

For Immediate Release
February 24, 2015

Imagine the Future of the Hill Country *Hill Country Alliance Call for Photos Begins March 1*



2014 Grand Prize winner: *No Bluebonnets this Year*, by Mark Holly

What is your vision of the Hill Country that future generations will inherit? The Hill Country Alliance (HCA) asks this question as it calls for photographs for its 2016 calendar.

People here and elsewhere share a strong connection to the culture, ranchlands, natural beauty, charming towns and precious spring-fed streams of the Hill Country. Are we losing the very things we value so much? What do we treasure to keep?

The annual HCA photo contest opens on March 1 and runs through May 31. Winners receive cash prizes and their photos will appear in the popular HCA calendar and in the organization's various educational products. Entering the contest is easy through the HCA website (www.hillcountryalliance.org).

Each year HCA produces a calendar featuring stunning photographs taken by both amateur and professional photographers. This year HCA seeks photos that illustrate what is worth protecting for future generations – creeks and swimming holes, breathtaking views, iconic cultural experiences like dance halls, charming towns and heritage ranches. “Our calendar is always a beautiful and educational reminder of how special the Hill Country is now, and the need for all of us to take care of it for the future,” said HCA Board President Leo Tynan of Fredericksburg.

Mark Holly, who lives in the rapidly changing Boerne area, has enjoyed seeing his images in four calendars including the cover of the current 2015 calendar. “The Hill Country, in my opinion, is the most beautiful part of our large state, retaining much of its natural beauty and many wonderful small

towns that so many of us can see ourselves raising a family and growing old in,” he said. “Thank goodness there are organizations like the Hill Country Alliance that are interested in helping us protect all that is good about the Hill Country.”

Rapid population growth presents many challenges for this region. Groundwater pumping is a challenge to track and manage. Ongoing drought exacerbates the problem, and falling aquifer levels effect our hill country springs, rivers and streams. Communities can quickly lose their character and quality when incompatible industrial and commercial development moves in. The annual calendar is one of many HCA educational programs designed to shed light on these kinds of issues.

HCA Executive Director Christy Muse says the photo contest is an easy way for anyone to get involved and contribute to a vision for Hill Country conservation. “This is going to be a spectacular spring season for wildflowers and many of our rivers and creeks are flowing right now, so please grab your camera, get outside and enjoy the Hill Country.” Learn more about the photo contest and HCA’s educational programs at www.hillcountryalliance.org.

HCA is a collaboration of diverse people and organizations whose purpose is to raise public awareness and build community support around the need to protect the natural resources and heritage of the Texas Hill Country.

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