



For Immediate Release

October 8, 2025

Hill Country leaders and residents gather in Concan to discuss the region's water future

On October 4, 2025, more than 85 locals, water practitioners, and elected officials gathered to discuss drought, flood, water planning, and what we must change for the western Hill Country to secure a reliable water supply for the current and future generations. Planned by a volunteer steering committee of Hill Country residents, the event constituted the eighth "Rural Roundup" held in the Hill Country over the last three years. Sponsored by the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country and the Hill Country Alliance, Saturday's event was filled with stories of how the status quo needs to change, but also stories of how Hill Country folks have already taken action to conserve water at a personal, local, and even state level.

"Our goal for this event was to gather neighbors who believe we need to preserve our region's water," said Judge Cindy Casburn, a member of the Leading in the Rural Hill Country steering committee and key planner of the event. "The Hill Country is home to 4 million people, which is double the population from 20 years ago. That does not include our extended family of over 2 million annual visitors per year. Another doubled growth is expected over the next 30 years. It is imperative to planning the stewardship of our natural resources ahead of this explosive growth. The expert presenters at the Rural Roundup echoed the call to conserve to preserve. If we wait, it will be too late. If not you, then who?"

The agenda for the day included:

- **Opening Remarks** from organizers Sabinal Municipal Judge Cindy Casburn and Uvalde County Commissioner Roy Kothmann, featuring an original song, "Hill Country Lovers," with lyrics written by Judge Casburn.
- **The State of Hill Country Water** presented by Paul Bertetti, the Senior Director of Aquifer Science Research at Edwards Aquifer Authority.
- **Conversation – Past and Future of Water in the Rural Hill Country:** Chairman Tracy King and Texas Representative Don McLaughlin discussed how past natural disasters, both droughts and floods, have informed the Texas water policy landscape we live in today. Real County Judge Bella Rubio moderated the discussion.
- **Workshop – Water in Your Backyard:** Texas Agricultural Land Trust CEO Chad Ellis, Hill Country Alliance Water Program Manager Marisa Bruno, and Rainwater Consultant Steven Grainger discussed the different strategies available to individuals, business owners, or neighborhoods looking to curb their water use.
- **Lunch** was provided by House Pasture Cattle Co.
- **Panel – Water Wins from Real and Uvalde Counties:** Joel Pigg from Real-Edwards Conservation & Reclamation District, Vic Hildebran from Uvalde County Underground Water Conservation District, Forrest Anderson from the Uvalde County Office of Emergency Management, and Dick Earnest from the Concan Water Supply Board discussed Concan's 2022 water shortage and how water practitioners are working to prevent future shortages.
- **Walking Tour:** Led by Dick Earnest and Kason Haby, participants visited Concan water supply wells to learn more about water processing, before learning more about how open lands slow and sink rainfall via the Texas Grazing Coalition rainfall simulator.



The Rural Roundup is a traveling event series showcasing different Hill Country communities and the specific strengths or challenges facing that community. Leading in the Rural Hill Country envisions a healthy and thriving rural Hill Country through a collaborative network of diverse leaders – both emerging and established. To help make this vision a reality, the group aims to connect leaders in the rural Hill Country to identify common challenges, share solutions, and pursue opportunities for our region's future. Find materials from the Concan Rural Roundup, learn more about this project, and stay tuned for updates on the next Rural Roundup event by visiting the Hill Country Alliance website or going to <https://bit.ly/LRHC2025>

Partners:

Hill Country Alliance: The Hill Country Alliance is a nonprofit organization that brings 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.

Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country: The Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country is dedicated to improving the quality of life for residents of the Hill Country region through philanthropic initiatives.

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Photos:

[Click here to view shareable photos from the event.](#)



Rep. Don McLaughlin and Chairman Tracy King discuss the past and future of water in the Texas Hill Country, moderated by Real County Judge Bella Rubio.



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Judge Cindy Casburn, Sabinal Mayor Erik Gomez, Blake Stanford, and Rob Smithers.





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The Rural Roundup was held at House Pasture Cattle Co and drew over 85 attendees.