

For Immediate Release

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Hill Country Dark Sky Conference Shines Light on Night Sky Preservation

Annual Event Returns to the Region, Uniting Leaders and Advocates to Combat Light Pollution

Blanco, Texas – “Our skies are not just a backdrop; they are part of our heritage, our science, and our spirit,” said Mayor Candy Cargill of Blanco, who welcomed participants at the conference's opening. “They inspire artists, guide farmers, and spark curiosity in the hearts of children. Preserving them is a responsibility we proudly share with all of you here today.”

The Hill Country Dark Sky Conference returned this year after a long hiatus. The 2025 event—hosted in Blanco by the City of Blanco and in partnership with the Blanco Chamber of Commerce, Blanco Country Friends of the Night Sky, and Hill Country Alliance—marked the first conference held since 2019 and reignited an annual tradition focused on preserving the region’s iconic night skies.

More than 60 attendees including city and county leaders, business professionals, utility managers, state parks officials, and night sky advocates gathered for a day of shared learning and networking.

The conference featured expert presentations from regional leaders and national authorities in night sky preservation:

- **Amber Harrison**, International Dark Sky Places Manager, DarkSky International – “*Restoring the Night: Combatting Light Pollution with DarkSky International*”
- **Dawn Davies**, Night Sky Program Manager, Hill Country Alliance – “*The State of Affairs in our Region: Hill Country Night Skies*”
- **Dalton Rice**, City Manager, City of Kerrville – “*Dark Skies Outdoor Lighting Ordinance*”
- **Michelle Fischer**, City Administrator, City of Dripping Springs – “*How May We Illuminate You? Lessons Learned from Being an International Dark Sky Community*”
- **Libbey Aly**, Executive Director, Blanco Chamber of Commerce, and **Wayne Gosnell**, President, Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky – “*Blanco: On the Edge of Darkness*”
- **Richard King**, Communications Initiatives Project Manager, Joint Base San Antonio – “*Joint Base San Antonio & 502d Air Base Wing Camp Bullis Dark Sky*”
- **Buddy Stefanoff**, Vice President, Crossroads LED – “*Eliminating Skyglow at the Speed of Light*”

A standout moment of the day was a visit from the Wizard of the Night Sky, who added a touch of magic and helped drive home the importance of public engagement and local preservation efforts.

“We can’t assume that our skies will always be star-filled in the Hill Country,” said Katherine Romans, Executive Director of the Hill Country Alliance, in her closing remarks. “Fortunately, Central Texas has some of the most passionate, organized, and dedicated staff and volunteers anywhere in the world, working to raise awareness and encourage development that minimizes light pollution.”

As development across Central Texas accelerates, the return of the Hill Country Dark Sky Conference signals a renewed commitment to protecting one of the region’s most awe-inspiring and endangered natural features: the star-filled night sky.

About: *The Hill Country Alliance is a nonprofit organization bringing together a diverse coalition of partners to preserve the open spaces, starry night skies, clean and abundant waters, and unique character of the Texas Hill Country. Learn more at hillcountryalliance.org.*

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Photos:



Caption: The Conference brought out more than sixty attendees from communities across the Texas Hill Country.



Credit: Wayne Gosnell - The Wizard of the Night Sky, aka BCFNS Board Member Bob Heinonen, gave the conference a simple but direct message.



Caption: Katherine Romans, Hill Country Alliance, delivers closing remarks