priority

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Assist county in implementing POSNA and ensuring its continued relevancy and adherence	2025-2027	Work with commissioners to identify a POSNA related project.	
2. Collaboratively establish Land Stewardship Award	2025: award established 2026: first award given 2027: Award given	Develop criteria and description of the Award Promote award in Comal County Receive at least 5 nominees	This award is separate from conservation easement recognition. This award will recognize landowners who go above and beyond in both conserving and managing their property
3. Develop Conservation Easement Recognition with county leaders	2025	Develop Criteria with support from County Commissioners, develop list of current conservation easements in Comal County, Work with Commissioners to develop rolling plaque, County Commissioners pass a resolution announcing the recognition.	The intent is for this award to have permanent placement in the county courthouse
4. Work with Commissioners on land conservation funding.	2025: \$5,000,000.00 2026: \$5,000,000.00 2027: \$15,000,000.00	County Spends \$25,000,000 on land conservation projects by 2030	This is a tall order for a county that currently has zero dollars spent on land conservation, but it is a target. Might include bond initiative
5. Help create annual Long-term Water Supply Report (need name) for Comal County providing an overview	2025: Work collaboration with the Texas Water Company as they draft their 2025 Water Availability Report 2026: Convene Water Leaders to develop county wide report 2027: Draft County Wide Water Availability Report with Partners	Acceptable TWC WAR Adopted 2025 County Wide Water Leaders Convened County wide Availability Report Drafted	Three-year goal with multiple intermediate steps
6. Encourage county to include One Water Systems in proposals for all new county buildings	Ongoing	Commissioners Court passes a one water resolution. That requires one-water to be included in all new county building proposals.	Hornseth and Boyd Can we identify a key win for a project site or demonstration site?

**Strategy E:** Strengthen community relationships and recognition

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Continue to recognize conservation leaders through the Jensie Madden Conservation Award	2025-2027	Give out the award each year during our major fundraiser	
2. Develop vignette for landowners from landowners	<p>2025: Identify key landowners who want to support this effort. Utilize LAP opportunities to incorporate Comal Conservations efforts.</p> <p>2026 Work with local videographer to create this vignette</p>	Create a vignette promoting land conservation in Texas. Does it get created? How is it utilized.	This effort has two components one is developing a group of landowners who can speak on camera regarding the importance of land conservation and then developing the actual vignette. Grant Dependent.
3. Develop Business Partnership Program	<p>2025-2027</p> <p>Create Business Partnership Program</p> <p>Develop Criteria for Partnership</p> <p>Develop Certification Logo and Sticker for Business windows</p>	We've recognized our first 12 business by 2027	Work with Comal Water Advocates

## Goal 2: Connect local residents to the mission, issues, and place through education, outreach, access, and programming

### Strategy A: Create initiatives to engage young people

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Create – Texas Children in Nature Collaborative: Hill Country	2025 – Submit collaborative proposal with headwaters. Develop funder list with this parameter in mind. Submit to at least 2 others each year of this plan  2025 2 proposals 2026 2 proposals 2027 2 proposals	Raised \$25,000 in funding to support collaborative.	With Headwaters, Youth Collaborative Parks and Recreation, CISD, NBISD, Bat Conservation International, Texas Wildlife Association, Young Life, Grant Dependent
2. Lead the collaborative's effort to connect with youth-serving organizations in Comal County and expand service to all children in our region.	2025: Organize the first meeting with Texas Children in Nature @ McKenna, Develop Leadership Team for collaborative, offer to serve as fiduciary agent for collaborative. Assess the needs of our youth serving organizations and identify gaps in services.  2026: Seek funding to hire full time program officer, Attend state and national conferences.  2027: Pass Comal County Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights	<b>Host Children &amp; Nature Collaborative Leadership Meetings, Develop Leadership Team, serve as fiduciary agent, assess needs of youth serving organizations and identify gaps, hire full time program officer, attend state and national conferences, pass county wide Comal County Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.</b>	
3. Create Comal County Jr. Ranger Activity Kit (Online & Print)	2026-2027 2026: Develop Comal Jr. Rangers Activity Book. Working with youth service organizations promotes the activity booklet. Once activities are completed host swearing in ceremony as Comal County Jr. Rangers by the County Commissioners or Judge	3 Schools Involved 2 youth organizations participating First Swearing in Ceremony in 2026	Engage schools and corporations
4. Create a group of young people who are interested in Conservation Work (18-29)	2026 - 2027	Bring Natural Leaders Network to Comal County	NLN Workshop (Service-Learning Weekend) Ryan has worked as a natural leader and hosted the first regional workshop at Shield Ranch in

			Texas and then hosted the second at Texas State. Grant Dependent
5. Develop conservation-mindedness and ownership in school-aged children	<p>2025: Work with Lamar Elementary on pilot project to remove Styrofoam plates</p> <p>2025: Work with Canyon Lake High School to reduce lighting impact at stadium</p>	<p>We have reduced the use of Styrofoam plates with a pilot project at Lamar Elementary.</p> <p>Canyon Lake High School turns off stadium lights when not in use.</p>	Matthew and Leesa

**Strategy B:** Support public access protection, helping people find their way to the river organically and easily

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Prepare for Great Springs initiatives	<p>2025: Work with GSP to understand their proposed trail route in Comal County and how our work can benefit and support their efforts.</p> <p>2026-2027 – Work with their landowner outreach team and develop and information sharing MOU in support greater land conservation impact.</p>	<p>Meet with GSP on landowner outreach. Share information and connect with LAP.</p> <p>Host a public program focused on the Great Springs Project and the proposed trail from Austin to San Antonio</p>	
2. Leverage social media to highlight opportunities for access and activity	2025-2027 (Ongoing)	<p>Create a social media strategy that supports the following messages:</p> <p>Developed 12 social media posts that focus on the best affordable recreation spots in Comal County</p> <p>Developed 6 social media posts centered around connecting kids with nature and recreation opportunities for families</p> <p>Developed 12 social media posts that highlight recreation partners and their work.</p> <p>Create a vignette that highlights the impact of the recreation economy on our local communities and how the natural systems need to be protected.</p>	Vignette is grant dependent



**Strategy C:** Cultivate an active and meaningful presence at community events with conservation information and activities that draw attention to our work

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Develop interesting content, captivating banners, and memorable materials for tabling	New materials by Q1 2025	Added to Outreach Materials: *Coloring Book Activity *Comal Conservation Rack Card *Stickers for Earth Day *New Outreach Banner	Budget for materials, giveaways, booth
2. Train volunteers to engage with community in meaningful ways	Outreach Training by Q1 2025	15 volunteers trained annually	Ensure that volunteers are well-prepared and doing outreach Budget for t shirts, hats, etc.
3. Attend Community Events with an outreach table and relatable activities	2025-2027	8 outreach events per year	Look for diverse settings (Dia los Muertos, Pride Day)

**Strategy D:** Host ongoing education programs to help residents and businesses become stakeholders

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Host at least 6 Community Programs per year on topics related to our mission	2025-2027	6+ per year	Matthew to chair

**Strategy E:** Host outdoor activities that target a variety of audiences and build awareness of the importance of being in nature

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Partner with private outfitters to develop programming including kayaking, canoeing, SUP	Pilot in 2025	50 people participate annually \$500 in fees	Earned revenue opportunity Hire kayak outfitter: Possibly Shane Wolf. Grant Dependent
2. Host clean-up campaigns engaging individuals and groups	2026	50 people participate annually 3 Clean Ups per year (Below Horseshoe) (Guad and Comal Confluence) (Comal River)	Staff or volunteers lead Partner with Keep New Braunfels, Canyon Lake, and Bulverde Beautiful Partner with County Constables for Eyes of Comal
3. Introduce people to local places of interest with special access and insights	2025 - 2027	2025 – Develop list of interested landowners 2026 – Host first landowners tour to Comal Conservation Champions group 2027- Sell public tickets to first Comal Conservation Tour	Connie Kraus' ranch tour, Fischer Ranch Tour, John Knox Ranch Tour, Bracken Cave, etc.

**Goal 3: Sustain organizational and operational growth and stability to ensure Comal Conservation's ability to sustain the environment**

**Strategy A:** Develop policies, practices, and systems that facilitate efficient and transparent operations

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Develop a process to support efficient and effective grant research and submissions	2025 Use strategic plan to develop fundraising strategy and calendar.	Annually submit grant proposals for each grant dependent goal.	Adopt new proposal review policy to support more grant proposal submissions immediately Increase use of Neon One
2. Improve Fundraising efforts to create reserve fund to support organizational resiliency	2025-2027	Establish a reserve fund with at least 1 year of operating funds 6 months by end 2025 8 months by end 2026 12 months by end 2027	
3. Maintain commitment to financial transparency and accountability	2025-2027	2025: financial review, earn Candid: Guide Star platinum badge 2026: Hire a bookkeeper 2027 financial audit	
4. Develop a record and file management plan that supports appropriate board and staff access	2025-2026	Decide cloud storage service and migrate if needed	Do we want to keep using google drive? Is it safe? What do other groups use?

**Strategy B:** Develop and implement Communications Plan to engage locals, build our name recognition, and become the clearinghouse for conservation information in the county

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Identify all target audiences and develop messages for key groups	2025	Develop Audience List and Identify media sources for each	What do we use Facebook for? How do we leverage our website? What types of audiences read the HZ?
2. Use tools and channels according to urgency and audience to reach audiences in timely and meaningful ways	2025-2027	By 2027: Increase Facebook Followers by 2000 Increase Website Views by 100% Increase Conservation Insider Subscriptions by 1000 Flush out LinkedIn Page Build stronger relationship with HZ resulting in Earth Day Banner	Can we get HZ to create an earth day banner for Earth Month in April? How much would that cost?
3. Enhance website content regularly to maintain relevance and utility	2025-2027	Find a volunteer to take over website editing responsibilities until it can be shifted to a staff person  Create an official phone number for Comal Conservation with an answering service (2025)	Check into Google Phone/Voice

4. Develop communications infrastructure, leveraging communications tools available for nonprofits when possible	2025 - 2027	2025 – Establish budget for Marketing 2026 – Promote Conservation Monthly through HZ and KNBT 2027 – Consider Water Conservation Campaign via Billboard around Canyon Lake	Facebook ads Google free advertising Radio ads Grant Dependent
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**Strategy C:** Engage donors meaningfully in uniquely Comal Conservation ways

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Cultivate giving society like Comal Conservation Champions with special incentives and engagement opportunities	2025 – 2027	2025 Grow the CCC by 50% Host two special events for CCC members 2026 Host 4 events without growth goal 2027 Host 6 events with a growth goal of 100%	
2. Sustain successful annual fundraiser “Keep It Country Music Jam”	2025 - 2027	By 2027 \$60K raised net annually 15% increase in attendance annually	
3. Participate in Big Give and other local fundraising events to connect with donors	2025 - 2027	2025 Create a new vignette for the Big Give that focuses on the CLCF 2026 Create an incentive package for donations through the Big Give.	Grant Dependent
4. Build online store	2025-2027	2025 – Work with Big Frog to create drop ship agreement, establish a set of approved merch, develop cost sheet that incorporates shipping, acquire sales tax certificate from the state. 2026 – Go live with dropship store 2027 – Sell \$10,000 worth of merchandise.	
5. Retain donors through meaningful cultivation and stewardship	2025-2027	50% of donors are retained annually. Increase this goal by 10% each year. Develop new stewardship programs along the way. Holiday Cards, Annual Reports, End of Year Donor Luncheon	

**Strategy D:** Recruit volunteers to facilitate smooth and successful programming, fundraising, events, and outreach

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Develop an easy-to-use yet robust system to track volunteer engagement	2025-2027	1000 hours annually	Neon One? Leverage Kim’s tracking systems for now, search for others in the longterm. Can we incentivize volunteer tracking, free swag or end of year award?

2. Create volunteer onboarding workflow to ensure clear expectations and consistent training	2025 – 2026	2025 – ED attends outreach training meeting. 2026 – Develop Orientation Packet and Implement new Volunteer training meeting.	
3. Retain volunteers through meaningful recognition and stewardship	2025-2027	Develop a volunteer recognition pin and host an annual lunch.	

**Strategy E:** Expand staff and board capacity to prepare for and support growth

Tactics	Timeline	Metrics	Notes
1. Thoughtfully build and hire new staff positions to track priorities of strategic plan and complement existing team	2025-2027	Hire as necessary to meet strategic goals	Budget for compensation. Grant Dependent
2. Engage Advisory Board	2025-2027	One activity a year 50% attendance at Music Jam	
3. Ensure all board members are well-prepared and meaningfully engaged through ongoing education and support	2025-2027	75% attendance annual retreat 75% attend 100% meetings 100% make personal gift	Budget for annual retreat facilitation Budget for strategic planning every 3 years
4. Cultivate staff development, retention, and success through helpful feedback, recognition, and meaningful benefits	2025-2027	Conduct annual review and consider staff needs.	Budget for merit raises and adding benefits