



OVERVIEW

Since 2023, the Hill Country Alliance has convened the Hill Country Leadership Institute - a ten-month program for elected officials and key staff from across the Texas Hill Country, with a focus on local planning and natural resource management challenges and solutions. From January to October each year, the cohort meets twice monthly for a total of ten in-person sessions and nine virtual sessions on themes ranging from water infrastructure funding to transportation and development codes, to engaging the Texas Legislature. To date, a total of 46 leaders have participated in the program.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 7 County Commissioners
- 4 County Judges
- 10 City Councilmembers
- 6 Mayors
- 7 Groundwater Conservation District leaders
- 12 city managers, planners, county engineers and key staff

These leaders represent 8 county commissioner courts, 11 city councils, 6 groundwater conservation districts, and together serve 1 incredible Hill Country worth protecting.

"Every session brought new ideas and a better perspective and understanding to take back to the Real County Commissioner's Court as we pursue local policies to preserve water quality and quantity. I count the Leadership Institute as one of the greatest opportunities I've had to learn on behalf of my county since taking office."
-Judge Bella Rubio, Real County

PROGRAMMING

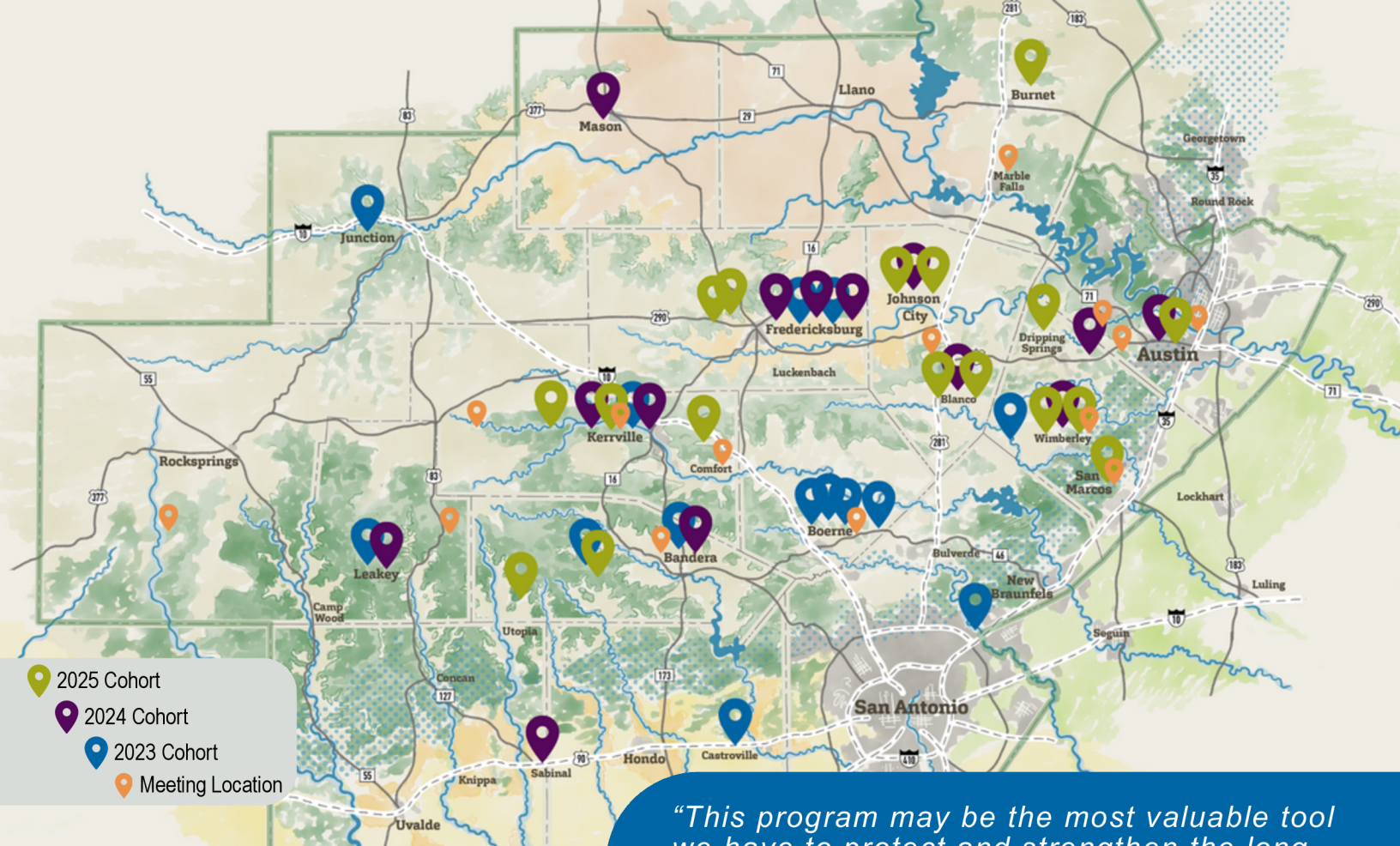
KEY TOPICS

- City and county planning tools
- Statewide and local water planning
- Innovative approaches to water management
- Land conservation, park creation, and funding
- Night sky preservation
- Local economic development
- Transportation planning and funding
- The land / water connection, land stewardship
- Funding tools (grants, loan programs, etc.)
- Fire mitigation and disaster planning

PRESENTERS & PARTNERS

- Cibolo Center for Conservation
- Environmental Defense Fund
- Native American Seed
- National Wildlife Federation
- Simplecity Design
- The Campsite at Shield Ranch
- The Meadows Center for Water & the Environment
- Texas Association of Counties
- Texas Municipal League
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- Texas Water Development Board
- Texas Water Foundation
- Texas Water Trade





"This program may be the most valuable tool we have to protect and strengthen the long term viability of the Hill Country."
- Mayor Robert Rayburn, City of Mason

DIRECT OUTCOMES

- Real County adopted new subdivision regulations thanks to the leadership of Institute alumni Judge Rubio and Commissioner Gray.
- The City of Castroville contracted with Simplecity Design, a forward-thinking firm, for the creation of their new Downtown Plan, Comprehensive Plan, and Unified Development Code. Simplecity's founder Matt Lewis was a presenter at two Leadership Institute sessions.
- The Cities of Fredericksburg, Boerne, and Wimberley adopted resolutions directing staff to fully consider One Water strategies when developing or permitting public and private facilities, inspired by a session on One Water in Wimberley.
- The Cities of Kerrville and Castroville have engaged with Native American Seed, a well-regarded native plant landscaping firm and seed farm, who presented about land stewardship during a Leadership Institute session.
- Hill Country Underground Conservation District, the Gillespie County Engineer, and the Travis County Natural Resources Office have connected to explore what Gillespie County can do to manage impervious cover in new development.
- The City of Kerrville approved a new tree preservation ordinance, and Johnson City is engaging with HCA and US Water Alliance to address aging and leaky water infrastructure which is causing 60% line loss.
- Hays County Judge Ruben Becerra committed to ensuring that all new county buildings, including the new Indigenous Cultures Institute, will be designed with One Water principles.
- The Hill Country has a stronger network of local and state leaders, aligned in a vision for the region. This network includes Institute participants and over a dozen more officials who have attended Leadership Institute sessions as guests.

PROGRAM GOALS

- Connect local leaders to practical solutions for common challenges.
- Strengthen the network of leaders aligned in their vision for our region.
- Identify opportunities for stronger regional collaboration.

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