



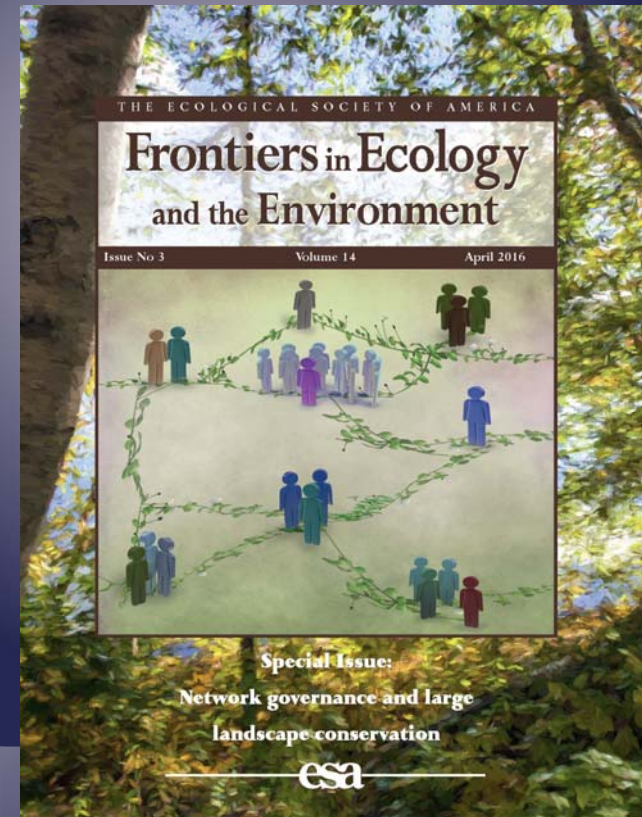
# Hill Country Connectivity: A Network Approach to Working Together

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RGK Center | LBJ School of Public Affairs

Hill Country Leadership Summit  
Camp Lucy, Dripping Springs  
September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016

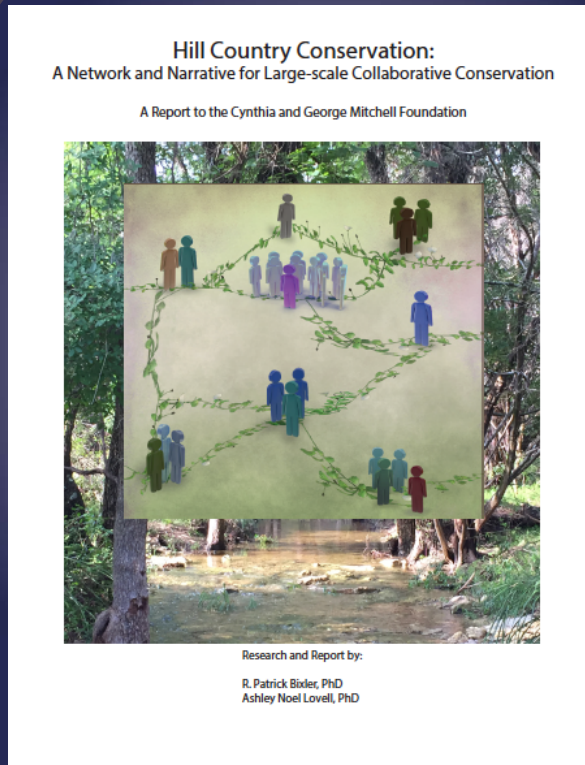
# Social Networks and Landscape Conservation

- ↳ **Social science** methods can provide insights into the patterns and structure of collaborative efforts
- ↳ We **theorize** that networks can affect an outcomes we care about
  - ↳ Empirical evidence suggests so
- ↳ **Key finding** of this study: there is a strong desire for a large-scale network approach as indicated in both the interviews and the survey



# A year ago....

I introduced our ideas for a "Hill County Landscape Network Study" .....



Report is available: <https://rgkcenter.org/research/1/hill-country-conservation-network-and-narrative-large-scale-collaborative-conservation>

Baby is available to anybody interested in babysitting....

# Scope and Objectives of Study

Research the organizational landscape to assess:

- (1) Who is out there?
- (2) Working on what?
- (3) Working together how?
- (4) Talking about working together how?
- (5) Talking about threats and opportunities?

# Methods

## Qualitative (interviews)

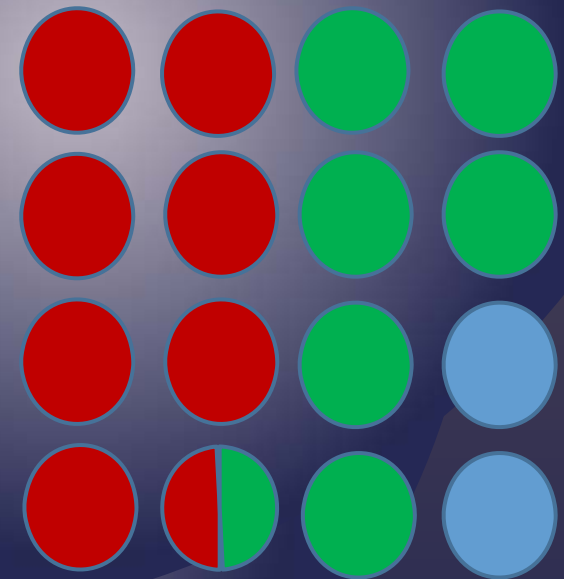
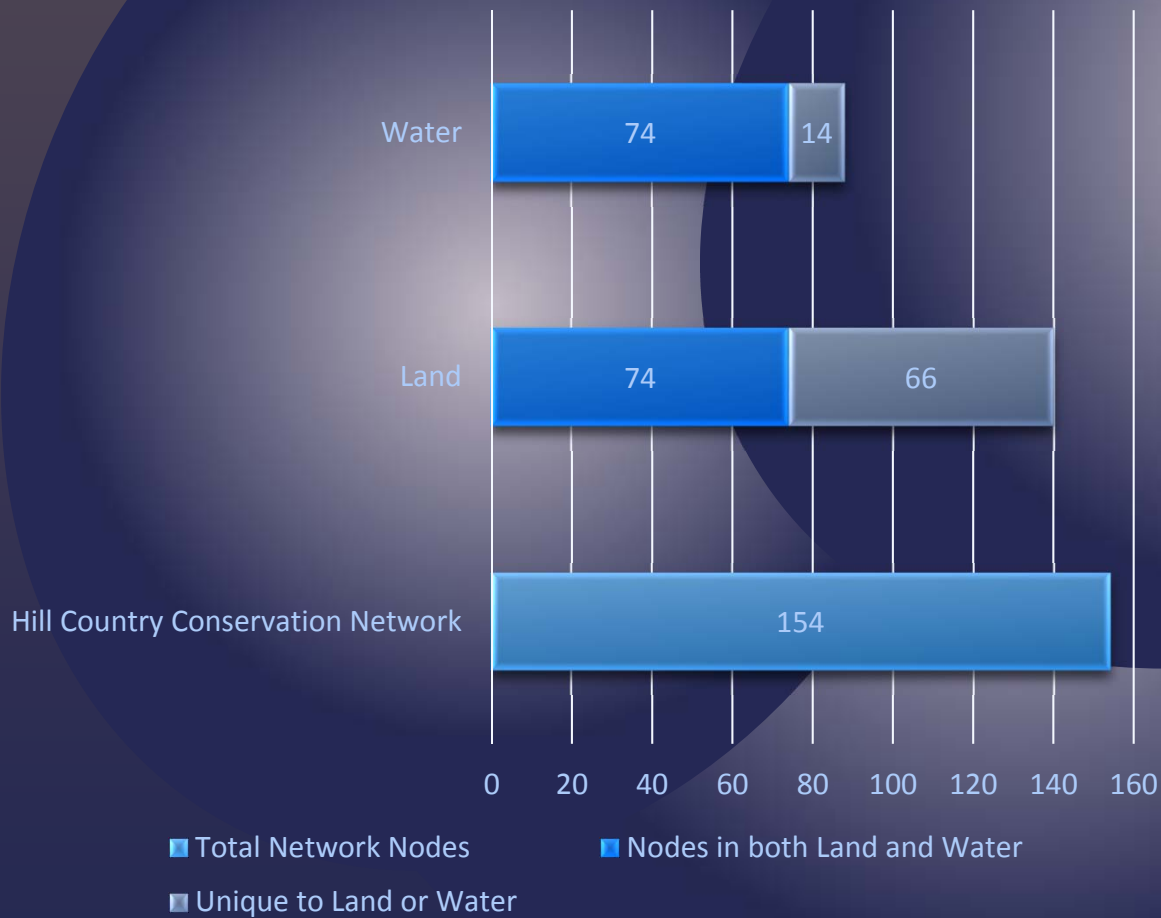
- 27 In-depth interviews

## Quantitative (survey)

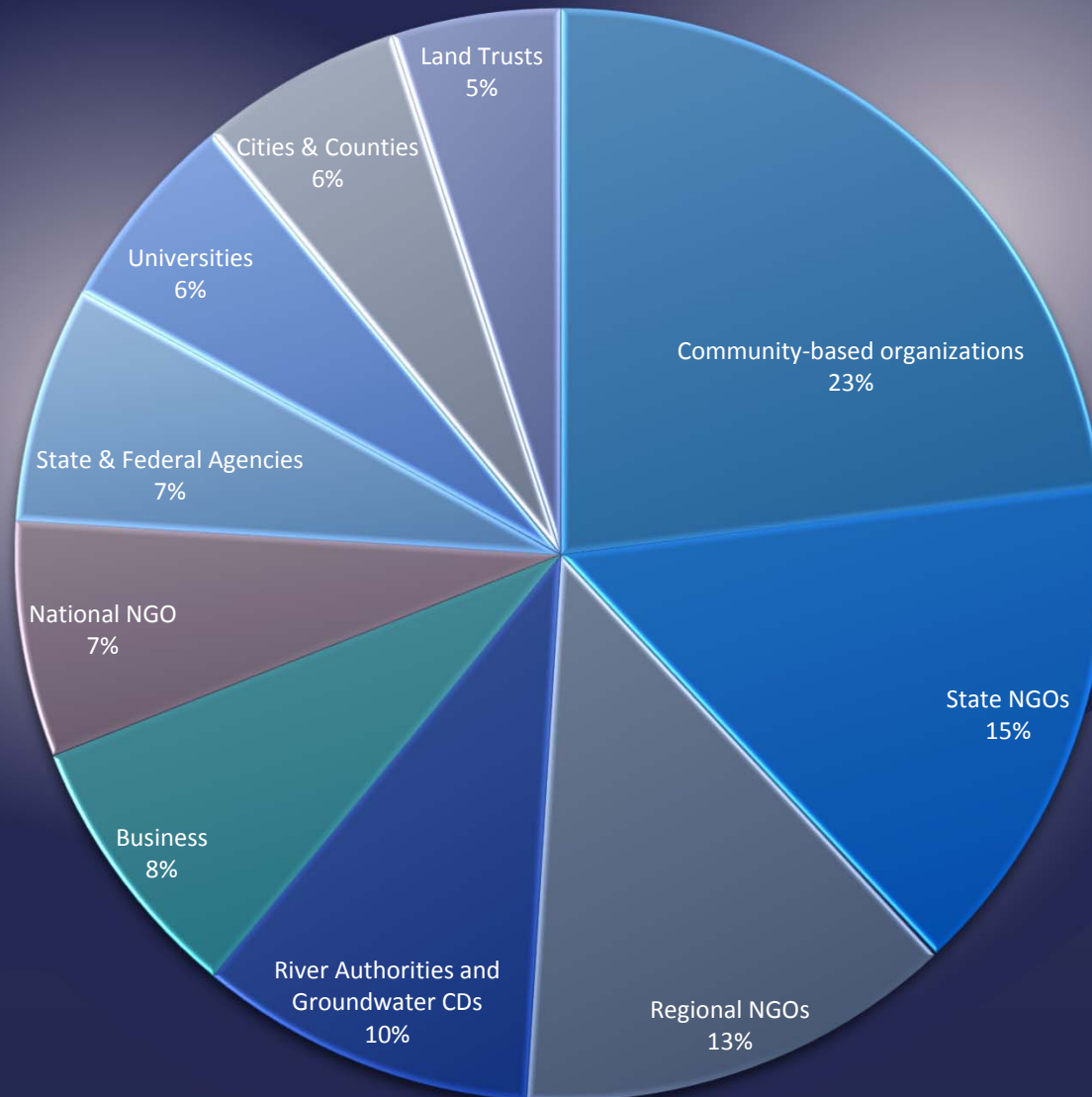
- 66 responses to online survey
  - Data collected on organizational characteristics
  - Relationship data (i.e., social network data) collected about working relationships for land and water conservation sectors

# How many “in the network”?

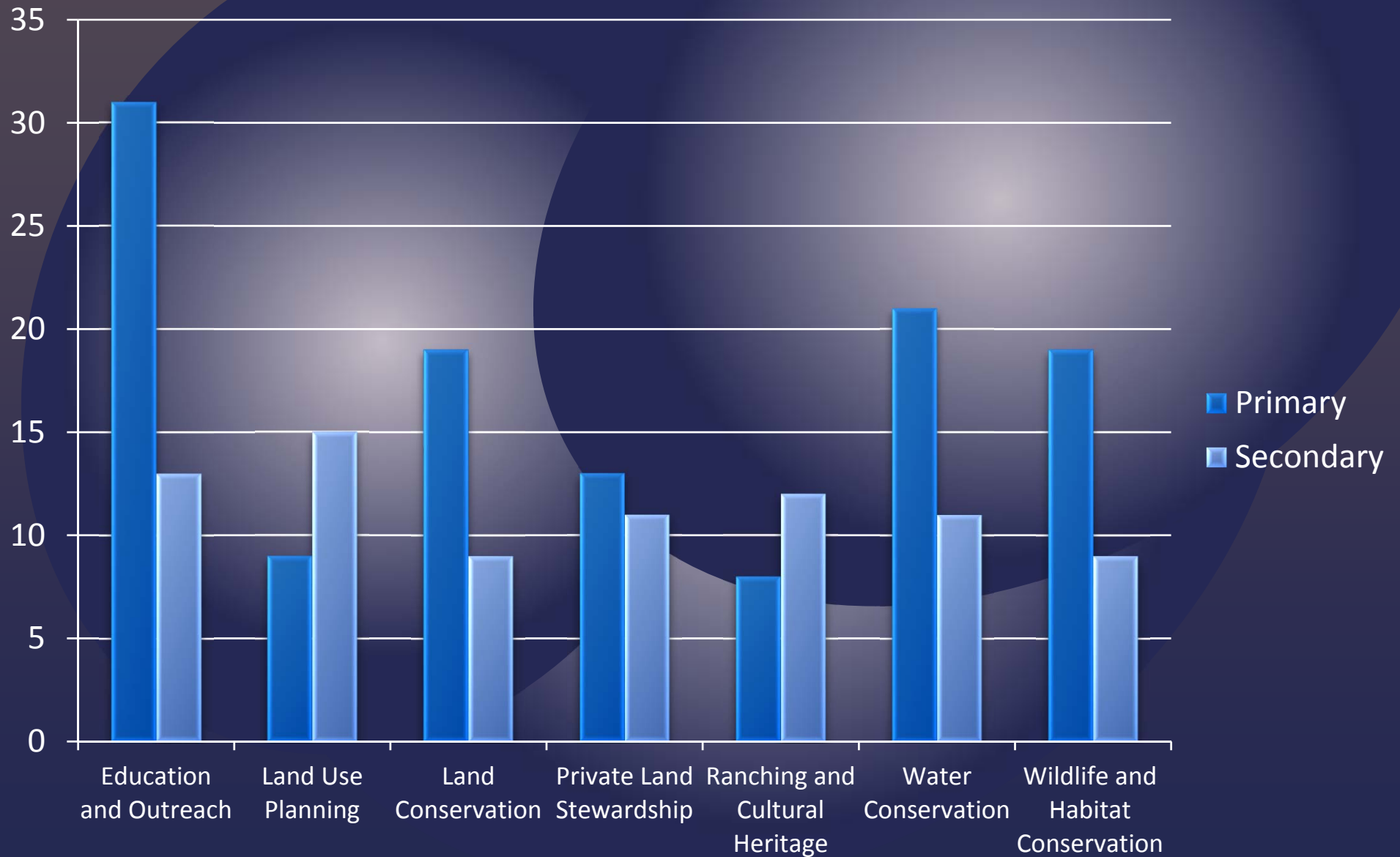
## Number of Organization & Agencies per Network Analyzed



# Who are we?

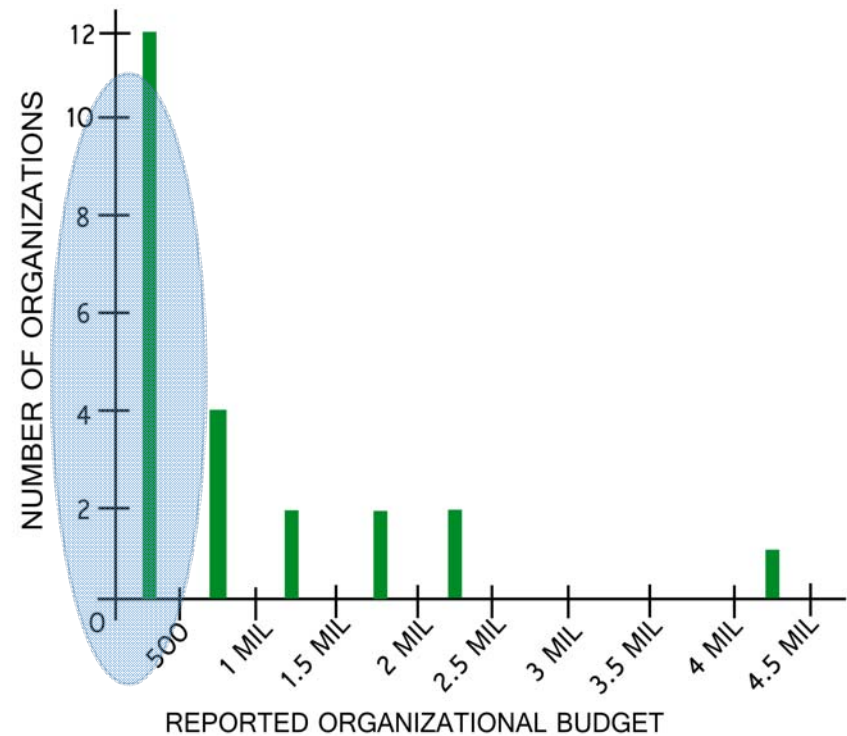
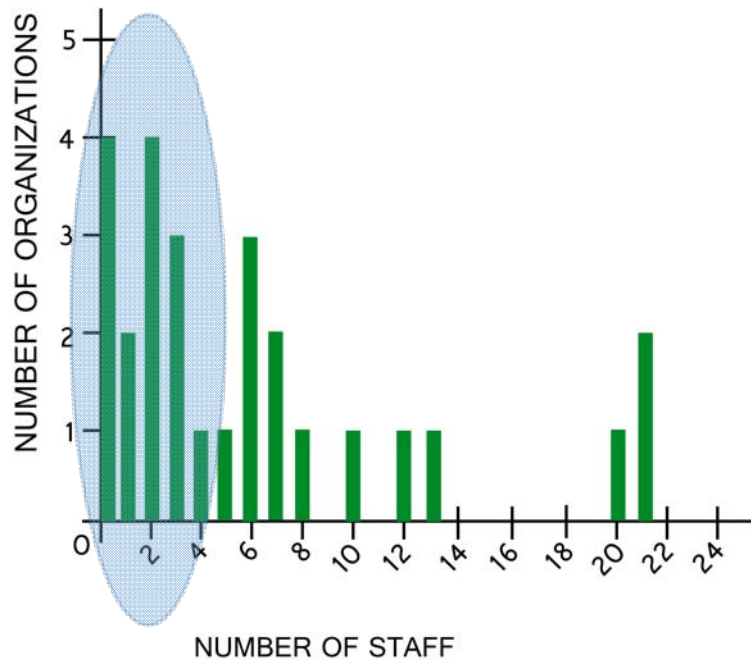


# What are we working on?





# With what kind of capacity?



# Why aren't we collaborating?

## Treading Water

- Overworked
- Lack of Funding
- Lack of Time
- Deliverables and deadlines don't match



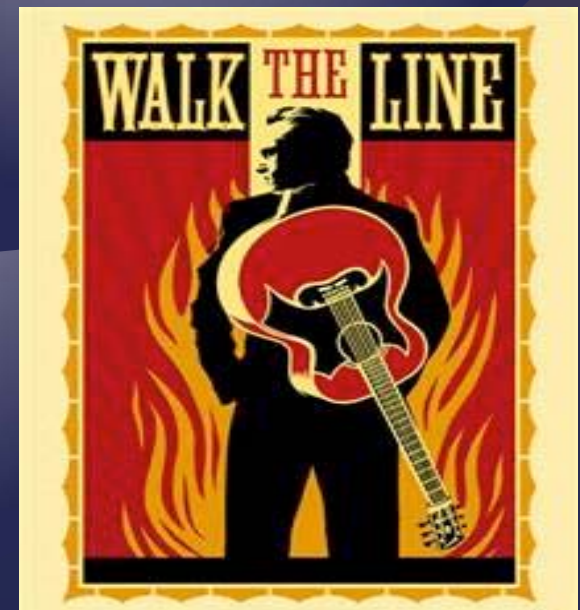
## What's Mine is Mine

- Organizational boundaries
- Different cultures
- Different priorities
- Funding restrictions
- Different strategies for achieving objectives



## Walk the Line

- Political landscape is tough
- Different degrees of environmentalism
- Challenges of legal battles, litigation



# Why are we collaborating?

## The New Rule Petition

- Legislative proposals and legislative change
- Lobbying
- “Already a lot of collaboration” (in policy / legislative change)



## Shared Benefits

- There is shared benefits to working together
- Reduce redundancy through communication
- Leverage expertise and experience
- Better process, better products



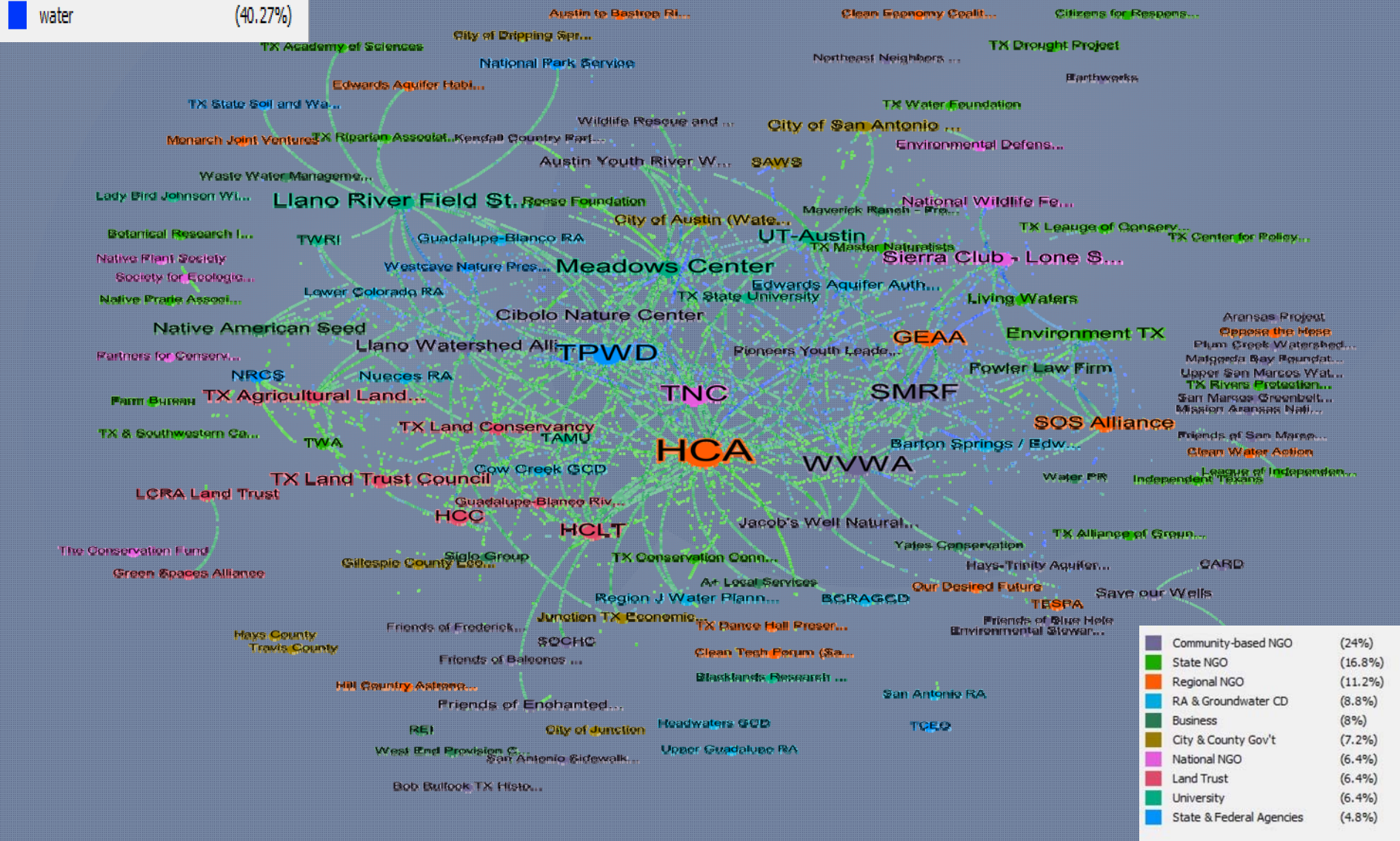
## Respond to Threats

- Issue-based collaboration
- Solving problems
- Respond to disasters
- Respond to active or new threats



# How are we working together?

land (59.73%)  
water (40.27%)



Community-based NGO	(24%)
State NGO	(16.8%)
Regional NGO	(11.2%)
RA & Groundwater CD	(8.8%)
Business	(8%)
City & County Gov't	(7.2%)
National NGO	(6.4%)
Land Trust	(6.4%)
University	(6.4%)
State & Federal Agencies	(4.8%)

# How are we working together?

## Hill Country Alliance



ORGANIZATION

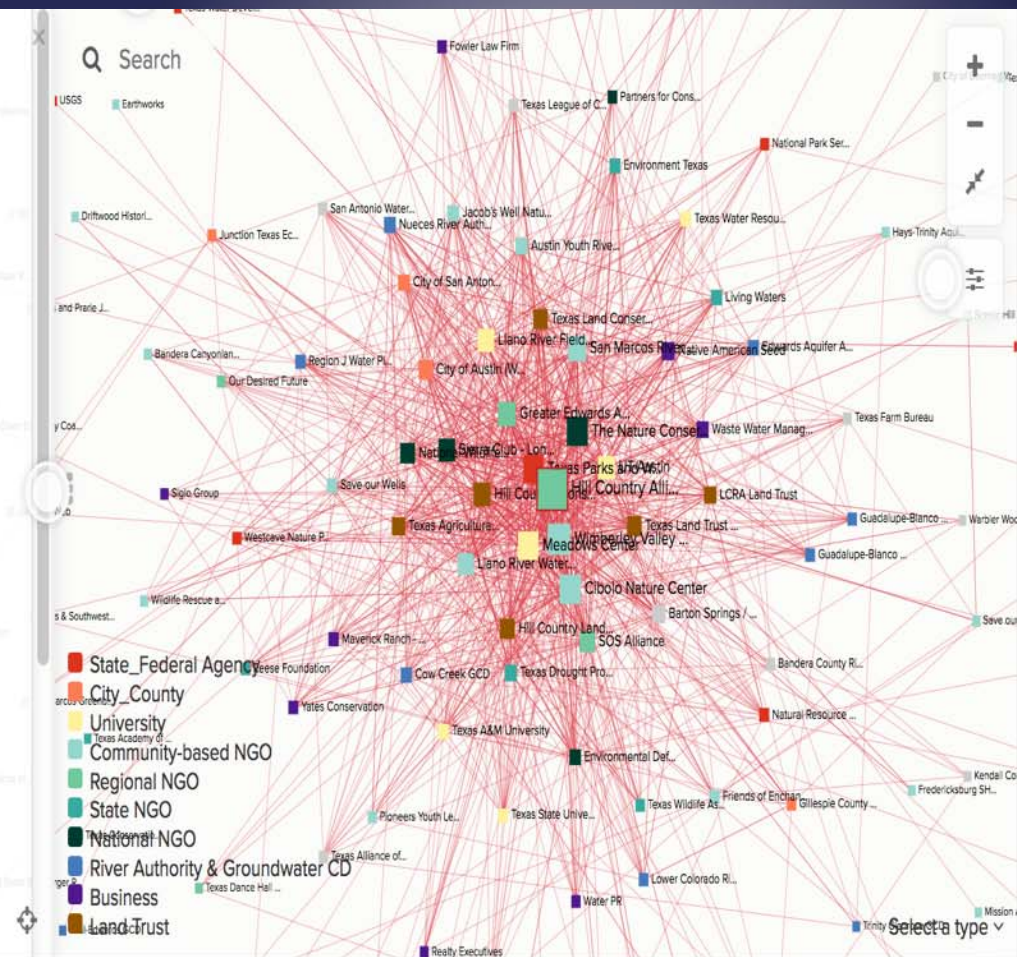
To build an ever expanding alliance of groups and individuals in the Hill Country with the long-term objective of preserving water supply, open spaces and the unique character and heritage of this region.

EMAIL [katherine@hillcountryalliance.org](mailto:katherine@hillcountryalliance.org)

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA Water

ORGANIZATION TYPE Regional NGO

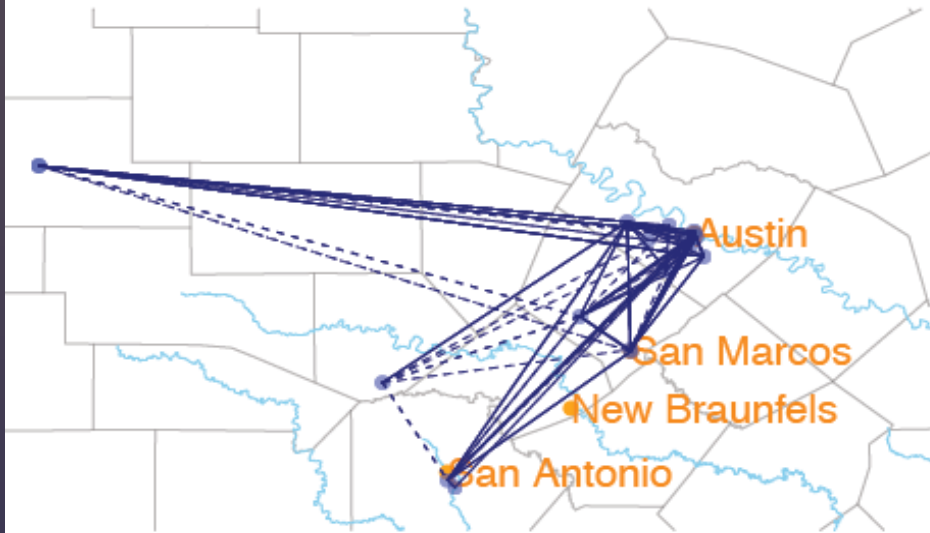
WEBSITE [hillcountryalliance.org/](http://hillcountryalliance.org/)



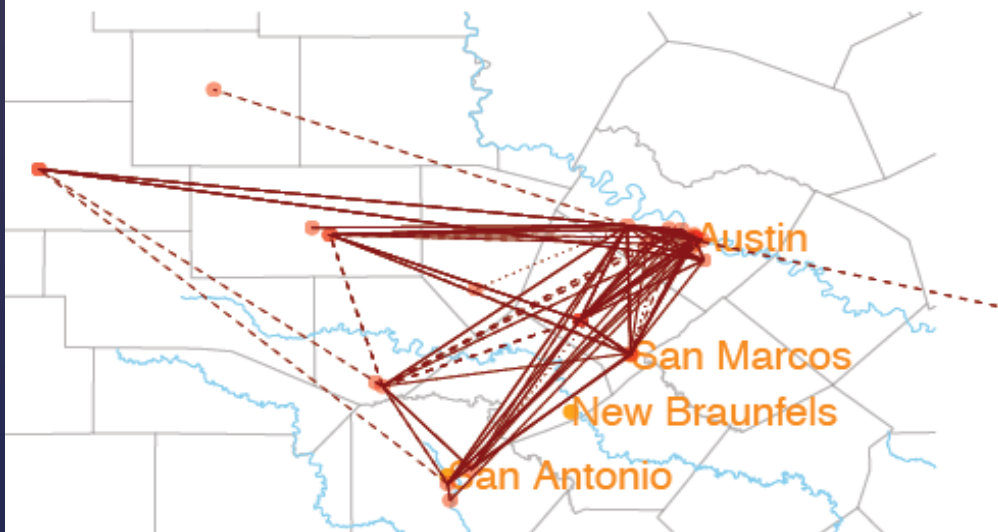
Interactive map available: <https://kumu.io/RGKCenter/hccn-823#hccn-823>

# Where are we working together?

**water**



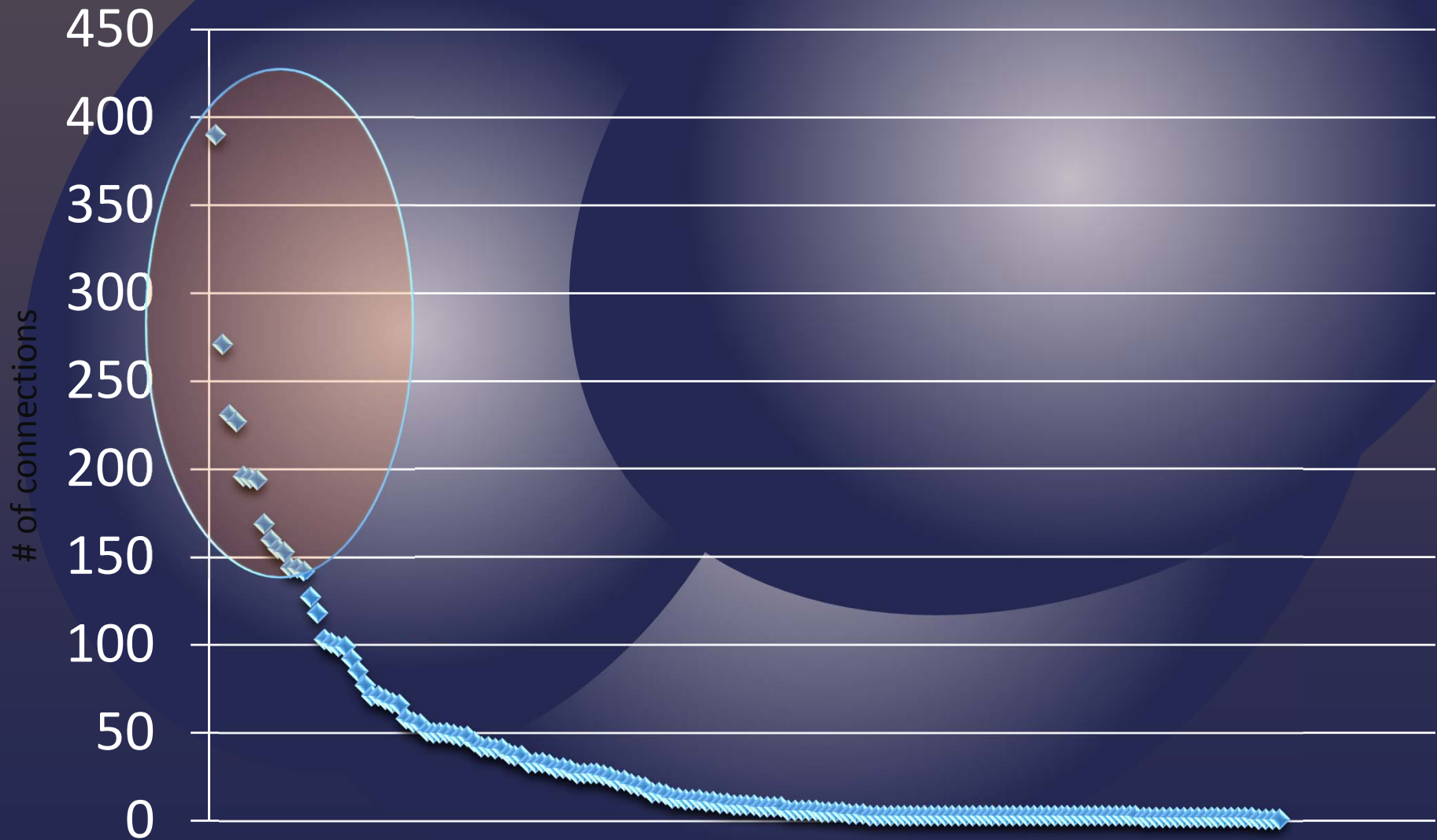
**land**



- Collaborate with
- - - - - Have met with
- · - · - Have talked with

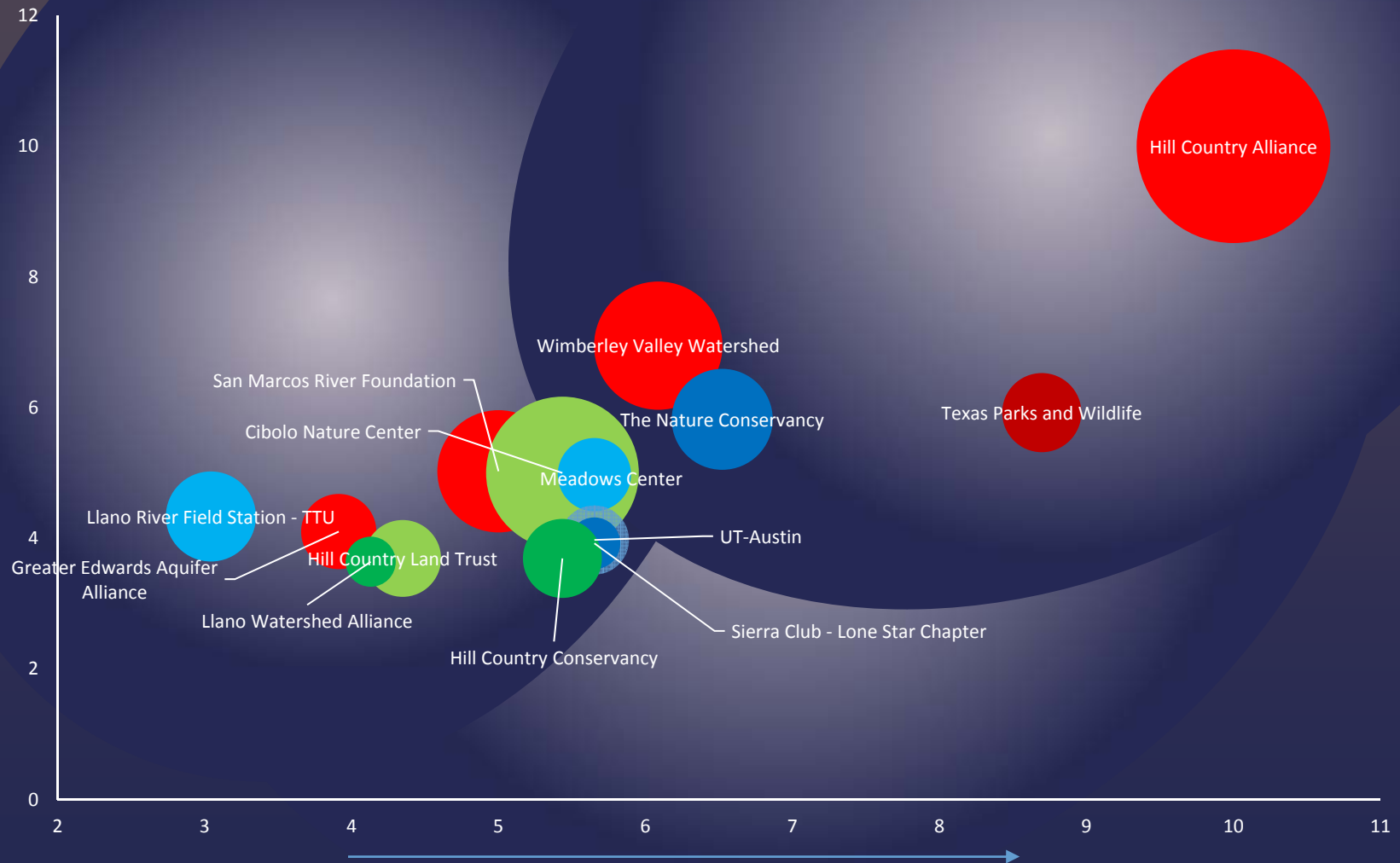
# Where are the connections?

Weighted Connections



# What organizations are network hubs?

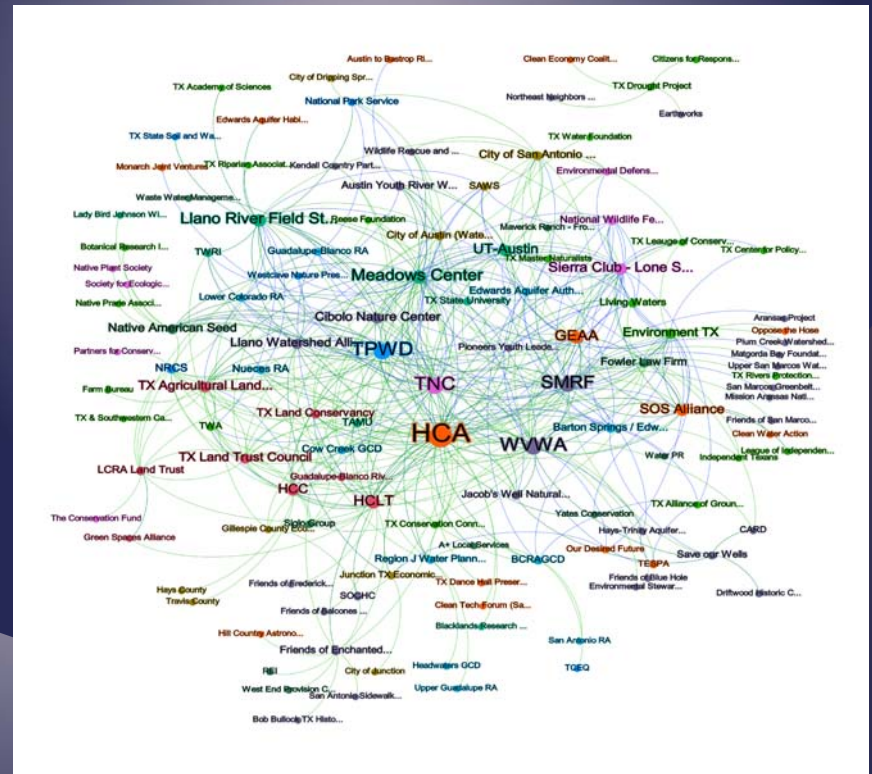
Texas Hill Country - Network Centrality





# Can we....

- Be intentional about our “network” moving forward?
- Be inclusive in our communications, outreach, and daily efforts?
- Coordinate efforts where it makes sense (but not necessarily where it doesn't)
- Organize ourselves to optimize collective impact?



## **Inform**

Collect and share information on the theory, practice, policy, and performance of local and regional initiatives

## **Connect**

Link people and organizations through workshops, events, peer-to-peer exchanges, and the web to build personal and professional relationships

### **Why Build and Sustain a Dynamic Network?**

## **Investigate**

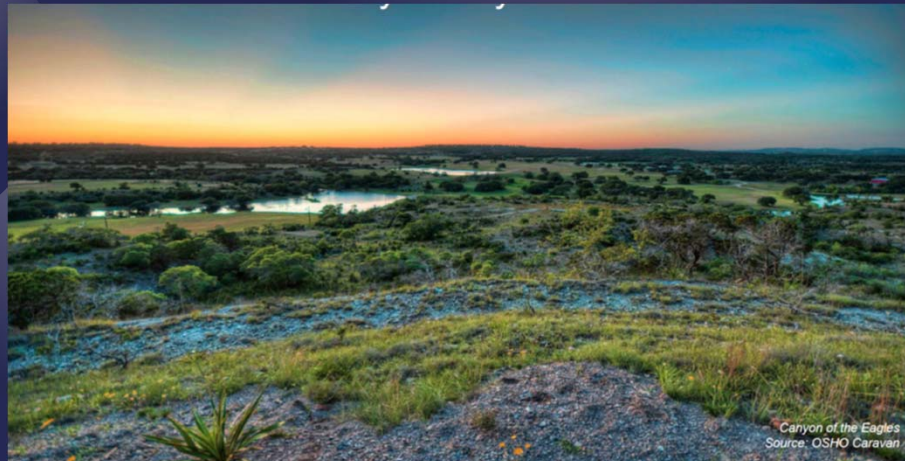
Examine needs and opportunities; identify gaps in knowledge and practice; examine policy and practical barriers; explore methods of assessing regional network performance

## **Support**

Promote and support a network and large landscape approach as a solution to issues of human, wildlife, cultural, and ecological health

# What's Next

- A key to a “large-scale collaborative approach” in the Hill Country is to make sure there is “a table” for interested people to sit
- Use a “Hill Country Conservation Network” to maximize opportunities that leverage resources & expertise in ways that translate to actions
- Use the “network” to improve capacities to engage landowners and small community-based organizations



# What's Next

1. How best can a “Hill Country Conservation Network” **inform**?
2. How do you **connect** to a Hill Country Conservation network? How does a Hill Country Conservation Network **connect** to you?
3. Can a Hill Country Conservation Network identify priorities and **investigate**?
4. How does a Hill Country Conservation Network **support** your work? How is it supported?

# Acknowledgements

## **A very special thanks to:**

- The Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation
- Ross Strategic
- The Hill Country Alliance and the Wimberley Valley Watershed Association
- Ashely Lovell and the Texas Land Conservancy

Please contact me with questions or thoughts:

R. Patrick Bixler, PhD

The University of Texas




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# What can we visualize?

- Network composition
- Quantity of nodes (partners)
- Quantity of edges (links between partners)
- Strength of ties
- Substance of ties
  - Kinds of “quality”?

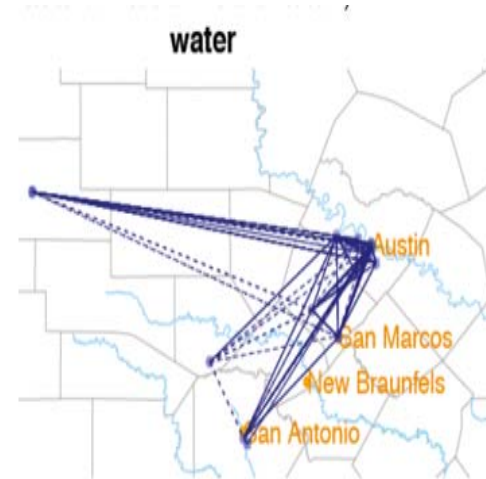
Community-based NGO	(29.55%)
Groundwater CDs_River Authority	(13.64%)
State NGO	(10.23%)
Business	(10.23%)
University	(6.82%)
National NGO	(6.82%)
Regional NGO	(6.82%)
Land Trust	(5.68%)
City_County	(5.68%)
State_Federal Agency	(4.55%)

	AMI 2013	AMI 2014	AMI 2015
# of Organizations	12	21	25
# of Connections	64	169	163
Avg. Ties per Org	5.33	8.4	6.52
Density	.530	.401	.272
# of Subgroups	3	3	3

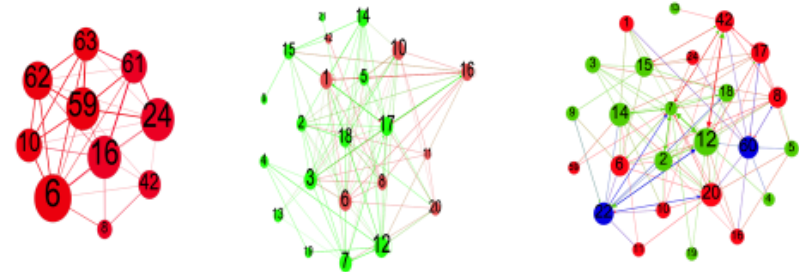
	Multiple	(50%)
	N/A	(24.07%)
	Data	(17.13%)
	Planning	(7.41%)
	BMP	(0.93%)
	Expertise	(0.46%)

# What can we visualize?

- Networks across space

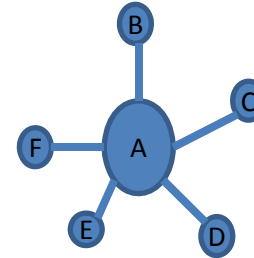


- Networks across time



# What can we measure?

- Centrality (node level)



- Centralization



- Density



- Modularity (subgroups; core-periphery)

– Homophily

