



Day 1: September 23rd 2020

Regenerative Grazing in the Texas Hill Country

This panel will explore the current use of regenerative grazing in the Hill Country, how it is helping improve land health, and how it may be scaled up in an increasingly fragmented landscape.



Chad Lemke, McCollum-Lemke Rancho

Fifth generation farmer and rancher in Central Texas, Chad is also the Production Manager for the Grassfed Livestock Alliance, LLC, helping to manage the day-to-day operations of the group and assisting its members in producing top quality American Grassfed beef. He is on the board of directors of the American Grassfed Association. McCollum-Lemke Ranches is a multispecies operation humanely raising Grassfed cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and chickens.



Mandy Krause, Parker Creek Ranch

Mandy Krause is co-founder of Parker Creek Ranch, a regenerative agriculture business that uses a systems approach to management to support ecosystem function through the production of grass-fed beef and pasture-raised poultry. She also works as a consultant for the Welder Wildlife Foundation and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service delivering conservation-based education programs across the state.



Jeremiah Eubank, Pure Pastures Ranch

Jeremiah and his family operate Pure Pastures; a multi-species, regenerative ranch in Canyon Lake, TX. He and his wife Maggie operated a small, direct to consumer pastured pork farm until they took a job as grazing managers at the ranch in Canyon Lake. They have since expanded their retail business to include grass fed beef, lamb, and eggs.



Kara Kroeger, National Center for Appropriate Technology

Kara's mission is to create awareness of human, animal, and ecosystem health through regenerative agriculture education and outreach. She currently serves as the of Sustainable Agriculture Specialist at the National Center for Appropriate Technology in San Antonio, TX, where she promotes holistic management tools that lead to improved soil health and can increase the nutrient density of food. In 2018, she received a BS in General Agriculture at Texas State University. Kara also operates Foundation Culinary, a nutrition consulting/private chef business focusing on holistic health.

The Water Funder Initiative: Using Philanthropy to Scale Impact on Intractable Water Challenges

The Water Funder Initiative (WFI) is a national effort to bring basins and watersheds into balance for people and nature. This "lighting round" panel will spotlight how local Texas Hill Country Conservation Network partners are using more than \$1.1 million in new funding from WFI to scale our collective impact in addressing critical water challenges in the Hill Country.



Sharlene Leurig, Texas Water Trade

Sharlene is Chief Executive Officer of Texas Water Trade. She is a sustainable water finance expert with extensive experience in Texas on long-range water planning, infrastructure finance and water transactions. She also chaired the Austin Water Forward Task Force, which developed a groundbreaking 100-year water plan approved unanimously by the Austin City Council in 2018.



Vanessa Puig-Williams, Environmental Defense Fund

Vanessa is Director of EDF's Texas Water Program, where she leads EDF's efforts to advance sustainable groundwater management in Texas. Prior to joining EDF, Vanessa was the Executive Director of the Trinity Edwards Springs Protection Association, a landowner organization focused on protecting property rights and groundwater resources in the Hill Country. Vanessa received her J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law.



Jennifer Walker, National Wildlife Federation

Jennifer is the Deputy Director for the Texas Coast and Water Program at the National Wildlife Federation. She has over 15 years of experience focusing on statewide water policy issues with an emphasis on water resources planning, urban water management, and bay and estuary protection. She is Vice-Chair of Austin's Water Forward Task Force, and serves on the Board of Directors of the Alliance for Water Efficiency.



Frank Davis, Hill Country Conservancy

Frank is the Chief Conservation Officer at Hill Country Conservancy (HCC). Since 2005, Frank has managed conservation easement acquisition and stewardship at HCC, conserving over 10,000 acres of critical Hill Country properties. Frank also serves on the Executive and Steering Committees of the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network. Frank has a Bachelor's degree in geography from UT Austin and a Master's in wildlife ecology from TX State University.



Katherine Romans, Hill Country Alliance

Katherine brings a decade of nonprofit and legislative experience to the Hill Country Alliance. She worked for several years as a legislative aide for the Committee on Natural Resources within the US House of Representatives, and has spearheaded programming at both local and regional conservation nonprofits. Katherine holds a Masters from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, is currently the Chair of the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network, and serves on the board of the Hill Country Land Trust.



Emma Lindrose-Siegel, Great Springs Project

An experienced fundraiser with a demonstrated history of working in non-profit development and managing successful capital campaigns, Emma has raised over \$34 million for Texas organizations. Prior to joining Great Springs Project, Emma served as the Executive Director of the Barton Springs Conservancy, where she led the organization in an early completion of the capital campaign to rehabilitate the historic Barton Springs Pool Bathhouse. Emma holds a Bachelors of Arts in English Composition & Environmental Ethics with honors from University of North Texas.



Robin Gary, Wimberley Valley Watershed Association;

Robin joined the Wimberley Valley Watershed Association in March as the Managing Director. As a geographer, groundwater scientist, teacher, and mom, she strives to learn, work, and collaborate to help make science more accessible, increase knowledge about watershed issues, and empower people to be part of a collective solution. Robin holds a masters degree from the University of Texas at Austin. Prior to joining WVWA she served as the Public Information and Education Coordinator for the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District.



Robert Mace, Meadows Center for Water and the Environment

Robert is the Executive Director and Chief Water Policy Officer of The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment and a Professor of Practice in the Department of Geography at Texas State University. Robert has over 30 years of experience in hydrology, hydrogeology, stakeholder processes, and water policy. Robert has a B.S. in Geophysics and an M.S. in Hydrology from the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology and a Ph.D. in Hydrogeology from The University of Texas at Austin

Day 2: Thursday, September 24

From the Arctic Circle to the Texas Hill Country: Embracing New Strategies for Regional Development

Regional collaboration offers opportunities for sustainable development that would not be available to communities “going it alone.” This talk will draw insights from successful collaborations elsewhere, orient them to a Hill Country context, and point to opportunities for enhanced collaboration in our region.



Gregory P. Pogue, IC² Institute, The University of Texas at Austin

Gregory serves as the Deputy Executive Director and Senior Research Scientist at the IC² Institute at the University of Texas at Austin.

He leads research, instructional and implementation programs surrounding technology commercialization, early venture creation and entrepreneurship. He organizes Institute-campus research programs and coordinates IC²'s regional and international programs with campus initiatives. He served as Interim Executive Director from 2016-2018.

The Growth of the Aggregate Industry: Community Responses and the Texans for Responsible Aggregate Mining (TRAM) Coalition

Aggregate production operations -- rock quarries, gravel and sand mines, as well as cement, concrete, and asphalt plants--are nearly unregulated in Texas and the industry is growing rapidly in the Hill Country. This panel will profile groups seeking to address the issue, including through the formation of a statewide coalition.



Jill Boullion, Bayou Land Conservancy;

Jill is Executive Director of Bayou Land Conservancy, a land conservation organization that protects more than 14,000 acres in the Houston area, and focuses on protecting the Lake Houston watershed, the primary source of drinking water for millions in the region. Before coming to BLC in 2016, Jill lead the Greens Bayou Coalition and helped bring a \$55m federal flood damage reduction project, parks, and a paddle trail to the watershed.



Mark Friesenhahn, Comal Environmental Education Coalition;

Mark is a 5th generation Texan, Comal County pecan farmer and a retired engineer. During his engineering career, he worked 42 years with ExxonMobil upstream oil and gas operations and projects, retiring as a Senior Technical Advisor. He helped form the Comal Environmental Education Coalition (CEEC), which addresses issues arising from the very high concentration of limestone quarries in Comal County.



Fermin Ortiz, Texans for Responsible Aggregate Mining

Fermin Ortiz is a rancher, conservationist, and businessman in Llano County. He chaired the Llano County Republican Party and founded the Boys and Girls Club of Marble Falls. He is a business consultant and owner of Double O Properties. Ortiz founded Save Sandy Creek with his neighbors to address the potential impacts of a proposed sand plant in their community. Save Sandy Creek is a member of Texans for Responsible Aggregate Mining (TRAM); Ortiz serves as TRAM's spokesperson.

**Bob Webster, Cow Creek Groundwater Conservation District**

Bob Webster is a Director of the Cow Creek Groundwater Conservation District in Kendall County, the President of the Cibolo Conservancy, the co-owner of a full-line retail organic nursery called Shades of Green, and the host of the popular Garden Show on KTSA.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Conservation in the Hill Country: Why it Matters and Where to Start

As we seek to build a vibrant future for the communities and natural resources of the Hill Country, it is critical that we do so in a way that engages with and reflects the full diversity of the region. This panel will explore why diversity, equity, and inclusion are important for the conservation movement broadly, and how organizations can start or continue their journeys to be diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

**David Buggs, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department**

Mr. Buggs is the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). He earned his MBA from Baylor University in Waco, Texas and a B.S. in Marketing from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. His role is developing and managing the execution of TPWD's Diversity and Inclusion strategy. David is an accomplished cultural compliance and management professional with experience in relationship building, leadership development, mentoring, and executive coaching.

**Sapna Mulki, Water Savvy Solutions**

Sapna Mulki is the founder and principal of Water Savvy Solutions an independent consulting practice that works with the water industry to create more diverse, inclusive and equitable workplaces and public engagement programs. She is also the host of Breaking Green Ceilings, a podcast that amplifies the voices of environmentalists from historically underrepresented communities.

**Rocío Villalobos, City of Austin Equity Office**

Rocío is the Immigrant Affairs Coordinator at the City of Austin's Equity Office. She is a native Austinite whose transnational childhood shaped her understanding of community, family, migration, inequities, and borders. For over 15 years, Rocío has been involved in social justice work in Austin, covering education, immigration, and the outdoors/environment. Rocío brings a commitment to equity and joy to both her personal and professional life.

**Emily Warren, Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation**

Emily is the water program officer for the Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation. For more than 20 years, Emily has worked on making connections between science and policy, providing the science that supports natural resource management decisions, engaging communities in caring for their watersheds, and sustainable use of natural resources in Texas. Emily earned a Bachelor of Science in Ecology, Ethology, and Evolution, a Master of Science in Environmental Science, a Master of Public Affairs in natural resource management and environmental policy, and is working on her Ph.D. in Geography.



Moderator: Vanessa Escobar, Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Groundwater Conservation District and Hill Country Alliance Board Member

Vanessa is the General Manager of the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District, where she supports the development and implementation of groundwater management policies and provides coordination and oversight over various program areas related to regulatory compliance, aquifer science, administration, and education & outreach initiatives. Vanessa is a native of Katy, TX and is a graduate of Texas A&M University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Bioenvironmental Science. Vanessa also serves as a Board Member of the Hill Country Alliance.

Day 3: Friday, September 25

Local and Regional Leadership: Tackling Big Challenges for the Hill Country

As the Hill Country and the state of Texas grows, new pressures are mounting on the resources that define this region. From oil and gas pipelines to land fragmentation, groundwater resources and our view of the night skies, how are locally and regionally elected officials responding to these emergent challenges?



State Representative Andrew Murr, House District 53

Andrew Murr was first elected in 2014 to represent District 53 in the Texas House of Representatives. The district includes Bandera, Crockett, Edwards, Kerr, Kimble, Llano, Mason, Medina, Menard, Real, Schleicher and Sutton Counties. An eighth generation Texan, he was raised on a local ranch, attended Texas A&M University, and graduated from Texas Tech University School of Law. Among other state committee and board appointments, Rep. Murr currently serves as the Vice- Chair of the Juvenile Justice and Family Issues Committee of the Texas House and Vice-Chair of the Texas House Republican Caucus Policy Committee.



State Representative Erin Zwiener, House District 45

Erin Zwiener is an author, educator, and conservationist who serves on the Environmental Regulation and Agriculture and Livestock Committees and is chair of the House Democratic Caucus Special Committee on Clean Air, Clean Water, and Climate Change. As a fifth-generation Texan, she is committed to bringing her values of healthy communities, inclusivity, and common-sense government to the Texas Legislature. Erin was a three-time Jeopardy! champion in 2012 and lives in Driftwood with her husband. Erin and Quincy are also parents to daughter Lark.



Commissioner Dennis Neffendorf, Gillespie County

Dennis Neffendorf is the County Commissioner Precinct 3 for Gillespie County. He has a background in agronomy, including 40 years working at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.



Commissioner Lon Shell, Hays County

Lon Shell is a local small business owner and was appointed Hays County Commissioner for Precinct Three in October 2017, and elected in November 2018. Prior to his appointment as commissioner, Lon served as Hays County's Chief of Staff for seven years, where he worked closely with previous Commissioner Will Conley to coordinate major county projects throughout the precinct, including disaster recovery in the wake of devastating flood events in recent years.



Moderator: Vanessa Puig Williams, Environmental Defense Fund and Hill Country Alliance Board President

Vanessa is Director of EDF's Texas Water Program, where she leads EDF's efforts to advance sustainable groundwater management in Texas. Prior to joining EDF, Vanessa was the Executive Director of the Trinity Edwards Springs Protection Association, a landowner organization focused on protecting property rights and groundwater resources in the Hill Country. Vanessa received her J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law.

Preserving the Natural Night Skies at US National Parks and Beyond

In recent years, the National Park Service (NPS) has embraced the night skies as a vital component of their parks, deserving of focused preservation efforts. This talk will provide insights into the NPS strategy that can be adapted for Hill Country parks and communities.



Li-Wei Hung, Ph.D., National Park Service

Dr. Li-Wei Hung is the lead scientist for the National Park Service night sky monitoring team. She provides scientific support to park managers in protecting natural night skies. Her research team is currently developing long-term sky brightness monitoring tools and studying how LED lighting affects skyglow. Dr. Hung is an astrophysicist by training. She received her Ph.D. degree in astronomy from University of California, Los Angeles.

Hill Country Sewage Scorecard: The State of Direct Discharge to Hill Country Waterways

As more people move to the Hill Country, we are seeing an increase in permit applications to discharge treated wastewater into creeks, streams and rivers around the region. Learn about research from the Save Barton Creek Association that uncovers the impacts of these facilities on water quality in the Hill Country.



Brian Zabcik, Save Barton Creek Association

Brian is Save Barton Creek Association's Wastewater Campaign Organizer. He coordinates the [No Dumping Sewage](#) campaign, a coalition effort organized to stop sewage pollution in Hill Country creeks and aquifers and to promote better wastewater systems. Brian is the former Clean Water Advocate at Environment Texas, where he focused on promoting green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) features such as rain gardens and rain harvesting to stop runoff pollution.

Hill Country Success Stories and the Road Ahead

As we close our first ever virtual Leadership Summit, hear from HCA's executive director about the path forward for the Hill Country. From economic development to flood infrastructure, land conservation and stewardship, and a regional approach to protecting our view of the stars at night, opportunities abound for the kind of landscape scale thinking that will ensure the Hill Country we know and love is here for future generations.



Katherine Romans, Hill Country Alliance

Katherine brings a decade of nonprofit and legislative experience to the Hill Country Alliance. She worked for several years as a legislative aide for the Committee on Natural Resources within the US House of Representatives, and has spearheaded programming at both local and regional conservation nonprofits. Katherine holds a Masters from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, is currently the Chair of the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network, and serves on the board of the Hill Country Land Trust.

Pre-Recorded Material:

AstroTourism in the Texas Hill Country: Opportunities and Momentum

Whether from downtown San Antonio and Austin, or from across the globe, people are headed to the Hill Country to enjoy the night skies. This panel will look at community and regional strategies for further developing this growing portion of our region's tourism economy.



Michelle Fischer, City of Dripping Springs



Wayne Gosnell, Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky



Patricia Moore, and Bandera County Convention and Visitors Bureau

Patricia is the Executive Director of the Bandera County Convention & Visitors Bureau and for more than 25 years has been promoting Bandera County as a destination of choice for visitors around the world. She is a native Texan and a Certified Tourism Executive and was awarded The Gene Phillips Hospitality Award by the Texas Department of Transportation Travel Division.



Moderator: Cindy Luongo Cassidy, Texas Chapter, International Dark-Sky Association

Cultivating a Hill Country for All - Inspiring Stewardship, Conservation, and Communication

Across the 17 counties of the Hill Country, there are many groups working to spread messages of conservation and stewardship, one person at a time. This panel will spotlight some of these groups and examine what it takes to connect and inspire the hearts and minds of diverse, young audiences across the region.



Justine Salsbury, Shield Ranch Foundation/El Ranchito Summer Camp; Justine began working with El Ranchito as a seasonal staff member in 2016, serving as Nature Discovery Camp Director. She stepped into the position in 2017. She also coordinates access to the Ranch for organizations providing education and nature immersion experiences to diverse audiences. Justine serves on the Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin Leadership Team and the board of directors for the Texas Informal Science Education Association.



Amelia DeVivo, Austin Youth River Watch

Amelia has worked as a bilingual educator for AISD for the past eight years, with a passion and specialty for connecting youth with nature. Her outdoor educational experience includes coordinating and leading the Gulf Coast Expedition, a nature immersion camp for young adults along the Texas Gulf Coast studying conservation and coastal ecology. Amelia graduated from Texas State University in May 2018 with her MS in Geography.



April Sansom, Bamberger Ranch

April holds a PhD in Environment and Resources from the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Before coming to Selah Bamberger Ranch Preserve as Executive Director, April most recently served as Executive Director of Community Conservation, an international community-based conservation organization based in Wisconsin. April is the newest addition to the BRP team and is currently working on year one at the ranch.



Josie Gutiérrez, San Antonio Chapter, Latino Outdoors

Deeply rooted in the Latino community anchored by her father's highly visible fame as the first Chicano feature-length filmmaking pioneer, Josie has had a lifelong dedication in celebrating the love of her heritage. Josie has spent decades connecting to nature and loves nothing more than to share her love for the outdoors with her family, friends and followers. As a Program Coordinator for Latino Outdoors in the Southwest, Josie will engage, encourage and promote her love for Mother Nature in outdoor adventures and activities.



Alex Bailey, H. E. Butt Foundation

Alex joined the H. E. Butt Foundation in 2020 as Senior Director of Outdoor School. After spending 8+ years serving students in Title I schools, he has a passion for expanding access to the outdoors for youth in our region. Alex graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University and then served as a Teach For America corps member in the Rio Grande Valley. He later became a leadership development coach with Teach for America San Antonio. These experiences helped him understand the "adventure gap" in outdoor programming for youth, specifically in urban San Antonio.

Moderator: Leah Cuddeback, Hill Country Alliance