



Summer-Fall 2012

# www.hillcountrylandtrust.org Newsletter

## Enchanted Rock State Natural Area BBQ Social

The Hill Country Land Trust (HCLT) selected the scenic and popular Enchanted Rock State Natural Area as its priority conservation area. A couple hundred thousand visitors visit the state park every year to make the climb to the summit to get a "bird's eye" view of the Texas Hill Country; a view that remains relatively unspoiled by development. The

bald dome of granite is one of the most recognized landmarks in the nation, and has had a history of mystery and intrigue dating back eons of time from which it received its "enchanted" name. Dating back more than a billion years,

the Llano Uplift area, of which

Enchanted Rock is a part, serves as the foundation around which the rest of Texas was built.

HCLT's priority conservation effort is to protect the view shed from the summit of the dome. We want future generations to enjoy their adventure of climbing to the top and see what current climbers see – a wide ranging landscape with minimal distractions. We are working with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to preserve as much of the surrounding properties as possible. The current landowners in the area also take pride in the views they enjoy from their properties. HCLT

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and TPWD have hosted two "Neighbors Meet Neighbors" BBQ socials to share and hear the interest and concerns of the park and the many surrounding landowners. Neighbors, park staff, HCLT board members and donors enjoyed a time of fellowship, nature walks and conversation about the future of the area.

HCLT currently holds three conservation easements around the park's periphery and is progressing towards adding a fourth easement. Although preserving the view shed of Enchanted Rock has a priority status, there are a number of other equally significant natural and historic resource areas around other state parks and in the watersheds of the Hill Country that HCLT places high interest and concern for conservation.

## A Big Step for HCLT

It was a big step, maybe even a leap, for our all-volunteer land trust to commit to the Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission process. It meant submitting to scrutiny every nook and cranny of how we operate, from finances, recordkeeping, policies, easements, form letters, monitoring of easements, training board members and volunteers, in fact every aspect of doing business, in mind-numbing detail.

But the Accreditation Commission knows what they are doing, and when they allow the use of the accreditation "seal", they are confident that a land trust is operating with the highest level of professionalism.

Why would we put ourselves through this exercise, meeting monthly for over two years, just to submit an application? The answer is simple. Because we want independent and verified affirmation that we are practicing sound, effective and sustainable land conservation practices.

Of the 38 land trusts in Texas, only two are currently

accredited. We hope to join them, earning the faith of our easement donors and the public that we can meet our mission and conserve and protect the agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, and watersheds of the Texas Hill Country for present and future generations.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission is currently inviting public input and accepting signed, written comments on the Hill Country Land Trust's pending accreditation application. To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit [www.landtrustallianceaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustallianceaccreditation.org) or email your comments to [info@landtrustaccreditation.org](mailto:info@landtrustaccreditation.org). Comments may also be mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments, 112 Spring Street, Suite 204, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866, or faxed to 518-587-3183

- Katherine Peake, Accreditation Committee Chair -

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We hope you enjoy this newsletter and find it informative. HCLT is currently gathering email addresses for future electronic newsletters. If you would like to receive the newsletter via email, please send your email address to: [office@hillcountrylandtrust.org](mailto:office@hillcountrylandtrust.org).

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The mission of the Hill Country Land Trust is to conserve and protect the agricultural lands, wildlife habitat and watersheds of the Texas Hill Country for present and future generations.

### President's Message

Almost all of us who call the Texas Hill Country home share concerns about the future of our beautiful scenery, diverse wildlife, clear water streams, and rich agricultural and cultural history. On a daily basis we see our lands fragmented, agricultural operations discontinued, water resources depleted and habitat loss for our wildlife. What was a basically a rural landscape is changing to an urban landscape as people are leaving the congested cities, both in Texas and across the nation, to move to the Hill Country for a better life. That was the same premise that brought our foreign settlers to our region in the mid-1800s – looking for a better life. I, too, plead guilty to that reality.

In the late 1990s, a group of volunteer Hill Country landowners decided to form a non-profit organization, the Hill Country Land Trust, to offer fellow landowners choices about the long term protection of their properties in which many invested a lifetime of effort and satisfaction of their labor. Like our current concerns, these volunteers were concerned about the increasing intense development pressures throughout the region that threatened to destroy the very nature of the Hill Country. They committed the Hill Country Land Trust to help protect and preserve the agricultural lands, wildlife habitat and watersheds that defined the rural character of the Hill Country region for the benefit of present and future generations.

**The Hill Country Land Trust is not sitting on our successes, but striving to become more efficient and effective in our endeavors to reach a higher level, that being a premier land conservation organization.**

Today, that mission continues to hold, as the Hill Country Land Trust has received sixteen donated conservation agreements totaling more than 4,800 acres in a nineteen county area. I am pleased to preside over our current volunteer board; a board of hard working Hill Country people from all walks of life who care about and share the mission our founders envisioned for our land trust. The conserved properties cover and protect scenic viewsheds, active agricultural enterprises, endangered and other diverse wildlife habitat, watersheds, and the overall landscape we all love and appreciate.

The Hill Country Land Trust is not sitting on our successes, but striving to become more efficient and effective in our endeavors to reach a higher level, that being a premier land conservation organization. To achieve this higher level of stature, we have opened an office at 320 West San Antonio Street in Fredericksburg, are engaged in a national accreditation process, seeking funding to insure solvency, expanding our education and community outreach, and promoting good land stewardship, while maintaining our land conservation mission.

This newsletter is intended to inform as many Hill Country citizens as possible about the Hill Country Land Trust, and more importantly to solicit your support in helping us reach our mission. By sharing with you our efforts to promote land conservation, we hope you will want to join us to preserve the Hill Country landscape, its wildlife, our natural resources and most of all our way of life. I invite you study this newsletter to learn about us and what we do, to see if our mission fits with your expectations of what the Texas Hill Country should and can be. Please feel free to contact me, or any of our board members about questions you may have. Together, we can keep the Hill Country being the Hill Country.

- Bill Lindemann, President, HCLT -

## Keepers of the House

Exploring the etymology of the word "steward" uncovers a rich and profound relationship when applied to the land. The word "steward" comes from Old English "keeper of the hall or house." The Greek word for a steward, "oikonomos," means "law over the house." Interestingly, it is and sounds like the root of our word "economy." How many of us think of economy as stewardship? Probably more should!

The idea of being guards or keepers, i.e. wards, resonates clearly when it comes to the land. And even though private ownership is a given, there are few among us who don't appreciate ownership's ephemeral nature and who don't deeply understand ownership's secondary role as that of passing on to the future something better than we received. For those of us involved with land trusts these concepts are soul-felt. They motivate us daily. They keep us focused on what really matters, the givens of the earth.

In the Middle-Ages being a steward meant being responsible, being informed, in charge, in touch. It meant being accountable to the lord of the manor for the daily running of his house. The buck stopped at the steward. Harry Truman would have understood.

So it is with our stewardship of the land. If we don't take an active, responsible role, if we pass the responsibility for caring for the land up the chain, if we are not aware of what's going on in the manor, then we are not stewards.

Every land trust is required by law to monitor and enforce the terms of the conservation easement and this is most effectively done with a Stewardship Committee. The primary tool of the stewardship committee is the annual monitoring visit. These visits provide something beyond the contractual, though. They nurture and deepen the human relationship and shared values between the landowner and the land trust. They give an ongoing dialog a chance to develop and grow.

When your monitoring visit rolls around for another year, take the time to reacquaint yourself with both your land and your land trust. Use it to reevaluate the relationship with both in the light of stewardship.

- John Huecksteadt, Stewardship Committee Chair -

## Why I Conserved My Ranch

*Betsy Bouchard put her land in a conservation easement with Hill Country Land Trust back in 2007 Her reasons may ring true with many landowners and we asked her to share them with you....*

My grandfather, who bought the ranch in 1929, used to bring the family together for his birthday. As we gathered for a photo, he would intone, "Four generations!" Since my great-grandmother was a pioneer, I think he was proud to have four generations within easy travel distance. There we were, my tiny great-grandmother at the top level, and my brothers and sisters and I on the bottom rungs. Since that time, there have been two more generations that gather at the ranch, even though it has been divided nine ways since that photo was taken. The time has flown...it seems like yesterday.

The ranch, with its sleeping porch that packed in eleven beds, gave us a way to get together regularly. For us children, it brought the wildest of freedoms and the comfort of extended family. We wanted to preserve that experience for our kids and their kids, if they wanted it. My sister Maggie, younger brother Rusty and I decided to use a conservation easement as a way to preserve our three adjoining ranches. We wanted to keep family history and experiences fresh, and nothing is better for that than a place with vivid and shared childhood experiences.

As developments began to spring up around us, we wanted to protect the open land, the abundant wildlife, the ranching and hunting that made up the traditional ways of life in our rugged part of the Hill Country. Nobody makes a living from our ranches now, but we protect the native grasses and wildflowers as if we did. Having them protected in a land trust will also help the next generation keep them by lowering the inheritance tax on land that can't be developed.

Everyone who is fortunate enough to have access to open land knows what lessons it offers. It is my privilege to be able to conserve it.



Cows enjoying lush grass on a Lampasas County Conservation Easement

## Hill Country Land Trust in the News...

Part of fulfilling our mission is to educate the public about the need and benefits of conserving your land through the use of conservation easements....and we did just that in a local paper "Hill Country Happenings". You can see the article online by visiting <http://hchappenings.com/2012/June/JuneIssue.html> and turning to page 25.

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Beautiful lake on conservation easement in Gillespie county



### Hill Country Land Trust in the News.....

Hill Country Land Trust is featured in the Summer 2012 issue of *Saving Land*, the quarterly magazine of the *Land Trust Alliance* ([www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org)), a national alliance of the country's 1700 land trust organizations. The *Land Trust Alliance* chose representatives from three land trusts around the country asking them about their life experiences and what led them to work towards land conservation in their particular areas. HCLT President, Bill Lindemann talks about the challenges of the Texas Hill Country region - water and water quality, development, wildlife diversity and what is being done to meet these challenges. Bill stresses the need for education in Texas where 94% of the land is privately owned and protecting the land often remains a poorly known concept. He also emphasizes the need to build credibility with authorities in your area so that your opinion will be sought out when important conservation and land issues arise.