



TALTnews

Conserving the Texas heritage of agricultural lands, wildlife habitats, and natural resources.

PASSING LAND DOWN TO FUTURE GENERATIONS: COASTAL LAND LEGACY INITIATIVE

by Lorie Woodward Cantu



The Gulf Coast region, one of Texas' most valuable agricultural and environmental areas, is losing open space at an alarming rate because of phenomenal growth—and yet many people fail to see the connection between healthy land and a healthy future.

“Conserving working lands is one of the most cost-effective and immediate ways to secure clean air and water and abundant food for all Texans,” said Ken Cearley, TALT’s stewardship manager. “TALT, thanks to a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, is positioned to help coastal residents understand the vital connections between land, water and a sustainable future.”

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NO LAND, NO WATER™: HOLLY FARMS

by Lorie Woodward Cantu

No Land. No Water. For Mary Ruth Rhodenbaugh, owner of Holly Farms in Brazoria County, these words are more than just a slogan on a decal; they are a fact of life.

“When rain falls it has to have some place to land,” Rhodenbaugh, who is a former teacher and retired employee of Dow Chemical, said. “I’m not picking on developers or industries because I appreciate the need for both, but when rain falls on concrete it has a hard time soaking into the ground and replenishing our drinking water supplies.”

To do her part to keep her working lands open, Rhodenbaugh partnered with TALT to place a conservation easement on her 188-acre farm, which has been her family since 1908 when Rhodenbaugh’s grandparents, William and Juliet Brigrance, established the homestead. It is located between the Brazos and San Bernard rivers in the San Bernard watershed.

The Brigrances hoped to launch a dairy farm but the harsh realities of the climate quickly forced them to refocus their efforts on cotton, corn and cattle. Today, Holly Farms is a

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CEO'S LETTER

English poet Samuel Taylor penned, “Water, water, everywhere...Nor any drop to drink” as a mariners’ lament. Without planning and action, Texas Gulf Coast residents could find themselves uttering the same words.

The vastness of the Gulf of Mexico creates a false impression of plenty, when in fact freshwater resources in the region are as fragile and stressed as those in other parts of Texas. A booming population, growing industrial demands and necessary agricultural usage are facts of life.

Local residents and water managers are beginning to contend with land subsidence and saltwater intrusion as underground freshwater supplies are tapped. Surface water, which is not only crucial for human needs but critical for in-stream flows that renew the rich bays and estuaries, is also in high demand.

While many are focused on water, they are unaware of the impact that land has on this precious resource. Quality and quantity of water is directly correlated to the quality and quantity of open space. And as the spring floods pointed out, rangeland plays a critical role when water rages.

“Land fragmentation with great development leads to greater run-off,” Neal Willkins, president and CEO of the East Foundation, said. “Healthy intact areas of native rangeland acts like a sponge, slowing run-off and keeping rivers from flooding in one big pulse that can be catastrophic.”

Raising public awareness of the land-water connection is the impetus behind TALT’s “No Land, No Water” campaign. Generous funding from The George and Cynthia Mitchell Foundation, Houston Endowment Inc. (A Philanthropy Endowed by Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones), The Jacob & Terese Hershey Foundation and The Meadows Foundation make this campaign possible. With grant funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, TALT is able to launch our “Coastal Land Legacy Initiative” and focus our communication and outreach efforts in the area from south of Houston to Corpus Christi.

Education and outreach makes a difference. Carolyn Chipman Evans, executive director of the Cibolo Nature Center, recently negotiated a conservation easement with TALT on Herff Farm in Boerne. The group acted in part to help protect Cibolo Creek which joins the San Antonio River, eventually flowing into San Antonio Bay.

She noted, “The connection between land and water seems self-evident, but it’s not. People understand it, though, once it’s brought to their attention.”

Bringing the issues that will affect the future of Texas is what TALT does. Unchecked land fragmentation means no land which means no water which means no life. Our mission is important. Failure is not an option.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Blair".

Blair Fitzsimons, Chief Executive Officer
bfitzsimons@txaglandtrust.org

FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER!
[@TXAgLandTrust](https://twitter.com/TXAgLandTrust)



TALT LAUNCHES NO LAND, NO WATER CAMPAIGN

Regardless if you are Texan by birth or got here as fast as you could, all Texans have at least two things in common: a love for our unique state and a need for water. A critical natural resource, water directly impacts our quality of life.

When it rains in Texas, that rains falls predominantly on privately-owned farms and ranches. The goal of No Land, No Water is to promote the conservation of Texas' private working lands as an immediate and cost-effective way to help ensure a future of abundant, clean water for all Texans.

With 97% of Texas' rural lands in private ownership, how these lands are managed impacts water quality and quantity. With proper stewardship, these lands capture and clean the water that recharges our aquifers and fills the rivers and reservoirs which supply our drinking water. Unfortunately, Texas is losing her rural lands at an alarming rate to development and fragmentation. This, in turn, puts pressure on natural water cycles.

In spite of the importance of rural lands to the state's water resources, the conservation of those lands is not currently part of our state's \$56 billion water plan. In his keynote address to the Texas Wildlife Association's annual conference in July, Speaker Joe Straus commented that "...providing water is not all about pipes and pumps. It's also about protecting our aquifers and rivers, and we need private stewardship to do so. Almost every drop of water in this state falls first on private property." No Land, No Water will help raise awareness of the role of rural lands in providing the state's water resources, and the need for financial incentives, like conservation easements, so that private landowners can continue stewarding this important resource for the benefit of all Texans.

By 2060, Texas' population will grow to 40-50 million people. If we are to ensure sufficient water supplies for these future populations, we need to act today to protect the lands that will help supply the water that goes into those pipes and pumps provided for by the state's water plan.

PLEASE JOIN TALT IN THIS IMPORTANT EFFORT

Visit NoLandNoWater.org today to see how you can be part of the solution.



Texas is home to
**8 OF THE COUNTRY'S 15
FASTEST**
growing cities.



Future supplies of clean and abundant water depend on the choices Texans make **today**.



Demand for water will increase
22% in the next 50 years while



existing water supply will decrease
by 10% in any drought year.

**THE NUMBERS SIMPLY
DO NOT ADD UP.**

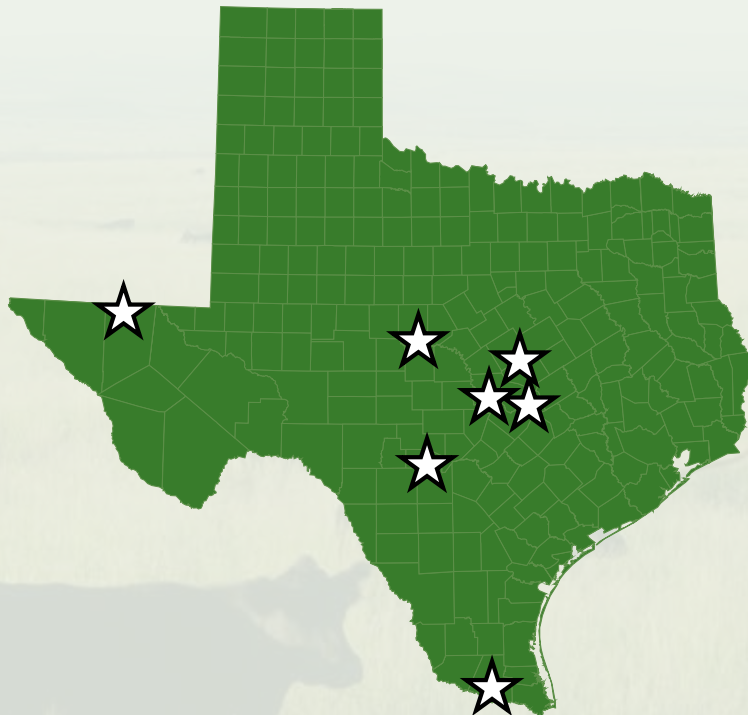
By conserving agricultural lands, we also conserve those benefits that ALL Texans enjoy: clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, scenic vistas. Private land conservation is a cost-effective strategy to protect our state's critical water resources.

THE TEXAS FARM & RANCH LANDS CONSERVATION PROGRAM: PROTECTING TEXAS' WORKING LANDS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Concerned that Texas is losing her agricultural lands at an alarming rate, the Texas Legislature in 2005 created the Texas Farm & Ranch Lands Conservation Program (TFRLCP). Housed at the time at the General Land Office, TFRLCP was designed to make grants to non-profit land trusts who in turn would purchase from farmers and ranchers the development rights for their agricultural properties. The intent of the program, known as a "purchase of development rights program," was to preserve the agricultural viability of Texas' rural lands while keeping those lands in private hands and under private management. Because 97% of Texas rural lands are privately-owned, this in turn would greatly benefit Texas' natural resources, like water and wildlife habitat.

In 2015, the Texas Legislature moved the Texas Farms & Ranch Lands Conservation Program from the General Land Office to the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and gave the program its first-ever \$2 million appropriation. Overseen by a board representing Texas' landowner community, TFRLCP awarded seven grants to five land trusts (including the Texas Ag Land Trust), who provided additional matching funds that leveraged the state's investment seven times.

The Texas Ag Land Trust will be working during the upcoming legislative session to make the case for a renewed appropriation for the Texas Farm & Ranch Lands Conservation Program. Continued funding is critical to help us conserve Texas' agricultural lands that provide critical benefits – water, food, wildlife habitat – that *all* Texans enjoy.



GRANT AWARDS

- 10,177 acres conserved
- 7 properties, with a market value of \$13.4M, were conserved with \$1.9M in TFRLCP funds
- The state's investment was leveraged 7:1
- 5 of 7 projects also received \$1.286M in federal funds



ACT TODAY!

Ask your legislator to **SUPPORT** increased funding for the Texas Farm & Ranch Lands Conservation Program!

TALT SEEKS LANDOWNERS!

Funding for paid conservation easements is now available through state and federal agencies.

The Texas Farm & Ranch Lands Conservation Program at the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and the Agricultural Land Easement program through the Natural Resource Conservation Service are now receiving applications for paid conservation easements.

Landowners must partner with a land trust, like TALT, who will submit the application.

**DEADLINE TO APPLY TO TALT
February 1, 2017**

Call James Oliver at
(210) 826-0074.

MEET TALT BOARD MEMBER BOB MCCAN

by Lorie Woodward Cantu

The McFaddin family, of which Bob McCan represents the fifth generation, has always seen the value of productive working land.



"We've had a cattle company for almost 140 years," McCan, who manages ranches in Victoria, Bee and Refugio counties under the umbrella of McFaddin Enterprises, said. "We also operate a large-scale recreational hunting enterprise to diversify our ranch income."

Using rotational grazing on native rangeland, the family strikes a balance that meets the needs of both livestock and wildlife, benefiting both.

"Healthy land means a healthy environment which contributes to a healthy bottom line," McCan said.

McCan, who has served as president of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association and the president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, understands the forces that buffet ranching families and can lead to land fragmentation. In 1987, his extended family partitioned the historic McFaddin Ranch. McCan's father and aunt kept their holdings together as an operational unit, he said. The Victoria County property, where they operate today, was purchased in 1878.

"We have been able to keep our portion of the ranch intact and operational since then—and hopefully for many more generations," McCan said. "From a ranching perspective, productive land is the foundation of a sustainable agricultural enterprise. If ranching families can't remain economically viable, then it's likely they will have to sell off a portion of the ranch. Once land is broken up, it generally moves out of agriculture."

While he looks at the land through rancher's eyes, McCan, a lifelong resident of the Coastal Plains, also sees the big picture. The population in his hometown of Victoria has doubled from about 33,000 in 1960 to more than 66,000 in 2015, following the state's growth trends.

"Our Victoria County ranch is near the confluence of the Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers, which are vital water sources for both agriculture and urban areas," McCan said. "We're very concerned about how water will be apportioned in the future."

In addition to supplying agriculture, cities and their attendant industrial uses, the rivers must also retain enough water to provide freshwater to nearby bay systems, which are ecologically and economically essential.

"All of the uses are important," McCan said. "Just as we strike a balance between livestock and wildlife on our ranch, the users are going to have to strike a balance between the demands—and realize how important open space is to our water supply."

NO LAND, NO WATER: HOLLY FARMS

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livestock and hay operation. In 2015, the farm was honored by the Texas Department of Agriculture as a Family Land Heritage property for being in continuous agricultural production for more than 100 years.

“The more open and receptive we keep the land, the more we can utilize rain to sustain the population of Texas,” Rhodenbaugh said.

The lifelong resident of Brazoria has watched the county, which borders Harris County and rapidly growing Houston, transition from sprawling farms and ranches to sub-divisions and strip malls. According to the Texas A&M Institute of Natural Resources, the Greater Houston/Coastal Bend area, of which Brazoria County is a part, has undergone some of the highest land fragmentation rates in the state.

“Water is something we need to pay attention to,” Rhodenbaugh said.

When Rhodenbaugh served as a Brazoria County Commissioner water for the future was one of her priorities. The rapidly growing county has already begun experiencing depleted supplies. Initially, her efforts got very little attention, but then Texas entered a period of extended drought. The obvious need allowed her to create a task force with representatives from agriculture, industry, environmentalists and municipalities.



“We were able to suggest practical things that would make a difference,” Rhodenbaugh said. “Now, we’re back in a wet season and it’s hard to convince people we need to conserve—and consider the future.”

With her eyes firmly on the future, Rhodenbaugh brings her message of water and land to Texas’ youngest citizens. She regularly speaks to pre-K, kindergarten and first grade classes about the importance of conserving natural resources.

“You have to get them early in their lives to help them understand that conservation is important for all of our lives,” Rhodenbaugh said.

If Rhodenbaugh has her way, Holly Farms will matter to all of Brazoria County’s children. She retained the right to develop an educational facility and envisions an outdoor learning campus where little ones can experience the simple pleasures of picking vegetables in the garden, gathering eggs and running barefoot in the grass.

“If nothing else, I want to conserve this land so children can experience open space,” Rhodenbaugh said. “Kids need room to run and play—and too many of them won’t ever have the chance if we don’t conserve the land we have.”

She chose TALT to hold the easement because “an ag-friendly land trust was the best solution for me.” Her family has embraced the notion.

“This is not a big project for TALT or big by Texas standards, but I hope it will be example of what can be done on smaller acreages,” Rhodenbaugh said. “It doesn’t have to be 10,000 acres to be important. We’re conserving land—and it all matters.”

COASTAL LAND LEGACY INITIATIVE

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The grant is funding TALT's Coastal Land Legacy Initiative, which began June 1 and will continue until May 31, 2018. The initiative is focused on the Coastal Bend region from Corpus Christi to Houston, including Brazoria, Wharton, Matagorda, Victoria, Jackson, Calhoun, Aransas, Refugio, San Patricio and Nueces counties.

THE COASTAL LAND LEGACY INITIATIVE HAS THREE PRIMARY OBJECTIVES:

- Help private landowners conserve their working lands legacy with a conservation easement;
- Provide information about the benefits of both donated and purchased conservation easements so that landowners can decide which works best for them;
- And, inform opinion leaders and the public about the NEED for conserving working lands and how doing so provides critical public benefits such as clean water, quality food, clean air and wildlife habitat.

Outreach activities will include workshops and presentations with partner organizations that serve landowners, natural resource professionals, local leaders, attorneys, accountants and estate planners.



“There is a strong landowner interest in opportunities to sell a conservation easement. In our outreach effort, we will focus on NRCS's Agricultural Lands Easement Program and TPWD's Texas Farm & Ranch Lands Conservation Program.”

—Ken Cearley, Stewardship Director

For more information about the initiative or to partner with TALT on an outreach project, contact Ken Cearley at (806) 670-6070 or kcearley@txlandagtrust.org.



[Read More txaglandtrust.org](http://ReadMore.txaglandtrust.org)

MISSION

To conserve the Texas heritage of agricultural lands, natural resources and wildlife habitats.

GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

STEWARDSHIP

requires stewards.

Keeping productive rural lands in private hands and under private management is the best way to conserve Texas' natural resources.

FOCUS

only on private lands.

TALT refuses to acquire conservation easements that will end up in public hands or that involve condemnation.

HELP

landowners protect their lands.

TALT does not own fee title to any properties.

TRUST

the landowner to manage.

TALT does not interfere with day-to-day management decisions.

RESPECT

landowners' rights.

The donation of an agricultural conservation easement does not require the landowner to provide public access, nor does TALT require it.

Create A Texas LEGACY



Planned gifts and bequests.

LEAVE A LEGACY

Would you like to leave a legacy for your children or grandchildren? One common tool is a charitable bequest, where an individual names in his or her will the Texas Agricultural Land Trust, or any other charity, as the heir to a portion of one's estate.

Naming the Ag Land Trust in your will allows you to make a significant contribution toward the conservation of Texas' working farms and ranches for future generations, while reducing the impact of estate taxes on your heirs.

If you plan to make a gift through your will, we have language that may be useful to you during your estate planning. For more information, or if you would like to talk with someone about making a planned gift, contact your financial advisor or Dina McIlhenny, Director of Finance, dmcilhenny@txaglandtrust.org, (210) 826-0074.



P.O. Box 6152 San Antonio, TX 78209

2017 EVENTS

TFRLCP Application Submission Deadline

FEBRUARY 1 TALT Office San Antonio

TALT Conservation Easement Workshop

FEBRUARY TBD Columbia Lakes Resort, Brazoria County
*see website for details

Texas Land Trust Council Annual Conference

MARCH 1-3 Austin

Houston Stock Show & Rodeo

MARCH 7-11 TALT booth at Ranching & Wildlife Committee show

Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Assn. Convention

MARCH 31 San Antonio, TALT booth at trade show

Visit txaglandtrust.org/news for more information.