

For Immediate Release

Healthy Creeks Initiative Underway

(July 17, 2020) – Contractors will soon begin the annual control efforts to manage Arundo along the Pedernales River and several tributary creeks. Arundo, also referred to as Giant Reed or Carrizo Cane, is a non-native, invasive plant that can take over creeks and rivers.

Since 2016, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD), Hill Country Alliance (HCA), City of Fredericksburg, and other organizations have partnered with participating landowners through the Healthy Creeks Initiative to control Arundo and enhance the creek-side (or riparian) habitat along Barons Creek, Town Creek, and other portions of the Pedernales River Basin.

Arundo, which has a cane-like stem that looks similar to bamboo, is a highly invasive, non-native grass that can grow more than 25 feet tall. This invasive plant has the potential to significantly damage the health of Hill Country streams and rivers by worsening flooding, displacing native plants, destabilizing banks, contributing to erosion, degrading fish and wildlife habitat, and increasing wildfire risk.

Daniel Oppenheimer, Land Program Manager at Hill Country Alliance, notes, “Landowners should not cut, mow, or bulldoze Arundo. These mechanical methods are likely to spread Arundo infestations to downstream neighbors through small fragments of the cane or root material.”

Over the past four years, 120 landowners have volunteered to participate in the Healthy Creeks Initiative to control Arundo in the Pedernales River Basin using targeted, aquatic-approved herbicide application. This control method has the least impact on the stream ecosystem and is currently being provided at no cost to the landowners.

With the large flood events in October 2018 and April 2019, fragments of Arundo have spread to new reaches of tributary creeks and the Pedernales River—sometimes at the water’s edge, and in other sites higher up in the floodplain.

Oppenheimer encourages landowners to talk with their neighbors. “This plant does not care about property boundaries. We need to be talking with friends and neighbors, making sure everyone knows about the threats posed by Arundo, the no-cost opportunity provided by TPWD to landowners, and the importance of our healthy riparian areas.” Healthy riparian areas comprised of diverse and abundant native plants mitigate floods, improve water quantity and quality, stabilize banks, reduce erosion, and provide fish and wildlife habitat.

If landowners think they may have Arundo growing on their property or have any questions about the project, please contact either Daniel Oppenheimer at Hill Country Alliance (210-287-0478; daniel@hillcountryalliance.org) or TPWD project staff (healthycreeks@tpwd.texas.gov; 512-389-8750).

To learn more about the Healthy Creeks Initiative, visit Texas Parks and Wildlife's website at <https://tpwd.texas.gov/healthycreeks>.

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.

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