

## Guadalupe Blanco River Trust Newsletter | Winter 2020/2021

**We're Hiring!**

### GBRT is searching for a **Conservation and Stewardship Manager.**

Working alongside the executive director, this position will manage the land trust projects, including our current land conservation portfolio, property management, land stewardship, funding acquisition, & records management. The position is full-time salaried, commensurate with experience. Offices in Seguin, TX with flexibility in beginning work location. Staff currently works remotely.

Visit our website for full job description.

To apply, email resume and cover letter to:  
[info@gbrtx.org](mailto:info@gbrtx.org)



### **A WORD FROM OUR CHAIRMAN W.A. "BILL" BLACKWELL**

We are extremely happy to say goodbye to 2020 and looking forward to a much brighter 2021! Although 2020 was a very challenging year GBRT has made significant strides towards protecting our natural resources within the Guadalupe River Watershed. The Plum Creek Wetland Preserve (PCWP) at Lockhart, Texas is a prime example. The Trust hired a firm to assist with developing a comprehensive Master Plan for the PCWP as a Nature Center and Environmental Education hub. The first annual volunteer reforestation of PCWP was held with the help of Staff, Board Members and a wide variety of Volunteers. We were able to plant 300 tree seedlings native to the Blackland Prairie. The trees and all materials necessary for the Re-Leaf

Program were donated by the Burdine-Johnson Foundation. It was a great experience for everyone who attended.

Special thanks to our Executive Director, Tyler Sanderson for his outstanding efforts this past year. He has done a great job putting partnerships together that will continue to bear fruit for the Trust for many years in the future.

To all our advocates, partners, grantees, and friends, thank you again for your support and commitment to the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust. We look forward to 2021!

Sincerely,

Bill Blackwell, Trust Board Chairman



"It is a wholesome and necessary thing for us to turn again to the earth and in the contemplation of her beauties to know the sense of wonder and humility." - **Rachel Carson**

2020 GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER TRUST  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Bios available at [www.GBRTX.org](http://www.GBRTX.org)

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**GBRT STAFF MEMBER**

- ◆ Tyler Sanderson - Executive Director

**TALES FROM THE TRUSTEES**



I first learned of GBRT when I was the regional president for South Central Texas for Wells Fargo. I received across my desk, a request for a grant for the work GBRT does in conservation easements. It referenced their web site and as a first step I read all about the conservation easements. I have always been very interested in conservation and wildlife preservation; particularly my quail retention on my two ranches in DeWitt and Gonzales County. I was able to approve the grant and was asked to join the board because of my interest and questions in the good work the GBRT has done with conservation along the Guadalupe, Blanco, San Antonio and other rivers and streams that flow together. I have been impressed with the prior Easements before I joined the board and also the numerous ones since I have been on the board. The Trust has and will continue to preserve wildlife and other important parts of the river basin and is an important part of land stewardship going forward.

Denis Mueller  
 Board Secretary/  
 Treasurer



During the holiday season, GBRT staff reflects on all our friends and partners we are grateful for. We give thanks to all of you reading this newsletter, as well as those who have an interest and stake in our work. We give special thanks to our big brothers and sisters at the Texas Land Trust Council and the Land Trust Alliance. With their support, guidance and funding, and all of yours, our progress has grown.



The federal conservation easement tax incentive is a crucial land conservation tool. This tax incentive grants landowners a charitable deduction in return for a donated easement. It empowers land-rich, cash-poor landowners to engage in conservation, adding significantly to the number of acres saved each year. Unfortunately, a few bad actors are putting it at risk by making large profits at the expense of American taxpayers. Fortunately, Congress has introduced simple, smart and effective legislation to halt the abuse — the Charitable Conservation Easement Program Integrity Act. Learn how you can stay informed and help this legislation by going here: <https://www.landtrustalliance.org/charitable-conservation-easement-program-integrity-act-advocate-toolkit>

## A WORD FROM THE GBRT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### TYLER SANDERSON



What a wild year it has been for GBRT. I have now been on staff for over a year and have grown professionally in that time. As I look back on 2020, of course the theme is the challenges brought about by COVID-19. I think we all learned a lot about dealing with a pandemic. I am choosing to reflect on the positives as best as possible. We learned that not all good work has to be in the office setting. We learned new ways to host or attend meetings. And we learned a lot of new vocabulary, or new definitions to old words, such as social distancing, Zoom, and lockdown. As most, I haven't gotten out much in 2020. I think we have all found new ways to entertain or endure life at home, or may have re-booted some old hobbies.

Pandemic aside, 2020 has been a successful year for GBRT. We have applied for and received several grants, including a grant from the Burdine Johnson Foundation, the Land Trust Alliance, Citgo and Restore America's Estuaries, H-E-B, the National Park Service, and EarthShare Texas. Additional funding came from sources such as Amazon Smile Charity Foundation, a Payroll Protection Program loan, Supplemental Environmental Projects through TCEQ, Kendra Scott Jewelers, GBRA, UGRA, and individual donors. We submitted some pretty major applications, including one to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, two to the Natural Resource Conservation Service for targeted conservation projects, the Matagorda Bay Mitigation Trust, the Texas RESTORE program, and numerous small grants for operations. We assisted in the San Antonio Bay effort to remove abandoned crab traps. We hosted our first-annual Plum Creek Re-Leaf reforestation event, and kicked off the work for a master development plan on the pre-

serve. Staff was able to take part in many virtual training sessions. We hosted three separate internships with Texas State, and received some additional project assistance from both Texas State University and the University of Texas at San Antonio. And possibly the most important success from 2020 was the relationships and partnerships that we built along the way.

As this year comes to a close, I want to thank all that have made this year possible. Thank you to the GBRT Board Trustees for putting your trust in me, for all your hard work and support. Thank you to all of our partners that are now too many to list. Thank you to all our volunteers, interns, and contract support. And finally, thank you to my family for sticking with me along this long and rewarding journey. Here's to a happy New Year and a strong start to 2021.

Have you ever wondered how to put a value on our conserved open spaces in Texas? The Texas Land Trust Council and Texas A&M have, and with the help of our partners, they may have cracked the code on how to better describe the positive impacts of these lands. Check out the latest publication *Texas Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Program: 2020 Evaluation Report* to get to know how our state is leading the charge in conserving vital open agricultural lands in Texas.



## Conserving Texas Land Saves Taxpayers Money.

Land trusts in Texas protect our water, reduce flooding impacts, and provide economic benefits and recreation opportunities for all Texans.

Over  
**1.65 Million**  
Acres conserved by Texas Land Trusts across our state

→

Yields  
**\$1 Billion**  
Estimated annual economic benefit to Texas taxpayers

Every \$1 invested in conservation yields up to \$9 return on investment.

<https://bit.ly/TFRL2020Report>



# Plum Creek Re-Leaf

On November 14th, volunteers from several partner organizations joined GBRT in our first-annual reforestation event at our **Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve** in Lockhart, TX. The event was originally planned to be a community-wide volunteer



event, but our first effort was scaled back due to COVID-19 concerns. Instead, we invited members of some of our dearest organizations to take part in a sneak peek at what is to become an annual Texas Arbor Day celebration along Plum Creek. Special thanks to a generous contribution from the **Burdine Johnson Foundation**, we were able to purchase the trees and tools necessary to put 298 trees in the ground.

**THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!**



The trees were various seedlings found native to the riparian areas in the Plum Creek watershed. Our preserve is a wetland mitigation site, which planted over 50,000 seedlings when construction occurred in 2011. Unfortunately, many of these seedlings perished due to drought and other factors. We have created a plan to chip away at restoring those areas to the original forested intention. All the seedlings we chose were taken from the original mitigation plan.



Volunteers logged a total of 58 service hours, planted almost 300 trees, watered and marked each tree, and received a hay ride style tour of the preserve. While we create a master plan for the development of the preserve as a nature center and environmental education hub, our progress with Plum Creek Re-Leaf will continue to grow.



Thank you, Anna Prusaitis Ybarra and Wilfred Korth, for the photos.

**GBRT wants to extend our most sincere gratitude to the following partner organizations who assisted with this project:**

The Burdine Johnson Foundation, the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership, Keep Lockhart Beautiful, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, TreeFolks, the National Park Service, the Texas Master Naturalists, the Native Plant Society of Texas, and Grant Development Services. This first-annual effort wouldn't have happened without you.



"Do something that will last and be beautiful." - **Ken Burns**



# GUADALUPE RIVER LEAST WANTED

## INVASIVE SPECIES OF THE GUADALUPE RIVER WATERSHED

### FERAL HOGS



**Threats:** Domesticated hogs released or escaped to the wild by settlers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

started a widespread problem throughout Texas and much of the United States. There is an estimated population in Texas over 2.5 million, more than 1/3 the nation's feral hogs, with continual expansion. Reasons for the widespread populations include recurrent release of domestic hogs which can turn feral in a matter of months, improved habitat, and removal or decline of predators are a few. Their ability to reproduce, makes them difficult to eradicate. They can begin breeding at six months of age and only take around 4 months to gestate, potentially allowing two litters a year which can range in size from 1-12 piglets.

Feral hogs are a major threat to the ecosystem. They can negatively affect native plant communities, outcompete other wildlife for resources, prey on small or young wildlife, and spread disease to livestock and other wildlife. Groups of hogs, or sounders, can root up large patches of gardens, lawns, crops or forest overnight, causing over \$500 million worth of damage per year throughout Texas. These sounders are also a threat to water quality. Living in and around water sources, they defecate in and along the waterways and use them as mud pits to wallow in.



**Evidence:** Hogs are generally nocturnal making them difficult to spot. There are several signs of hogs in the landscape. These signs include: foot prints (similar to deer but wider and more rounded hooves), trails (often low to the ground in dense brush), rubs (mud or scrapes on a tree), wallowing (mud pits where they roll and root in), droppings, rooting and grubbing of the ground, and hair left behind on fence wires.

**Expungement:** There are a few methods of removing hogs from the landscape. Depending on location, there are organizations that may assist in their removal. It is important to do your research before beginning a hog eradication program. Euthanizing feral hogs can be done year round but it requires a hunting license to do so. There is an open season on hogs but hunters and trappers must adhere to their local laws. There are many styles of traps but it takes time to ensure good trapping methods. If trapping, make sure you take steps to minimize trapping other wildlife. Some counties, such as Caldwell, Guadalupe, Hays and Kerr, have a hog bounty program. Additionally, there are programs to fund trapping and population management.



#### For more information:

Refer to Texas Parks and Wildlife ([https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/nuisance/feral\\_hogs/](https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/nuisance/feral_hogs/))

Contact your local AgriLife Extension office (<https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/>)

Or search for a local program partner in your area.



**HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT GBRT?**

A gracious donation can be made to one of our multiple campaigns either by visiting our website, sending a check to our mailing address, or by clicking [here](#): To donate to a specific purpose, make a note of that with your donation.


Our targeted project areas include:


**General Operating**— contribution to our general funds can make a difference in supporting GBRT’s mission by helping cover costs that grants and restricted donations can’t.

**Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve**— This restricted account is designated specifically for the maintenance and improvements of the preserve. As we develop the preserve into a nature center, your contribution will help us build the dream.

**Texas Mid Coast Initiative**— The purpose of this initiative is to work collaboratively with project partners to target and conserve critical coastal habitats in an 8-County range around the San Antonio Bay. Partners include: NRCS, Ducks Unlimited, USFWS, San Antonio Bay Partnership, International Crane Foundation, Texas Audubon, and many others with this regional interest.

**Other ways to support our mission:**

 Perhaps the coolest way to support natural resources across Texas is to support [EarthShare](#). They raise and distribute unrestricted funds for dozens of conservation organizations in Texas. Visit [earthshare-texas.org](http://earthshare-texas.org) to contribute.

 Shopping at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) is a simple and automatic way for you to support GBRT every time you shop. By choosing GBRT as your charity of choice, Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price at no cost to you.

**Look for GBRT on**  
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[@GuadalupeBlancoRiverTrust](#)



WE BOUGHT A DRONE FOR EVENT VIDEOGRAPHY AND REMOTE MONITORING

*To be added to this electronic newsletter, please email [Info@GBRTX.org](mailto:Info@GBRTX.org) or call 830-560-3981. Thank you.*