

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 8, 2011

CONTACT: Susan K. Hughes
210-862-1150
or Courtney Hollimon
1-800-839-9453

“Conserving Our Rural Heritage” 2011 Farm & Range Forum Scheduled April 1st and 2nd in Uvalde

On April 1st and 2nd, the 2011 Farm & Range Forum will be held in Uvalde, Texas. The focus of this year’s forum is “Conserving Our Rural Heritage.”

Landowners, urban and rural conservationists, and anyone interested in the history and dynamics of the region as it faces economic and social challenges are encouraged to participate. Uvalde County is an ideal setting for this dialog.



Photo by: Jason Penney

Friday afternoon, the forum will kick-off with a field trip to the Harris Ranch, where specialists will lead small groups in examination of recommended range management practices, riparian values and protection, and healthy rangeland plant diversity, as well as opportunities for income diversification. After a steak dinner at the ranch, participants will enjoy a campfire conversation.

Saturday’s program will be held at the Uvalde Adult Activity Center. It includes a range of informative panels as diverse as public benefits of private lands, land fragmentation, economic development, crop diversification, rain enhancement, and ways to maximize the conservation values of rural lands. Two features will be a discussion by landowners who have chosen to place conservation easements on their property and an introduction to the “Barn Again” program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and its tax credit offering for barn restoration.

The keynote speaker during Saturday's program is Con Mims, general manager of the Nueces River Authority.

As the regional population increases dramatically (projected to grow from 3.1 million to 4.3 million by 2030) and central Texas becomes more urbanized, the character of the land and the people is threatened with change. To sustain what people love and cherish as their rural heritage requires a strategy including dedicated land stewardship, protection of natural resources, and incentives to help landowners conserve open spaces and make a living on the land to sustain their ownership. This is a challenge to urban dwellers, as well as rural communities, because their objectives and interests in conservation and sustainability are intertwined. We all need clean air, healthy soils, pure water, and places for wildlife.

The Farm & Range Forum was developed to foster dialog between rural landowners and urban conservationists, recognizing that in Texas, with 95+ percent of land in private ownership, conservationists who wish to conserve wildlife habitat must depend on and cooperate with landowners who provide stewardship. Since 2000, regional Farm & Range Forums have been held in locations from Seguin and Bulverde to Hondo and Fredericksburg. This year's forum is being planned by the Bexar Audubon Society, Edwards Region Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, Green Spaces Alliance of South Texas, Hill Country Alliance, Nueces River Authority, San Antonio Conservation Society, Texas Agricultural Land Trust, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas Wildlife Association, and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Continuing education credits have been approved for Certified Private Applicator, Certified Professional in Range Land Management, and Master Naturalist.

Sponsors and exhibitors are welcome. Contact Courtney Hollimon at chollimon@texas-wildlife.org or Helen Holdsworth at hholdsworth@texas-wildlife.org. Phone 800-TEX-WILD (800-839-9453). Registration forms are available at the following websites: www.greensatx.org, www.texas-wildlife.org, www.hillcountryalliance.org, and www.bexaraudubon.org.

###

2011 Farm& Range Forum Schedule*

Friday, April 1

12:00 noon Depart Uvalde Adult Activity Center for Harris Ranch
12:30pm Field trip at the ranch, dinner, and campfire

Saturday, April 2

7:30am Breakfast at Uvalde Adult Activity Center
8:00am Optional session on pesticide laws and regulations (for CEUs)
9:00am Welcome and overview of Friday's program & preview
9:30am Public benefits of private lands — Blair Fitzsimons,
Texas Agricultural Land Trust
Land fragmentation — Neal Wilkins,
Texas A&M Institute for Renewable Natural Resources
Maximizing Conservation Values of Rural Lands — Claude Ross, USDA-NRCS
10:50am Landowners with conservation easements
11:30am Estate planning and tax update
Legislative and policy update — Kirby Brown,
Texas Wildlife Association
1:00pm Keynote by Con Mims, Nueces River Authority
2:00pm "Barn Again" program and tax credit for barn restoration —
Stuart Johnson, San Antonio Conservation Society and National Trust for
Historic Preservation
2:30pm Income diversification — Joe Peña,
Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Crop diversification & local food perspectives — Noel Troxclair, Texas AgriLife
Extension Service
Agritourism, nature tourism, and rural heritage — Shelly Plante, Texas Parks &
Wildlife Department
Fostering economic development and stability — Chandra Eggemeyer, Texas
Department of Agriculture
4:00pm Rain enhancement — Stephanie Beall,
Southwest Texas Rain Enhancement Association
4:30pm Q&A

* Speakers, schedule, and topics subject to change.

###