



Photo Courtesy of Hill Country Alliance

Dear Friends of BCI and Bracken Cave,

Greetings and Happy Spring from Bat Conservation International!

I want to provide an update on our efforts to prevent intensive development of 1520 acres owned by Galo Properties, adjacent to Bracken Cave in the Texas Hill Country between Austin and San Antonio.

As you know, Bracken Cave is home to more than 10 million female Mexican Free-Tailed bats, making it the largest gathering of mammals in the world. Each June, more than 5 million bats are born and raised in the Cave. The females become pregnant in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, then migrate in March and April to the cave. At the height of summer, more than 15 million bats are using the cave and the surrounding countryside. The entire colony eats 140 tons of insects each night.

It was a year ago that BCI first became aware of the plan to build 3,800 homes next to our preserve and under the nightly three-hour flight path of the bats. Because the young bats make extensive use of the property in question, the risk of regular human-bat interactions will be high, which would backfire on the bats. The fact that the bats have been living in Bracken for 10,000 years won't amount to much if nearby neighbors get fed up with finding 50 young bats clustered around their porch lights every night, catching moths, or if a steady stream of children have to get preventative rabies shots (\$900 - \$1000 for the series of three shots!) because they or their cat or dog found a sick or tired bat on the ground.

Public support over the past year – including yours! – has been enormous. Saving Bracken's bats has become a major bipartisan cause within Texas government, and the City of San Antonio, led by Mayor Julian Castro and City Councilman Ron Nirenberg, has pledged \$5 million in aquifer-protection funds (Bracken lies over the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone) if BCI can also raise at least \$5 million. Just two weeks ago, the San Antonio-based **Kronkosky Charitable Foundation** **pledged \$1 million** toward this effort. We can't thank them enough for their generosity and leadership. The Kronkosky Charitable Foundation has been a strong supporter of Bracken since our efforts to protect the first five acres there began many years ago.

Though progress has been private these past three months, we are continuing our negotiations with Galo Properties. There are a number of issues on the table for discussion, and slowly they are being resolved. We were once well more than \$10 million apart in our negotiations with Galo; we're now negotiating over a gap that has shrunk to just a few million dollars.

You've helped make all of this possible. Were it not for the early and strong outcry from our members and the public at large, we would not be where we are today. We still have much of our fund raising in front of us, but many of Texas' most prominent citizens, from State Representative Lyle Larson to former First Lady Laura Bush, have helped in one way or another, as have many people outside of Texas.

We will keep you informed of new developments as they occur. If you're anywhere near central Texas between May and October, [please come out to Bracken](#). We would be pleased to have you!

Sincerely,

Andrew Walker
Executive Director