

Shield Ranch, Director of Land Stewardship

The Director of Land Stewardship for the Shield Ranch will be responsible for the conservation management of the Shield-Ayres-Bowen family ranchlands in Jeff Davis, Real, and Travis/Hays Counties. The Director of Land Stewardship will report to Robert A. Ayres, Managing Partner of the Shield Ranch.

The Opportunity

The 23,000-acre Cherry Canyon Ranch in Jeff Davis County is situated in the northern portion of the Davis Mountains. The flora and fauna are typical of the lower and middle-elevation montane habitats of the northern Chihuahuan Desert. There has been no livestock on the ranch since 2011. (Approximately 90% of the ranch burned during the Rock House fire in April 2011.) Numerous rare plants have been identified on the ranch. Wildlife includes mule deer, elk, aoudad, mountain lion, and golden eagle. Fred and Vera Shield purchased the Cherry Canyon ranch in 1950.

The 7,500-acre Camp Wood Ranch is located on the western edge of the Hill Country in the southwest corner of Real County near the town of Camp Wood. Most of the ranch is within the Ranch Creek watershed, a tributary of the Nueces River. The northeastern portion of the ranch is within the Dry Frio watershed. The flora and fauna are typical of the western edge of the Edwards Plateau with influences from the neighboring Chihuahuan Desert and Tamaulipan Thornscrub eco-regions. There has been no livestock on the ranch since 2012. A portion of the ranch is under conservation easement with The Nature Conservancy of Texas for the protection of habitat for Black-capped Vireo. There is also a significant population of Golden-cheeked Warblers on the ranch. Fred and Vera Shield purchased the Camp Wood Ranch in 1945.

The 6,800-acre Shield Ranch is located in southwestern Travis and northern Hays Counties in the Barton Creek Watershed. The ranch is a protected wildland in close proximity to the City of Austin. Ninety-five percent of the ranch is under conservation easements with The Nature Conservancy and the City of Austin. The ranch is currently leased for cattle. The ranch has received numerous awards (including, in 2000, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department statewide Lone Star Land Steward Award) and has been widely recognized for its commitment to land stewardship, water quality, ecological diversity, outreach, and education. Shield Ranch is home to El Ranchito, a nature immersion summer camp for kids who would not otherwise be able to attend summer camp. El Ranchito and other outreach programs are administered by the Shield Ranch Foundation. Fred and Vera Shield purchased the Shield Ranch in 1938.

Responsibilities

General and Supervisory

- Develop and implement a multi-year conservation management plan for each property
- Develop effective working relationships with ranch owners, ranch staff, and Shield Ranch Foundation staff
- Supervise ranch foremen, assistant ranch steward, and part-time administrative assistant
- Arrange and oversee contract work related to conservation programs and projects
- Develop effective partnerships with governmental agencies, non-profit groups, grantees of conservation easements, professional advisors, and consultants
- Explore sources of funding to leverage available stewardship resources
- Support the Director of External Relations in leading tours and presenting ranch programs to the public

Conservation Management

- Manage conservation programs (in collaboration with governmental and non-profit partners)
 - hunting
 - livestock operations (Travis/Hays County only)
 - brush management
 - prescribed burning
 - pond and spring management
 - habitat restoration
 - endangered/threatened species programs
 - predator control
 - control of exotic and invasive species
 - biological inventories
 - monitoring of water quality and other development impacts
- Explore opportunities for sustainable agriculture
- Approve, coordinate, and review scientific research by outside parties
- Generate or procure maps as needed for documentation and planning of conservation activities
- Assist with the compilation of land use histories for each ranch from existing records, aerial photography, interviews, etc.
- Establish methods of monitoring range conditions and the impact of various management practices (transect surveys, photographic records, etc.)

Property Management

- Oversight of Infrastructure and improvements (roads, trails, fences, water systems, facilities)
 - construction of new improvements
 - maintenance and repair of existing improvements
 - historic and pre-historic sites

- Site Support for El Ranchito Camp and other Shield Ranch Foundation programs
- Oversight of volunteer program
- Oversight of Real Property Issues
 - risk management (develop and implement risk management plan)
 - maintain a fire readiness plan in communication with local authorities
 - insure compliance with terms of conservation easements
 - insure compliance with wildlife valuation requirements
 - insure compliance with mitigation management plans and reporting obligations
 - utilities easement issues (internal service and transmission lines)
 - impacts of neighboring development
 - trespass issues
- Fiscal oversight (in collaboration with ranch financial services provider)
 - develop employee work plans and ranch budgets each year
 - monitor year-to-date expenses against budgets
 - major equipment purchases
- Administration
 - maintain detailed records of management activities
 - develop and manage data base of information relevant to future management decisions and reporting obligations
 - Support the efforts of the Director of External Relations to prepare an annual report summarizing activities and accomplishments

Requirements and Qualifications

- Undergraduate degree in range management, wildlife management, or related degree
- Master's degree preferred
- Minimum ten years land stewardship experience
- Land stewardship experience in Central, South, or West Texas
- Understanding of and interest in management challenges of wildland/urban interface
- Demonstrated supervisory experience
- Proficiency with GIS and common software programs (Excel, PowerPoint, Word)
- Demonstrated fiscal oversight
- Travel to Cherry Canyon Ranch three-four times per year
- Travel to Camp Wood Ranch five-six times per year
- Employee should live on or near Travis/Hays county ranch
- Criminal background check required

Compensation

- Position is full time and includes health insurance and retirement plan
- Compensation commensurate with experience

Send resume to info@shieldranch.com.