**The Hill Country Alliance – Part 2**

Friday, August 21, 2020

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As we know there is a dichotomy between those who have lived in the Hill Country all of their lives and those who have recently moved to it. It is as if once we move here we want to “shut the gate” and not let anyone else come in.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, that is not going to happen. As a result, there must be a consensus among those living in unincorporated areas about how to manage our beloved surroundings. The danger is that we can love it to death.

Living in the Hill Country is a blessing, because while we are free to do what we like without following too many rules, the same is true about it being a curse because just when you need more rules, they do not exist.

Balancing the two is difficult, but luckily, there is a solution — just ask Cliff Kaplan. He has been the operations manager for the Hill Country Alliance for the past five years and has experienced firsthand the growth and added interest.

“We plan for the future of the Hill Country by using collaboration among the ever expanding like-minded groups using a regional approach,” Kaplan said. “In the continuing-effort to get the public involved in the care of our resources, Hays County just agreed to put on the Nov. 3 election a $75-$80 million item to address the need for 16 parks throughout its county, including six in San Marcos and one in Kyle.”

Here in Comal County, and in partnership with the HCA, the Comal County Conservation Alliance (CCCA) is doing their part. From their website:

*Comal County Conservation Alliance (CCCA) was formed in 2018 by a group of concerned local citizens who saw the need to raise awareness about the urgency of preserving land in our fast-growing county while there is still land to preserve. Preserving land, water, and wildlife in Comal County benefits our citizens, our community, and our economy as well as the natural world that supports us.*

*CCCA created the Comal Land Conservation Fund (CLCF) in 2020 to provide funds for projects dedicated to preserving open space in Comal County. Among the projects eligible for CLCF funds is a landowner’s effort to establish a conservation easement through a contract with a Land Trust entity. Conservation easements allow landowners to retain ownership and use of their land while agreeing to keep the land in its existing natural state by selling or donating the land's development rights to the Land Trust entity. Conservation easements allow landowners to retain ownership and use of their land while agreeing to keep the land in its existing natural state by selling or donating the land's development rights to the Land Trust entity.*

*Financial assistance from the Fund to cover associated contract costs might make the difference between a landowner selling to a developer versus saving the farm or ranch in perpetuity. The Fund may also be used for matching funds for grants or loans from state, federal, and private programs designed to help communities protect water resources, wildlife or, as in most cases, both. These and a variety of other options are ways the Fund can help keep land in its natural state. Preserving natural land and open space benefits the well-being of all of us in Comal County. Your tax deductible donations to the CLCF will help CCCA preserve land, allowing Nature to continue doing what it does for us — cleaning the air, producing oxygen, filtering rainwater, providing wildlife habitat, giving people a place to refresh and rejuvenate, and ensuring that our beautiful Hill Country landscape and rural charm continue to be the hallmarks of Comal County. We must do our part to protect what we have been given.*