

Hill Country Alliance presents the Annual

# LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

## LEGACY & COLLABORATION

Our collective stewardship of the Texas Hill Country.

- 8:30am**      **Registration and Breakfast**
- 9:00am**      **Welcome and Introduction**  
Matt Lara, HCA Board Vice President
- 9:05-9:30am**      **Land Use and Our Rural Counties**  
Will Conley, Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
- 9:30-10:30am**      **One Hill Country, One Water**  
Sarah Richards, Cynthia & George Mitchell Foundation  
Ian Taylor, New Braunfels Utility  
Lee Butler, Austin Central Library
- 10:30-10:45am**      **BREAK**
- 10:45-11:45am**      **Texas Water Policy: Culture, Myths, & the Hill Country's Water Future**  
*Keynote Address: Seamus McGraw, Author, A Thirsty Land*  
Charlie Flatten, Hill Country Alliance  
Milan Michalec, Cow Creek Groundwater Conservation District  
Vanessa Puig-Williams, Trinity Edwards Springs Protection Association
- 11:45-12:45pm**      **LUNCH**
- 12:45-1:45pm**      **Handing on the Reins: Private Landownership through the Generations**  
Francine Romero, College of Public Policy, UTSA  
Ryland and Isabel Howard, Landowners, Head of the River Ranch  
Sky, Julie, and Jeff Lewey, Landowners, Open V Ranch
- 1:45-2:00pm**      **BREAK**
- 2:00-2:30pm**      **Edge of Night: From the Global to the Local**  
Bettymaya Foott, International Dark Sky Association  
Shannon du Plessis, Wimberley Valley Dark Sky Committee
- 2:30-3:00pm**      **Collaboration and the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network**  
Katherine Romans, Hill Country Alliance
- 3:00-4:00pm**      **Breakout Discussions**
- 4:00-6:00pm**      **Final Wrap Up & Networking Reception**



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

September 27, 2018



### **Matt Lara**

**Engineer, Musician & Hill Country Alliance Board Vice President**

Matt Lara is an electrical engineer by day, musician by night and conservationist at heart. He became involved in HCA through the Night Sky program, where he helped create educational materials and give presentations about proper lighting for starry nights. Born and raised in Amarillo, Lara now lives in Spicewood. Lara is also the acting volunteer executive director of the Big Bend Conservation Alliance. Lara joined the HCA board in 2015, and holds both undergraduate and masters degrees in electrical engineering from Texas Tech University.



### **Will Conley**

**Chair, Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization**

Will Conley was elected as a Hays County Commissioner in 2004, where he served 13 years. He led county efforts to improve traffic flow, road safety, develop innovative school safety protocols, and protect water and natural resources. As a strong natural resource advocate, Conley was an architect of the Hays County Conservation Plan. Through innovative partnerships, grants, and in partnership with land trusts, the plan is preserving treasures throughout the county. A graduate of Texas State University, Conley owns and operates a family auto services business.



### **Sarah Richards**

**Water Program Officer, Cynthia & George Mitchell Foundation**

Sarah Richards has more than 20 years of experience working with academia, government, and nongovernmental organizations in Texas. As the Water Program Officer for CGMF, she invests resources toward addressing Texas's most pressing water challenges. Richards serves as an appointed member of Austin's Water Forward Task Force. She holds a B.A. from the University of Texas and a Master of Education from Texas State University.



### **Ian Taylor**

**CEO, New Braunfels Utilities**

Ian Taylor is a Professional Engineer with more than 20 years of experience in utility engineering, operations, and water resource planning. He holds a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Texas at Austin and serves as a volunteer for a number of boards, committees, and organizations. Taylor is passionate about public service and grateful for the opportunity to lead during a period of record growth.



### **Lee Butler**

**Building Services Manager, Austin Central Library**

Lee Butler leads the facility maintenance team at Austin Central Library. The library boasts a rainwater harvesting system, solar arrays, power regenerating elevators, central HVAC chilled water, daylighting, and native landscape design. With more than 20 years of experience in Facility Management, Butler has always had a commitment to sustainability and environmental issues. He holds a B.A. in Philosophy and Art from St. Edward's University.



### **Seamus McGraw, Keynote Speaker**

Seamus McGraw is the author of *The End of Country: Dispatches from the Frack Zone* and *Betting the Farm on a Drought: Stories from the Front Lines of Climate Change*. His award-winning writing has appeared in The New York Times, Popular Mechanics, and Reader's Digest. He has received the Freedom of Information Award from the Associated Press Managing Editors, the Golden Quill Award, as well as honors from the Casey Foundation and the Society of Professional Journalists.



## Charlie Flatten

Water Policy Program Manager, Hill Country Alliance

Charlie Flatten joined the Hill Country Alliance in 2012 and currently manages the water program. He is responsible for HCA's Texas Water Symposium series, guides legislative input, and frames HCA's policy positions. Flatten is an appointed board member of both Regional Water Planning Groups K and L as well as the Guadalupe/San Antonio Rivers Bay and Basin Area Stakeholder Committee. Flatten holds a B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin and a Masters from Texas State University.



## Milan J. Michalec

President, Cow Creek Groundwater Conservation District

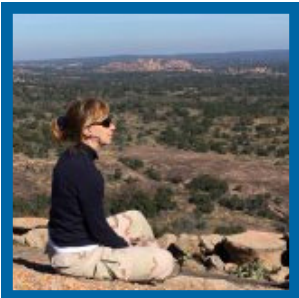
Milan J. Michalec is a retired veteran of the US Air Force and is currently employed at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph as an Aircraft Logistics Program Analyst. Michalec is serving a fourth term on the Cow Creek Groundwater Conservation District. According to Milan: "As we cope with unprecedented growth in Kendall County, we must recognize our water sources begin with a single drop that falls from the sky."



## Vanessa Puig-Williams

Executive Director & General Counsel, Trinity Edwards Springs Protection Association

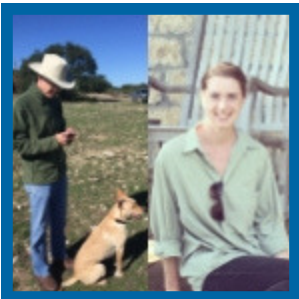
Vanessa Puig-Williams is the Executive Director of TESPAs, a nonprofit advocating for the protection of groundwater resources in the Texas Hill Country. Additionally, Puig-Williams advises land trusts and landowners on matters related to conservation easement transactions. She received her J.D. from The University of Texas School of Law in 2006, and currently serves on the Hill Country Alliance board of directors.



## Dr. Francine Romero

Associate Dean, University of Texas at San Antonio

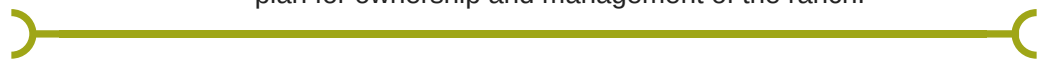
Dr. Romero is an Associate Dean and Associate Professor in the College of Public Policy at UTSA. One of her research areas is local land use policy, including open space protection strategies. She chairs San Antonio's Conservation Advisory Board, which recommends expenditures of the \$100 million fund for purchase of land and conservation easements over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone.



## Ryland & Isabel Howard

Owners, Head of the River Ranch

The Howards come from ranching families with conservation as a central feature of their land stewardship. Their ranch is home to the headsprings of the South Concho River. Ryland is a retired attorney and practiced real estate and estate planning. He served as president of the Texas Nature Conservancy, founding board member of both the Texas Agricultural Land Trust and the Bexar Land Trust, and director and chairman of YMCA Camp Flaming Arrow. Isabel is finishing a Masters in Architecture (Historic Preservation) at UTSA and working with her siblings to create a succession plan for ownership and management of the ranch.



## Sky, Julie & Jeff Lewey

Owners, Open V Ranch

Sky Lewey is a former board member of Hill Country Alliance and Director of Resource Protection & Education at the Nueces River Authority. She grew up on the banks of the Nueces River, as five generations of ancestors did before her. Lewey lives on the Open V Ranch, near Uvalde, and manages the property with her son, Jeff, and daughter, Julie. Together, they are keeping the Open V Ranch viable and productive by cooperating with neighbors and others on what they refer to as Conservation Ranching.





### **Bettymaya Foott**

Director of Engagement, International Dark-Sky Association

Bettymaya Foott works directly with communities and parks around the world working to preserve their starry skies. She began her dark sky career with Utah State Parks, starting 12 International Dark-Sky Park applications. She has also worked as Coordinator for the Colorado Plateau Dark Sky Cooperative and the Consortium for Dark Sky Studies at the University of Utah. She holds a degree in Environmental and Sustainability Studies from the University of Utah.



### **Shannon du Plessis**

Wimberley Valley Dark Sky Committee

Shannon du Plessis heads the Wimberley Valley Dark Sky Committee, which earned the International Dark Sky Community designation for the Wimberley Valley in June. Shannon, an advocate for the environment, lives in Wimberley and is a Hays County Master Naturalist. When she isn't fighting light pollution, she works as the owner of ACE Cloud Bookkeeping Services, LLC.



### **Katherine Romans**

Executive Director, Hill Country Alliance

Katherine Romans brings a decade of nonprofit and legislative experience to the Hill Country Alliance, where she manages the implementation of strategic and collaborative conservation across 17 counties. Romans worked on national and international natural resource issues as a legislative aide for the Committee on Natural Resources within the U.S. House of Representatives. Romans holds a B.A. from the University of Virginia and a Master of Environmental Management from the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies.

# **NOTES**