



2022 ANNUAL REPORT



hill country alliance

2022 BY THE NUMBERS

TOP Trough Visitor.

Jerry Sargent

CENTER The Old Swimming Hole.

Jeffrey Gladden

BOTTOM Bluebonnet Back Road.

William Shelton

125+

Events hosted, convened, or presented at.

250+

Leadership Summit attendees.

18,110

Tuned into our online outreach through social media and the Neighbor to Neighbor newsletter.

30 million

New dollars coming to Central Texas for conservation and stewardship programs.



1 Hill Country

Worth protecting for future generations.



FROM THE DIRECTORS DESK

Dear Neighbors,

Thanks to you and your support, 2022 was HCA's biggest single year of impact for the Hill Country. Our efforts led to more than \$30 million new dollars to support landowners interested in conservation and stewardship of their land. We reached broad audiences across Texas, with dozens of news stories and op-eds. We saw new protections for our night skies in San Antonio and Kerrville and kicked off a brand-new grassroots water gathering to convene residents and organizations championing the responsible management of our water resources.

From my first day on the job with HCA ten years ago it was clear — the work of preserving and protecting the Hill Country simply can't be done by any one group or individual. Landowners, businesses, elected officials, scientists and nonprofits all play a critical role in protecting the long-term future of our lands, waters, communities and night skies.

In that vein, 2022 was a year to strengthen collaboration across the region. HCA led the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network in the rollout of the first ever State of the Hill Country Report, documenting growth trends, conservation achievements, and areas for focus. We grew our role with the Texas Living Waters Project advancing water conservation. We led the Camp Bullis Sentinel Landscape Partnership — a first-of-its-kind effort in Texas to protect land health with an eye toward military readiness. We also expanded the Texans for Responsible Aggregate Mining Coalition, working statewide to address the impacts of aggregate operations on local communities. When we work together, we can make real change in our region.

As I write this letter, 2023 is already well under way. One of the projects I'm most excited about this year is the first ever Hill Country Leadership Institute. With a goal of bringing elected officials from across our 17 counties together to discuss growth and conservation issues, share ideas, and learn from one another, I feel confident that this new project will be the next big thing for HCA — and for the conservation movement in Central Texas.

If you've supported our work or spent time with us out in the Hill Country this year, thank you! We simply couldn't achieve all the successes we've had without the support of partners, donors, and dedicated champions working across the Hill Country. I hope you'll reach out, come to an HCA event, or drop us a note to let us know what's happening in your corner of the Hill Country.

I'm for the Hill Country,

Katherine Romans

1322 HWY 290, Suite D, Dripping Springs, TX 78620
www.hillcountryalliance.org
512-894-2214 (p)
info@hillcountryalliance.org



ABOVE Gold Framed Capitol. *Tim Speer*

2022 PHOTO CONTEST

SNAPSHOT OF THE HILL COUNTRY WINNERS



GRAND PRIZE Determination. *Yu Zhou*



FIRST PLACE Lazy Day. *David Satterwhite*



SECOND PLACE Midnight on The Llano. *Jeremiah Terry*

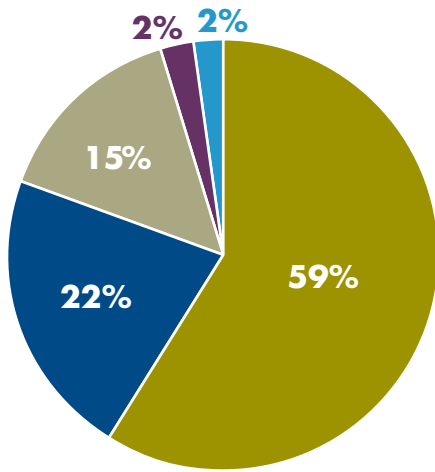


THIRD PLACE Window onto a Canyon Lake Sunset. *Jerry Sargent*



PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD Rare Albino Bluebonnets. *Andrea Raynor*

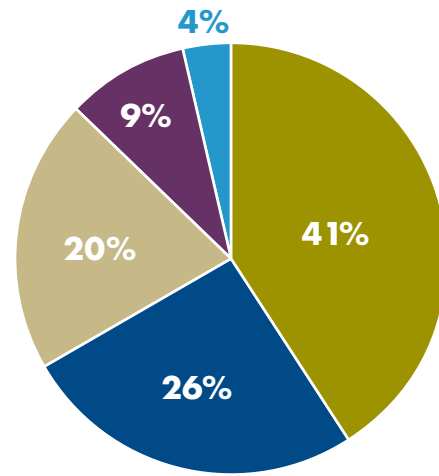
FUNDRAISING AND FINANCIALS



Income

Foundations	\$738,370
Individuals	\$272,792
Organizations and Government	\$181,873
Other	\$33,645
Corporate	\$24,366

Total: \$1,251,046



Expenses

Programs	\$501,664
Network	\$318,076
Education and Outreach	\$249,066
Administrative	\$114,099
Fundraising	\$42,231

Total: \$1,225,136

63%

Increase in new donors
from 2021 to 2022

\$9,000+

Dollars raised from a successful silent
auction during the Leadership Summit

We've been following the Alliance for many years and, especially in the last ten years, have come to rely on them as the source for information about the health and well-being of the Hill Country now and into the future. — Michael Hawkins, The Comfort News

NETWORK

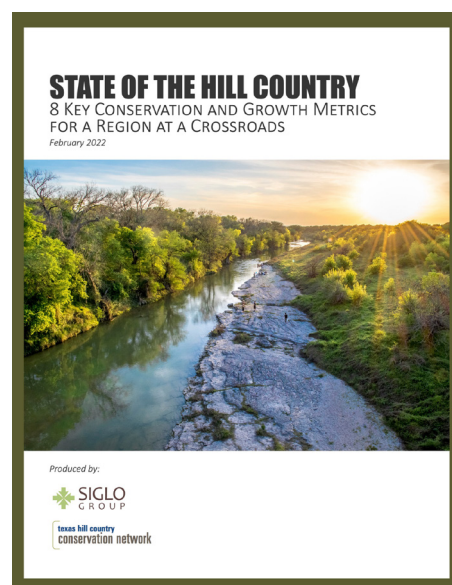
With a mission to maximize natural resource protection through enhanced collaboration, the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network - led by HCA's Josh Sendejar - is bringing together non-profits, academic institutions, government agencies, and businesses to address our most pressing conservation challenges.

2022 saw the release of the State of the Hill Country Report, outlining 8 metrics to track changes in the region's natural resources. This report received the attention of local media, with nearly 40 separate articles, op-eds, and news pieces on the report. And provided support for a substantial investment in conservation in Kendall County through a successful \$20 million bond election.

In the summer of 2022, the Network released its Water + Equity report through the help of several network partners and Texas A&M's Natural Resources Institute. The Network's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice committee continues to meet on a regular basis, thanks to the leadership of both Cliff Kaplan and Rachael Lindsey (HCC). The

Network continued work on streamlining communications through a new Network Communications Plan, which will provide a framework for onboarding new partners and providing shared language for the Network's mission and how its work fits into the mission of our partner organizations.

September saw the onboarding of new Network Manager, Josh Sendejar, and continued work for the Network's Land, Water, and Natural Infrastructure Plan (to be published in 2023). The Natural Infrastructure Plan has also pushed the Network to reach previously unreachable audiences through offering translation of resources, working with BIPOC-led organizations, and hosting a webinar with live Spanish translation.



TOP State of the Hill Country report released in 2022.

BOTTOM Texas water delegation at the 2022 One Water Summit in Milwaukee.

LEFT Network partners meet for a potluck at the John Knox Ranch.



LAND

HCA's Land Program, led by Daniel Oppenheimer, is dedicated to promoting on-the-ground stewardship that benefits Hill Country lands, creeks, and rivers as well as bolstering conservation strategies to protect ranches, wildlife, and water resources.

In 2022, Land Program Director Daniel Oppenheimer, became the coordinator for the Camp Bullis Sentinel Landscape (CBSL) Partnership, the first of its kind in Texas, working to enhance natural resources conservation, agricultural productivity, and military readiness in multiple counties around Joint Base San Antonio's Camp Bullis. The CBSL Partnership made big strides: growing to more than 50 organizations, creating multiple technical committees, and securing \$8.57 million through the USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program to support volunteering private landowners with stewardship activities.

In August, HCA hired Rachel Seets as the new Landowner Outreach and Stewardship Manager. Together, Daniel and Rachel engaged more than 375 private landowners through riparian and hillside stewardship workshops, site visits, pot-lucks, and other educational events. The land program also convened more than 100 partners from conservation organizations to enhance information-sharing, coordination, and collaboration across the Hill Country.



ABOVE Land Program Director Daniel Oppenheimer points out hillside erosion from a headcut.

BELOW HCA partners meet for work related to the Camp Bullis Sentinel Landscape Partnership.



WATER

HCA's Water Program, led by Marisa Bruno, focuses on informing water planning and management processes, advocating for water policies that recognize the connection between groundwater and surface water, and promoting water infrastructure alternatives that wisely steward critical water resources in the Hill Country.

HCA joined partners in bringing a rule change petition to the TCEQ regarding pristine streams at the start of 2022. While unsuccessful, the effort started an important dialogue with the TCEQ commission and staff and are hopeful that we can garner momentum through a staff-led stakeholder process to address the issue of nutrients discharged into pristine streams. To support this work and honor the life and legacy of the late Sky Lewey, we launched the Sky Lewey River Protection Fund to specifically raise funds for the preservation of pristine streams.

In April, the water program kicked off the first ever Spring Water Revival - a month-long celebration of water in the Hill Country – with more than 300 attendees at events from Austin to Junction. In July, Marisa Bruno joined HCA as the new Water Program Manager, with Sydney Beckner moving into a new role as Research and Project Manager. Throughout the year from Blanco to Bandera, the water program convened gatherings of Hill Country grassroots water advocates, met

with water managers on infrastructure funding in Real and Uvalde counties, cultivated relationships with technical assistance providers and local water managers, and created a resource on the State Revolving Fund with the Texas Living Waters Project.

As we go into the 87th Legislative Session in 2023, the Water Program will continue to advance its policy priorities: pristine streams, county tools, and sustainable groundwater planning.



ABOVE In 2022, the Water Program launched our inaugural Spring Water Revival.

CROSS SPREAD Local landowners attend a stewardship workshop.

BELOW Water advocates from across the Hill Country gather in Bandera.



NIGHT SKY

HCA's Night Sky program, led by Dawn Davies, engages communities across the region in night sky preservation efforts and convenes a broad spectrum of partners to minimize the spread of light pollution as the region grows.

In 2022, the Night Sky Program saw tremendous advances in local government activity around combatting light pollution. After more than ten months of work, the Camp Bullis Sentinel Landscape Night Sky Preservation Subcommittee saw the passage of their proposed amendments to the Military Lighting Overlay District Ordinance in the City of San Antonio. Following eight months of work with the Kerr County Friends of the Night Sky group, the City of Kerrville adopted its first-ever Outdoor Lighting Ordinance in January 2023.

HCA continues to support parks and communities seeking to earn designations as International Dark-Sky Places. Currently, five communities and nine state and local parks are pursuing their designations through the International Dark-Sky Association, with another 15 planning to do so in the near future.

This year saw significant developments within HCA's Night

Sky team, with the establishment of the 14th Night Sky Friends Group in Gillespie County and the start of a 15th group in Uvalde County. In October, HCA celebrated our third annual Hill Country Night Sky Month with 48 functions across 11 counties. The month drew media attention and was recognized with over a dozen proclamations and resolutions passed across the region.

In 2022, the Hill Country Eclipse Team expanded to over 380 members, representing over 200 organizations across 33 counties in Texas, as well as guests from Massachusetts and California—all planning for the upcoming April 8, 2024 total solar eclipse. Roundtable meetings continue to bring over a third of the team together quarterly and the HCA Eclipse Portal page remains one of the top three most visited across HCA's whole site.



ABOVE Night Sky Program Manager Dawn Davies leads campers in solar observation for a star party at Shield Ranch.

LEFT Orion Over the Hill Country. Photo contest entry courtesy of Mike Lundy.

COMMUNITY

HCA's Community Program, led by Cliff Kaplan, supports communities in their efforts to maintain their distinct character – from historic main streets to winding country roads – while they grow. Here are some highlights from 2022:

This year, the Community Program broadened and deepened its work thanks to the work of Research and Project Manager, Sydney Beckner who stepped into a supporting role. HCA continued its Leading in the Rural Hill Country collaboration with the H. E. Butt Foundation and hosted our biggest Hill Country Leadership Summit yet – with over 250 attendees. In addition to this leadership work, HCA created the Hill Country Leadership Institute, a new 10-month program created for decision makers and elected leaders throughout the Texas Hill Country. The inaugural cohort of 16 participants launched in January 2023.

HCA helped Texans for Responsible Aggregate Mining (TRAM) develop a communications plan, a policy agenda, and strategy for the 2023 Legislative Session. TRAM is up to 25 member organizations representing 45 counties; 2022 additions from the Hill Country include GEAA, TESPA, and the Oak Hill Neighborhood Association. We've begun a process of identifying and spotlighting aggregates and concrete operators that are using commendable Best Management

Practices (BMPs), including a gravel mine, rock quarry, and concrete batch plant, all in the Hill Country. This has led to promising conversations with some of the biggest operators in our region. The coalition was also significantly involved in the TCEQ's Sunset Commission process, an amendment process for concrete batch plant regulations (still underway), and Kerr County's official Citizens' Advisory Council for APOs, which will move towards adopting recommended BMPs for operators in the county in the new year.

We developed a new resource for release in 2023 – Leading by Example: Ordinances and Tools for Growing Hill Country Communities - made up of approximately 25 guides on various types of ordinances that promote responsible development and natural resource stewardship. As part of the research for this project, HCA conducted a regional audit of 35 municipalities across 17 counties. While the audit confirmed there is more work to do to encourage the adoption of appropriate ordinances, it also revealed strong examples within the Hill Country for most types of protective ordinances.



LEFT 2022 Hill Country Leadership Summit attendees at The Hall at Jester King Brewery. Photo courtesy of Jacob Gonzales.

RIGHT More than 80 joined us in Blanco for a meeting that kicked off the newly formed Blanco County Conservation Initiative.



2022 STAFF + BOARD

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Cliff Kaplan, Program Director

Chanee Carlson, Director of Philanthropy

Daniel Oppenheimer, Land Program Director

Marisa Bruno, Water Program Manager

Dawn Davies, Night Sky Program Manager

Josh Sendejar, Texas Hill Country Conservation
Network Manager

John Rooney, Texas Hill Country Conservation
Network Manager

Leah Cuddeback, Storytelling and Public
Engagement Manager

Sydney Beckner, Research and Project Manager

Rachel Seets, Landowner Outreach and
Stewardship Manager

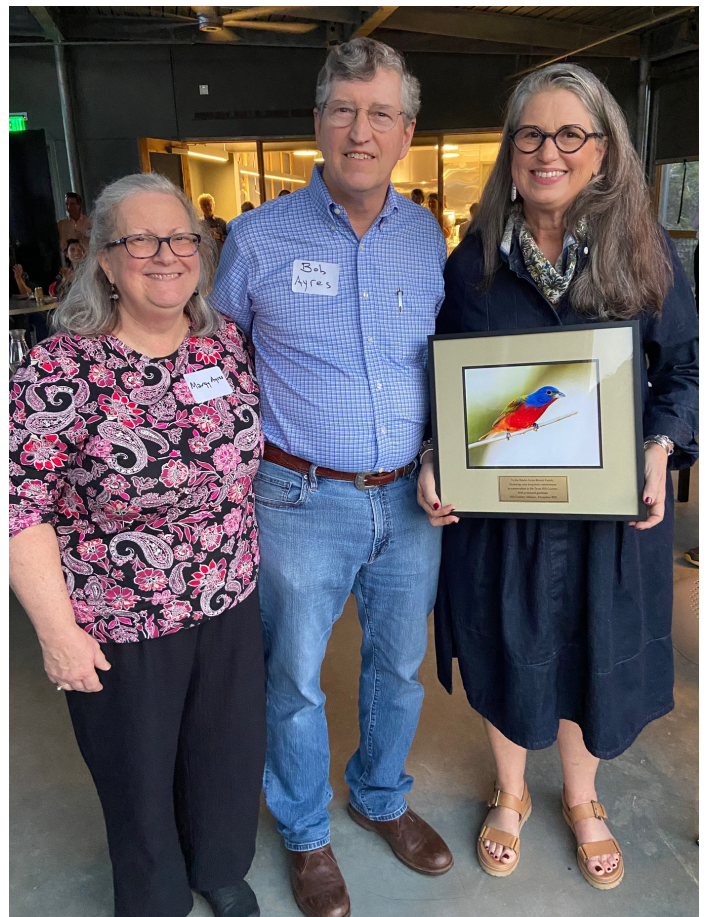
Sheila Holt, Office Manager

Dominic Troiani, Spring Education and Outreach Intern

Maggie Nemetz, Fall Community Program Intern

Board of Directors officer positions listed based on January 2022 officer list. Positions change as board members depart the board. Full board list includes new members added throughout 2022. For the most up-to-date listing of HCA Board members, see our website at: hillcountryalliance.org/about/hca-board-of-directors


Staff includes all staff of HCA throughout 2022



Our work is possible because of the generous support of many donors – both on the individual and organizational level. Although we have made every effort to recognize everyone who has financially contributed in support of HCA’s work in 2022, we apologize for any accidental omissions.
Please contact us if an error has been made or if you prefer us to display your name differently in the future.

THANK YOU

Alexander Sullivan	Chuck Lesniak	Elizabeth Walch	Jenna Kromann Rao	Land Trust Alliance	Mike and Beth Harper	Robert Deming*	Texas Water Trade
Alexandra Thompson	Cibolo Nature Center	Elsa Hull	Jennifer Bernier*	Larry and Arlene Becker*	Mike and Pam Reese	Robert Hixon	The Bill M. and Cecile
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Mailing address:
PO Box 151675, Austin, TX 78715

Email:
info@hillcountryalliance.org

The mission of the Hill Country Alliance is to bring 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.

COVER PHOTO Cool Clarity. *Karrie King*
DESIGN *Weston Sanders*