

For Immediate Release

Film addresses lessons and future strategies following Blanco River flood



(October 9, 2015) The Texas Hill Country, known as “Flash Flood Alley”, is a semi-arid region known for extended periods of drought interrupted by significant flooding events. The Memorial Day flood along the Blanco River was one of the most devastating on record. Citizens and communities along the river were left with heartbreaking losses of life and property, and also many questions about how this happened and how can we reduce future impacts from

floods.

In response, the Hill Country Alliance (HCA) teamed up with the Nature Conservancy, Wimberley Valley Watershed Association, and numerous experts throughout the region to create a 14-minute film aimed at building public awareness of the realities and threats—as well as the solutions—related to flooding in a growing region. The film is now available, free of charge, for everyone to download, watch, and share at [Blanco River Riparian Recovery Film](#).

“There is no doubt we will see more significant flooding in the future.” said Sky Lewey of the Nueces River Authority and HCA Board Member. “Changes in land cover, land practices, and vegetative management along our rivers, and also in the uplands, contribute to the intensity of flood events and to our ability to withstand and minimize damage of future floods. There are lessons to learn and simple strategies to implement such as stepping back away from the river with development and landscaping to give her room to swell when necessary in to the floodplain. We should also remember that the stability of a river actually begins in the uplands where a good cover of thick native vegetation can catch, hold and slow down heavy rains.”

With increased development, including roads, rooftops, and manicured lawns, rainfall is channeled from the land to our rivers and streams at a greater volume and velocity. “There is middle ground for river bank management,” noted Rachael Ranft, Director of Northern Hill Country River Projects for The

Nature Conservancy of Texas. “The landowners along the Blanco River experienced this devastating event, and many immediately started looking for methods to manage their properties for better river health. Working together with highly-qualified organizations, we are a community learning how to manage for our human needs while protecting our beloved river.”

Hill Country communities have often experienced the powerful force of high waters, but when floodwaters recede, it is clear to see the difference in how floods affect land under disparate management practices. The film points out how plants, grasses, trees, downed logs, even boulders, gravel and sand play integral roles—in energy dissipation of floodwaters and the ultimate recovery of land and water.

“It is encouraging and ever hopeful to observe nature’s remarkable way of healing herself,” said Christy Muse, Executive Director at HCA. “Our hope is to spread the word, one landowner at a time, neighbor to neighbor, on how to work with nature and not against her.”

The Blanco River film was made by Robert Currie, a Wimberley filmmaker/producer, under the guidance of HCA and a team of technical experts, including Rachael Ranft of the Nature Conservancy, Sky Lewey of the Nueces River Authority, Bill Neiman of Native American Seed, retired NRCS biologist Steve Nelle, retired USGS hydrologist Raymond Slade, and others. Funding was generously contributed by the Newman Foundation and the Burdine Johnson Foundation.

The 14-minute film, plus three shorter 5-minute segments, along with many other educational resources, may be downloaded from the HCA website using the link above or at the following URL:

<http://www.hillcountryalliance.org/letting-the-river-heal-itself/>

The Hill Country Alliance is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to raise public awareness and build community support around the need to preserve the natural resources and heritage of the Central Texas Hill Country. Visit us at www.hillcountryalliance.org.

###

Contact:

Christy Muse, Executive Director

Hill Country Alliance

christy@hillcountryalliance.org

512.560.3135