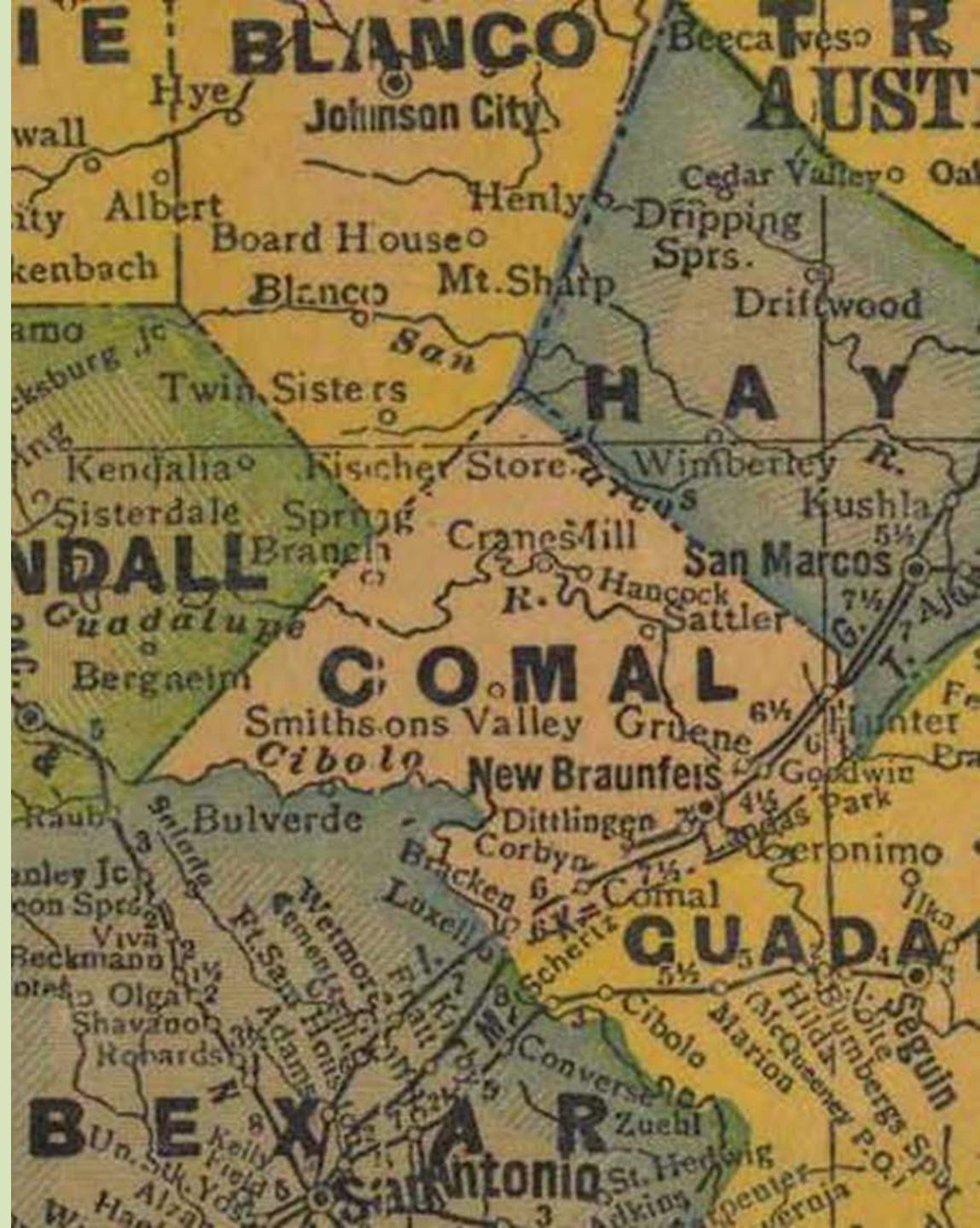


# Preserving Open Space in Comal County: Challenges and Opportunities

Presentation to the New Braunfels Parks Advisory Board

by Annalisa Peace  
Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance

January 10, 2023



APRIL 2003 \$3.99

# Texas Monthly

Life & Death  
at NASA  
by STEPHEN HARRIGAN

# hill country FOREVER

by JOHN GRAVES, SUZY BANKS,  
and KINKY FRIEDMAN

School Finance  
For Dummies  
by PAUL BURKA

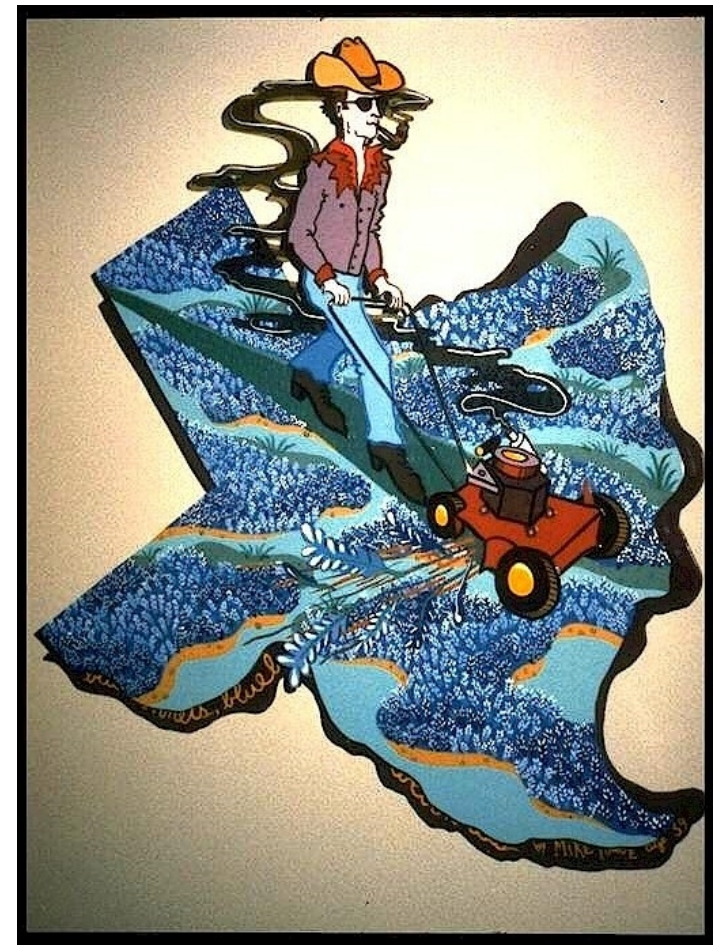
David Koresh Will  
Be Resurrected  
Any Day Now  
by MICHAEL HALL

The Woman Who  
Ratted Out Enron  
by PAMELA COLLOFF



A poll taken in the 1990's by Texas Monthly found that 80% of Texans want to retire to the Hill Country.

We are literally loving the Hill Country to death.



Mowing Bluebonnets by Mike Pogue

# **Comal County is at the forefront of urban development due to its steady increase in population over the past decade.**

- According to US Census Bureau, Comal County's population increased about 43.9% between 2010 and 2019, from 108,250 to 156,209 individuals.
- Housing units increased by 34% from 47,292 units in 2010 to 63,391 in 2019.
- In 2018, Comal County experienced an increase in population by 5.4% over the course of one year, making it the second fastest growing county in the nation.
- Population in the county is projected to increase by 14% over the next 10 years, to a total of 178,399 individuals.
- This steady increase in residential population has resulted in water management challenges for Comal County both in terms of meeting water demands in the face of unreliable water resource availability and balancing consumption and wastewater discharge with water resource protection.
- Increases in development and population in Comal County have a direct relationship with total water use. Comal County has had a steady increase in water use and treatment costs over the past five years, with an increase of 16 million gallons per year to 24 million gallons per year and \$57,000 to \$96,000, respectively.

## What others are doing:

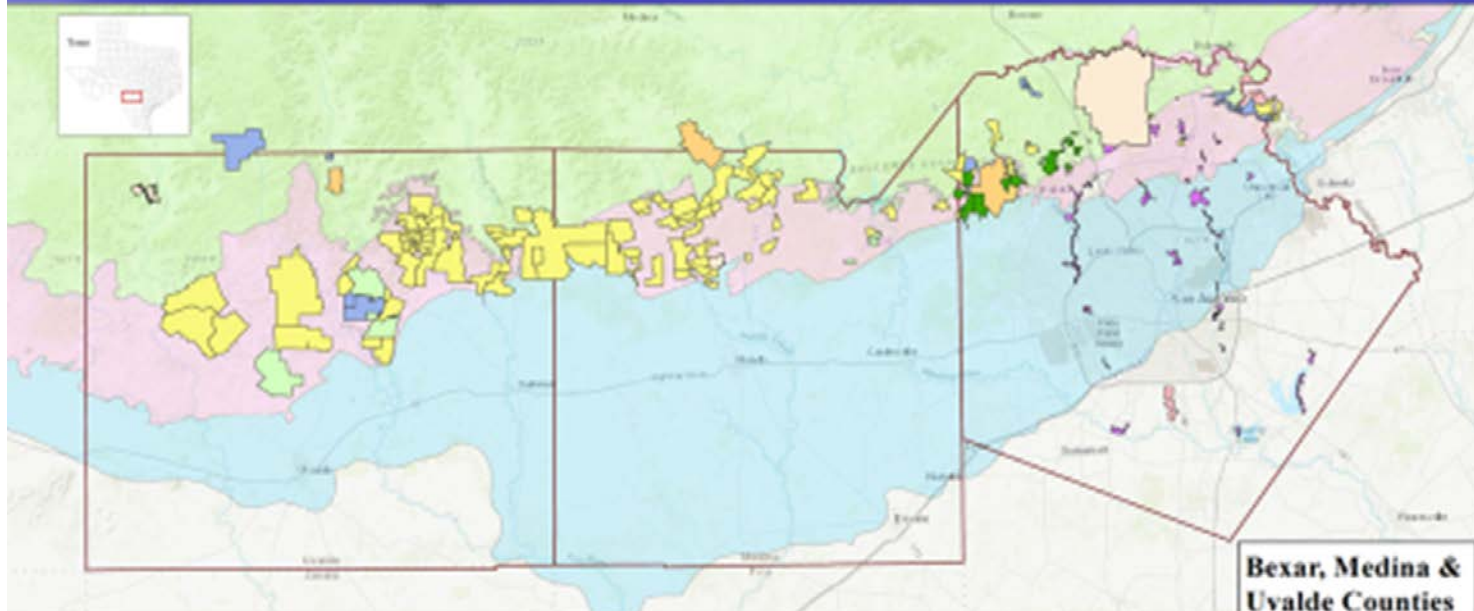
- City of San Antonio
- Travis County
- City of Austin
- Hays County
- Kendall County



- Habitat Conservation Plans:
  - Balcones Canyon HCP
  - Southern Edwards Plateau HCP
  - Comal County HCP
  - Coming Soon – Guadalupe River HCP

# Aquifer Protection

## EAA and COSA Acquisitions



Since May 2000, the City of San Antonio has preserved 161,511 acres funded by a portion of a voter-approved 1/8 -cent sales tax venue.

In 2008, the EAA joined with the City of San Antonio in an interlocal cooperation agreement to provide geological assessment and easement monitoring in support of the growing program. The EAA continues to perform geologic evaluations on the prospective properties and conducts the annual monitoring essential to the integrity of the program.

## Travis County

Travis County purchases easements using voter-approved bond funds, and also accepts donated easements, which may provide estate or income tax benefits to the landowner.

Travis County voters approved \$8.3 million in 2011 for the purchase of conservation easements, and another \$16.6 million in 2017.

Travis County prioritizes properties along identified conservation corridors, properties adjacent to existing preserves, parkland, or other conserved lands, and properties with unique features such as springs, historical/archaeological sites. The targeted conservation corridors include Wilbarger Creek, Gilleland Creek, the Colorado River, Onion Creek, and the Pedernales River.

# City of Austin

The City of Austin's Water Quality Protection Lands Program has protected 26,603 acres of land in the Barton Springs Recharge and Contributing Zones through funding approved in 1998.

In 2018, voters in the City of Austin approved \$149 million for parks and recreation. Of this amount, \$72 million was dedicated to water quality protection land acquisition and \$45 million went to parkland acquisition.

The City of Austin also limits impervious cover on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone to 15% and has a robust watershed protection program.

# Hays County

- In 2007 Hays County voters approved – by a 2-1 margin – Proposition 2 for “the issuance of \$30,000,000 of Hays County Tax Bond for parks, natural areas, open space, and related projects and the preservation of water quality, aquifer recharge areas, and wildlife habitat...”

This bond preserved land in Buda, Kyle, Dripping Springs, San Marcos, Wimberley, and unincorporated areas.

- In 2020, Hays County residents voted for the Parks & Open Spaces Bond (Proposition A) which called for the issuance of \$75 million in general bonds to fund parks, open spaces, conservation lands, and other recreational opportunities over the next several years.



# Council To Consider \$2M In Parks Bond Funds For Purgatory Creek

The City of San Marcos is moving ahead with one of its priority parks and open space projects just in time for the new year.

On Tuesday, San Marcos City Council will consider approval of an Interlocal Agreement with Hays County, authorizing the city to use \$2 million in parks bond funds toward the purchase of real property and preliminary work associated with the Purgatory Creek Improvements Project.

Resolution 2023-01R states the Phase 1 Area (Purgatory Creek from the San Marcos River to Johnson Avenue), funding will be used to acquire easements and right-of-ways identified for improvements including flood mitigation and multi-use trails. For the Phase 2 Area (Purgatory Creek from Johnson Avenue to Hunter Road), the acquired easements will be used for multi-use trails only.

# Kendall County

In 2022 voters approved Proposition for \$20 million, in funding to protect the Guadalupe River, aquifer and groundwater supplies, wildlife habitat, and working ranches and agricultural lands.

These funds will protect Kendall County's drinking water sources and preserve quality of life by protecting the last remaining natural areas and wildlife habitat before they are lost to development forever.

## **Opportunities for Funding:**

- Bonds – any combination of city and county initiatives
- Hotel Motel Tax
- Texas Water Development Board Flood Infrastructure Funding (FIF) grants
- Camp Bullis Sentinel Landscape is applying for federal grants for land preservation

And more...

## **Opportunities to match funds from:**

- Comal Habitat Conservation Plan
- Edwards Aquifer Conservancy
- Guadalupe Blanco River Trust

And others...

## **Green Infrastructure Funding Microsite**

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) launched a new funding microsite for communities interested in pursuing federal funding and/or technical assistance for nature-based solutions and green infrastructure projects. The interactive database allows users to search and sort the more than 70 types of federal grants that fund nature-based solutions based on factors such as eligible recipients, project purpose, and the match required. It also provides information about the typical application cycles, and contact information for each program.

**Access the database here: [FundingNatureBasedSolutions.nwf.org](https://www.fundingnaturebasedsolutions.nwf.org)**


## **New Roadmap to Accelerate Nature-Based Solutions for Climate Progress and Equity**

The Whitehouse released a Roadmap and over 100 federal informational resources to scale-up nature-based solutions to address climate change, nature loss and inequity. The reports, announced in November during the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) in Egypt, respond to a call from President Biden earlier this year to identify opportunities to expand the use of nature-based solutions across the federal government.

**Learn more here: <https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/green-infrastructure-federal-collaborative#What's%20New>**

## Considerations:

- Interlocal agreements or memoranda of understanding between Comal municipalities, appropriate government agencies; and the County.
- Comal County is reluctant to manage new park properties. Provide options.
- Fee simple purchase v. Conservation Easements
- Agencies to map/identify and prioritize available properties for open space and water quality preservation.

- 
- **Rapid regional population and urban growth predicted to continue.**
  - **Multiple jurisdictions with no coherent plan or vision for the region**
  - **Publicly funded infrastructure projects that encourage growth in sensitive areas**
  - **no land use powers in unincorporated areas**

**“Government, private corporations and citizens must act promptly to direct urban development away from the aquifer through control of infrastructure investment....” and “Restrict impervious cover to levels that will sustain existing water quality.”**

[http://www.aquiferalliance.net/Library/GEAAPublications/Edwards\\_Aquifer\\_Protection\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.aquiferalliance.net/Library/GEAAPublications/Edwards_Aquifer_Protection_Plan.pdf)

For more information about GEAA  
and our member groups visit  
[www.AquiferAlliance.org](http://www.AquiferAlliance.org)

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