



December 1, 2016

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In 1998 three influential and forward thinking women—Terry Hershey, Lady Bird Johnson and Trudy Harris—joined forces to lay the groundwork for an organization that could meet the development pressure facing the Hill Country. Ever since those founding days, the Hill Country Land Trust (HCLT) has been working tirelessly to protect the agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, watersheds and scenic views of Central Texas. In the intervening eighteen years, HCLT, with the help of many dedicated volunteers and support organizations, has protected approximately 6,000 acres through 20 donated conservation easements.

During those same two decades, I have had the privilege of spending an annual long weekend of camping with extended family on the Llano River not far from Junction. What started as a small group of brothers and brothers-in-law has grown into a large group of 30+ that includes siblings, our children, and most recently, our grandchildren. The pristine quality of the Llano has remained relatively unchanged during that time, but I can see the land use changes that are steadily occurring up and down the river, some of which will inevitably negatively affect the river.

When I see these changes I am grateful for and reminded of the importance of the conservation work of our land trust. While our board and volunteers continue to innovate and work to protect and preserve land, Texas currently leads the nation in the loss and conversion of working farm and ranch lands. The Hill Country includes some of the fastest growing communities in the country, and that distinction is evidenced by the rapid changes we are seeing in our own backyards. In the past 10 years the Hill Country has added more than 50,000 acres of roads, rooftops, driveways, and other impervious surfaces, threatening our scenic vistas, heritage ranches, and the health of our aquifers.

Fortunately, there are charitable organizations devoted solely to conserving land and all the benefits they provide us. The Hill Country Land Trust is an accredited organization conserving Central Texas' special lands and waters by permanently protecting them from development for the benefit of the people, economy and wildlife of our state. Our mission is to conserve land, including water resources and wildlife habitat, and promote strong stewardship practices in caring for the land and its resources. The Hill Country Land Trust is unique in the depth and breadth of the expertise of our board members, and the land management expertise we offer to our conservation easement donors.

In sitting down to write this letter, I can't help but think of my grandchildren. I have been on this board for three years now, and have had the opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder with some of the most thoughtful and passionate landowners and stewards that I have met in Texas. The work we do is not for our own enjoyment -- as much as we may enjoy it. This work is about the Hill Country we hand down to the next generation of Texans - our grandkids, and their children and grandchildren. It is about passing on a legacy that recognizes that some places are too special to lose forever.

To better share that legacy, HCLT redesigned our website this year and began a video series to help landowners approach common stewardship challenges like prickly pear management and brush control. We hosted two landowner workshops in 2016, covering techniques to improve groundwater recharge and wildlife habitat in the Pedernales River basin. We also produced a short film highlighting the passion and hard work of Pam and Kim Bergman, Hill Country residents and conservation easement donors. The video shows their incredible efforts to restore native grasses and wildlife habitat on their property in Gillespie County, and the reward they enjoy in knowing their conservation easement will help protect the fruits of that labor. **We urge you to visit our website, www.HillCountryLandTrust.org, to view our first 3 videos, supplemental materials and to learn about future workshop opportunities.**

Our work would not be possible without the support of our countless donors and supporters. We rely on your generosity to keep generating the innovative resources, meaningful conservation successes and long-term protections for this special region. **Will you make a tax-deductible 2016 donation of \$50, or more, to help us continue this important work preserving the Texas Hill Country we all value?**

Your gift will help us protect our iconic Texas landscapes, so our grandchildren will be able to experience the wonder of stargazing at Enchanted Rock, the challenge of naming native grasses on our ranches, and the thrill of swimming in the spring-fed waterways of the Hill Country.

Thank you for your continued support of the Hill Country Land Trust and for your interest in preserving the natural beauty of our Texas Hill Country. We wish you and yours the very best during the upcoming holiday season.

Most sincerely,



Mike Krueger
President



Krueger family grandkids; July 2016