

***For Immediate Release***

**Volunteers Work to Protect Native Trees Along South Llano River**

(July 14th, 2017) – On Sunday, July 9<sup>th</sup>, volunteers from the Texas Master Naturalist Program joined staff from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Llano River Watershed Alliance, Hill Country Alliance, and Texas Tech University Field Station at the South Llano River State Park in Junction. The team worked together to identify native tree saplings and install caging around them, to protect them from deer and other browsing animals.

Native trees provide important values for humans, wildlife, and livestock. Scientists, land managers and river stewards are increasingly concerned about a lack of young seedlings and saplings in river bottoms. Saplings are often the first food choice for browsing deer and livestock.

As Tyson Broad, Watershed Coordinator at the Texas Tech Llano River Field Station notes, “Creekside areas along the Llano River are often void of young trees due to over browsing from native white-tailed and non-native axis deer.” Volunteers saw this first-hand as they scoured for young pecan, mulberry, and sumac trees to protect on Sunday.

Broad notes, “As the older trees die, having established younger trees becomes vital to preserving the riparian area, helping to prevent bank erosion, mitigating the force of floodwaters, and providing shade for both aquatic and terrestrial species.”

Volunteers and partners spent a full day installing caging around seedlings and saplings of native tree species. Over 20 young trees were protected using hog-panels, t-posts, and heavy-gauged wire.

Paula Harley, a volunteer with the Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program, affirmed, “As competition among native and exotic herbivores increases, so does the decline of future generations of native trees and riparian habitat. By volunteering today, I can do my part to help this river and all the plants and animals that depend on it.”

Texas Parks and Wildlife will monitor the tree-caging project to determine future management needs.

To learn more about upcoming volunteer events, check out Hill Country Alliance’s webpage at <http://www.hillcountryalliance.org/upcomingevents/> or contact Daniel Oppenheimer at [Daniel@hillcountryalliance.org](mailto:Daniel@hillcountryalliance.org).

*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](http://www.hillcountryalliance.org).*

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