PASSING LAND DOWN:
GENERATIONS ON THE LAND SUMMIT
by Lorie Woodward Cantu

The goal of the Generations on the Land Summit, held in May of this year, was to provoke lively discussion about the future of agriculture and stewardship in Texas.

“We wanted to initiate a conversation about succession—an issue that is pivotal to the future of the industry—and we wanted the discussion to take place outside the ‘echo chamber,’” said Texas Ag Land Trust Director Jesse Womack, who served on the steering committee along with fellow directors Caroleene Hardee Dobson and Norman Garza Jr. “To be most effective, the conversation had to be inclusive and reach beyond the traditional participants and audience of most land-based programming.”

In addition, the steering committee hoped to identify key areas that could serve as bulwarks for consensus-building and to help introduce Texas Ag Land Trust’s work and mission to a new audience.

continued on pg. 6

CONSERVING OUR LAND AND LEGACY:
TOMAHAWK CONSERVATION BANK
by Lorie Woodward Cantu

The Lesser Prairie Chicken and agricultural production will always have a home on the Williams Family Ranch in Yoakum County thanks to the Tomahawk Conservation Bank.

“The conservation bank provided us a unique opportunity,” said Kirk Williams, who along with his siblings and their cousin participated in the project. “By selling our development rights to the conservation bank, we could ensure that the land would never be developed for other purposes, stabilize the habitat, and have money set aside to accomplish our management goals that honor our family’s commitment to leave the land better than we found it.”

continued on pg. 7
Texans are resilient, innovative, persistent, and the grit with which ranchers and farmers approach a challenge is unrivaled.

And they need to be, because challenges loom large: With an aging landowner population, the U.S. will soon face the largest intergenerational transfer of rural lands in history. Rampant development and expanding populations swallow prime ag lands. Never has the divide between urban and rural interests been so pronounced. Most alarming, Texans are increasingly disconnected from the land that fuels our economy, feeds our population, and cleans our air and water.

Families are grappling with succession as Baby Boomers start turning over their lands to their children. Perhaps it’s because I am Mom to three of them, but I am optimistic and confident in the millennial generation. As millennials grow into adulthood, they are bringing new skills, ideas and creativity that could translate into great things for the future of Texas lands.

Millennials respect their parents, seek guidance from them, and thrive in a team environment. Yet, characteristically unconcerned about institutions and norms, millennials are willing to look outside the box for solutions. My opinion: we are on the cusp of exciting developments in how land is passed down from generation to generation as Boomer wisdom merges with millennial innovation to change the face of agriculture for the better.

Our Generations on the Land Summit, held in May of this year, brought together land-owning families, ag professionals, and academia for a conversation about succession, transition and innovation. Young entrepreneurs shared how they transformed their family ranching operations. Millennial members of multi-generation ranching families talked about tackling hard issues like leadership development, governance, and family unity. We learned about unique business models that foster sustainability and profitability. Afterwards, as the audience mingled over cocktails, there was a profound sense of excitement and energy.

At the Texas Ag Land Trust, we believe that by protecting rural lands, we protect culture, history and a way of life for future generations. Watching those millennials on that stage last May, it gave me great hope that the grit and determination that helped create this great state endures in the next generation. It is families working together to create a legacy, like the Williams family profiled in this issue, that will determine the future of Texas.

As we celebrate our 10th Anniversary, we are proud of the partnerships we have forged with such dedicated land stewards, and we can't wait to do more. The future is bright, Texas.

All the best,

Blair Fitzsimons, Chief Executive Officer
bfitzsimons@txaglandtrust.org
THOUGHTS FROM THE BOARD

NORMAN R. GARZA JR.
“Although conservation easements may be foreign to some families, the idea of keeping land intact and in production from generation to generation is not. If I can help educate the younger generation, they can educate the older generations. Together, they can determine if this tool is right for their family.”

CAROLEENE HARDEE DOBSON:
“The Texas Ag Land Trust is dedicated to keeping working lands open by educating landowners about their options. It’s an organization that makes a difference in a way that allows me to use my experiences, passions, and expertise to make a difference, too.”

JESSE WOMACK:
“I was drawn to the Texas Ag Land Trust because I am very passionate about agriculture and it’s future here in Texas. Conservation easements are one tool to help ensure the future of agriculture and maintain open spaces for generations to come. They are also a way to acknowledge the eco-system services that well-managed working lands provide to the general public.”

CHANGING TEXAS

171 MILLION ACRES...

61
AVERAGE AGE OF FARMER/RANCHER IN TEXAS

ONE MILLION ACRES WORKING LAND LOSS SINCE 1997

POPULATION: 26 MILLION....10% IS RURAL, LANDOWNERS ARE <1%

...142 MILLION ACRES PRIVATE WORKING LANDS

5% PUBLIC vs
95% PRIVATE

17% DEVELOPED vs
83% RURAL
FARM BILL ADVOCACY

The Texas Ag Land Trust works closely with state and national groups to advocate for policies that benefit privately-owned working lands. Not only do we work with the national Land Trust Alliance and the Texas Land Trust Council, we are also a member of the Partnership of Rangeland Trusts (PORT), a coalition of Western-states land trusts created by their state cattlemen's associations, and we participate in the ad-hoc Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) Working Group. These groups are advocating for changes to the easement program found in the Farm Bill, known as the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), which provides funding for land trusts to purchase conservation easements on agricultural lands.

With Congress currently working on a new version of the Farm Bill, the Texas Ag Land Trust has participated in several recent briefings, town hall meetings, and Washington DC trips to make policymakers aware of changes that are needed to make the program work better for agricultural producers.

Our top priority is removal of a matching fund requirement whereby a land trust must contribute cash from a non-federal source. With so few sources of conservation funding in Texas, this requirement disqualifies many viable land conservation projects that would help protect the state's valuable agricultural lands.

Please visit our website at www.txaglandtrust.org for the full list of TALT's recommended reforms to ACEP for the 2018 Farm Bill. Then contact your US Representative and Senators to ask for their support! Talking points and sample letters are on the website.

TEXAS CONSERVATION FUNDING DISAPPOINTMENT

In our last newsletter, we reported that HB2943 had passed both chambers of the Texas Legislature and was awaiting Governor Abbot's signature. HB2943 was the culmination of a two-year effort, initiated by the Texas Ag Land Trust and Texas A&M's Natural Resource Institute, to investigate innovative approaches to funding land conservation in Texas. Based on an Ohio model which provides financial incentives for water utilities to sponsor land conservation projects that protect water quality, the program had the potential to yield up to $14M per year.

Unfortunately, the bill was vetoed by the governor. While this is a disappointing setback, we will continue to pursue innovative strategies to support the conservation of Texas' private working lands.

SUPPORT OUR POLICY WORK!

We rely on the generosity of our friends to fund our policy work. If you are interested in supporting the Texas Ag Land Trust in our efforts to develop land conservation programs that work for ag producers, please consider a donation today!
Help the Texas Agricultural Land Trust as we work to protect the rural lands that connect us to that uniquely Texan legacy of rugged independence, unlimited opportunities, and wide open spaces. Together, we can conserve the Texas we love for generations to come.

Naming the Texas Agricultural 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, go to http://plannedgiving.txaglandtrust.org/. 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.
“Our overarching objective was that every participant would come away from the discussion challenged and inspired by the opportunity to impact the future of Texas and the continuity of land, heritage, and culture,” Garza said.

More than 100 people representing a cross section of age groups from inside and outside of agriculture gathered in Austin in late May for the day-long participatory event.

“The summit featured a series of speakers from Texas and beyond, including keynoter Miriam Horn [staff member of the Environmental Defense Fund and author of *Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman: Conservation Heroes of the American Heartland*], who shared their front line experiences and engaged in real-time give-and-take with the audience,” Dobson said. “It was challenging and provocative in the very best sense of those words.”

The take away messages were as varied as the participants and speakers. “I was inspired to learn how people my age were taking on the massive responsibility of land stewardship by either creatively adding to their family’s legacy of production agriculture or writing a new chapter of their own,” Garza said. “People of the land aren’t raised to ‘brag a bit about themselves,’ but perhaps they should because it’s illuminating. The summit was a perfect venue to spur new ideas.”

For Dobson, the summit drove home the importance of dialogue within families as well as the agriculture industry and the urban public. Womack said the program highlighted the importance of nimbleness, flexibility, and creativity in production agriculture.

Regardless of their point of connection, participants indicated the summit was a worthwhile effort.

“We’ve not begun formal planning, but we all agree that the conversation needs to continue—and Generations of the Land was a successful forum for a meaningful discussion,” Womack said.
Conservation banks safeguard threatened and endangered species and their habitat at a free market rate that delivers the greatest financial benefit to private landowners. Credits are established for the specific sensitive species that occur on the site and these credits can be purchased by entities needing to offset damages to habitat that occur in the course of activities such as road and pipeline construction and oil and gas development.

“For three generations, our family has used our land for livestock grazing, which we can continue under the conservation bank’s required conservation easement,” said Williams.

In order to conserve the habitat in perpetuity, the Tomahawk Conservation Bank, which was created by Tomahawk CB, LLC, a joint venture between RiverBank Conservation, LLC and LPC Conservation LLC/Common Ground Capital LLC, enacted a conservation easement with the Texas Ag Land Trust on 1,535 acres of native rangeland.

According to Wayne Walker with LPC Conservation/Common Ground Capital, “When private landowners and private investors are compensated at a free market rate that is superior to the income they receive from the traditional government program activities while meeting the highest conservation standards for rare species, all of the stakeholders win.”

“Texas Ag Land Trust, with its agricultural and conservation background, was a good fit for our private landowner partners,” Walker said.

While the land trust was selected by the conservation bank, the Williams family was comfortable with the choice.

“Texas Ag Land Trust is ag friendly, which sets it apart from many of the other land trusts operating in the state,” William said, noting another land trust functioning in the region had only allowed grazing one time in the seven to eight years it managed a nearby property.

He continued, “For us, the decision to enter into conservation banking and its attendant conservation easement made sense. For many people with rare species, one of the concerns is that ‘someone’ is going to tell you what to do with your land. We now know what we can do with our land—and it’s essentially what we’ve done for generations. If you want the land to stay the way it is and still be a productive unit, this can be a viable option.”
UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit txaglandtrust.org/news for more information.

Texas Farm Bureau Annual Meeting
December 3-4  Frisco

Texas Land Conservation Conference
February 28-March 2  Austin

10th Anniversary Ranch BBQ
March 9  Victoria

Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association Annual Convention
March 23-25  Ft. Worth

Texas Wildlife Association Annual Convention
July 12-15  San Antonio

WISHLIST
From time to time, we have needs that fall outside the budget. Please consider a gift to help us improve our efficiency and impact.

CURRENT NEEDS:
New Database $5,000
Server Upgrade $4,000
New Staff Laptop $1,000

Contact Dina McIlhenny
DMcIlhenny@txaglandtrust.org

HELP US
#SAVETXAGLANDS!
Please use the enclosed envelope to send your support today!

ANNUAL REPORT ONLINE
www.txaglandtrust.org/annual-reports/