

To Subscribe or Advertise Call 1-325-655-4434

RANCH & RURAL LIVING

www.ranchmagazine.com

JULY 2012

DNA Testing for Whitetails

PAGE 13

Alpacas Produce Fine Fiber

PAGE 25

PUBLISHED IN SAN ANGELO, TEXAS, SINCE 1920

By Mike Mecke
Retired Natural Resources & Water Specialist
(830) 896-0805 mmecke@stx.rr.com

water

Texas Counties Must Get the 'Big Picture'

Example: Kerr County Plans Rainwater Harvesting Reservoir for Exhibition Center



Rainwater Harvesting system at Culberson County Courthouse in Van Horn, Texas

Some Water Background

Kerrville and much of our Texas Hill Country, has a limited amount of water to spare—either groundwater or surface water. Folks visiting the region, one of the most scenic in Texas, often don't go home with that picture in their minds. Creeks and rivers seem to be plentiful in many years and it is a region of sometimes major flooding. These streams form because many of the sometimes porous and cracked rock formations in the region capture recharging rains and flood waters. These rock formations commonly leak water or produce springs—anywhere from thousands of small seeps in these counties up to the two largest flowing springs in Texas at New Braunfels and San Marcos. Other large springs are also found along the edges of the Hill Country and Balcones Escarp-

ment such as Austin's Barton Springs, Fort Clark's Las Moras Springs and San Antonio's now "wet weather" springs which once formed the vigorous headwaters of the San Antonio River. Pumping from the aquifers supporting these springs increased dramatically from the early 1900s to now. The catchment area for supporting these large springs and the hundreds of thousands of small springs and seeps across the Hill Country is semi-arid in climate and very prone to drought as much of this last decade has shown residents. The year 2011 was the Texas record for both hottest and driest in recorded history. But, don't forget, these small rural springs are also very prone to drying up from increased aquifer pumping.

In recent decades many of the Central Edwards Plateau counties (aka the Hill

Country) have boomed in population, growth and tourism activity. With many of the new area residents, including many retirees, coming from wetter and large urban regions, their knowledge of Southwestern water conservation and water management has left much to be desired in promoting sustainability in the region. Many ranches, large and small, are now owned and "managed" by absentee owners or owners with almost no agricultural knowledge. Ashe juniper, liveoak and mesquite now dominate many ranch landscapes, which affect water resources dramatically, as you all know.

Also, Austin has exploded west into the prettier hilly terrain and likewise San Antonio has pushed ever northward into the Hill Country. And new residents are always demanding plenty of cheap water from the water utilities. Large, lush home landscapes are installed on steep, rocky hills using a lot of cheap water. It seems both large cities have tried to meet in the middle along clogged Interstate 35, with San Marcos and New Braunfels absorbing much of that new growth and water demand.

Adjoining counties and towns such as Blanco, Fredericksburg, Boerne, Bandera and Kerrville now have large populations of newcomers compared to the 1950s when the last major long-term drought hit Texas

Join America's oldest and largest Boer Goat Registry.



Providing a national show program, membership services, education, and the source for superior genetics.

AMERICAN BOER GOAT ASSOCIATION

1207 S. Bryant Blvd., Suite C, San Angelo, TX 76903 ~ 325-486-2242 ~ www.abga.org

 **WOOL TESTING**

Provides Performance Data at the Right Price

- Core Testing •
- Individual Animal Testing
- LaserScan and OFDA100 Technology

Yocom-McColl Testing Laboratories, Inc.
540 West Elk Place — Denver, CO 80216-1823 — USA
Phone 303-294-0582 • Fax 303-295-6944
E-Mail: ymccoll@ymccoll.com • <http://www.ymccoll.com/>

in the gut (it lasted 8 to 10 years). With current and projected populations, the Hill Country, along with Austin and San Antonio, would suffer greatly with a repeat of that drought as described in Elmer Kelton's "The Time It Never Rained." If you have not yet, go to the library or book store and read it.

The Hill Country is no longer primarily a ranching region with scattered farming which once supported local family's herds of cattle, sheep, Angora goats and native whitetail deer. Now the common highway view is of miles of high fences (sometimes) holding tens of thousands of exotic big game animals, many meat goats, some cows and a very few sheep or Angoras! The Hill Country now has thousands of new water demands from large, lush residential and business landscapes, city parks and ball fields, new and larger schools plus golf courses galore! And the push for more growth is coming constantly across much of the region, especially



2137 Mesquite Lane
San Angelo, Texas

M & M Air Service

George Mitchell (325) 655-2309
Mark Mitchell
David Mitchell
Andy Mitchell

**AERIAL SPIKE APPLICATION
MESQUITE & PEAR SPRAYING**

DAY OR NIGHT—SAN ANGELO 1-866-666-2309
Fax (409) 794-2958 MOBILE (409) 656-5998

Southwest Texas Solar
Solar Energy
Ronnie Sauer
Eldorado, Texas
solar@verizon.net
(325) 853-1000
1-866-899-1200
Call Today for More Info

David Persilver's well
at Comstock, Texas,
featuring a new
Solar panel.

NCRS
Approved
Installations

Dealer
Inquiries
Welcome

30% Federal
Income Tax
Credit

www.swtxsolar.com

ALL ABOUT WATER
TANKS • PIPING • RAINWATER COLLECTION DESIGNS

WATER STORAGE TANKS

- For Ranch, Rainwater Harvesting, and Commercial (up to 700,000 gallon)
- Water sanitation for domestic use, i.e: UV light with pre-filtering (note: a lot of well water now becoming contaminated)

- Water tank level gauges
- Rainwater harvesting designs
- Water tank retrofits with liner and roof — no evaporation, no leaks.

Photo above, courtesy of Pioneer, features the view off the roof of an approx. 160,000 gallon commercial tank, installed for the Terlingua Ghost Town water plant site.

Pioneer Water Tank Distributor & Installer
Dan Fleming—Menard, Texas
Ph: 325 396 4473
flemings52@wildblue.net

DENIS RANCH

**Custom Lamb Feeding
Lamb and Feed Financing Available
Custom Rations for
Sheep, Goats and Cattle**

Producers retain ownership -
Realize the benefit of your superior genetics.

We Buy Feeder Lambs!

PO Box 84 • Vancourt, Texas 76955



325-469-3991
fax: 325-469-3751





Cotton fields in very dry Pecos County depend on rain, and ground water resources for irrigation.

the southern and eastern sections.

Agriculture as we once knew it in the area has really changed with many of the older generation retired or selling to deep pockets from the major cities—often just

for hunting or as exotic big game ranches. Local youth have often moved to far away places for better paying jobs. Many smaller ranches have been broken up into subdivisions with many more straws into aquifers

and higher water use. Even some old, large ranches have sold off property for various reasons. Land stewardship and knowledge of proper watershed and rangeland management is often lacking in many of today's landowners and managers. Change has happened out in the country too, whether we wanted it or not!

Where Will 'New Water' Come From?

This is the \$64,000 question! In a short answer to a very tough question – there is no "new water". But, there are options to maximize and improve our water use efficiency and conservation efforts—many of them! Those are mostly for future conversations.

Something that folks living and working on the land (the catchments/watersheds and riparian areas) can do is to properly manage their ranges, farms or wildlife lands. They—or you—can assure there is good vegetative cover, not only for livestock forage or wildlife habitat, but for improving rainfall penetration in the soil while protecting the surface from erosion and drying out. Improved irrigation efficiency, growing profitable crops with lower water use and other present or future water conservation ideas will all help keep Texas' farms and ranches viable and maybe even growing. You folks are still the basic conservationists we all depend upon.

Other ideas such as the rainwater harvesting (RWH) just announced here on the Kerr County Youth Exhibition Center are very helpful at taking some of the local water demand off of aquifers and rivers. RWH is also a great educational tool in demonstrating and teaching conservation—you can see the water levels go up or down with your use and with the rains. The officials of Kerr County are to be commended along with others in Menard, Sanderson, Van Horn, Monahans and more for their implementation of RWH on county buildings. You can do the same in your county by learning more about the practice through your local AgriLife Extension Agents and then getting actively involved. Rainwater Harvesting is a very old practice that is new again and much improved! Get going—before the rains come!

Water is Life! ♦

HUGHES TANK COMPANY, INC.

1-800-596-9500 (972) 366-8684
www.hughestankcompany.com Venus, Texas

Family-owned and
operated since 1989.

- Above- and below-ground storage tanks for multiple uses.
- Home, Farm, Factory, Industrial and Oil Field
- Standard and Custom Tanks



GOAT HOUSE

Goat and Small Livestock Shelters and Storage Covers
Strong, non-rusting fiberglass construction

David Imm
1102 Sherman
Tioga, Texas 76271
(469) 364-1976



Custom Fence Builder



Master's Touch Fence, Inc.
www.masterstouchfence.com



Custom Processing
Wildgame Processing
Retail Meats • Jerky

NICHOLSON'S MEAT COMPANY

Lee and Danita Walston, owners
207 S. Broadway • Mertzon, TX 76941
325-835-2611

WEB- WWW.NICHOLSONSJERKY.COM