

Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust Newsletter | Summer 2022

Mid-Coast Initiative A Partnership for Texas

The Texas Mid-Coast Initiative project has almost been working a full year with the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership. Along with project Partners, Ducks Unlimited and Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program, we have completed a round of landowner applications, scored and ranked 5 projects and have moved forward on the eventual protection and restoration of 3 properties (2 in Refugio County and 1 in Victoria County). These properties were chosen to have the most positive impact on shorebird and waterfowl habitat, and best potential for the improvement or preservation of coastal wetlands and freshwater hydrology.



Foundation, eventually becoming a life member of that organization. Interest in water continued throughout my career, and since retirement I served eight years on the board of the Headwaters Groundwater Conservation District, followed by my current appointment to the UGRA board.

If you're ever in Kerr County, please stop by UGRA's EduScape to see examples of the use of native plants and water conservation practices. Our website is ugra.org. GBRT has an annual Releaf gathering at its Plum Creek Preserve that is also worth attending. For details, check GBRT's website at gbrtx.org closer to the event in November. And wherever you live in the watershed, consider a conservation easement if you

have property you'd like to preserve for your family or future generations of Texans.



"We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty" ~ Maya Angelou

TALES FROM THE TRUSTEES

Diane McMahon

The Guadalupe River watershed is a large area. It extends from the river's origin in western Kerr County all the way down to the Gulf Coast. As a member of the board of the Upper Guadalupe River Authority (UGRA), I am appointed by my board to serve on the Guadalupe Blanco River Trust (GBRT) board as a liaison between the two groups. UGRA is the "other river authority" in this region of Texas, smaller in scale because we encompass only Kerr County--which is the uppermost area of the watershed.

UGRA and GBRT share the common objective of protecting the Guadalupe River watershed: UGRA through direct involvement in preserving water quality and quantity, with a focus on safeguarding the river's riparian areas; and GBRT through acquisition and management of conservation easements to preserve vulnerable areas of ecological importance. I am pleased to be associated with both of these groups because of the importance of their work in protecting the "natural Texas" we all value. This work becomes even more critical as our population increases with the accompanying pressure on water and other natural resources.

My own interest in all things water goes back to the late 1980's. While I was a graduate student in biological sciences, I became a volunteer water quality monitor with the Galveston Bay



2022 GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER TRUST

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Bios available at www.GBRTX.org

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GBRT STAFF MEMBERS

- ◆ Tyler Sanderson - Executive Director
- ◆ Stephen Risinger - Conservation & Stewardship Manager

Are you a state employee in Texas?

The State Employee Charitable Campaign starts in September. All state employees can contribute to GBRT and other leading environmental organizations through their workplace giving program. Please remember EarthShare Texas (code 035500) and the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust (code 35601) in your consideration of charitable choices. For more information visit:

www.SECCTexas.org



www.earthshare-texas.org



STEWARDSHIP: Lasting Connections

Tyler Sanderson

When the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust enters into a conservation easement with a landowner, we are promising to look after that land and ensure that its future use complies with the terms of the easement. Our conservation easements run in perpetuity, and we take that seriously. We tend to find ourselves continuously thinking ahead. From the future of the watershed to our next volunteer date and everything in between, we can get caught up in those details and forget to appreciate the projects that got us here. Projects have been and still are our priority. Our conservation easements, new and old, are all our future and it’s only by keeping our promises to the land that we succeed in what we are doing. This is done by responsible, consistent stewardship of the land.



The priority of stewardship is to make sure that the terms of the easement are carried out. A conservation easement places certain restrictions on the land, often removing landowner rights to things such as subdivision of the property, development over a certain number of buildings or surface impact, certain land uses, and restrictions on water and mineral use. Land trusts must track activities on the land at least annually and make sure those activities are consistent with the easement. Of course, all land is different, all landowners are different, and pretty much all conservation easements have their differences. It is our responsibility, as stewards of the conservation easement, to understand each property and its intricacies in order to defend it. A core stewardship activity is clear communication with landowners. It benefits us, and the land, to maintain positive relationships and serve as a resource for them, helping answer any questions, assisting with land use decisions, and ideally helping with access to resources for their land.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, land trusts across the country have strategized how to monitor the land in a safe and effect way. Like many other land trusts, GBRT began using remote monitoring software and mapping for annual review of our easements. Most of our 16 visits were remote in 2020 and 2022. While remote monitoring software does make our stewardship process more efficient and effective, it also removes us from the land and the face-to-face relationship with our landowners. We appreciate the patience from our landowners as we navigate the process. In this more virtual and immediate world, our goal is to integrate these two approaches, building on lasting relationships. Thank you to all you landowners who trust us, and land trusts across the country, to look after your precious resources. We appreciate the opportunity to do the work we love so dearly on such marvelous properties.



COMIN' IN HOT

With nearly all of Texas experiencing "extreme" drought conditions and almost 40 days of triple-digit temperatures this year, I think it's safe to say we Texans are feeling the heat. The current drought has seen reduced flow in the Guadalupe River in particular. As of July 29, 2022, the Guadalupe River above the Comal River is flowing at a rate of 57.3 Cubic Feet per Second (CFS), far less than the mean flow of 575 CFS. Our friends at the Upper Guadalupe River Authority have experienced scorched and windy days with mean flows as low as 5 CFS at the headwaters of the Guadalupe River, just 2 CFS up from the historic low of 3.3 CFS.

2011 was considered the worst drought in Texas since 1895 and persisted for four years. 2022 is not looking much better. Low or no stream flows cause habitat loss, degraded water quality, and increased saltwater intrusion into fresh water. Marine fish are moving into Texas rivers with increased salinity. The drought has also led to lower plant growth, which affects insect populations. Low insect populations will lower seed production, and animals that rely on seeds and plants for nutrition, from birds to deer, will, in turn, have lower reproduction rates. Predators relying on those animals as a food source also remain hungry and reproduce less. The drought causes a domino effect that will impact the ecosystem of Texas for years to come.

Wildfires are another danger posed by extreme drought and dry conditions. Texas A&M Forest Service averages 1,194 wildland incidents a year involving 462,466 acres. Since Jan. 1, the Forest Service and local fire departments have responded to 6,809 wildfires for 596,427 acres burned across Texas. That compared with 6,284 wildfires for 168,734 acres

burned across the state in 2021.

Water Weekly

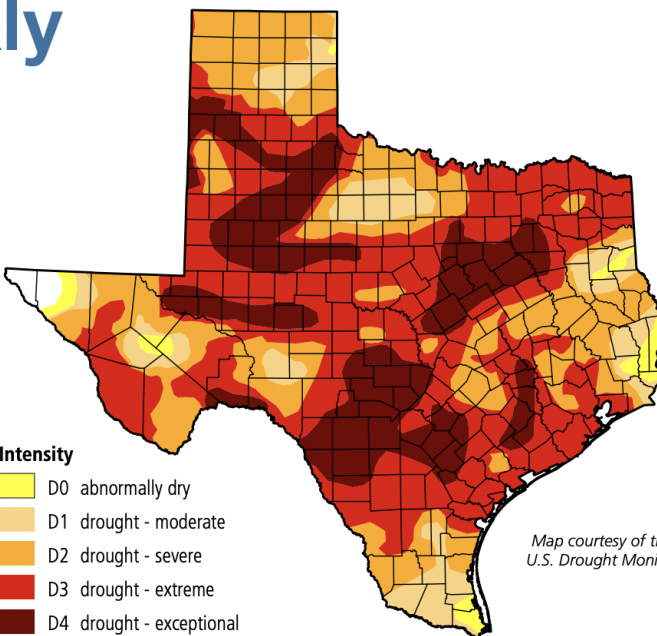
For the week of 08/08/22

Water conditions

The drought map for August 2 conditions shows improvement in parts of West Texas and the Panhandle but degradation in other areas. The total area of drought was unchanged from last week, but extreme or worse drought was up two percentage points and now covers 62 percent of the state.

Drought conditions

- ◆ 97% now
- ◆ 97% a week ago
- ◆ 80% three months ago
- ◆ 1% a year ago



Map courtesy of the U.S. Drought Monitor

Woefully, drought conditions will likely worsen over the next few months. The National Weather Service anticipates that almost the entire state will be experiencing drought by the end of October. As for the rest of Texas, we will keep ourselves limber for the occasional rain dance until these dry conditions improve.

Everyone join us in a rain dance.





It's Summer, but Re-Leaf is Near

Preparations for this year's Plum Creek Re-Leaf Texas Arbor Day Celebration are underway! The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust seeks volunteers to help replant the Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve. Grant funding from the Caterpillar Foundation to enhance our effort over three years. We plan to shepherd the project into a large-scale, annual reforestation event centered around Texas Arbor Day in the fall.



GBRT's Re-Leaf volunteer reforestation event will happen on **Friday the 9th and Saturday the 10th in December 2022**. Volunteers interested in signing up for one of these events should visit gbrtx.org to sign up. Alternatively, contact Stephen Risinger at GBRT by calling 830-632-2292 or emailing stephen@gbrtx.org. As we restore the forest canopy, leaf litter, water, and wildlife return, and nature begins to heal. Approximately 40 acres of Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve need reforestation. This fall, volunteers will plant a total of 4,000 trees on 15 acres of the Preserve. Reforestation efforts will continue in the spring.

Each volunteer day will begin at 9 am and end early afternoon. Lunch will be provided to volunteers. Participants of all ages are encouraged to join; a parent or guardian must accompany minors. Make sure to bring a hat! The River Trust will provide water, gloves, and sunscreen. Come and help us "re-leaf" the Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve!



We love our Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve. We are sure you can tell by now. There has been a lot of activity around the preserve this past year. For over a year, we have been working on a master plan for the development of the preserve, and the creation of a nature center. We anticipate presenting the Plan by year end. We find ourselves thankful for the many folks who have helped along the way and would like to recognize our partners, sponsors and funders who are helping to keep all these wheels turning. We wouldn't have the progress we've got today without the *Burdine Johnson Foundation, the Caterpillar Foundation, the Land Trust Alliance, the National Park Service, GBRA, TreeFolks, One Million Trees Across Texas, Lockhart ISD, EarthShare Texas, Texas State University, the University of Texas at San Antonio, Ehler's Tree Farm, the Lockhart Air Force JROTC, Keep Lockhart Beautiful and local Master Naturalists.*

GUADALUPE RIVER LEAST WANTED

INVASIVE SPECIES OF THE GUADALUPE RIVER WATERSHED

ELEPHANT EAR

(Colocasia esculenta)

Background Check: Elephant ear, also known as wild taro, is native to the East Asian tropics. The tuber plant was introduced to Texas in the early 20th century as a replacement for potatoes and was later grown as an ornamental. It is now recognized as an exotic invasive species.

Crime: Elephant ear invades wetland and stream bank areas vigorously. It forms dense growth that out-competes native species, forming a monoculture, reducing biodiversity and preventing growth of other plants. The dense stands also prevent large waterfowl from hunting and foraging. It spreads best through re-growth from the roots. Uprooted plants will float downstream and start new colonies with very little trouble.

Evidence: Growth up to 4 feet tall with thick shoots that will sprout in clusters. Large (up to 24") arrowhead shaped leaves with a dark green upper surface. It thrives in wet areas along stream edges and wetlands. Flowers are tiny and packed densely towards the top of the stalk. Small berry-like fruits grow in clusters on the fleshy stalk. The plant's shallow root system makes it easy to pull or wash away in high water flows.

Expungement: Since broken tuber fragments will re-grow, pulling the plant is not the best method of removal. Special care must be taken to ensure the entire plant is removed. The most effective method for removing from a site is a selective treatment of aquatic herbicide. Much care must be taken when foliar spraying the leaves. Since it grows in aquatic habitat and along streams, spray precisely so herbicide does not treat desired vegetation or enter the waterway. Special aquatic herbicide must be used to minimize effects to other flora and fauna.

Native Alternatives: Pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*) and Water Canna (*Canna glauca*) prefer similar conditions and provide wildlife habitat and forage and more attractive flowers when blooming.

More information at:

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (<https://www.wildflower.org/>).



Pickerelweed



Preservation Matters



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.

Click the links below to learn more about each of our ways to contribute.

[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 to contribute.



Shopping at 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

 Instagram
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DID YOU KNOW?



The Upper Guadalupe-River Authority (UGRA), with the help of some Hill Country Master Gardeners, created a learning landscape at their headquarters. The landscape, known as UGRA’s EduScape, is used to educate and demonstrate the principles of sustainable stormwater management from water wise planting, to small-scale engineering. When the time comes and you find yourself itching to explore beautiful Kerrville and the headwaters of the Guadalupe River, come take a walk on the UGRA educational path.



To be added to this electronic newsletter, please email Inquiry@GBRTX.org or call 830-560-3981. Thank you.