

WIMBERLEY VALLEY WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL
REPORT



Photo By Woody Welch
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WVWA's mission is to ensure that communities are aware of their connection and responsibilities to the watershed and are supported in implementing water policies and practices that will ensure ecological sustainability for future generations.

MAKING IMPACTS THAT BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY

WVWA's vision is for a future with clean, plentiful water flowing from Jacob's Well into Cypress Creek, a healthy ecosystem essential to the culture and economy of the Wimberley Valley. Over the past two decades our broader mission has emerged to include fostering community awareness of the watershed and the community's responsibility to its watershed in the Wimberley Valley, across the Hill Country region, and throughout the State of Texas. At the heart of what we do is working to engage communities and provide experiences that reconnect people with nature. This principle runs throughout our six impact areas, which support implementing education, land conservation and water policies to ensure water quality and availability for future generations.

Although the six impact areas overlap and strengthen one another, much of our work in the first three impact areas focuses on protecting natural resources and ecosystems, while the latter three focus more on people and relationships whether among partner organizations or between individuals and special places in nature like Jacob's Well. The land, water, and wildlife may be the initial beneficiaries, but it is the communities who ultimately benefit from these efforts and ensure that they will be successful far into the future. Scientific study underpins watershed protection, environmental planning, and the policies for which we advocate. It also empowers others to practice responsible stewardship and champion the implementation of sound water policies to achieve our core vision. Clean, plentiful water is the lifeblood of every community from which all other benefits flow.

WVWA's vision is to create a greater understanding of the many benefits that flow from a respectful relationship with the land: human health, ecological health, economic sustainability, enriched community life, and the renewal of the human spirit.

WVWA advocates for multiple community benefits: clean water, organic food, eco-tourism, recreation, access to nature, and both ecological and personal health.

IMPACT AREAS

Watershed Protection and Conservation Science

Environmental Planning, Policy, and Advocacy

Land Conservation

Texas Hill Country Conservation Network

Center for Engaged Ecology at Jacob's Well

Education and Outreach

Major Accomplishments in 2017

Watershed Protection and Conservation Science:

- Provided quality assured water quality data from nine sites in Cypress Creek and the Blanco River for the Texas Clean Rivers Program
- Designed education and outreach materials for the Cypress Creek Watershed Protection Plan including resource guides and signage for rainwater harvesting and rain gardens
- Co-sponsored a riparian workshop in Wimberley in partnership with the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment and Texas A & M
- Co-sponsored two rainwater harvesting workshops including a demonstration workshop at the Patsy Glenn Refuge in partnership with the Wimberley Birding Society, the Hays County Master Naturalists, and the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment

Environmental Planning, Policy, and Advocacy:

- Sponsored a planning studio at the UT School of Architecture focused on water neutral development in the Hill Country; prepared the student resources, coordinated and provided guest lectures, and reviewed student work throughout the semester
- For the last two years, WVWA has hosted the Kent Butler Memorial Intern from the University of Texas School of Architecture. The intern for 2017 Daniel Alvarado, conducted research and created a low impact development report for the Wimberley Valley in preparation for the water neutral UT planning studio

Land Conservation:

- Presented to City Council and successfully entered an informal agreement with the City of Wimberley for Preservers and partner organizations to assist with management of the Cypress Creek Nature Preserve and restoration projects.



Ubiquity University

Formed a Cypress Creek Nature Preserve Steering Committee with representatives from partner organizations, as well as an advisory board with local representation

- Completed first phase of riparian restoration at the Cypress Creek Nature Preserve and awarded \$2,000 from Keep Wimberley Beautiful for second phase

Texas Hill Country Conservation Network:

- Wrote the RFP for the strategic planning and organizational development of the Hill Country Conservation Network and hosted a Network Steering Committee meeting at Jacob's Well with more than 20 conservation groups in attendance
- Researched collaborative network models and strategies and presented to the Hill Country Network Steering Committee

Center for Engaged Ecology at Jacob's Well:

- Developed mission, vision, and values with Dr. Vince Lopes, Texas State University, and Dr. Will Taegel, Wisdom School of Graduate Studies at

Education and Outreach:

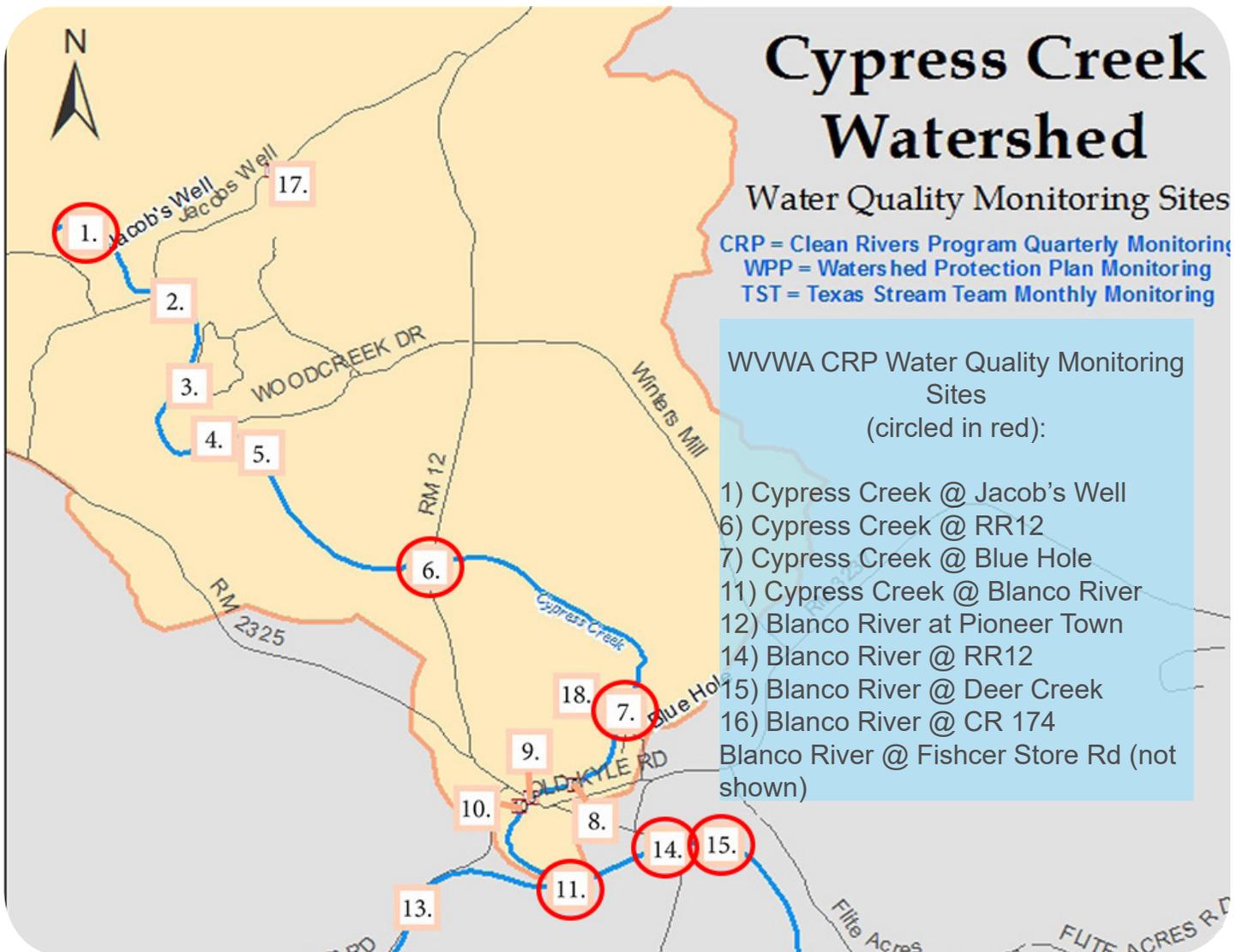
- Hosted an international conference on new paradigms for living in harmony with nature in partnership with the Wisdom School of Graduate Studies at Ubiquity University
- Hosted the eco-philosophy Meetup group from Texas State University for a workshop and tour of Jacob's Well
- Launched a new WVWA social media platform for community outreach via Salsa Labs
- Coordinated a CHARM (Community Hazard and Resource Management) workshop to demonstrate the capability of this interactive planning tool for watershed protection efforts



Watershed Protection and Conservation Science

The CCWPP is a collaborative approach involving the cities, county, civic organizations, and citizens of the Wimberley Valley. The community-led and EPA accepted Watershed Protection Plan is an important tool used to help guide efforts to effectively manage the Cypress Creek Watershed by utilizing best management practices (BMPs) designed to mitigate nonpoint source pollution, anticipate future water quality impairments, and protect groundwater resources."The WVWA continues to serve on the executive committee and is partnering with the [Meadows Center for Water and the Environment](#) to support CCWPP education and outreach activities.

The WVWA contributes to newsletter and [website](#) content, rain garden and rainwater harvesting resource guides, and educational signage that provides the community with best practices for protecting our water backed by scientific data. Workshops and [Best Management Practice \(BMP\)](#) demonstrations bring people together with experts for active land-based education. This year, WVWA is planning to implement several BMPs outlined in the Watershed Protection Plan at Jacob's Well including rain gardens and rainwater harvesting. These BMPs will be the first of many to be integrated into the Center for Engaged Ecology at Jacob's Well, a demonstration site for watershed residents as well as international visitors to the Texas Hill Country.



WVWA is the only nonprofit organization in the State of Texas collecting quality assured water quality data used to assess whether surface water in the Blanco River and Cypress Creek is meeting Federal Clean Water Act standards and will continue to participate in partnership with the **Guadalupe Blanco River Authority** and the **Texas Clean Rivers Program**. Recognizing that the water quality data is difficult to interpret, a water quality dashboard has been established at <http://www.cypresscreekproject.net/main-water-quality/>. WVWA staff is working to translate this dense data into relatable content that will tell the story of the watershed's health over the last several years. Educating the public about the scientific data and how it affects our everyday lives encourages community ownership of the Watershed Protection Plan and the longevity of the practices and protections it advances.



Photo: **Wimberley Institute of Cultures**

Find a snapshot of the Water Quality Dashboard from the Cypress Creek Project Web Site: <http://www.cypresscreekproject.net/main-water-quality/>



Healthy Lawns And Healthy Waters Workshop



In October 2017, a rainwater harvesting and turf grass workshop entitled “Healthy Lawns and Healthy Waters” was provided by the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service at the Wimberley Community Center in partnership with the Cypress Creek Watershed Protection Plan (CCWPP), the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. More than 30 people attended from around the Hill Country.

The workshop focused on rainwater harvesting design and installation in addition to locally successful turf and landscaping species including management practices with an emphasis on turf grass. John Smith, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Program Specialist, provided the rainwater harvesting presentation that included information about water conservation and rainwater collection capacity, components, gutters and filters and aesthetics. He also stated that,

60 – 70% of residential water use occurs outdoors; this means that using rainwater harvesting to irrigate the landscape can help conserve increasingly scarce groundwater by reducing demand.

Although rainwater harvesting may also be used to supply potable water for indoor uses, the focus of John’s pre-

sentation was on rainwater harvesting for landscape irrigation, including plumbing, an overview of first flush devices, supporting large rainwater harvesting tanks, and examples of a wide variety of storage tanks. One item of keen interest to many attend-ees was Senate Bill 198, passed in 2013, which made it illegal for homeowner’s associations in Texas to prohibit the following: installing rain barrels or a rainwater harvesting system (although they can require screening or shielding to obscure the view of tanks); using drought resistant landscaping or water-conserving natural turf (such as Buffalo Grass); composting of vegetation; installing underground drip irrigation.

Reagan Hejl, PhD, Research Associate, Texas A&M Agrilife Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, provided an additional session, “Healthy Lawns,” which included choosing climate and soil appropriate turf and landscaping species for local conditions, the importance of soil testing, and improving irrigation efficiency and effectiveness. Reagan emphasized the benefits of turf grass lawns by pointing out that they reduce soil erosion, stabilize dust, enhance groundwater recharge, improve surface water quality, sequester CO₂, and both dissipate heat and moderate temperature.

The Healthy Lawns and Healthy Waters Program aims to improve and protect surface water quality by enhancing awareness and knowledge of best management practices. For more information, please visit the [Texas A&M Healthy Lawns and Healthy Waters website](#).



RWH System of the Cypress Creek

Last October, the Wimberley Birding Society, and the Hays County Master Naturalists partnered with the WVWA and Meadows Center for Water and the Environment to sponsor a rainwater harvesting demonstration workshop at the Patsy Glenn Refuge in Wimberley. This demonstration workshop also marked the installation of the first of many best management practices (BMPs) for the *Cypress Creek Watershed Protection Plan (CCWPP)*.

The community workshop introduced the *Cypress Creek Watershed Protection Plan* and rainwater harvesting as a critical watershed protection Best Management Practice (BMP) since it protects the local aquifer by reducing groundwater demand. Handouts were distributed including *CCWPP Rainwater Harvesting Resource Guides* as well as documents that included a sketch of the collection structure and system, materials list, and rainwater harvesting calculations, all of which will be available on the Cypress Creek Project website. (www.cypresscreekproject.net)

The Wimberley Birding Society, which created the Patsy Glenn Refuge, recognizes the importance of protecting the aquifer while also developing the landscape of the natural area. Earlier this year, they decided to replace the aquifer supplied irrigation system for the butterfly garden with a rainwater harvesting system to eliminate demand on the aquifer. This rainwater

collection structure and harvesting system was designed and installed to achieve this goal.

This rainwater collection structure and harvesting system was designed to blend in with the natural surroundings and achieves the goal of reducing water demands on the aquifer during the driest months from April through October while keeping the plants in bloom. The rainwater structure was built by Jim McMeans and Larry Calvert who were part of a group of dedicated volunteers from the Wimberley Birding Society and the Hays County Master Naturalists.

The three 500-gallon plastic tanks connected in tandem can store up to 1500 gallons at a time. If future monthly rainfall amounts match historical averages, this system can provide up to 800 gallons of irrigation water per month from April through October, assuming that the tanks are full at the end of the winter.

Special thanks to Jim McMeans, Larry Calvert, the Wimberley Birding Society, Hays County Master Naturalists, Wimberley Valley Watershed, Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, Michael Gatto, and Bob Currie for making this community event possible. (Much of the information for this article was provided by Bob Currie).

Environmental Planning, Policy and Advocacy

With the ruling in favor of the developers, the long-running case of WVWA et al vs. HTGCD and WSP over the golf course irrigation permit in the recharge zone adjacent to Jacob's Well has ended after six years of litigation. The WVWA has focused for years on defending the sustained spring flows from the Trinity Aquifer to Jacob's Well and Cypress Creek. In addition to responding to local and regional environmental threats, the WVWA is concentrating our current protection efforts on promoting sustainable groundwater management policy and low impact development strategies in the critical recharge zones.



water quality data and opposed privatization of local wastewater treatment at a packed **Citizens Alliance for Responsible Development** meeting of over 500 residents regarding the Wimberley Wastewater Plan.

Recognizing the constant and ongoing threats require an organization helmed by legal experts dedicated solely to such efforts, WVWA worked with local landowners to form **Trinity Edwards Springs Protection Association (TESPA)** in response to the **Electro Purification** and **Need-more Ranch** groundwater pumping proposals. WVWA continues to support TESPA in mounting important environmental legal challenges that threaten springs and the regional water supply.

The Watershed Association continues to work with partner organizations to develop policies and advocate for more effective water and land conservation and land use regulation. WVWA continued research on effective Groundwater Management Zone policy and plan to forward a public process to establish a management zone for Jacob's Well in 2018.

Because legislative advocacy is always a top priority, WVWA expanded its impact in 2017 through supporting partner organizations **TESPA**, **Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance**, and **The Sierra Club**, by issuing public statements as well as legislative spotlights and calls to action to our supporters. We also participated in Water Warriors legislative planning and briefing meetings and monitored water and environmental legislation including over 250 bills in the 2017 session on topics ranging from Municipal Utility Districts, groundwater, eminent domain, parks funding, local control, overturning of municipal tree ordinances and wastewater regulation. At the local level, WVWA presented

Our summer Kent Butler Memorial Intern from the **University of Texas School of Architecture** prepared a low impact design manual tailored to the Wimberley Valley for use in a UT planning studio course focused on water neutral residential development strategies exclusively using rainwater harvesting and decentralized wastewater reuse infrastructure. These projects represent proactive ways of articulating what we are for rather than only fighting what we are against, a more effective strategy for rallying public support and cooperative engagement with developers for policies and practices that will secure sustainable water supply and ensure aquifer protection.



UTSOA Fall 2017 Physical Planning Studio students and faculty at the Jacob's Well Community Garden

UT School of Architecture Planning Studio at Jacob's Well

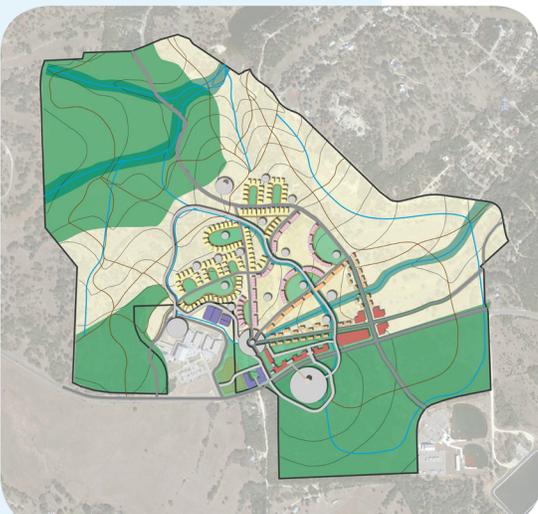
WVWA sponsored a University of Texas School of Architecture (UTSOA) planning studio to develop a master plan for the development of a 323 acre site adjacent to Jacob's Well to serve as a model for the Cypress Creek Watershed and the surrounding Texas Hill Country. Along with Kent Butler Intern, Daniel Alvarado, WVWA staff helped to design the curriculum, the resource library, and the guest lecture series for the studio, which called for the development of an ultra-low impact high density "Hill Country Urbanism" as an alternative to conventional suburban-sprawl type development in the Hill Country.

WVWA staff also guest lectured and reviewed the students' work throughout the semester. Since the proposed site is within the

Jacob's Well spring-shed, the students were challenged to achieve net-zero water performance as a stretch goal. Other aspects of the students' scope of work include:

1. 250- 500 units of housing – single-family, multi-family, town-home
2. Energy and water efficient commercial/retail space including live/work spaces
3. Walkable mixed-use town-center, village, or hamlet with green streets
4. Community Space including meeting space and non-profit office space
5. Affordable housing and community land trust
6. Climate appropriate agricultural production (micro-farm, permaculture) and gardens
7. Open space network with parkland, trails and diverse natural habitats that promote clean and abundant aquifer recharge

Below: one of three of the student developed masterplans.





Land Conservation

WVWA's land conservation program is a combination of science, policy, and education. Protecting the 96 acres of land surrounding Jacob's Well with conservation easements designed to restore and protect the conservation values of the land in perpetuity means more than just saving the spring. By transferring the **Jacob's Well Natural Area** to Hays County, we have created new opportunities for public recreational access paired with experiential learning about water and the environment.

WVWA continues efforts to strategically conserve land in critical recharge areas and threatened habitats. WVWA has completed appraisals, conducted a warbler survey and met with local landowners, elected officials and the **Texas Nature Conservancy** to discuss conservation and funding options for properties adjacent to the Jacob's Well Natural Area. The Association also monitors three conservation easements on properties in the Wimberley Valley and actively stewards WVWA's property adjacent to Jacob's Well. Land conservation is central to achieving the mission of sustaining spring flow and healthy economy of the Wimberley Valley.

Along with the newly formed Cypress Creek Nature Preservers and the City of Wimberley, the WVWA facilitated improvements to the Cypress Creek Nature Preserve to develop

short-term mitigation of conservation easement violations and began developing a long-term management and stewardship plan. After presenting to City Council and entering into an informal agreement with the City of Wimberley to allow the Preservers and partner organizations to assist with management of the Nature Preserve. Initial restoration efforts to design and install informational signage and barriers to allow damaged areas to recover proved successful.



Moving forward, the Preservers and WVWA are working closely with the Parks Director and City staff to coordinate further restoration, education, and enforcement of easement regulations. Protecting these lands, raising awareness about local ecosystems, and engaging the community in stewardship efforts work together to maximize impact in this area.



In 2002, The City of Wimberley acquired The Cypress Creek Nature Preserve—7.24 acres of land along Cypress Creek stretching from just east of Wimberley Square to the southwestern edge of Blue Hole Regional Park. Termed a remnant property, the land has never been farmed or developed, so it offers visitors the opportunity to experience a pristine riparian ecosystem in which a wide variety of plants and wildlife thrive in their natural state. The Wimberley Valley Watershed Association holds a conservation easement on the property designed to protect this beautiful piece of undisturbed creekside forest in the heart of Wimberley.

The preserve demonstrates the importance of riparian habitat protection and the benefits of healthy riparian systems. The majestic cypress, oak, pecan, and walnut trees that line the creek supply cooling shade, food base, and high quality habitat for the abundant wildlife. With a higher biodiversity than upland ecosystems, healthy riparian environments can provide more robust protection from invasive species. This stronger ecosystem also protects water quality by filtering debris and nutrients as well as maintaining constant levels of dissolved oxygen adequate to support fish and other creatures in the creek.

Further, such ample native vegetation creates resilient stream banks, which lessen the impacts and frequency of floods. They also ensure longer lasting and less variable baseflow between flood events. These stabilized banks guard against erosion protecting water quality, aesthetic beauty, ownership boundaries, and property val-

ues. Healthy riparian ecosystems like the Cypress Creek Nature Preserve serve the community by safeguarding natural resources, public health, and the local economy.

Over the past several years, increasing foot traffic and violation of easement rules in the Nature Preserve have caused the type of erosion described above. Perhaps unaware of the preserve's strict limits or the extent of the harm that off-trail activities can inflict, visitors have created an informal creekside trail punctuated by popular creek access points, significantly damaging the creek bank and hindering the ability of the riparian habitat to function as nature intended.

Recognizing the risk of losing this wild treasure in the heart of the village, a group of local citizens is teaming up with Wimberley Valley Watershed Association to form the Cypress Creek Nature Preservers. In collaboration with the City of Wimberley, Wimberley Birding Society, Hays County Master Naturalists, Keep Wimberley Beautiful, and local educators and youth organizations, the Nature Preservers are rallying local volunteers to work on riparian restoration, trail maintenance, and more informative public outreach and education to protect the preserve for years to come. Involving a wide variety of partner organizations and community members of all ages will help cultivate future stewards to carry forward a culture of respect for nature. The Nature Preserve presents the valley with a great opportunity to highlight what makes Wimberley one-of-a-kind.

THCCN

TEXAS HILL COUNTRY CONSERVATION NETWORK

In order to promote resilience in the eighteen-county region, the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network (THCCN), a group of more than 150 NGOs, businesses, universities, and government agencies are collaborating to scale up the impact of conservation focused initiatives to protect the natural resources and rural heritage and quality of life in the Texas Hill Country.

Building on the WVWA commissioned report “[Hill Country Conservation: Identifying a Narrative and a Network for Large-scale Collaborative Conservation](#),” the Network Steering Committee continues to assemble a regional conservation community to confront problems stemming from the wide scope of unmanaged growth in this sensitive region. While the breadth and depth of expertise in the partner organizations involved holds great value, the THCCN is as much about cultivating relationships to exchange ideas, build trust, share resources and increase our power to solve problems.

In partnership with [Hill Country Alliance](#), WVWA success-fully convened an expanded core group of organizations to fund and actively participate in the development of the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network Strategic

Plan. The plan is now near completion; WVWA



will assist in implementation of the plan with the [Hill Country Alliance](#) and the other THCCN steering committee members, including [The Nature Conservancy](#) and the [Sierra Club](#).

Growing the Network will allow us to work

across boundaries and agencies to harness the necessary professional diversity to meet key economic, social, and environmental objectives at a regional scale. Even though this regional initiative may seem an ambitious departure from our local focus, the rapid pace of population growth and development in our region dictates that we expand our efforts to align with regional partners to meet the challenges that threaten the environmental and economic health of the Texas Hill Country.





Regional Conservation Partnership Program

Regional Conservation Partnership Program Award

One of the THCCN's first major collaborative efforts resulted in an award of over five million dollars from NRCS for land conservation and stewardship in the Hill Country. The Hill Country Conservancy, Hill Country Alliance, The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, Texas Tech Llano River Field Station, and WVWA staff co-wrote and submitted the grant proposal in the fall of 2017.

The Hill Country region in the heart of Texas faces extreme drought and extreme flooding with increasing intensity and frequency. Climate change, compounded by development pressures and ecological vulnerability, threaten permanent damage to the region's rich natural resources, including water quality degradation and wildlife habitat loss. Like much of the rest of Texas, 95 percent of the Hill Country is privately owned; yet another conservation challenge.

This project seeks to implement a replicable model for people and nature to thrive through thoughtful growth. Partners will use a combination of Environmental Quality Incentives Program,

Conservation Stewardship Program, and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program funds to address the resource concerns innovatively by carefully vetting individual projects proposed through a structured application process.

Hill Country Headwaters Conservation Initiative

Proposed NRCS Investment:

\$5,150,000 (National)

Lead Partner: Hill Country Conservancy

Number of Initial Partners: 19 Participating

States: Texas (Lead State)

2017 TEXAS HILL COUNTRY NETWORK HIGHLIGHTS

- Wrote the Request For Proposals for the strategic planning and organizational development of the Hill Country Conservation Network and hosted a Network meeting at Jacob's Well with more than 20 partner organizations in attendance
- Researched collaborative network models and strategies and presented to the Hill Country Network Steering Committee
- WVWA staff, board and THCCN partners from HCA and The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment attended two day facilitator training: Leading Collaboration: Design & Facilitate Meetings that Get Results to increase our capacity to facilitate network and community meetings
- In partnership with the THCCN steering committee, WVWA secured commitments for \$50,000 in contributions from Texas Hill Country Network Steering Committee organizations to fund strategic planning and organizational development
- A coalition of 19 organizations in THCCN was awarded a Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant for 5.2 million dollars to fund private land stewardship best management practices and land conservation across the Guadalupe and Colorado River Basins in the Hill Country



The Center for Engaged Ecology at Jacob's Well

The Center for Engaged Ecology at Jacob's Well promotes environmental practices that restore and sustain watersheds for ecosystem and community health. The Center is integral to the long-term stewardship of Jacob's Well by providing an open venue to inspire, influence and educate the local community and visitors to the Texas Hill Country region.

Our unique setting adjacent to the Jacob's Well Natural Area affords us the opportunity to reach thousands of guests who travel here from all over the world annually. Engaging visitors at the site fosters stewardship through ecological literacy and demonstration of sustainable living and design practices.

The Center also includes the Jacob's Well Community Garden Project, located on the WVWA property at Logan's Run, where sixteen active gardeners from the local community grow organic produce not only for their families but also those in need.

Perhaps most importantly, the Center for Engaged Ecology is intended to provide personal experiences designed to connect people to the natural environment. The programs at the Center aim to enhance human appreciation of the interconnectedness of all living systems. By bringing awareness to the intrinsic connection between nature and people, we seek to inspire stewardship and expand the impact of conservation beyond the measures of acres protected and economic impacts to the measure of social and individual wellbeing. One of our most localized impact areas in terms of scale, the JW-CEE has the greatest potential to reach a global audience.

2017 HIGHLIGHTS

- Conducted bi-weekly planning meetings to establish Engaged Ecology Programming
- Hosted the Eco-Philosophy Meetup group from Texas State University
- Hosted the Co-Creating a New Civilization Conference in partnership with Ubiquity University for participants attending from throughout the US, Germany, England and Australia
- Hosted the Wimberley Earth Tribe gathering to share indigenous practices
- The Jacob's Well Community Garden produced and delivered 370 pounds of vegetables and herbs from the Community Garden to [Crisis Breadbasket](#) in 2017



Jacob's Well Community Garden Annual Report: 2017

It has been a busy year for Jacob's Well Community Garden! We have a total of 27 raised garden beds. The 24 community beds are all currently rented as of January 2018. We've also erected 3 new beds, dedicated to growing produce for Crisis Breadbasket, all of which are planted and producing.

In April of 2017, we applied for and received a grant from Keep Wimberley Beautiful in the amount of approximately \$850.00. We used this grant money to build and plant all 3 new beds for Crisis Breadbasket, and to develop a new three-unit compost bin. Since then, we produced, harvested, and delivered over 370 pounds of vegetables and herbs to Crisis Breadbasket. We expect to deliver even more in 2018. Our gardeners supply all volunteer

labor, an estimated 475 hours in 2017.

We rent community beds for \$20.00 per bed for six months. All proceeds are used for the improvements to the garden. We use them to purchase soils, organic fertilizers, organic pest control and weed control products, and tools and hoses for the use of our gardeners. We also buy plants and seeds for use by our gardeners on an as-needed basis. We recycle aluminum cans—2 truckloads this year—and use those funds for the same purpose.

We have recently entered into an agreement with Indigo Brew coffee shop in Wimberley to pick up all coffee grounds, tealeaves and fruit/vegetable residue for use in our compost bins. We also maintain the perime-

ter of the garden, planting wildflowers annually to attract bees and to further beautify the space allocated for our use.

We are so very lucky to have this facility to practice our hobby and our craft, and we are very thankful to Wimberley Watershed for carving out a space and providing it to us to use!

Content provided by Dave Boyd, JWCG Coordinator





Education and Outreach

Education is central to our mission and is a fundamental element of all our goals and objectives across all of our impact areas. Through our research we conducted to establish the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network we found that eighty percent of the 155 organizations surveyed cited education and outreach as their top priority. WVWA collaborates with partner organizations and volunteer groups including the Friends of Jacob's Well, the Jacob's Well Interpretive Guides, Restoration Rangers, and Master Naturalists to provide education, restoration and stewardship of the **Jacob's Well Natural Area**.

In cooperation with **Hays County Parks Department**, these groups provide weekly public tours for youth and adults, maintain trails, and restore the native habitat at the Hays County Jacob's Well Natural Area. Additional education and public outreach programs will be developed in conjunction with The Center for Engaged Ecology in 2018.

With partners from across the region, WVWA has planned a **series of art events** celebrating

the great springs of Central Texas – San Antonio Springs, San Felipe Springs, Comal Springs, San Marcos Springs, Barton Springs and Jacob's Well. WVWA will host an Art & Music weekend event at Jacob's Well in April of 2018 as part of this project.

Our collaboration with area universities include lectures to Vince Lopes' and Andy Sansom's graduate classes at **Texas State University**, presentations to the **UT School of Architecture** and semester-long low impact development planning studio, and participation on a panel at **San Antonio College's Eco Centro Environmental Education Center**. WVWA also sponsors educational events such as the **Biannual Kent Butler Summit** taking place this year April.

In addition to classroom and nature-based experiential education, outreach to our supporters and the general public is a key part of our mission. Monthly newsletters that connect people to local conservation initiatives, development of a dynamic social media presence, and providing articles to the local media are a growing part of our effort to tell the stories

2017 HIGHLIGHTS

- Disseminated monthly newsletters to over 1200 members and posted weekly articles to WVWA website social media.

- Collaborated with Master Naturalists to develop plan for JWNA tours and nature center and Interpretive Guide Program

- Gave a presentation at University of Texas Law School on WVWA impact areas and the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network

- David Baker lectured to Andy Sansom's Conservation Leadership Class at Texas State

- David Baker, Vince Lopes and Will Taegel made a presentation on engaged ecology as part of the "The Value of Water" lecture series at the Eco Centro Environmental Center in San Antonio

Master Naturalists Volunteer Work at The Jacob's Well Natural Area

encouraged to help care for this beautiful place in their own back yard.



that inspire people to engage in water and land conservation and the deeper relationship with their community and watershed. Like the pristine water flowing from springs across the region to form deep connections throughout the Hill Country, Education and Outreach flow through our impact areas and connect our organization the larger communities to which we all belong.

Thanks to Master naturalists' volunteers and County staff, Jacob's Well Natural Area saw many improvements this year both in the Jacob's Well Nature Center (JWNC) and surrounding area making for a much richer experience for the visitors. The Center has been painted and refreshed with new photos and exhibits including an enhanced fossil collection and a continuously playing video showing features and conditions within the well.

The Restoration Rangers and staff have cleaned out

the landscaping around the building, refurbished the keyhole garden, and installed a rain garden that absorbs overflow from the rainwater harvesting cisterns. These features assist the Jacob's Well Interpretive

Guides (JWIGs) with interpretation of the site and demonstration of water conservation techniques. Without the Nature Center, displays, videos and enthusiastic volunteers, many visitors would miss the stories



about Jacob's Well and its importance to the Wimberley Valley and beyond.

Visitors to Jacob's Well come from all parts of the globe, but few local residents take advantage of the tours. Efforts are underway to encourage the people who live in the area to come use this space and learn about their water source in hopes they will be

As a result of volunteer and staff efforts, the Jacob's Well Nature Center opened its doors to visitors on Saturdays and Sundays for the first time during the busy summer season.

The JWIGs offer tours each Saturday at 9:00 am, lasting approximately one hour, from September through May. Additionally, special tours are available with advance notice, for groups such as the Sierra Club and Lions International Exchange students. Eight dedicated Guides hosted 100 youth and 233 adults, reporting 130 hours of time to the Texas Master Naturalist program.

From September through May, the center is open on Saturdays 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. Volunteers are needed for the Saturday shifts and can contact Suzanne Davis (suzdavis73@gmail.com) or the staff at JW Natural Area. The 2018 summer shift will resume on Saturdays and Sundays during the summer swimming season from May to September.



Operations & Administration

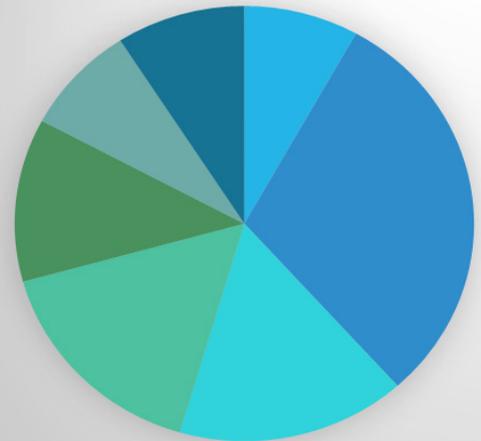
In 2017, WVWA hired Doug Norman as the Communications and Community Planning Coordinator to enhance community awareness and engagement in WVWA programming. WVWA was also the recipient of the Kent Butler Memorial Internship for the second consecutive year. The 2017 Intern, Daniel Alvarado, conducted critical research and created a low impact development report for WVWA in preparation for the water neutral University of Texas School of Architecture Planning Studio.

WVWA raised \$379,326 in 2017 to support the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network, Watershed Protection and Conservation Science, Environmental Planning, Policy and Advocacy, Land Conservation, The Center for Engaged Ecology, and Education and Outreach.

WVWA continued to monitor our currently held conservation easement lands, including the Cypress Creek Nature Preserve on the Wimberley Square. WVWA also laid the groundwork for a land conservation initiative to preserve additional land in the Jacob's Well recharge zone.

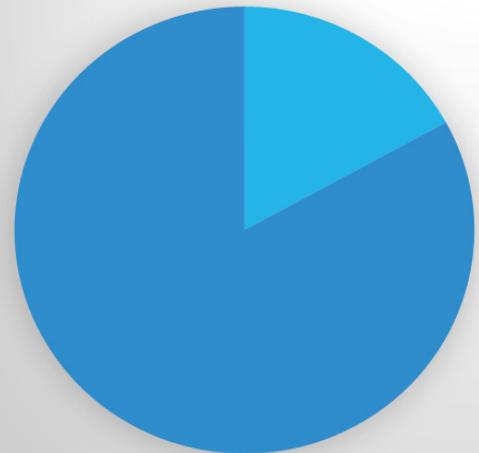
WVWA would like to thank all of our generous donors who have supported our work in 2017. A special thank you to The Harry L Willett Foundation, The Burdine Johnson Foundation, Michael & Pam Reese and The Reese Foundation, Laughlin-Beers Foundation, Jennifer Clark, Peter & Mary Faye Way, The University of Texas at Austin, The Greater Houston Community Foundation, Save Barton Creek Association, Hixon Family Foundation, and Malcolm Harris.

2017 Cost Allocation

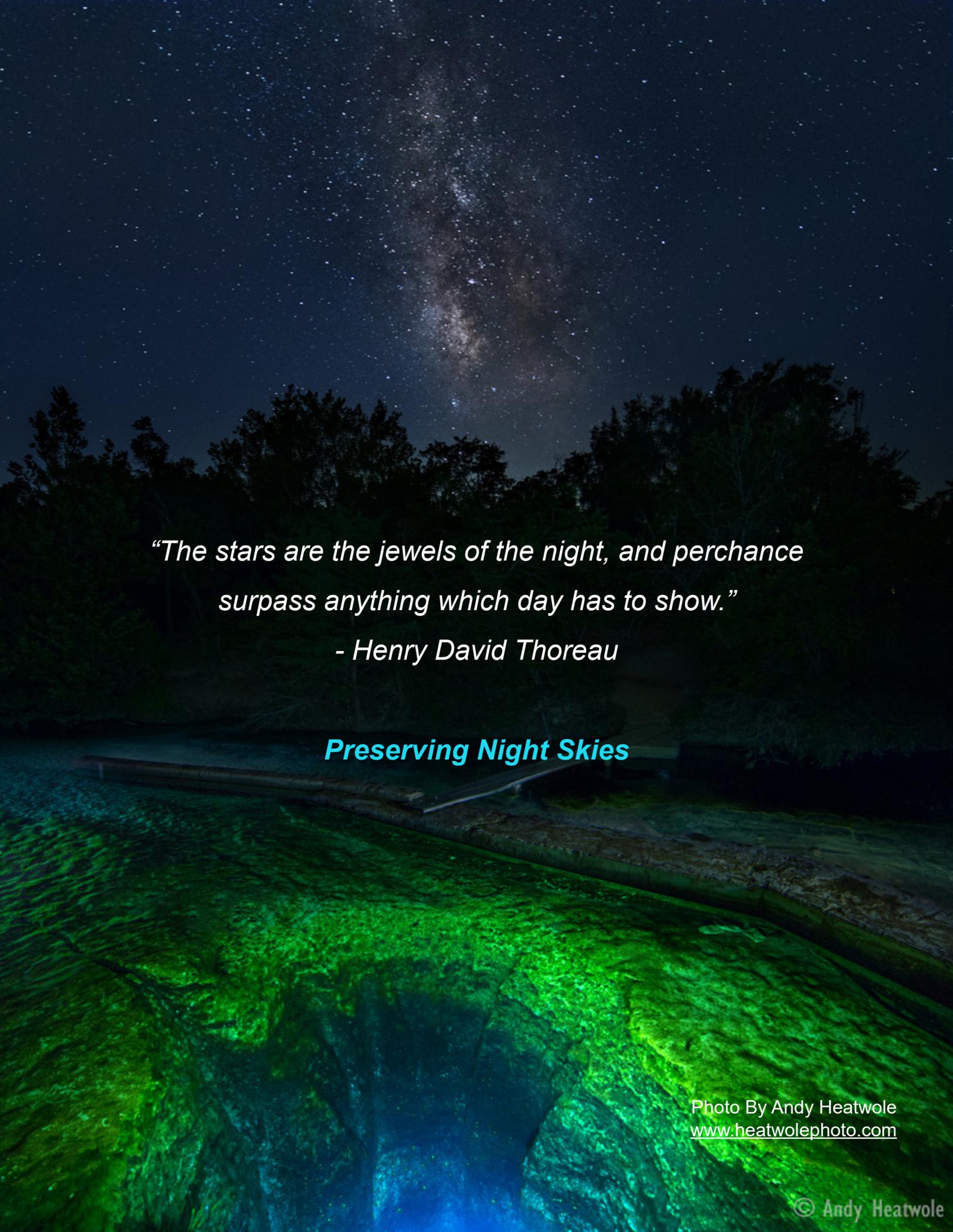


- Land Conservation 8%
- Education & Outreach 30%
- Environmental Planning, Policy, & Advocacy 16%
- Watershed Protection & Conservation Science 16%
- Texas Hill Country Conservation Network 12%
- Operations 8%
- Fundraising 9%

2017 Overhead & Programs Costs



- Fundraising & Operations 17%
- Impact Area Programs 83%

The image is a composite. The top half shows a clear night sky with the Milky Way galaxy stretching across it. Below the sky is a dark silhouette of a forest. The bottom half of the image shows a waterfall illuminated with a vibrant green light, creating a glowing effect on the water and the surrounding rocks. The overall scene is a blend of natural beauty and artificial lighting.

*“The stars are the jewels of the night, and perchance
surpass anything which day has to show.”*

- Henry David Thoreau

Preserving Night Skies

Photo By Andy Heatwole
www.heatwolephoto.com

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Looking Ahead: 2018 Goals

WVWA staff is looking forward to a productive and fulfilling 2018 by focusing our efforts on achieving the goals below.

Watershed Protection and Conservation Science

WVWA will continue to monitor water quality at nine Clean Rivers Program sites on Cypress Creek and the Blanco River while pursuing specific watershed protection and conservation science goals including:

1. Design and deliver two low impact development workshops for the CCWPP stakeholder committee
2. Install one rainwater harvesting system and one rain garden on WVWA properties (as BMPs for the CCWPP)
3. Fund the next phase of the endangered species study for Jacob's Well and Cypress Creek and host a public lecture on the initial study

Environmental Planning, Policy and Advocacy

We will continue to support TESPAs to meet legal challenges and advocate for sensible water laws at the state legislature. Our top priority in this impact area is to establish the Jacob's Well Groundwater Management Zone through a public process with HTGCD, and:

1. Engage Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension planners to produce GIS-based development scenarios for proposed development adjacent to Jacob's Well to demonstrate the impact of a "business as usual" full build out and the advantages of Low Impact and Water Neutral Development alternatives
2. Provide technological and communications support to partner organizations for a regional #NoDrippingSewage campaign to ban wastewater discharge permits in the Hill Country



Land Conservation

We will develop a comprehensive land conservation plan to protect 300 more acres in the Jacob's Well recharge zone, including funding proposals for Regional Conservation Partnership Program funds and a potential future open space bond initiative; additional goals are:

1. Engage with private landowners in the Jacob's Well Spring-shed in regional conservation plans and goal setting
2. Implement second phase of Cypress Creek Nature Preserve restoration including trail improvements, kiosk restoration, and educational signage

Texas Hill Country Conservation Network

1. Scale permanent land conservation and stewardship practices and shape sustainable development practices



2. Ensure adequate spring and river flows for human and ecological systems
3. Protect the water quality in Hill Country creeks, waterways, and aquifers from contamination by wastewater and run-off
4. Grow awareness and support for Hill Country conservation among public and multiple levels of government
5. Scale Up investment in Hill Country conservation

Center for Engaged Ecology at Jacob's Well

WVWA will continue to develop Engaged Ecology programs and Low Impact Development site master plan.

1. Complete Phase 2 improvements to WVWA properties to build capacity to host future events and plan the second Engaged Ecology conference in early 2019
2. Expand JW Community Garden rainwater harvesting system and install solar pumps
3. To develop sustainable site plan designs for WVWA properties utilizing "One Water" and low

impact development principles

4. Host two farm to table community events
5. Establish Engaged Ecology for youth in the Wimberley Valley

Education and Outreach

We will continue to engage the local community in watershed awareness by hosting educational and social events, including:

1. Produce Texas Art of the Sacred Springs show in Wimberley
2. Co-produce summer youth programs with the Amala Foundation and other partners
3. Host a workshop on the Story of Place to establish a shared vision for the future of the Wimberley Valley
4. Develop educational programming in support of other impact areas such as Watershed Protection and Land Conservation
5. Assist in the development of an informal Interpretive Education Program at Jacob's Well
6. Establish the Children in Nature Program with community partners

Many thanks for the leadership and ongoing
stewardship of Jacob's Well and Our
Hill Country land, water and communities.

Donate to WVWA

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Texas Hill Country Conservation Network

Brooke Leftwich and the Hays County

Parks Department

Jacob's Well Natural Area Staff

Jacob's Well Interpretive Guides

Hays County Master Naturalist

Restoration Rangers

Greg Tatum and the Jacob's Well

Exploration Project

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