



Pines and Prairies

Bastrop Caldwell Fayette Lee Counties of Texas

Newsletter of the Pines & Prairies Land Trust Vol. 6, No. 4 Winter 2009

Items of Interest from TLTC Conference

Here are two articles on conservation issues taken from presentations at the 2009 Texas Land Trust Council statewide conference held in Austin in February.

Habitat Conservation Banking

A conservation bank is an area of habitat that has been conserved and managed for the conservation of identified natural "resource values," the benefits of which are used to offset negative impacts to the "resource" occurring on other areas from land use activities. While this kind of conservation activity might and often does occur in purely voluntary settings such as land trusts, conservation banking is usually associated with a regulatory program that prescribes conditions for land uses that adversely affect the habitat of a particular species of concern. Usually, as with conservation banking carried out under the Endangered Species Act, the conditions include obtaining approval for the land use activity from an administrative agency, which frequently carries the price of having to mitigate for the adverse impacts through, among other things, securing compensating habitat values either on the project location or on land within some ecologically relevant area.

Regulatory agencies believe conservation banking is good for the species, as it promotes a more orderly system for securing permanently dedicated conservation lands and attracts persons with true expertise to the "industry" of creating and managing those lands. It is said to be "a free-market enterprise that offers landowners economic incentives to protect natural resources, save developers time and money by providing them with certainty of preapproved compensation lands, and provides long-term protection of habitat." (*From the presentation by J.B. Ruhl, Alan Glen and David Hartman*)

Three Conservation Easements

Three landowners, including Albert Pecore, whose 194 acre farm is protected by an easement held by PPLT, described their experiences with placing a conservation easement on their properties. Joe "Skip" Barnett ranches and no-till farms 1700 acres in Denton County that's been in his family since 1888. Matt Hicks' family has owned land in the Hill Country since the mid 1800's and has secured the family ranch in Gillespie County with a conservation easement.

Each of them described their love and appreciation for the land under their stewardship and why they chose to protect it as it is with an easement. Two had been associated with their land since childhood and had deep family roots and their personal history was entwined with the productive land. Mr. Pecore had acquired his land as an adult and has grown to appreciate it in an equally fervent manner.

They all represent the kind of thoughtful understanding of the significance of open lands that support ranching, farming and wildlife habitat and the need to protect as much of that remaining land as we can.

The pride and enthusiasm was clear in their voices as they talked about their land. It was clear why they sought out a land trust to help them create a means of insuring that the hard work and loving concern for the land would not be wasted.

Bastrop Chamber of Commerce Honors Tom Dureka and PPLT

The Bastrop Chamber of Commerce created a new category of "Friends of the Environment" in its annual honoring of community volunteers this year. Tom Dureka and Pines and Prairies Land Trust were among the individuals and groups honored for "Continuous Contributions toward the Conservation of the Environment in Bastrop."

Spring at Yegua Knobbs Preserve

The annual Spring bird census and country walkabout at the YKP will happen on May 9 this year. Dr. Wellso won't be available to lead the hardy band of birders on an early morning trek, but Mark McClelland will take the late risers and other stragglers a bit later in the day. You'll be welcome to join Mark's group or you can simply head out on your own with a fairly useful map we'll provide and your own sturdy shoes, sun screen, hat and enthusiastic grin.

Be aware that the "facilities" consist of a composting toilet in its own little unsightly hut. And, of course, the great outdoors festooned with large, cozy bushes and the occasional forest.

We'll alert the local papers a week or so before so you can get more information, plus you can check our web site for particulars the last week of April.



Nature Classes at The River Refuge By Joan Russell

Twentyseven children and nine moms attended the Nature Lesson at the Colorado river Refuge about tree bark and tree trunks. Daniel Lewis, forester with the Texas Forest Service LaGrange office brought tree trunk slices, posters and his own knowledge to share. Pieces of different species of tree trunks and branches with bark were passed around for the learner to examine and discover the various parts of the bark and trunks and what you can tell about the trees from looking at them.

Lexi Maxwell, a fire fighter with the Texas Forest Service in Bastrop also talked about tree bark and how it protects the tree from insect infestation and from fire. The two guest instructors held the lesson on the back porch of the WCID #2 building in Tahition Village and then accompanied the group to the Refuge to look at all the living trees in the forest and talk about different characteristics of the bark of each species. Many tree species can be identified by the bark alone.

Thank you Mark Sheffield and the Roscoe State Bank of Bastrop for sponsoring two nature classes at the CRR with your gift of \$250.00!

Riparian Buffer Zones

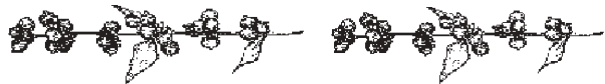
By Robert Fuller

As we become more aware of our environmental impact we look to balance development with the needs of the local community and the protection of our natural resources. In Bastrop County, the Colorado River and associated watersheds play an important role in our current and future quality of life. One way to protect and enhance the Colorado is the implementation of "Riparian Buffer Zones".

A Riparian Buffer Zone is the strip of land adjacent to a body of water containing rich vegetation including trees, shrubs and grasses, providing habitat and travel corridors for wildlife, as well as being a lovely environment for swimming, paddling, fishing and walking.

Besides the aesthetic value, the buffer filters and traps agrochemicals, animal waste, sediment and sediment-attached contaminants from run-off. It increases stream bank stability and maintains natural fluvial geomorphology of the stream system, reducing sedimentation and protecting habitat for aquatic organisms.

Buffer zones decrease flood severity while improving water storage and groundwater recharge by allowing water to spread and soak into the soil, recharging groundwater and extending the baseflow through the summer. They shelter and shade the aquatic environment, moderating temperatures, so it retains more dissolved oxygen, and supports a healthy assemblage of aquatic flora and fauna and improves water quality by helping to maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the water.



Margaret (Campbell) Bamberger, whose lovely plant drawings have graced each issue of this newsletter, died peacefully, surrounded by her family, at her beloved Selah Ranch on March 6, 2009. She brought beauty into our lives with her careful renderings of our native plant species and she worked tirelessly to heal and preserve our shared environment. Margie Crisp, one of her three children, is an active member of our Advisory Board.

Paul P. Dureka died unexpectedly on 2/9/09 at age 87. He and his wife of 62 years, Esther, raised three sons and a daughter, including Tom, our Executive Director. Paul repaired fighters and bombers in the Army Air Corps in WWII. A community volunteer, he enjoyed and appreciated the outdoors and kindled a love for the wild in hundreds of young people. He and Esther supported PPLT from its beginning.

Events of Interest

March 16 Lost Pines Master Naturalists meeting 6:30PM Red Rock Mark McClelland 512/281-5516
17 Bastrop Co. Audubon Society meeting. (3rd Tues) 7PM Priscilla Jarvis 512/281-2762.
18 Lost Pines Water District Board 7PM Bastrop City Council chambers www.lostpineswater.org
19 Friends of Lost Pines State Parks 7PM John Cobb cobbfarm@airmail.net
21 Colorado River monitoring trip led by Allan Kugler 512/581-2631
24 Wildfire Preparedness for homeowners workshop 6PM Michal Hubbard michal_firecap@yahoo.com
31 "Greenprint for Growth" 6:30PM Elgin ISD Bldg. Diane Miller Envision Central Texas 512/916-6037
April 4 Bastrop and Caldwell Cnty's Annual Wildlife Management Association Extravaganza at Smithville's Riverbend Park from 1 to 4 PM
18 Earth Day Festival at McKinney Roughs 10AM-3PM 512/303-5073
22 Earth Day on the river at the CRR and the Lost Pines Nature Trails Denise Rogers 512/303-7850
25 FireCAP FireFest 10-5 Michal Hubbard 512/321-2471
May 9 Spring Field Day and Bird Census at Yegua Knobbs Preserve

President's Message

You've probably observed more people talking about global warming, the problems with fossil fuels and being more careful where they leave their carbon footprint. We must help each other avoid sneering at the latecomers and making snide comments about how glad we are that they finally noticed. We must, instead, be ready to graciously welcome them and bring them quickly up to speed on the daunting tasks at hand. Our shared environment needs a lot of attention and one of the most important elements is under serious, constant threat from some who still have not got the message or, worse, who are simply disregarding its content. Water: Rivers and creeks on the surface, groundwater below in our aquifers, the water all life depends on has become just another commodity to be bought and sold by clever marketers. Your land trust, focused as we are on saving as much land as we can for farming, ranching and wildlife protection, is equally concerned about saving the riparian areas, the waterways and the underlying groundwater that sustains all the rest. Earth, sky, water...they're interconnected, interdependent and indispensable to all living creatures. All of us working together, observing, learning and teaching, can heal the wounds and keep our shared environment healthy and robust. We're definitely all in this together.

Jeremiah Jarvis, President

Welcome Travis Brown to the PPLT Board

Travis Brown lives in Lee County and is the renewable energy program manager for the state Office of Rural Community Affairs in Austin. Previously he was energy projects director for the Texas office of Public Citizen, a consumer advocacy group. For more than 20 years he was a journalist, reporting for several newspapers in Texas and for the Sacramento Bee, in California. In the 1990s, he led a grass-roots citizen's group in Erath County that fought water pollution from large dairies. He also helped organize and leads Neighbors for Neighbors, which formed in 1999 to battle environmental and human health threats in Lee and Bastrop counties from the strip-mining and coal-burning operations of Alcoa and Luminant. Thanks for joining us, Travis.

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The ongoing drought that has ruined decent pastures and withered giant trees throughout Central Texas has created very dangerous wildfire conditions. Here are suggestions from FireCap's Michal Hubbard for things you can do to protect your home:

- 1. Remove flammable items and vegetation for about 30 feet around your home.**
- 2. Get leaves and debris off your roof and out of rain gutters.**
- 3. Keep grass around the house short and irrigated (if possible).**
- 4. Keep water hoses hooked up and ready to use.**
- 5. Limb trees 6 to 8 feet up and remove vines, shrubs, etc. that would create a "ladder" for fire into the trees.**
- 6. Remove vegetation from around your home - assess what will burn if the shrubs burn.**
- 7. Stack firewood well away from structures.**
- 8. Do not drive onto or park in high grass. The auto's exhaust system can start a fire.**
- 9. Soak BBQ grill ashes in water for at least 24 hours before discarding.**
- 10. OBSERVE THE BURN BAN!**

For additional information go to www.firecap.org

Also, for a list of firewise, wildlife habitat plants for Bastrop County, contact Joan Russell: joanrussell@suddenlink.net

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