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Hill Country Residents and Leaders Gather in Junction to Discuss Fire Resilience

Junction, TX – More than 60 Hill Country residents, landowners, emergency management coordinators, county judges, fire fighters, and ecologists gathered in Junction on October 17 to learn how prescribed burns can support healthy landscapes and help communities prepare for wildfire.

Organized by a volunteer steering committee of Hill Country residents, the event constituted the 11th Rural Roundup hosted by Leading in the Rural Hill Country over the last four years. Sponsored by the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country and the Hill Country Alliance, the event brought together participants to share local knowledge, learn from experienced practitioners, and discuss the opportunities and challenges of using prescribed fire as a land management tool.

The day included presentations on fire ecology and the history of fire in the Hill Country, a panel featuring experiences fire practitioners, and case studies on fire recovery and community fire preparedness. Participants also toured Native American Seed Farm before gathering for a happy hour in its oak tree-shaded beer garden.

"As a county judge, I too often feel like I'm in a state of hurry, always thinking about the next task. But today I am reminded how important it is to slow down for discussion, to listen, to learn, to share...Putting out fires, building community, that is resilience." – *Kimble County Judge, Hal Rose*

"Homeowners, landowners, HOAs, community members, elected officials, businesses, and emergency services all have a stake in the use of prescribed fire in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), and each person has different risk frames and potentially different goals as they relate to fire. So, it can be difficult to get everyone on board and moving in the same direction without authentic engagement. It's key to learn why individuals may feel resistant instead of making assumptions about them." – *Dr. Rebekah Fox, Communication Technical Specialist, US Forest Service*

"There's 70 burn associations in Texas covering over 300 counties. We were the first association in Texas, maybe in the US. Our goal is to create a fire culture in the counties. A culture is something that's passed from one generation to the next." – *Dr. Butch Taylor, Edwards Plateau Prescribed Burn Association Founder*

"We need to recruit that next generation of burners because, frankly, I'm getting too old to do this stuff! I'm a rabid proponent of prescribed fire because I've seen what it's done on my property." – *Sam Jetton, Upper Llano Prescribed Burn Association*

"I have used and promoted prescribed fire for many years, and I've also been guilty of overpromoting it. On a ranch field day many years ago in Mason County, we described all of the merits and benefits of using fire. Then a few days later we received a very kind and professional letter from one of the well-known old-time ranchers in Mason. He said that we mentioned only the positive aspects of prescribed fire but none of the negative aspects or risks. Ever since, I've tried not to overpromote any tool. The tools are neither good nor bad. It's how they are used that matters." – *Steve Nelle, Natural Resource Specialist*

The organizers extend their gratitude to the presenters and speakers for sharing their expertise, and to Junction C.A.S.P and Native American Seed Farm for hosting the gathering. Special thanks go to photographer Mackenzie Wade of Stillstone Design and catering partners Donut Palace, Lum's BBQ, and The Bumpkin Bakes.

About Leading in the Rural Hill Country:

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 Junction 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/LRHC2026>.

Partners:

Hill Country Alliance: *[The Hill Country Alliance](http://www.hillcountryalliance.org) 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.*

The Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country: *[The Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country](http://www.communityfoundationofthetexas.com) is dedicated to improving the quality of life for residents of the Hill Country region through philanthropic initiatives.*

Media Resources: Event photos are available [here](#). Photo credit: Mackenzie Wade.