

## 85<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session: Policy Priorities for the Texas Hill Country



The Hill Country contributes significant economic, environmental, and cultural value to Texas through its unique natural features, landscapes, heritage ranches, history, and traditions. The health of our region, and the state of Texas, depends on clean, clear flowing waters, striking landscapes, open spaces, vibrant communities, and thoughtful growth.

Attracted by its beauty and quality of life, more people are moving to the Hill Country every day. The impacts of that growth on our region's natural resources are increasingly evident. Our rivers and lakes are over-allocated, and our groundwater levels are declining. Our land is being permanently fragmented and developed, impairing water quality, scenic beauty, and wildlife habitat. Our starry night skies are obscured by light pollution.

Now is the time for a more innovative, proactive and conservative approach to the waters and lands that sustain the people, communities, and economy of the Hill Country. HCA has a breadth and depth of expert advisors that can provide insights into some of these difficult challenges. Please consider us as a resource in this legislative session!

### **Hill Country Alliance recommends the following policy objectives to the 85th Texas Legislature:**

#### **Water Resources: Quantity and Quality**

- Recognize the physical connection between surface water and groundwater; and develop planning, management, and permitting strategies that recognize this connection.
- Support the authority of local Groundwater Conservation Districts (GCDs), consider the importance of adequate funding, and enable them to manage groundwater in accordance with the best available science.
- Prioritize water conservation and the capture of rainwater as effective, economical, and reliable methods to address unmet water needs as identified in regional and state water plans.
- Protect water quality by enforcing existing laws, encouraging local input on discharge and dumping activities, and implementing strict anti-degradation policies for Hill Country streams.
- Allocate funding to existing water conservation education programs.

#### **Hill Country Night Skies: Big and Bright, Deep in the Heart of Texas**

- Give Hill Country counties the authority, already granted to some West Texas counties, to address light pollution and light trespass.
- Encourage public education and outreach around the impacts of light pollution on tourism revenues, private property rights, public health, wildlife, and the hunting industry – and the simple ways to reduce that impact.

#### **Land: Protecting and Stewarding for Future Generations**

- Fund the Farm and Ranchlands Protection program to allow willing landowners to permanently protect their lands from development pressures.
- Support programs that encourage stewardship practices that naturally slow, spread, and sink rainwater to slowly recharge our aquifers and refill our creeks and rivers.
- Defend meaningful local management and local ordinance decision making authority so that Hill Country communities can protect private property values, natural resources and quality of life.



The Hill Country Alliance is a nonprofit whose purpose is to raise public awareness and build community support around the need to preserve the natural resources and heritage of the Texas Hill Country. Visit us: [www.hillcountryalliance.org](http://www.hillcountryalliance.org).

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### **Hill Country Alliance Program Staff**

Katherine Romans, Executive Director  
512.410.9368 | [katherine@hillcountryalliance.org](mailto:katherine@hillcountryalliance.org)

Cliff Kaplan, Program Manager  
512.387.3097 | [Cliff@hillcountryalliance.org](mailto:Cliff@hillcountryalliance.org)

Charlie Flatten, Water Policy Program Manager  
512.694.1121 | [charlie@hillcountryalliance.org](mailto:charlie@hillcountryalliance.org)