

FRIENDS OF THE NIGHT SKY RESOURCE GUIDE

A Compendium for Cultivating Dark Sky Advocacy in the
Texas Hill Country

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Created and maintained by



In Partnership with



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

■ INTRODUCTION	3
■ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
■ THE HILL COUNTRY NIGHT SKY PRESERVATION MOVEMENT	4
■ FORMING A FRIENDS OF THE NIGHT SKY GROUP	5
■ STARTING A NIGHT SKY GROUP: CHECKLIST	5
■ ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	7
■ LEADERSHIP	8
■ GLOSSARY OF NIGHT SKY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS	10
■ CALENDAR OF DATES AND EVENTS	11
■ EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES	12
■ ENGAGING AND CONNECTING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE	14
■ VOICE AND TONE	14
■ COMMUNICATING WITH DIFFERENT AUDIENCES	15
■ LEGISLATORS, REGULATORS & GOVERNMENT ENTITIES	15
■ PRIVATE LANDOWNERS	15
■ BUSINESS OWNERS, INDUSTRY PARTNERS, CORPORATIONS & UTILITIES	16
■ CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS AND SCIENTISTS	16
■ OUTREACH RESOURCES	17
■ BRAND IDENTITY	17
■ LOGO DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN	17
■ IMAGE USE AND SHARING	18
■ PRINT, DIGITAL, AND SOCIAL MEDIA	18
■ PRINT MEDIA	19
■ DIGITAL MEDIA	19
■ ORGANIZATIONAL NEWSLETTERS	19
■ WEBSITE CREATION	20
■ SOCIAL MEDIA	22
■ PLATFORMS	22
■ POSTING FREQUENCY	23
■ PARTNER TAGGING	23
■ STRATEGIES AND TIPS	23
■ ONLINE TOOLS	24
■ FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS	26
■ DIRECTORY OF PARTNERS	29
■ HILL COUNTRY NIGHT SKY TIMELINE	31

INTRODUCTION

This resource guide was developed to provide the Hill Country Alliance Night Sky Team and participating Friends of the Night Sky Groups with general information, strategic direction, communication guidelines, and educational resources to support night sky outreach and education efforts across the Hill Country. A directory of partner organizations and useful contacts is included to help individuals strengthen their networks and collaborate on projects of mutual interest.

The purpose of this resource guide is to:

- Foster new groups interested in protecting starry, dark skies;
- Align partners with a shared mission and vision for Hill Country night skies;
- Provide partners with guidelines and suggestions on communication, branding, outreach, and advocacy;
- Share relevant resources, events, and opportunities for night sky advocacy and preservation;
- Answer common questions night sky advocates may encounter.

“Enough but not too much.” This resource is not all-inclusive, though care has been taken to include relevant information for partners in the Texas Hill Country. Volunteers and organizations in the Hill Country and around the world dedicated to protecting our night skies have developed many tremendous resources, and this is a consolidated compendium of them.

This guide was developed in partnership with Texan by Nature and is authored and maintained by Dawn Davies and Leah Cuddeback of the Hill Country Alliance. This is a living document. If we missed a relevant resource, or if you have suggestions on additional night sky assets we should include, please complete and submit the [Guide Recommendation Form](#).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The cover image is courtesy of Rob Greebon. Special thanks to all who contributed their time and expertise to reviewing this resource.

Wayne Gosnell | *Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky*
Greg Webb | *Wimberley Valley Dark Sky*
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Kevin Wessels | *Kerr County Friends of the Night Sky*
Michelle Molina | *Comal County Friends of the Night Sky*
Cindy Luongo-Cassidy | *DarkSky Texas*
Soll Sussman | *Hays County Friends of the Night Sky*



THE HILL COUNTRY NIGHT SKY PRESERVATION MOVEMENT

The Texas Hill Country is a unique geographic region that people have called home for over 13,000 years. The region sits on the edge of the night, with large swaths of relatively dark night skies still optimal for stargazing. As development continues to push westward from the urban corridor, we risk losing our unimpeded view of the stars due to increased light pollution. Thankfully, the Hill Country is also home to a collective effort, led by many passionate individuals across the region, to ensure we continue to see the stars at night.

Light pollution reduction work began in Texas in the 1980s with members of the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), now DarkSky International. In 1998, a team of key players, including John Gregory, Anne Atkins, Julie Schaar, and Cindy Luongo Cassidy, formed a Texas Chapter of the IDA, now known as DarkSky Texas. In 2014, Dripping Springs, a Hill Country Community, became the first International Dark Sky Community in Texas - only the sixth in the world. As of April 2025, the Hill Country region is home to fifteen internationally recognized Dark Sky Places, with many more on the way.

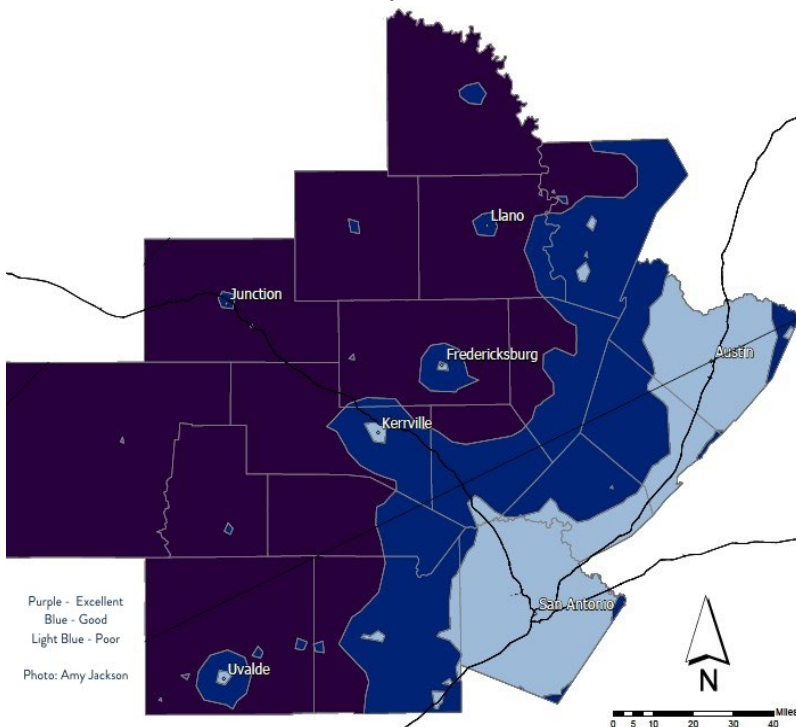
Since 2012, the Hill Country Alliance (HCA) Night Sky program has supported and partnered with over a dozen community-based Friends of the Night Sky groups and helped to grow the night sky movement to prominence in the Hill Country region. This collaborative work would not be possible without a broad network of partners. These local advocates for night sky preservation work with

schools, local governments, and community partners to advance night sky preservation locally. These community groups help establish local ordinances, resolutions, and dark sky designations, all in the name of dark skies.

See the [Hill Country Night Sky Timeline](#) for additional information and key dates related to the spread of night sky efforts within the region.

Click here to [view an interactive map showing dark sky places across the state, courtesy of Dark Sky Texas.](#)

The [Directory of Partners](#) provides a comprehensive list of contacts, including Friends of the Night Sky Groups.



Together, we can reduce light pollution and its detrimental effects through community partnerships, public outreach, local and regional initiatives, lighting best practices, and celebrating our star-filled night sky.

FORMING A FRIENDS OF THE NIGHT SKY GROUP

Our region has many great examples of individuals who've worked within their community to make positive changes for starry skies happen on a much larger scale. If you and your friends or neighbors are interested in creating a night sky advocacy group in your community, here are some recommended steps for getting started:

STARTING A NIGHT SKY GROUP: CHECKLIST

1. Initiating a Group
 - ☐ Generate attention
 - a. Host an information session
 - i. Consider local libraries, recreation centers, or clubhouses for meeting space
 - ii. Promote the meeting with fliers in civic buildings and local businesses
 - iii. Invite local leaders, business owners, organizations, and HOAs
 - b. Connect with your local media outlets
 - i. Submit an article about the impact of light pollution in your community
 - ii. Write a press release about your town hall meeting ([see Appendix Document](#))
 - c. Initiate an online discussion via social media ([see Platforms](#))
2. First Group Meeting
 - ☐ Send out meeting reminders one week before and the day before your meeting
 - ☐ If possible, provide a virtual option for attendees or record the meeting for those absent
 - ☐ Create an agenda and sign-in sheet, and take minutes ([see Appendix Document](#))
 - ☐ Get to know your members (i.e., knowledge, skill sets, strengths, participation interests)
 - ☐ Identify 1-2 areas of focus based on need and interest (i.e., education, outreach, policy)
 - ☐ Determine the date, time, and location of the next meeting, maintaining consistency if able
 - ☐ Distribute meeting minutes and a link to any recording to all attendees and those absent
3. Early Group Meetings
 - ☐ Select a name for your group
 - a. County-wide Night Sky Team groups go by "County Name" County Friends of the Night Sky (e.g., Bandera County Friends of the Night Sky), while the names of community-based groups vary ([see the Directory of Partners](#))
 - ☐ Establish an organizational leadership (i.e., a board, committees, etc.)
 - ☐ Identify the parameters of membership (i.e., paid vs non-paid, levels of commitment, etc.)
 - ☐ Decide the group structure, discussing and weighing all options ([see Organizational Structure](#))
 - ☐ Develop a mission statement, values, and bylaws
 - ☐ Design a logo or adapt the logo used by other Night Sky Friends Groups ([see Logo Development and Design](#))
 - ☐ Create a communications plan
 - a. How will members correspond with one another and how will the group communicate with the public (e.g., internal vs. external, Facebook Group vs. Page, website, email newsletter, Instagram, Discord, Slack, etc.)?
 - ☐ Set meeting parameters (i.e., frequency, location, times, dates, etc.)
 - ☐ Become familiar with the lighting policies of the communities served by your group
 - ☐ Learn about Texas lighting regulations and what laws affect the area served by your group

STARTING A NIGHT SKY GROUP: CHECKLIST (cont.)

4. Future Group Meetings

- ☐ Connect and form partnerships with local city and county leadership (i.e., City Mayor, City Manager/Administrator, City Council Members, County Judge, County Commissioners, etc.)
- ☐ Connect and form partnerships within your community (i.e., libraries, parks and recreation facilities, schools, other volunteer groups, and service organizations)
- ☐ Establish short and long-term goals (include action items, member assignments, and identify partners)
- ☐ Create an outreach plan
 - a. Consider leveraging existing opportunities (e.g., chamber of commerce mixers, school STEM events, local farmers markets, local government meetings, etc.) and group-initiated outreach (e.g., proclamation procurement from city and county leadership during key night sky celebrations, star party/night sky annual functions, etc.).
- ☐ Connect with Hill Country Alliance about initiating the Night Sky Friendly Business or Night Sky Friendly Neighborhood Program in the area your group serves ([see Recognition Opportunities](#))
- ☐ Promote DarkSky Texas' Be A Star Award Program ([see Recognition Opportunities](#))
- ☐ Develop a fundraising plan
- ☐ Initiate relationships with local and regional news and media outlets
 - a. Consider printed periodicals (newspapers, magazines, community group newsletters), online media (news, journals, blogs), television, and radio

5. Ongoing Growth and Development

- ☐ Recruiting new members/volunteers
- ☐ Preventing member/volunteer fatigue
- ☐ Internal education and training
- ☐ Establishing succession planning for group leadership positions
- ☐ Connecting with Hill Country Alliance on group progress, updates, successes, and needs

Do not recreate the wheel if you don't have to. Do you need processes or materials to support your group that you cannot find in this guide? Contact another Night Sky Friends group or reach out to Hill Country Alliance (dawn@hillcountryalliance.org). It is highly likely that what you need already exists!

For additional resources on starting a new night sky group, see the Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky Presentation, [How to start a Friends of the Night Sky advocacy group.](#)

Creating a Shared Message and Strategic Plan

Identifying shared values, a mission statement, and a strategic plan is crucial to ensuring team cohesion and success when starting a new group. If you need a place to start, use the Directory of Partners to visit partner organization websites for inspiration, or feel free to refer to HCA's [Night Sky Strategic Plan Goals](#).



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Disclaimer: The information that follows is provided for general purposes only and is not a substitute for, and does not replace, the advice or representation of a licensed attorney.

Many volunteer-led Friends of the Night Sky groups tend toward a non-profit organizational structure, with a few having attained their 501c3 tax-exempt status. Volunteer groups are not usually subject to the same filing or registration requirements as for-profit organizations. However, if your group plans to engage in an activity requiring special permits or licenses, it is recommended that you file with your municipality and county accordingly.

Achieving 501c3 tax-exempt status has many benefits. However, the process takes time, effort, and money - elements that a fledgling volunteer group may not have. One way to benefit from the advantages of a tax-exempt organization may be to partner with a 501c3 in your community. Chambers of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureaus are typically non-profit organizations with 501c3 status and have successfully supported night sky efforts in the past.

Without 501c3 status, your group can still operate as a non-profit organization and engage in charitable activities. However, it will not be able to benefit from tax-exempt status and it cannot receive tax-deductible donations.

Partner With Your City: A Story from Jonestown, Texas

Getting your city government involved early is vital to the success of a dark sky venture!

In 2021, Jonestown's mayor and city council asked for volunteers to pursue a dark sky initiative. A small group formed Jonestown Night Sky Advocacy (JNSA). As we matured, we formalized our agreement with the city. It was a win-win, with the city funding some of our projects in return for our pursuit of certification. As newly formed teams pursue DarkSky Community Certification, one of the first hurdles seems to be buy-in from the city government. Often, a new, improved lighting ordinance is a necessary step. Getting them on board early makes sense to help with some heavier lifting during the process.

Our JNSA group still exists as a 501c3 group and conducts all the outreach, education, and night sky monitoring for Jonestown. In 2024, for insurance and other considerations, we formed the Jonestown DarkSky Standing Committee, working as a standing committee under the city umbrella (with a new contract denoting maintenance of certification).

It is a bit of the best of both worlds - more structure, a formal budget, access to citizen contact information, direct access to city assets, input into many Planning & Zoning and Park issues, and our insurance is covered. We continue to operate as JNSA, a volunteer team with the ability to collect donations and take part in outreach that does not directly affect Jonestown (i.e. speaking engagements and educational events for other communities).

The good news is that we have developed a close relationship with the city government and staff, get more done with less red tape, and we've more than doubled our city budget to over 10K for 2025!

- Mark Grossman, Jonestown Dark Sky Advocacy

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE (cont.)

VIRTUAL COLLABORATION SPACES

Microsoft Teams

Teams is a collaboration platform that integrates chat, video conferencing, and file sharing. It's perfect for coordinating efforts among group members, hosting virtual meetings, and maintaining an organized flow of communication through channels. Its strong integration with other Microsoft Office tools makes it ideal for document collaboration.

Zoom

Zoom is a video conferencing platform that supports real-time communication through video, voice, and chat. It's ideal for virtual meetings, webinars, and hosting guest speakers for your community. Zoom allows for large group calls with interactive features like screen sharing, breakout rooms, and recording, making it a go-to platform for remote events.

Livestreaming

Livestreaming through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube allows you to engage with your audience in real-time, whether you're hosting a Q&A, streaming an event, or sharing a live night sky observation. This format is great for immediate interaction and participation since viewers are able to comment, share, and ask questions during the stream (social media, YouTube, etc.).

LEADERSHIP

Defined roles vary from group to group. Some organizations opt to have individual positions, while others form committees with co-chairs. Some groups might fill their roles with those who raise their hand and volunteer, and others may conduct this business more formally with nominations and a vote.

To effectively define leadership roles within an organization, aligning these roles with the group's objectives and goals is essential. Here is how you can create a clear, cohesive structure:

1. **Decide Roles Based on Organizational Objectives**

Start by assessing the organization's mission and goals. Leadership roles should be designed to help achieve these objectives, ensuring that each position is purpose-driven.

2. **Allocate Responsibilities to Attain Goals**

Once the roles are identified, allocate specific responsibilities to each role. These duties should be directly tied to the achievement of your group's goals, ensuring that everyone's efforts contribute to the overarching mission.

3. **Create Roles to Meet the Group's Needs**

Tailor roles to fit the unique needs of your group. Consider the skills, expertise, and resources required to move the organization forward and ensure the leadership team is equipped to address these needs.

LEADERSHIP (cont.)

4. **Avoid Creating Unnecessary Roles**

Keep the leadership structure lean. Don't create more roles than necessary, as this can lead to confusion and inefficiencies. A focused, streamlined leadership team is often more effective.

5. **Clearly Define Responsibilities and Expectations**

Clearly outline the duties, responsibilities, and expectations for each role. This ensures that everyone knows what is expected of them and how their work contributes to the team's success.

6. **Determine Duration of Roles**

Identify how long individuals should hold their roles. Establishing a time frame helps maintain focus and allows for rotation or reevaluation of positions to meet changing needs over time.

7. **Create Committees as Needed**

If necessary, form committees to tackle specific tasks or projects. Committees can bring together diverse perspectives and skills to address challenges and help distribute the workload.

8. **Document and Share Information**

Thoroughly document all positions, responsibilities, and the process for appointing leaders. Sharing this information with all members of the group ensures transparency, fosters accountability, and helps everyone understand the leadership structure.

By carefully considering these points you can create an effective leadership framework that aligns with your organization's goals, supports its members, and drives success.

Coordinating Responsibilities: Regional Examples

The Lampasas County Friends of the Night Sky group hosted a "Mix and Mingle Orientation" to coordinate responsibilities and share their first organizational chart ([see Appendix Document](#))

The Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky group created a resource documenting types of volunteer roles and their corresponding job descriptions. ([see Appendix Document](#))



GLOSSARY OF NIGHT SKY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Astrotourism

A form of nature-based tourism specifically concerned with the viewing of celestial objects, space, and the physical universe.

Best Management Practice (BMP)

Methods that have been determined to be the most effective and practical means of preventing or reducing pollution. These practices include both measures to prevent pollution and measures to mitigate pollution.

Color Temperature or Color Correlated Temperature (CCT)

This defines the color appearance - not brightness - of a light source and is measured in kelvin (K). The spectrum runs from lower, warmer colors near 1,000K to higher, cooler colors near 10,000K.

DarkSky Texas

The only chapter of DarkSky International in Texas. DarkSky Texas promotes the use of better outdoor lighting to restore our view of the nighttime sky, improve the safety and well-being of people and wildlife, and save energy.

DarkSky International

Formerly the International Dark-Sky Association, also known simply as DarkSky. DarkSky International restores the nighttime environment and protects communities from the harmful effects of light pollution through [outreach](#), [advocacy](#), and [conservation](#).

Hill Country Alliance (HCA)

A non-profit organization whose purpose is to raise awareness and build community support around the need to preserve the natural resources and heritage of the Central Texas Hill Country.

International Dark Sky Place (IDSP) Program

A conservation program run by DarkSky International that recognizes and promotes stewardship of the night sky in protected areas and communities around the world.

Light Pollution

Artificial light that alters the natural patterns of light and dark in the ecosystem. Simply put, light pollution is wasted light in the natural environment.

Sky Quality Meter (SQM)

An instrument used to measure the luminance (brightness) of the night sky. Used to quantify the skyglow aspect of light pollution, measured in units of “magnitude per square arcsecond.”

Skyglow

The brightness of the night sky in a built-up area as the result of light pollution.

[Click here to see a full glossary of night sky terminology.](#)

CALENDAR OF DATES AND EVENTS

Many partners are involved in night sky preservation across Texas, the US, and internationally. For example, in April, DarkSky International celebrates International Dark Sky Week. Central Texas focuses on night skies throughout October as part of Hill Country Night Sky Month. DarkSky International hosts the Under One Sky conference in November, geared toward updating and connecting advocates.

Spread the word about your group's night sky event on the following calendars:

- [Hill Country Alliance Events Calendar](#)
- [DarkSky International Events Calendar](#)
- [DarkSky Texas Events \(on front page of website\)](#)

MONTHLY NIGHT SKY EVENTS

Every Month

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| • IDSP Coaching Calls (1 st Wed. 7 p.m.) | <i>DarkSky Texas</i> |
| • Night Matters Lecture (dates vary) | <i>DarkSky International</i> |
| • Advocate Action Meeting (dates vary) | <i>DarkSky International</i> |
| • Night Sky Friends Group Meetings (dates vary) | <i>Night Sky Team</i> |
| • Globe at Night Monthly Campaigns (dates vary) | <i>Globe at Night</i> |

ANNUAL NIGHT SKY EVENTS

March

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Spring Bird Migration Begins (Mar – June) | Lights Out, Texas! – Audubon Texas |
|---|--|

April

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| • Peak Spring Bird Migration (Apr – May) | |
| • Night Sky Spring Team Meeting (2 nd Tues.) | <i>Hill Country Alliance</i> |
| • International Dark Sky Week (dates vary) | <i>DarkSky International</i> |
| • Dark Skies Festival (dates vary) | <i>McDonald Observatory</i> |

May

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| • Hill Country Dark Sky Conference (3 rd Thurs) | <i>Hill Country Alliance</i> |
|--|------------------------------|

August

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Hill Country Night Sky Month Check-in (2 nd Tues) | <i>Hill Country Alliance</i> |
| • Fall Bird Migration Begins (Aug – Nov) | Lights Out, Texas! – Audubon Texas |

September

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| • Peak Fall Bird Migration Begins (Sept – Oct) | |
| • Hill Country Night Sky Month Events Due | <i>Hill Country Alliance</i> |
| • International Observe the Moon Night | <i>NASA</i> |

October

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| • Hill Country Night Sky Month | <i>Hill Country Alliance</i> |
| • Night Sky Team Fall Meeting (2 nd Tues) | <i>Hill Country Alliance</i> |

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

DARK SKY PLACES

- [International Dark Sky Place Types](#) (*DarkSky International*)
- [International Dark Sky Places](#) (*DarkSky International*)
- [Celebrating 15 Years of Dark Sky Places](#) (*DarkSky Texas*)
- [Texas Dark Sky Places](#) (*DarkSky Texas*)

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSETS

- [Organizational Chart](#) (*Lampasas County Friends of the Night Sky*)
- [Volunteer List and Responsibilities](#) (*Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky*)

HELPFUL WEBSITES

- [Hill Country Alliance Night Sky Program Story Map](#) (*Texan by Nature*)
- [Night Sky Projects and Mapping](#) (*Hill Country Alliance*)
- [Youth Focused Educational Resources](#) (*DarkSky Texas*)

ACTIVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- [Fun & Online Learning for Students in Texas](#) (*DarkSky Texas*)
- [Family activities to enjoy the night from home](#) (*DarkSky International*)
- [Classroom Activities & Resources](#) (*McDonald Observatory*)
- [Virtual Visits](#) (*McDonald Observatory*)

ISSUE PAPERS, PAMPHLETS, ETC.

- [Issue Paper: Preserving the Night Skies](#) (*Hill Country Alliance*)
- [Issue Paper: Lighting Done Right](#) (*Hill Country Alliance*)
- [Night Sky Preservation Reading List](#) (*Hill Country Alliance*)
- [Materials for Public Outreach](#) (*DarkSky International*)
- [Resources](#) (*DarkSky International*)
- [Dark Skies Resources](#) (*McDonald Observatory*)

PRESENTATIONS

- Texas Hill Country: On the Edge of Night (*Hill Country Alliance, pending*)
- [How to Start a Friends of the Night Sky Group](#) (*Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky*)
- [Directory of presentations, take-home resources](#) (*DarkSky Texas*)

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (cont.)

VIDEOS

- [Hill Country Alliance Night Sky Program - 2023 Texan by Nature Conservation Wrangler](#) - 06:02 min (*Hill Country Alliance & Texan by Nature*)
- [Why the Stars are Disappearing](#) - 10:47 min (*McDonald Observatory & PBS*)
- [Preserving Dark Skies](#) - 02:51 min (*McDonald Observatory*)
- [Dark Skies: The Night's Watch | Texas Parks & Wildlife](#) - 09:30 min (*Texas Parks & Wildlife*)
- [I Am the Night Sky](#) - 2:35 min (*Texas Night Sky Festival®*)

LIGHTING

- [Lighting Replacement Options and Suppliers](#) (*DarkSky Texas*)
- [DarkSky Approved Lighting](#) (*DarkSky International*)

EVENTS & CAMPAIGNS

- [Lights Out, Texas!](#) (*Texas Audubon*)
- [International Dark Sky Week](#) (*DarkSky International*)
- [International Observe the Moon Night](#) (*NASA*)
- [Hill Country Night Sky Month](#) (*Hill Country Alliance*)

RECOGNITION OPPORTUNITIES

- [Night Sky Friendly Business Program](#) (*Hill Country Alliance*)
- [Night Sky Friendly Neighborhood Program](#) (*Hill Country Alliance*)
- [TxN Certification](#) & [Industry Guidance](#) (*Texan by Nature*)
- [Night Sky Friendly Lighting Recognition Program](#) (*McDonald Observatory*)
- [Be a STAR Award](#) (*DarkSky Texas*)
- [BOLD initiative for Better Lighting in Texas](#) (*DarkSky Texas*)
- [How to Become an International Dark Sky Community](#) (*DarkSky International*)

GUIDELINES & REPORTS

- [Model Language for HOAs in the Texas Hill Country](#) (*Hill Country Alliance*)
- [Leading by Example Guidebook: Ordinances and Tools for Growing Hill Country Communities](#) (*Hill Country Alliance*)
- [State of the Hill Country Report](#) (*Texas Hill Country Conservation Network*)

ENGAGING AND CONNECTING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

VOICE AND TONE

In the course and scope of your group's activity, you will engage with many individuals from different backgrounds, fields, and walks of life. Communication is key! Knowing how to best connect with an individual or your audience will aid in the success of your engagements and the retention of shared information. A few guiding recommendations:

DO

- **Keep it positive**
Night sky friendliness falls on a spectrum - it's not all black and white, and small changes can pave the way for big moves.
- **Collaborate**
Success for night skies is a success for the whole region; when one group succeeds, we all benefit. Highlight partners and achievements as they happen!
- **Know when to use "dark sky" vs. "night sky"**
In our world, groups and partners often use either "dark sky" or "night sky," and sometimes both. Which version you use is up to you and your group. Hill Country Alliance uses "night sky" because we have found that the term "dark sky" can have a negative connotation in some environments.
- **Focus on the average person**
Astronomers and advocates are very valuable to your group, but overall success depends on engaging the entire community. Groups like Wimberley Valley Dark Sky focus engagement on simple topics like passes of the International Space Station, when and where they can see planetary alignments, and stories about the lunar cycle while encouraging proper lighting.
- **Present information in a simple and structured manner**
Most presentations have three main components/sections. 1) Identify the current state, goal, or issue. 2) Discuss the "but". Why is the current state being threatened, ignored, etc. 3) Introduce some opportunities or solutions, "therefore we must..."

DON'T

- **Dwell on the negative**
A little goes a long way; balance is key.
- **Use excessive scientific jargon**
Is there an easy way to convey your point? If not, explain what you mean and try to ask questions to engage your audience. Would a fourth grader understand what you're saying?
- **Shame**
Everyone's knowledge level varies. Turn situations of unawareness into chances to educate.
- **Use acronyms without defining them**
With only 26 letters in the alphabet, there are acronyms in the night sky and conservation worlds that stand for something completely different elsewhere. If you use an acronym in speech or print, ALWAYS define it.



COMMUNICATING WITH DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

LEGISLATORS, REGULATORS, & GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

What does this audience probably already know?

- Night skies are a valuable natural and cultural resource

What should this audience also know?

- The potential for economic growth associated with dark sky tourism (astrotourism)
- The number of designated International Dark Sky Places within their jurisdiction
- Unobscured nightscapes enhance visitor experiences and wilderness character
- Excessive artificial light disrupts circadian rhythms, affecting sleep and health

What concerns this audience most, and how should you address the issues?

- Public safety - focus on scientific studies of light pollution's impacts
- Lighting costs - explain how good design balances safety, environmental impact, and aesthetics

What tone/voice should be used when talking to this audience?

- Respectful, professional, calm, diplomatic, and solution-oriented
- Present the issues clearly, using science-backed evidence

Points to drive home - What will spurn this audience to act?

- Suggest outdoor lighting ordinances or regulations to restrict light pollution
- Recommending lighting solutions that are efficient, economical, and energy-saving

PRIVATE LANDOWNERS

What does this audience probably already know?

- Being able to look up and enjoy a starry, Hill Country night sky is a treasure

What should this audience also know?

- Light pollution impacts the environment, economy, and human health
- The availability and many benefits of lighting audits

What likely concerns this audience most, and how should you address the issues?

- Private property rights – their ability to do what they want on their own property
- Safety and security
- Lighting costs
- Environmental health is key to successful farming/ranching operations

What tone/voice should be used when talking to this audience?

- Friendly, curious, positive, casual, relaxed, and non-technical.
- Offer resources and ways to support their efforts

Points to drive home - What will spurn this audience to act?

- Propose mutually beneficial solutions that respect landowners' rights
- Identify other landowners using best management practices as models to emulate
- For landowners who are also business owners, refer to the section that follows

BUSINESS OWNERS, INDUSTRY PARTNERS, CORPORATIONS AND UTILITIES

What does this audience probably already know?

- Energy costs and lighting can be expensive

What should this audience also know?

- Light pollution is bad for business
- The economic benefits of night sky best practices
- The availability of lighting audits and their benefits
- The Hill Country region is a key astrotourism hotspot, offering great business opportunities

What likely concerns this audience most, and how should you address the issues?

- Public-facing appearance and brand identity
- Financial and economic prosperity
- Limitations in operations/decision-making, dependent on the individual's role and responsibilities

What tone/voice should be used when talking to this audience?

- Confident, friendly, positive, casual, relaxed, and non-technical
- You want to support and uplift the business, not punish them for not following best practices

Points to drive home - What will spurn this audience to act?

- Appropriate lighting can boost your business financially and establish it as a community leader
- Address the opportunities to receive public recognition for positive actions
- Identify other companies that are using best management practices as models to emulate
- Your community and local landowners favor adopting best practices
- International Dark Sky Communities attract visitors and new residents, which leads to more opportunities to grow your business.

CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS AND SCIENTISTS

What does this audience probably already know?

- The Hill Country region is a significant astrotourism hotspot
- Light pollution impacts the economy, the environment, and human health

What should this audience also know?

- Landowners are concerned about legal rights and safety
- Business owners are mindful of their reputation and upper-level corporate regulations

What likely concerns this audience most, and how should you address the issues?

- Their personal or organizational mission (ex. wildlife/birds)
- Benefits to the environment

What tone/voice should be used when talking to this audience?

- Respectful, informative, collaborative, and professional
- Highlight the ecological and health impacts using a scientific and evidence-based approach

Points to drive home - What will spurn this audience to act?

- The need for successful engagement and collaboration between businesses and landowners, considering the likelihood of diverse perspectives and economic factors

OUTREACH RESOURCES

BRAND IDENTITY

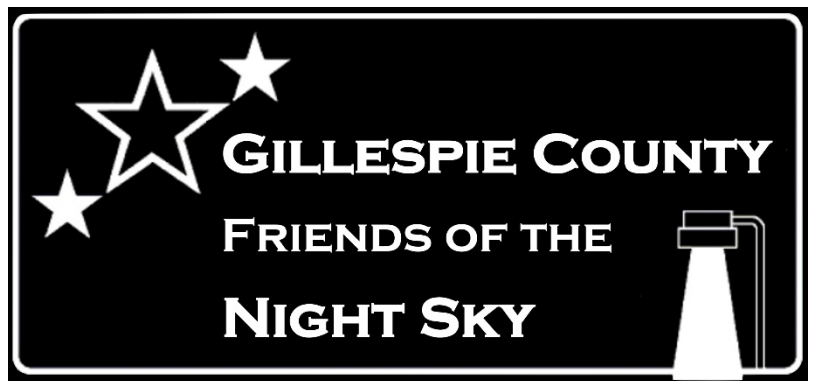
As your group grows and develops, so will your voice - both in person and in writing. If multiple people will be managing outreach, it is very helpful to standardize your style early on, so your message is streamlined and your look is recognizable. A quick Google search will show you lots of options for brand/style guides or communication plans and this can be a helpful place to start. At the very least, we recommend developing a logo, picking a font (or a few fonts), and finding a few colors to use consistently in your outreach to serve as your group's brand. Whether you're creating social media posts, flyers, or reports, having an established brand can help you present a cohesive and polished message.

For additional inspiration, explore the [Hill Country Alliance Brand and Style Guide](#), which shares guidelines for maintaining a consistent and professional appearance across all HCA communications. It includes details on logo usage, color schemes, typography, and tone of voice to ensure that all materials align with HCA's identity. While this extensive PDF is helpful for an established group, *remember you can (and should) start small!*

LOGO DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

Hill Country Alliance has created a general logo template for new Friends of the Night Sky Groups, which can be seen below and [linked here](#). However, each Friends Group is encouraged to create its own unique logo to represent its regional programming and work.

- Use high-contrast colors - remember, less can be more!
- Consider the aesthetics and clarity of your text color, foreground color, and background colors ([chart](#))
- Create square + horizontal designs for use in different contexts
- Design color as well as black and white options
- Keep it simple and connected to your community (i.e., if you have an iconic local feature, find a way to tie it into your logo)



Click the link to view existing [Friends of the Night Sky Group logos](#) for additional inspiration.

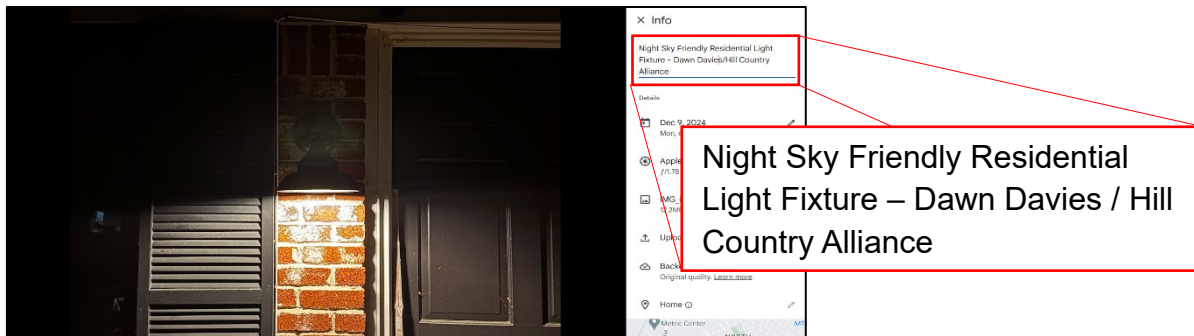
IMAGE USE AND SHARING

Finding quality night sky photography without worrying about image licensing can be challenging! To help Hill Country volunteers, we put together a collaborative photo album for use by partners within the Hill Country Night Sky Team.

[PHOTO ALBUM: Hill Country Night Sky Photography](#)

This is a shared, open-source album for Hill Country Night Sky Team members. Its purpose is to provide a repository of approved content for sharing on social media.

Please include photographer or organization credit in image titles and/or descriptions when adding to this album to ensure others who use your images can give proper attribution. As illustrated below, select the image and click the info button to add details. Please include attribution/credit using the following format - "[Image/Event title] - [Organization/Photographer]."



PRINT, DIGITAL, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

When you create a new group or are trying to grow a new, broad following it can feel overwhelming and often like you're posting "into the void." If you're curious about where to start, here are some of the tips, tricks, and resources we use and recommend. All of the below strategies can meet you where you are - for example, if you have the bandwidth to manage a Facebook account but not an Instagram or TikTok, then make a Facebook page and run with it!

PRINT MEDIA

While most folks have a computer in their pocket, lots of communities still also rely on local media, dedicated to spreading the word on nearby happenings, opportunities, and events. Often, local newspapers are looking for new stories and content. We highly recommend identifying your local news sources - whether they are print, radio, or digital - and making a connection to share the work your group is doing. When you get to know your local newsroom, you can make new partners while also getting your message out. Finding ways to create a recurring column, a photo feature, or hosting a night sky hour on the local radio can bring in creative volunteers and spread the word.

PRINT MEDIA (cont.)

Click here for a [Sample Press Release Template](#) from Texan by Nature, formatted for print or digital media. When sharing press releases or media alerts, here are a few best practices:

Add a clear subject line such as “MEDIA RELEASE: [Title of article]”

- If you email a list with multiple news contacts, blind carbon copy (BCC) your contact list!
- Paste the full text of the news release below your signature in the email and attach a Word doc and/or PDF. This allows folks to read the article without downloading the attachment.
- Include photos with attribution and/or captions.
- Provide your contact information - email and phone number - in case of questions.
- Add a general website link or landing page for folks to learn more (if applicable).’

Jonestown’s “friendly” First-Notice Letter

This was developed by the city's Friends group and is sent out before issuing a formal violation notice with penalty information. It gives the homeowner/ business owner time to correct without using a hammer approach. They have had good success with this process. It takes an additional two weeks, but citizens seem to appreciate the gentle approach. ([see Appendix Document](#))

Jonestown’s Homeowners Association / Property Owners Association letter

This letter was a call to action for Jonestown HOA/POA Board Members to support the city’s efforts to achieve their International Dark Sky Community designation. ([see Appendix Document](#))

DIGITAL MEDIA

ORGANIZATIONAL NEWSLETTERS

Creating a newsletter for your Friends of the Night Sky group is an effective way to communicate with both your membership and the broader community. It provides a valuable resource for those who may not engage with social media and allows for more detailed information and links to resources, which are often impractical on platforms like Facebook or Instagram.

A newsletter serves as a historical record of your group's achievements and milestones while offering a platform to announce upcoming events, accomplishments, and group needs. You can use it to spotlight new members or share updates from partners, and newsletter platforms like Mailchimp or Constant Contact allow you to include images (with proper credit/attribution, of course) to enhance visual appeal. It is a great asset for current members and can help attract new ones, furthering your organization's mission. The Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky group distributes a monthly newsletter featuring information on membership numbers, upcoming meeting details, event highlights, photos, volunteer bios, and so much more. Click the link to view [BCFNS Newsletters](#), past and current.



WEBSITE CREATION

Having a website is one of the most powerful tools your Friends of the Night Sky group can use to reach a broader audience and communicate your mission. A well-designed website allows you to share your passion for night sky preservation, organize events, and invite others to join your cause. With the right platform, even those with limited technical skills can create a site that looks professional and effectively showcases your group's work.

PLATFORMS

[WordPress](#)

an open-source content management system for creating and maintaining websites, blogs, and online stores without the need for extensive coding knowledge

- **Pros:** Highly customizable, free themes and plugins, flexible for future growth
- **Cons:** Requires some setup, may have a learning curve for complete beginners
- **Cost:** Free options available, with paid plans for advanced features

[Squarespace](#)

an all-in-one website builder and hosting platform allowing users to create and manage websites, online stores, and portfolios without extensive coding knowledge

- **Pros:** Beautiful, professionally designed templates, easy to use, drag-and-drop interface
- **Cons:** Higher price point, less flexibility for customization compared to WordPress
- **Cost:** No free plan, monthly subscription starting around \$12/month

[GoDaddy](#)

offers a range of tools and services for website development, including a website builder, domain registration, web hosting, and design, catering to beginners and those with technical experience

- **Pros:** Simple setup with website + domain + hosting in one package, easy to use
- **Cons:** Limited design flexibility and customization options
- **Cost:** Affordable, with basic plans starting around \$10/month

[Weebly](#)

a website builder and e-commerce service that allows users to create websites, blogs, and online stores without needing coding knowledge, offering various tools for customization and growth

- **Pros:** Easy-to-use drag-and-drop builder, no coding required, great for beginners with little to no web design experience, includes built-in SEO tools and mobile optimization, which can help your site rank higher on search engines
- **Cons:** Limited customization compared to more advanced platforms like WordPress
- **Cost:** Free plan with Weebly branding; paid plans starting at around \$6/month for additional features and to remove branding

WEBSITE CREATION (cont.)

[Madwire](#)

offers a range of services for small-to-medium businesses and organizations, including website building, payment processing, scheduling, content marketing, and digital advertising campaigns

- **Pros:** Madwire offers a complete marketing and website-building solution, including tools for email marketing, lead generation, and social media management. It's ideal for groups that want a comprehensive digital marketing strategy alongside their website
- **Cons:** More expensive compared to basic website builders and can be overwhelming for users who only need a simple site. Best suited for organizations with a dedicated marketing focus
- **Cost:** Pricing starts at higher tiers, often around \$300/month, as it bundles website design with marketing services

ESSENTIAL WEBSITE ELEMENTS

When starting your website, it's important to include a few key elements that will allow visitors to learn about your mission and get involved easily:

- **Email/Contact Form:** Make sure visitors can easily reach you by including a contact form or your group's email address.
- **Mission Statement:** Clearly state your group's mission to protect and preserve the night sky, and the purpose of forming your local chapter.
- **Meeting Times:** Provide up-to-date information on when and where your group will meet, as well as any virtual options.
- **Call to Action:** Include a simple way for people to join or participate, like a "Join Us" button, event sign-ups, or donation links.
- **Social Media Links:** Link to your group's social media platforms to encourage broader community engagement.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- **Keep It Simple:** Focus on clean design and easy navigation. Don't overload your website with too much information right away - let your main points shine.
- **Mobile Optimization:** Many visitors will be using mobile devices, so make sure your website looks good and functions well on phones and tablets.
- **Content Organization:** Group similar content together to make it easier to find (e.g., have one section for events and another for resources, and another for about us).
- **Use High-Quality Images:** Photos of night skies, group events, or your local area can bring your mission to life and make the site visually appealing.

SOCIAL MEDIA

PLATFORMS

Facebook

Facebook is ideal for community engagement, offering a space to share updates, events, and longer-form content with a broad audience. This platform effectively reaches a wide demographic and fosters interaction through comments and shares. FB can forward posts to Instagram (if accounts are linked) and share links externally.

Instagram

Instagram focuses on visual storytelling, where high-quality images and short videos capture attention. It is popular with younger demographics and can be perfect for showcasing visually appealing content, from behind-the-scenes looks to highlights of your work. If linked, Instagram can forward content to Facebook.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn caters to a professional audience, making it the platform of choice for networking, industry news, and thought leadership. It's useful for sharing professional achievements, sharing links and articles, and engaging with industry peers.

TikTok

TikTok is centered on short, engaging videos that appeal primarily to a younger audience. This platform is excellent for creative, trend-driven content, where storytelling can be playful and visually dynamic to attract attention and participation. TikTok will allow you to forward videos to Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook via share options.

Nextdoor

Nextdoor is a neighborhood-focused platform ideal for engaging with local communities. It provides a space to share updates, events, and calls to action with people living nearby. This platform is particularly effective for grassroots outreach and organizing local initiatives.

SLACK

Slack is a messaging platform designed for team communication. It allows for organized conversations through channels. It's great for managing internal communication within your group or coordinating efforts across teams. Slack supports file sharing, integrations, and group discussions in real-time.

Discord

Discord is a platform built for real-time communication via text, voice, and video. It's especially popular with younger, tech-savvy audiences and ideal for building close-knit online communities. Channels allow for organized discussion topics, making it an excellent tool for ongoing engagement and collaborative projects.



POSTING FREQUENCY

Consistency is key in social media. Posting regularly keeps your audience engaged and helps build momentum around your content. While the ideal frequency varies by platform, a general rule is to post at least 2-3 times per week on Facebook and Instagram, with more frequent updates on Twitter. Be cognizant of what resonates with your audience and adjust your schedule as needed. Review post analytics and insights at meetings to see where changes or improvements are needed. Consider assigning several group members to post on the various media platforms and rotate them frequently so the task doesn't feel overwhelming and the thoughts shared are fresh and diverse.

PARTNER TAGGING

Tagging partners and collaborators in your posts effectively expands your reach and fosters community relationships. Whenever possible, mention or tag relevant organizations, individuals, or groups to highlight your connections and promote cross-promotion. This broadens your audience and also strengthens partnerships by acknowledging the contributions of others in your network.

STRATEGIES AND TIPS

GENERAL

- Post and share on various platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, etc.)
- Use a variety of formats to keep your audience engaged (photos, videos, infographics, etc.)
- Use a call to action “visit link in bio,” “sign up for our newsletter,” or “share this post”

RESOURCES

- Look into free or paid software management options to support multiple social media accounts (i.e., Hootsuite offers a nonprofit discount and allows you to schedule dozens of posts in advance across multiple social media platforms)
- Explore graphic design options (i.e., Canva or Canva Pro which is free for nonprofits)
- Shorten hyperlinks (Bitly is a great, free resource)
- Manage multiple links from one page with link-in-bio accounts - (LinkTree, Taplink, Biolink, etc.)

AUDIENCE

- Resharing is a win-win! Partners love to be spotlighted. You can learn from them, and it can help build your online audience, especially when you're getting started.
- Visit other posts with similar hashtags, engaging them to increase awareness of your own page.
- Know when and when not to respond to comments. Encourage healthy dialogue. Engage with commenters, invite them to follow you (a Facebook feature), or attend future meetings.



ONLINE TOOLS

Graphic Design – Canva

Canva is a great resource for nonprofits interested in creating graphics through either a paid or free account. HCA has a Canva Pro account, purchased with a significant nonprofit discount. Canva also creates lots of [handy tutorials](#) we recommend checking out to learn more.

Post Scheduling – Hootsuite

If possible, it works best to draft a week+ worth of posts at a time. This keeps your social media accounts active and relieves a lot of pressure from last-minute scheduling. Aim to schedule posts with space in-between to generate engagement naturally. HCA has a paid Hootsuite Account - at a discounted nonprofit rate - which allows us to schedule posts across platforms in one place. Hootsuite allows you to manage social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube. To learn more, check out these linked tutorials from the Hootsuite site.

- [Hootsuite Hacks: 10 Tricks and Features You Probably Didn't Know About](#)
- [Social Media for Nonprofits: 11 Essential Tips for Success](#)
- [How to Create a Social Media Strategy in 8 Easy Steps \(Free Template\)](#).

ChatGPT

ChatGPT is an AI-driven platform designed for generating text-based content, answering questions, and facilitating conversations. It is useful for helping you craft emails, responses, public comments, brainstorming ideas, or even creating content for your website or social media. Ideal for groups that want to streamline tasks like drafting outreach materials or responding to common inquiries.

QR Codes and Link-in-Bio Software

QR codes and Link-In-Bio software are powerful social media tools that streamline user access to multiple online destinations. QR codes offer easy offline-to-online engagement, while Link-In-Bio software consolidates links in one place, enhancing navigation and boosting conversion opportunities. Both tools simplify sharing on social media platforms and improve user experience. A few examples include [LinkTree](#), [Taplink](#), and [Biolink](#).

Link Shortening

In order to make a link more easily shareable, you may want to use a third-party service to make a short, customizable link. The most common and accessible platform for link shortening is Bit.ly. Without creating an account, you can shorten links by simply going to <https://app.bitly.com>, scrolling to the text box that says “shorten your link,” pasting the link, and clicking “shorten.” You will then be given a short link, ideal for sharing on flyers, posts, and in emails.

ADDITIONAL MEDIA RESOURCES:

Content Inspiration

- Relevant events and activities in your community
- Post on the progress your group makes in all areas concerning your mission (i.e., new ordinances passed, lighting replacements, new business members, alliances formed, etc.)
- Share before and after images of night-sky-friendly lighting retrofits or installations
- Posting & commenting on newly designated International Dark Sky Places
- Night-sky-related holidays
- Share the love: Spotlight other Friends of the Night Sky Groups and their success

[Texan by Nature Social Media Content Planning Guide](#) (click the link to open the Guide)

This Social Media Content Planning Guide offers some valuable insights into effectively sharing your message on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. It begins with an introduction to defining content pillars, which are key themes that will make content planning easier. The guide includes worksheets to help you brainstorm content ideas and align them with your mission and goals, as well as 30 social post examples and helpful tips for writing engaging captions. It covers tools for tracking the post performance, making it a simple and accessible way to enhance your social media presence.

[Hill Country Alliance Night Sky Month Toolkit](#) (click the link to open the Guide)

October is an annual, month-long celebration of the region's most dazzling nighttime feature — the star-twinkling, planet-glowing, comet-crossing night sky — where beauty and wonder abound. Hill Country Night Sky Month is a celebration of our region's night skies and the hard work that Hill Country communities do to preserve them. Use the HCA Night Sky Month Toolkit to generate ideas for possible events, contests, and activities to host as part of Hill Country Night Sky Month.

[Audubon Texas – Lights Out Texas Complete Toolkit](#) (click the link to open the Guide)

The Central Flyway is a crucial “superhighway” for migratory birds, with Texas serving as a vital gateway and stopover point along the route, connecting breeding grounds in the Arctic and Canadian tundra to wintering grounds in Central and South America. Light pollution, or artificial light at night (ALAN), poses a significant threat to migratory birds, disorienting them, disrupting their navigation, and leading to collisions with structures, exhaustion, and even death. Lights Out, Texas! is a campaign of education, awareness, and action that focuses on protecting the billions of migratory birds traveling through Texas from March to June and August to November. The Audubon Texas “Lights Out Texas” Complete Toolkit is a resource designed to help individuals, businesses, and organizations reduce light pollution during bird migration seasons to protect migratory birds from collisions with building structures. It is a full suite of resources from social media posts to email templates and flyers.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q Where can I get night-sky-approved outdoor lighting?

- A DarkSky International operates the DarkSky Approved Luminaires program, which offers third-party certification for commercial and residential light fixtures that protect the night sky. Their [DarkSky Approved products database](#) is searchable by company, use, retailer, and color temperature, featuring fixtures from over 175 companies.

Q My neighbor got a new light that shines directly into my window at night. What can I do?

- A No two situations of this kind are alike, and as such, there is no one clear-cut answer. However, resources are available that offer different strategies and approaches.

Click here to learn [How to talk to your neighbor about lighting](#) from the Greater Big Bend Dark Sky Reserve.

Learn more and find information you can share with your neighbor on Hill Country Alliance's [Night Sky Friendly Lighting](#) webpage and in their [Hill Country Lighting Done Right](#) one-pager.

Talk with your neighbors and hear their reasons for wanting the lights. Share how their lights affect you. This [6-minute night sky video](#) from Texan by Nature on the Hill Country Alliance Night Sky Program and the importance of night sky preservation is another good resource.

The next step is to talk to other neighbors who may be adversely affected by the same light trespass. If there is consensus on the issue, your neighbor may be more compelled to change. If you and your neighbor live in a municipality with an outdoor lighting ordinance, refer to the text on lighting compliance and proceed accordingly.

Q The new gas station in town has terrible lighting. Is there anything I can do to get them to shield their fixtures?

- A If the gas station is situated within a municipality with an outdoor lighting ordinance, refer to the text on lighting compliance and proceed accordingly. A more direct approach is recommended if the gas station is situated within a municipality lacking an outdoor lighting ordinance or in a county's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

Wimberley Valley Example: At the end of 2024, ground broke for a convenience store in Hays County's ETJ, adjacent to the Wimberley Valley, an International Dark Sky Community. Local advocates and neighbors worked with neighboring cities, Woodcreek and Wimberley, to share resources from the city and partners, addressing the importance of night sky preservation within and surrounding their community. This thoughtful, proactive approach led to collaboration with the business owner. ([see Appendix Document](#))

- Introductory Letter from the Chair of Wimberley Valley Dark Sky
- Letter signed by the mayors of Wimberley and Woodcreek, the Executive Directors of the Wimberley Valley Chamber of Commerce, The Watershed Association, and Wimberley Valley Dark Sky,
- Hill Country Lighting Done Right one-pager

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (cont.)

Q My community/neighborhood/city is putting up new streetlights - how can I make sure they are night-sky-friendly?

A If the new streetlights are located within the boundaries of a municipality that has an outdoor lighting ordinance, check to see what the policy is regarding streetlights.

If the streetlight location is in a county's ETJ, there is no outdoor lighting ordinance, or an existing ordinance does not address night-sky-friendly lighting practices, contact your local government or community representatives to voice these concerns and provide recommendations for sustainable lighting practices.

To ensure the new streetlights are night-sky-friendly, you can advocate for lights that:

- are fully shielded
- use energy-efficient LED fixtures
- direct light downward, minimizing glare and preserving the natural night sky
- use a warmer color temperature bulb (2700K or lower) to reduce blue light emissions

Q How can my city adopt an outdoor lighting ordinance or update its current ordinance to be more night-sky-friendly?

A Every municipality manages its policy adoption process differently. If your city's process isn't clearly noted on its website, you can contact your City Manager or Administrator.

For information on outdoor lighting ordinances, refer to the Hill Country Alliance resource [Leading by Example: Ordinances and Tools for Growing Hill Country Communities](#).

DarkSky Texas has created a comprehensive [Texas Model Outdoor Lighting Ordinance](#) for municipalities to use and reference in part or in its entirety.

Q Where can I find some night-sky-preservation visual aids to use for an upcoming meeting with my local HOA Board/City Representative?

A Here are a few of our favorite materials and resources for this very purpose. Just make sure to provide credit and attribution to the designer/source.

- [DarkSky International's Light Pollution Factsheets](#) - *DarkSky International*
- [Five Lighting Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting](#) - *DarkSky International*
- [Shielded vs Unshielded Lighting \(Unacceptable to Best\)](#) – *DarkSky International*
- [Examples of Acceptable/Unacceptable Lighting Fixtures](#) – *DarkSky Texas*
- [Light Bulb Color Temperature](#) - *The Lightbulb.co.uk*
- [Hill Country Lighting Done Right](#) – *Hill Country Alliance*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (cont.)

Q How do I determine the quality of the night sky near my home or place of business?

A To determine the quality of the night sky, there are several tools or methods you can use.

- **Sky Quality Meters (SQMs):** These devices measure the brightness of the night sky in magnitudes per square arcsecond. They can be handheld or installed permanently for ongoing monitoring. SQMs provide objective, quantifiable data about how dark your skies are.
- **Online Satellite Light Pollution Maps:** Websites like lightpollutionmap.info, darksitefinder.com, use satellite data to show levels of light pollution across different regions. These maps help identify nearby dark-sky locations and give a general idea of sky quality in your area.
- **Dark Sky Metering Apps:** There are smartphone apps available for both iOS and Android that use your phone's camera and sensors to estimate sky brightness. While not as precise as dedicated SQMs, they are a convenient and accessible way to get a quick reading.
- **Naked Eye Limiting Magnitude (NELM) Scale:** This method involves identifying the faintest stars you can see with the unaided eye and comparing them to star charts. It provides a more subjective but useful estimate of sky quality based on human perception.

By combining these tools—instrumental readings, online data, mobile apps, and visual assessments—you can get a comprehensive understanding of the night sky quality at your location.

Q What Texas State laws exist regarding night sky preservation?

A The following is a list of bills passed by the Texas State Legislature pertaining to night sky preservation.

- **House Bill 916, 76th Leg:** Relates to regulation of outdoor lighting at state-funded entities
- **(Amend) House Bill 1852, 80th Leg:** Allows the regulation of outdoor lighting within five miles of the perimeter of Camp Bullis in San Antonio
- **House Bill 4158, 86th Leg:** Allows the municipalities of Blanco, Dripping Springs, Hays City, Johnson City, Mountain City, and Woodcreek to use up to 25% of their annual hotel occupancy tax revenue for promoting and preserving dark skies
- **House Bill 2439, 86th Leg:** Restricted a municipality's ability to adopt an outdoor lighting ordinance unless they had been designated as an International Dark Sky Community
- **State Bill 1090, 87th Leg:** Rectified the errant language of HB 2439, and allows municipalities to adopt outdoor lighting ordinances but only in conjunction with the adoption of a resolution to pursue an International Dark Sky Community designation at an undetermined future date.

DIRECTORY OF PARTNERS

FRIENDS OF THE NIGHT SKY GROUPS

Bandera County

[Bandera County Friends of the Night Sky](#)

Blanco County

[Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky](#)

Comal County

[Comal County Friends of the Night Sky](#)

Gillespie County

[Gillespie County Friends of the Night Sky](#)

Hays County

[Hays County Friends of the Night Sky](#)
[Wimberley Valley Dark Sky Committee](#)

Kendall County

[Kendall County Friends of the Night Sky](#)

Kerr County

[Kerr County Friends of the Night Sky](#)

Lampasas County

[Lampasas County Friends of the Night Sky](#)

Llano County

[Llano County Friends of the Night Sky](#)

Real County

[Real County Friends of the Night Sky](#)

Travis County

[Jonestown Night Sky Advocacy](#)
[Lago Vista Starry Skies](#)
[Lost Creek Dark Skies](#)
[Spicewood Starry Skies](#)
[Travis County Friends of the Night Sky](#)

Uvalde County

[Uvalde County Friends of the Night Sky](#)

Williamson County

[Liberty Hill Save Our Stars](#)

INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY PLACES

Blanco County

[City of Blanco](#)

Burnet/Llano County

[City of Horseshoe Bay](#)

Gillespie County

[Enchanted Rock State Natural Area](#)
[City of Fredericksburg](#)
[Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park](#)

Hays County

[City of Dripping Springs](#)
[Wimberley Valley](#)

Kerr County

[UBarU Camp and Retreat Center](#)

Kimble County

[South Llano River State Park](#)

Travis County

[City of Bee Cave](#)
[City of Jonestown](#)
[Lost Creek Neighborhood](#)
[Milton Reimers Ranch Park](#)
[River Hills Neighborhood](#)
[Shield Ranch – Barton Creek](#)

TEXAS STATE PARK FRIENDS GROUPS

[Friends of Enchanted Rock](#)

[Friends of Garner State Park](#)

[Friends of Government Canyon](#)

[Friends of Inks Lake State Park](#)

[Friends of McKinney Falls](#)

[Friends of Lost Maples](#)

DIRECTORY OF PARTNERS (cont.)

NIGHT SKY PRESERVATION ENTITIES

[DarkSky International](#)

[McDonald Observatory](#)

[DarkSky Texas](#)

[Starry Sky Project](#)

CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

[Audubon Texas](#)

[Keep It Real Beautiful](#)

[Bexar County Audubon](#)

[Keep Utopia Beautiful](#)

[Capitol Area Master Naturalists](#)

[Texan by Nature](#)

[Highland Lakes Master Naturalists](#)

[Texas Conservation Alliance](#)

[Hill Country Conservancy](#)

[Travis County Audubon](#)

[Texas Master Naturalists - Hill Country](#)

[Travis County Parks Foundation](#)

AMATEUR ASTRONOMY GROUPS

[Austin Astronomical Society](#)

[Medina Astronomy Club](#)

[Concan Stargazing](#)

[New Braunfels Astronomy Club](#)

[Hill Country Astronomers](#)

[San Antonio Astronomical Association](#)

[Mason Stargazers](#)

[Stars and Science Austin](#)

UTILITIES

[Bandera Electric Cooperative](#)

[Kerrville Public Utility](#)

[CPS Energy](#)

[Pedernales Electric Cooperative](#)

[Central Texas Electric Cooperative](#)

NATURE & SCIENCE FACILITIES AND AGENCIES

[Austin Nature and Science Center](#)

[Science Mill](#)

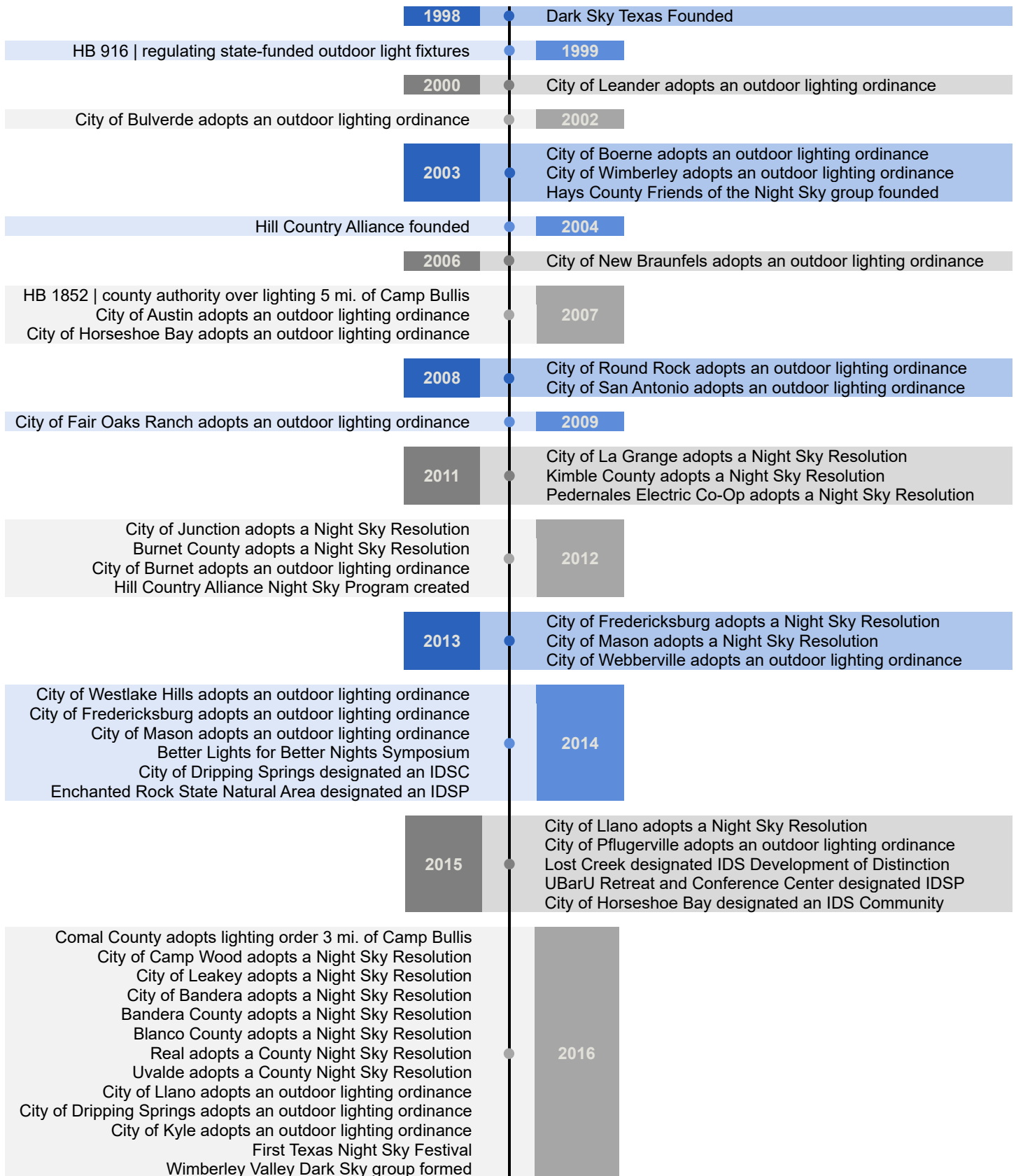
[Riverside Nature Center](#)

[Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center](#)

[Texas Parks and Wildlife Department](#)

[Wild Basin Preserve](#)

HILL COUNTRY NIGHT SKY TIMELINE



HILL COUNTRY NIGHT SKY TIMELINE (cont.)

2017

Kendall County adopts lighting order 5 miles of Camp Bullis
City of Fredericksburg adopts resolution to become an IDSC
Kerr County adopts a Night Sky Resolution
City of Lampasas adopts an outdoor lighting ordinance
City of Johnson City adopts an outdoor lighting ordinance
City of Cedar Park adopts an outdoor lighting ordinance
City of Manor adopts an outdoor lighting ordinance
South Llano River State Park designated an IDSP
First Hill Country Dark Sky Conference
Second Texas Night Sky Festival
River Hills designated IDS Development of Distinction

2018

Comal County adopts a Night Sky Resolution
Edwards County adopts a Night Sky Resolution
Gillespie County adopts a Night Sky Resolution
Mason adopts a County Night Sky Resolution
City of Sunset Valley adopts an outdoor lighting ordinance
City of Hondo adopts an outdoor lighting ordinance
City of Bandera adopts an outdoor lighting ordinance
Wimberley Valley designated an IDS Community
Hays County Friends of the Night Sky group formed
Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky group formed
Second Hill Country Dark Sky Conference

2019

HB 4158 | allows small cities HO Tax to reduce light pollution
HB 2439 | only IDSCs can adopt outdoor lighting ordinances
Hays County adopts a Night Sky Resolution
Llano County adopts a Night Sky Resolution
City of Blanco adopts an outdoor lighting ordinance
City of Woodcreek adopts an outdoor lighting ordinance
Third Hill Country Dark Sky Conference

2020

Kendall County adopts resolution to become an IDSC
Kendall County adopts a Night Sky Resolution
City of Buda adopts an outdoor lighting ordinance
City of Fredericksburg designated an IDSC
Bandera County Friends of the Night Sky group formed
Comal County Friends of the Night Sky group formed
Kendall County Friends of the Night Sky group formed
Kerr County Friends of the Night Sky group formed
Travis County Friends of the Night Sky group formed
Inaugural October Hill Country Night Sky Month

2021

SB 1090 | municipalities adopting OLOs to become IDSCs
City of Lampasas adopts a Night Sky Resolution
Lampasas adopts a County Night Sky Resolution
City of Spring Branch adopts Resolution to become an IDSC
City of Spring Branch adopts an outdoor lighting ordinance
City of Jonestown adopts an outdoor lighting ordinance
Llano County Friends of the Night Sky group formed
Jonestown Night Sky Advocacy group formed
Lago Vista Starry Skies group formed
Spicewood Starry Skies Group formed
Milton Reimers Ranch County Park designated an IDSP
LBJ National Historical Park designated an IDSP

HILL COUNTRY NIGHT SKY TIMELINE (cont.)

