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For Immediate Release

Celebrate the Stars at LBJ Ranch June 2

Learn about preserving the beautiful night skies of the Texas Hill Country

Austin (May 17, 2010) – Enjoy an evening of star gazing and a presentation on what you can do to preserve the night skies starting 7:30 pm, Wednesday, June 2, at the LBJ Ranch. The event is hosted by Hill Country Alliance, Hill Country Land Trust and Green Living for the Hill Country.

Once it was the stars and the moon that lit up the skies at night in the Hill Country. The Milky Way, our galaxy, was visible and provided a sense of our place in the universe. Now the glare of poorly designed city and residential lighting makes it difficult to enjoy the night skies without driving miles away from the city.

The contamination of night skies with glaring, unnatural light also impacts essential cycles and rhythms for animals and humans. Studies show altering the light levels and light rhythms of nature affects migration, reproduction and feeding of animals. There also is increasing evidence that light pollution has a negative impact on human health.

Poor lighting design and excessive lighting wastes energy and results in higher electric bills. Simple changes in lighting design and installation make it possible to have light where it is needed at night, save energy and prevent spill-over into the night skies.

“We can do better lighting for less money, says William Wren, author, speaker and outdoor light control proponent from the McDonald Observatory. “I like to talk about good quality, cost-efficient lighting for the community when and where it is needed,” says Wren, who is responsible for keeping skies dark for astronomical research at the observatory.

As an example of how a city can save money and improve lighting, Wren says the City of Alpine is changing out 324 light bulbs and replacing all street lights. The city is taking out 175 and 400 watt high pressure mercury vapor lights (glary and excessive lighting) and installing 70 watt high pressure sodium lights, which provide more light per unit of electricity. According to Wren, the lights will be shielded with reflective shields for better illumination on the ground and less electricity cost.

“One of the first and easiest places to start cutting cost and use of fossil fuel is replacement of poor outdoor lighting,” Wren says. “We’re talking tens of billions of dollars a year that shines light into the night sky.”

Wren will be the featured speaker at the *Celebrate the Stars* event at LBJ Ranch, Wednesday, June 2.

Event Schedule:

7:30 pm Arrive to park and get acquainted with the Hill Country Alliance, Hill Country Land Trust and Green Living for the Hill Country
8:00 pm Presentation
9:00 pm Star party, star gazing, constellation tour

Location:

LBJ Ranch Hangar, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park

11 miles west on Hwy 290 from Johnson City; turn right at Ranch Road 1 and drive 3 miles; turn right on park Road 49 ; follow the event signs to the LBJ Ranch Hangar

Or, 9 miles east on Hwy 290 from Fredericksburg; turn left at Ranch Road 1 and drive 5 miles; turn left on park Road 49; follow the event signs to the LBJ Ranch Hangar.

The Hill Country Alliance (HCA) is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to raise public awareness and build community support around the need to preserve the natural resources and heritage of the Central Texas Hill Country. Please visit the HCA website (www.hillcountryalliance.org) for more information about the latest news, events and initiatives, and how you can contribute to our activities.