LAND STEWARDSHIP: PROVIDING WATER FOR TEXANS

***"Saving the water and the soil must start where the first raindrop falls."* Lyndon B. Johnson, 1947**

Texas farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners have a long history of voluntarily conserving the natural resources entrusted to them. Living off the land provides a great incentive to conserve and make the most of available resources. Today, Texas farmers, ranchers, and foresters produce more food, fuel, and fiber than ever on a greatly reduced number of acres using no more water than was used in the 1950s. In addition, wildlife management on working ranches has resulted in the conservation and recovery of a number of wildlife species.

Due to the prolonged drought in Texas, many of the state's agricultural producers have sought to aggressively adopt innovative technologies and on-farm conservation practices to combat the impacts of drought and improve profitability. Some of these conservation practices, such as grazing management, cover crops, and wildlife habitat enhancement, are lower-cost management practices that can have subtle impacts when implemented on thousands of acres. Other practices, like irrigation efficiency improvements and targeted brush removal and management, provide a greater benefit to Texas' water resources, but can be very costly to farmers and ranchers.

Understanding the Benefits of Land Stewardship:

Unfortunately, as more Texans move from rural to urban areas they generally become less mindful of their reliance on the land and its natural cycles as well as the variety of benefits they derive from the voluntary stewardship provided by private landowners throughout the state. As a result, many today do not recognize that land stewardship, which provides water for Texas, is a responsibility that should be shared by all Texans. Key concepts to understanding this important link include:

- Ground and surface water supplies originate with the rain that falls on the land and is captured by complex, large-scale ecological processes involving many variables including plants, animals, soils, and geology. When these processes function optimally, floods are reduced, aquifers are replenished, and water is released more slowly and steadily into springs, streams, rivers, lakes and eventually our bays and estuaries.
- When the natural processes are working well across millions of acres of productive agricultural, forest, wildlife and recreational lands the contribution to the state's water supply can be tremendous, "creating" more water for all Texans.
- The rainfall soaks into the ground as opposed to running off and carrying soil and sediment. The absorbed groundwater reappears as springs which drain into creeks, streams and rivers, which eventually feed the bays and estuaries, thus providing a base flow of water for all Texans. Land stewardship on millions of acres, combined with community conservation efforts, translates into what may be the most significant contribution to water conservation today.
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, voluntary land stewardship allows Texans to consider water at its origins, not just at its destination.

We should encourage voluntary land stewardship – on a grand scale – as one of the cornerstone solutions for water issues in Texas because it is complementary, cost-effective, sustainable, efficient, environmentally sensitive, multi-faceted and manageable. The efforts of private landowners are vitally important because the presence of voluntary land stewardship helps maximize the effectiveness of all other water management strategies.

Look and see what you can do to make a difference on your lands and through your everyday activities to help provide more water for Texans.

Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board
75th Anniversary 1939-2014

Association of Texas Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Texas Wildlife Association

Ducks Unlimited

Texas Water Resources Institute
make every drop count

STPRA
South Texans' Property Rights Association

Texas A&M IRNR
Institute of Renewable Natural Resources

Texas Deer Association
Est. 1999

Texas A&M Forest Service

Texas Corn Producers Board

Trinity Waters
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Texas Horse
Preserving Our Tradition

PCG

Texas Association of Dairymen

Texas Parks & Wildlife

Texas Poultry Federation
Pharmaceuticals · Processor · Hatchery · Feed · Equipment · Producer

Taking Care of Texas

Texas Pork Producers Association