



THE
WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION
LAND · WATER · CONNECTION

A non-profit organization located in the heart of the Texas Hill Country, born out of a love for water.

Protect Texas Water

Image by Eric Schlagel



Land Conservation



**Regenerative Connection
& Education**



**Watershed Protection
& Conservation Science**



Art4Water



**Policy, Advocacy,
& Environmental Planning**



Get Involved



Land Conservation

Image by Jonathan Ogren

'We Conserve Land to Protect Water.'

The Watershed Association is a regional land trust serving Central Texas and is a proud member of the Texas Land Trust Council. The Watershed Association has worked over the past 26 years to assemble and reunite the land directly surrounding Jacob's Well into a single ownership for the first time since the 1800s. The land had been subdivided into hundreds of parcels for development and was finally placed in a conservation easement in 2010. The Watershed Association worked to remove over five acres of impervious cover and begin restoration of the landscape to transfer to Hays County to establish the Jacob's Well Natural Area. Since then, the Bluffs, Rebecca Springs, Colemans Canyon and Dry Cypress Preserves, were purchased and conserved to protect critical habitat and aquifer recharge that supports local drinking water and spring flow from Jacob's Well.

With strong community support and stakeholder investment, the Watershed Association has converted over 300 acres into permanently conserved lands.

In addition to the conserved public lands and properties owned by the Watershed Association, we also monitor 294 acres of conservation easements, including the City of Wimberley's Cypress Creek Nature Preserve. Our work to conserve land is central to connecting our communities conservation ethic to these natural wonders, sustaining spring flow and water quality, and growing a healthy economy in the Wimberley Valley and Central Texas region.

Image by Woody Welch



Watershed Protection & Conservation Science



Image by Kenny Braun

Healthy spring flows directly influence water quality—especially in the Hill Country. As flow declines, dissolved oxygen levels also decline and pollutant loading from direct wastewater discharges and non-point sources increases, which can impact the health of fish and aquatic communities. Since 2003, the Watershed Association funds ten quarterly and two monthly Clean Rivers Program water quality sampling sites along Cypress Creek and the Blanco River, to document water quality conditions in these sensitive areas.

With increases in population and associated groundwater use complicated by frequent droughts, flow at Jacob's Well has stopped several times within the last decade. The Cypress Creek Watershed Protection Plan was established by the Watershed Association, Meadows Center and community stakeholders in 2008 in response to water quality impairments and to proactively address water challenges through stormwater best

management practices, green infrastructure, alternative supplies, beneficial reuse, conservation development and other "One Water" design concepts that protect spring flow and water quality.

Thanks to robust monitoring, quality assured science is available to community leaders and stakeholders to inform public policy. Recently, the Watershed Association utilized water quality data in the formation of the Blanco Water Reclamation Task Force to facilitate policy changes that prevent direct wastewater discharge into the Blanco River. With innovative solutions such as "One Water", and the creation of groundwater management zones, **we will continue to protect spring flow and maintain the pristine quality of our water supply through informed decision making and public policy based on sound science.**



Image by Peter Sprouse



Image by David Baker



Policy, Advocacy, & Environmental Planning



Image by Ray Don Tilley

In the Hill Country, there is a need for innovative approaches to provide more investment in parks and open space, protecting aquifer recharge, water equity and regional planning for conservation-based development. These strategies prevent wastewater pollutants from impacting local streams, encourage rainwater harvesting through incentives and forward sustainable groundwater management. Our region is characterized by a state of prolonged drought punctuated by extreme rain events. As a result, providing affordable and reliable wastewater treatment systems that prioritize reuse and prevent groundwater depletion is critical to sustain water availability and water quality. Through promotion of decentralized water management “One Water” design, **the Watershed Association encourages an integrated planning and implementation approach** to managing finite water resources for long-term resilience and reliability, meeting both community and ecosystem needs.

A huge Hill Country “One Water” success story is the Wimberley ISD’s One Water School—Blue Hole Primary, completed in 2019. The Watershed Association was instrumental in the planning,

funding, design, implementation and monitoring of the school’s water system, and the investment has already paid off. The One Water School is using less than half the potable water compared to other schools in the area. The “One Water” initiative is saving the school district money in utility bills, actively engaging students in water stewardship and has inspired countless projects throughout the Hill Country.

Given the rapid population growth in Central Texas and our finite water resources, **“One Water” principles are becoming critically important to extend and protect our vulnerable water supplies.** A core principle of “One Water” is the reuse of treated wastewater for irrigation and other beneficial use. The Watershed Association is a founding member of the No Dumping Sewage Coalition that has been a driving force to identify and investigate alternatives to direct discharge into the last remaining pristine streams in Texas through both legislation and a rulemaking petition to TCEQ. The reuse of treated effluent will protect water quality and will also help offset groundwater use for irrigation and be more protective of spring flows to balance community and ecosystem needs for a sustainable water future.



Image by Eric Schlagel



Regenerative Connection & Education



Image by Eric Schlagel

Like the pristine water flowing from springs across the region to form deep connections throughout the entire Hill Country and beyond, connection and education are key pillars to the work we do.

Forming a connection with nature isn't just beneficial, it's vital for our human health. Increased time in nature shows clear positive associations with overall physical and psychological health and emotional wellbeing— it even makes us more productive.

Research tells us that when people simply view images of nature, "they are inclined to be more social, more caring towards others, more community-oriented, and more generous." More time in nature tends not only to make us healthier, but better people in our communities with more inclination to recognize and respond to planetary health and concern for threats to our natural systems.

It has been said that humans are becoming the first indoor species, with our children spending more time with devices than in unstructured, outdoor play. Since most of our bodies are made up of the same elements found outside, when we become distant

from nature, we also become separated from fully knowing ourselves. The Watershed Association's nature-based programming focuses on regenerative and experiential practices where humans realign our relationship with nature. **We offer diverse opportunities for people of all ages to better understand themselves through the lens of the natural world.**

- Interactive learning programs for both youth and adults
- The Jacob's Well Community gardens
- Educational campaigns, STEAM-based programs and field days with schools and youth
- Nature-based team building and trainings for organizations and businesses
- Community and Regional Network gatherings to regenerate connection and immersive experiences in nature

When we return to our rightful place in the natural world, we are healthier, we better understand nature and we are more likely to take care of it.



Image by David Baker



Image by David Baker



Image by Kara Buse

“Art shapes culture, and changes people and communities. Art tells a universally powerful story that communicates the value of water beyond words.”

Artists have always served society as visionaries, translators and storytellers– they help share powerful stories and elements of the human experience that are limited by spoken language. Art4Water is a program that advocates for environmental protection through the lens of art.

Art4Water's inaugural program, The Sacred Springs Kite Exhibition, is a collaboration with Terry Zee Lee and 30+ artists in the creation

of water-inspired art kites. The Sacred Springs Kite Exhibition brings together artists and art lovers around the respect for Texas' great springs–their history, their value, and the threats to their existence.

The Sacred Springs Kite Exhibition is a free exhibit open to the public at the Austin Central Library (710 W. César Chávez St, 78701) through November 2022.

Stay tuned for more Art4Water programs including artist in residency immersions and Art4Water community events and exhibitions. Follow us on **Instagram @_art4water** to stay connected.



Image by Travis Beerburg



Image by Kara Buse



Get Involved



Image by Carl Griffin

Support the Watershed Association to inspire responsible stewardship of our watersheds. Your investment is vital to engage communities to preserve and protect the land and water of Texas Hill Country for future generations.

Follow the Watershed Association and Art4Water at www.wimberleywatershed.org and on social media @ [wimberleywatershed](#) and @ [_Art4Water](#) to stay informed of the latest news and events.

The Watershed Association

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Image by Andy Heatwole