

Dear GEAA members and friends,

We always hear that ninety percent of lands in Texas are privately owned. This [opinion piece](#) from the [High Country News](#) explains how that came to be. According to the author, Adam M. Sowards, “When Texas joined the United States in 1845, Congress allowed it to keep its public domain — some 200 million acres. ... the overriding concern in this case was Texas’ debt. The federal government thought that Texans ought to address financial shenanigans of their own making.”

“Leaving Texans to their own devices led to excesses. ... Beautiful spots and fragile ecologies in the state faced constant and myriad threats. ... Many scenic areas became so overdeveloped that the wildness, beauty and solitude people valued them for disappeared, while still other places were sequestered behind signs announcing “Private Property.” Environmental protection in Texas always lagged, despite courageous conservationists playing David to the Texas establishment’s Goliath.”

Unfortunately, today many of the beautiful places in the Texas Hill Country that became private ranches are rapidly being converted to high density subdivisions that threaten to exacerbate problems with traffic, flooding and diminish water quality, wildlife, and our quality of life. Texas needs to catch up to the rest of the west when it comes to protecting land, particularly in fragile watersheds like that feed the Edwards and Trinity aquifers.

One bright spot is the [Texas Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Program](#), which recently awarded \$1.4 million to help bring more than 14,300 acres of the state’s high-value working farm and ranch lands under long-term protection. We are happy to report that two of the properties that will be permanently protected are in the Edwards region.

San Antonio’s [Edwards Aquifer Protection initiative](#) and Austin’s [Water Quality Protection Lands Program](#) both enable public investment to protect the land that replenishes the our groundwater supplies. Fast growing cities like New Braunfels would also be well served by initiating similar programs. The time is ripe for us Texans to reverse a legacy of regarding our land primarily as a means of short-term profit.

So, this lovely spring, while you are out enjoying the bluebonnets – take a moment to reflect on how precious is the land remaining in its natural state. We invite you to join us in advocacy for protecting the land, private and public, that sustains us all.

Have a great weekend!

Annalisa Peace

Executive Director

[Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance](#)