

North Central Texas
Council of Governments

Let's Grow! Ensuring Success for Water-Wise Landscapes

NCTCOG Webinar
November 13, 2025

Alyssa Knox, NCTCOG
aknox@nctcog.org



*This project was funded by
the U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency through
the Texas Commission on
Environmental Quality.*

Webinar Procedures



The webinar is being recorded and will be posted to NCTCOG's website under the green banner called "Webinars" here:

<https://www.nctcog.org/environment/natural-resources/water-resources>



If you submitted an RSVP for this webinar, you will receive an email with the presentation slides and a link to the recording. If you did not RSVP and would like these webinar materials, please email aknox@nctcog.org.



Please keep your microphone on mute until the Question-and-Answer period at the end of the presentations.

Welcome and Introduction of Speakers

Webinar Agenda

- **“Prairies and Water - How Grassland Conservation Protects Texas' Water Resources”**
– Rachel Seets
- **“Navigating the Politics of Native Plants”** – TJ Gilmore
- **Encouraging Use of Native Plants in a Community of Ordinances and HOAs-** Diane Wetherbee
- Discussion and Q&A

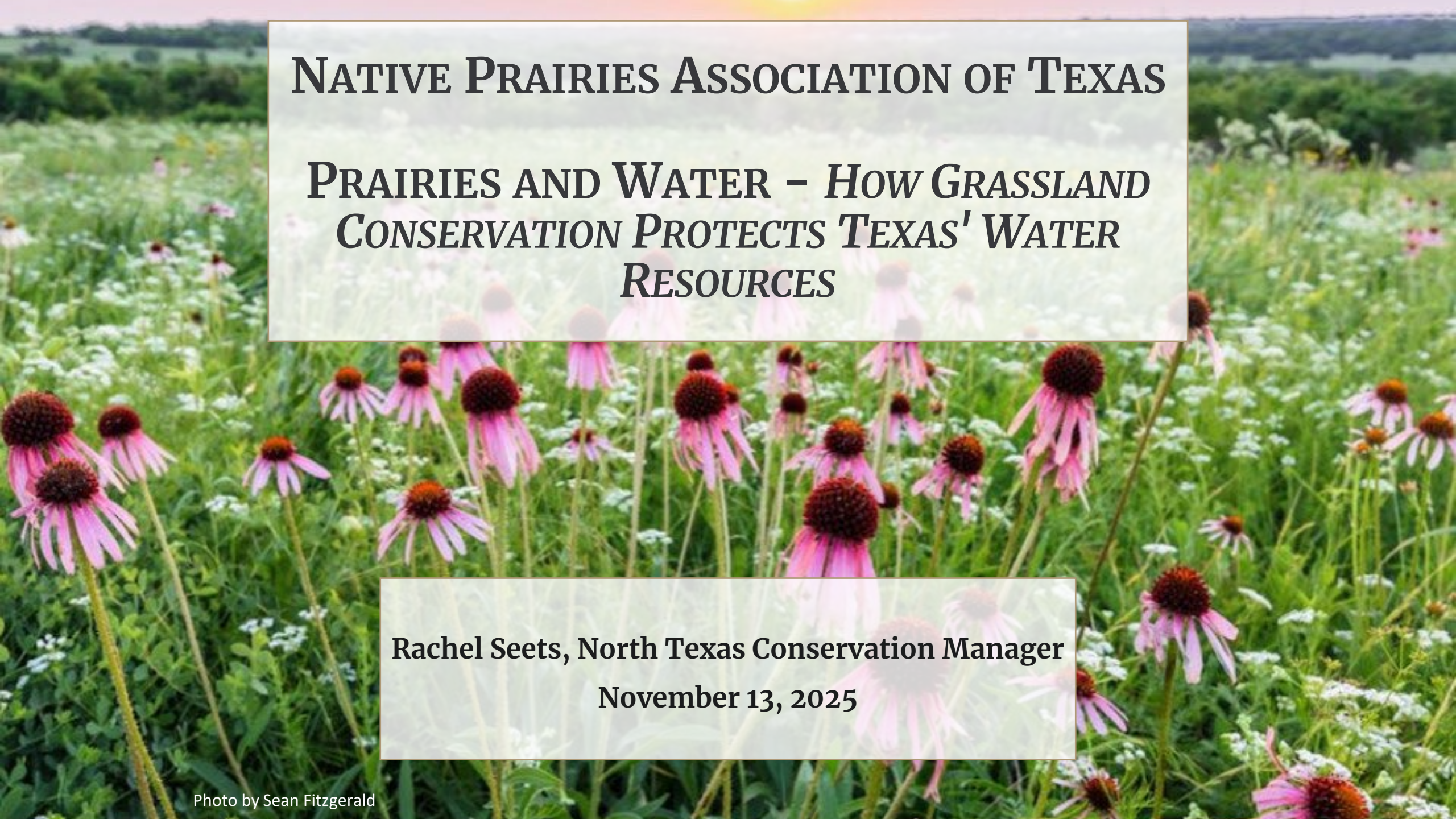
Speaker Introduction



Rachel Seets

North Texas Conservation
Manager

Native Prairies
Association of Texas



NATIVE PRAIRIES ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

PRAIRIES AND WATER – *HOW GRASSLAND CONSERVATION PROTECTS TEXAS' WATER RESOURCES*

Rachel Seets, North Texas Conservation Manager
November 13, 2025

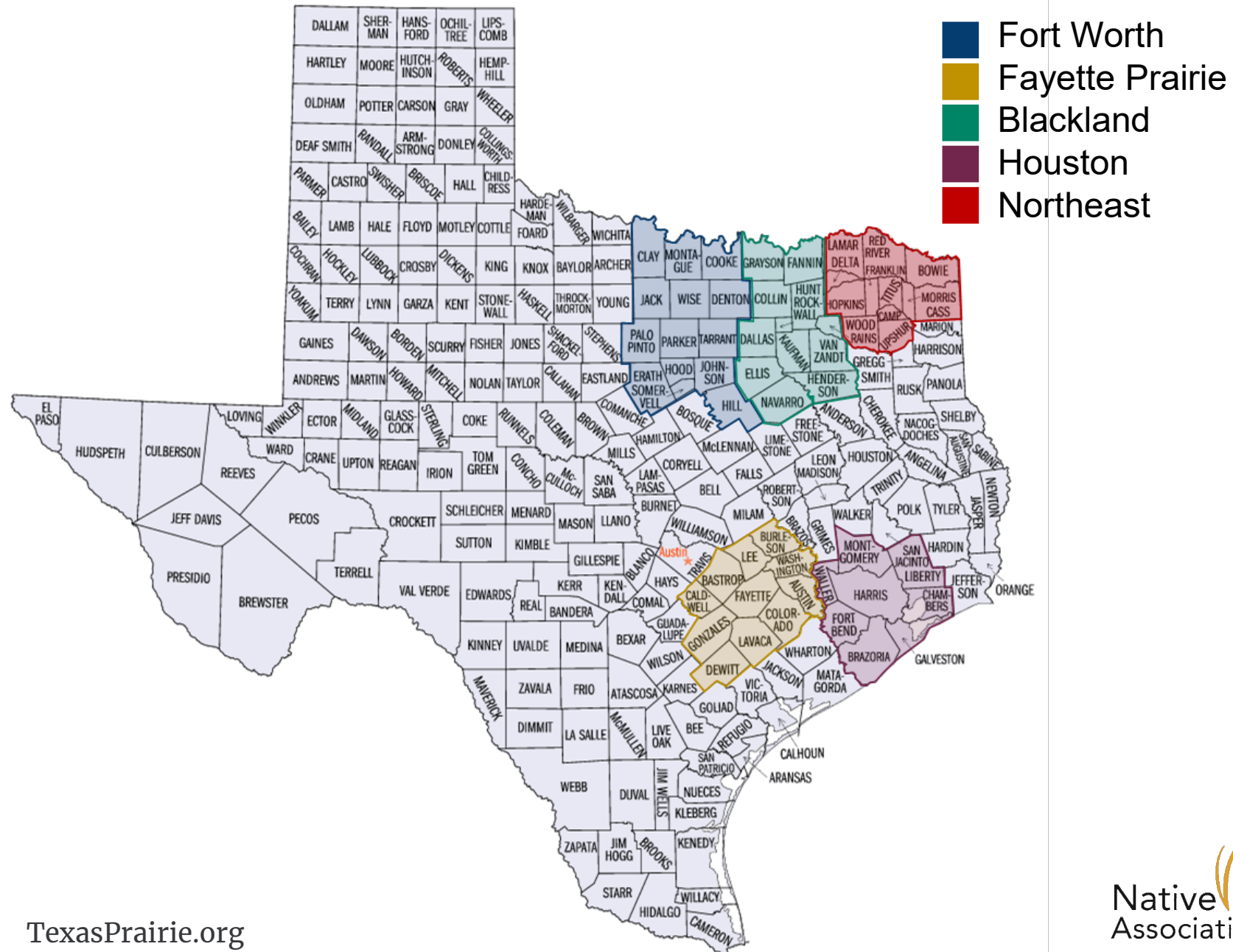
NATIVE PRAIRIES ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

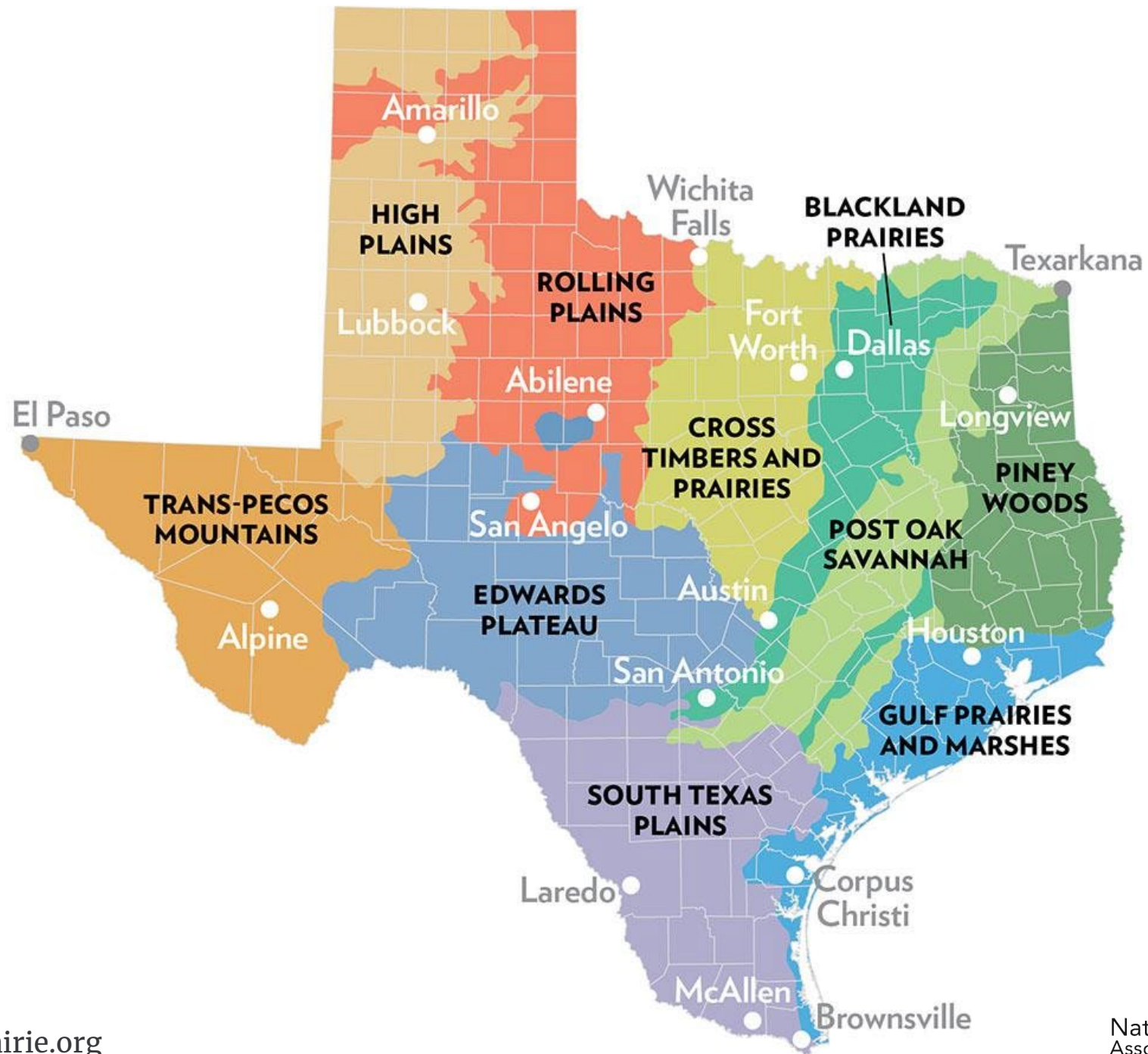
- Founded in 1986 by Texans concerned about our disappearing prairie heritage, especially Texas' endangered tallgrass prairies.
- Our mission is dedicated to conserving native prairies—and their vital benefits—through land protection, stewardship, and community.
- 8 Statewide Staff
- 11 Fee Owned Preserves
- 22 Conservation Easements
- Over 7,000 total acres of protected land
- Regional Chapters
 - Blackland Prairie (Dallas), Fort Worth, Fayette Prairie, Houston, Northeast Texas
 - CenTex (Austin) and San Antonio not currently active

Photo by Sean Fitzgerald

TexasPrairie.org







HISTORIC RANGE OF THE PRAIRIE

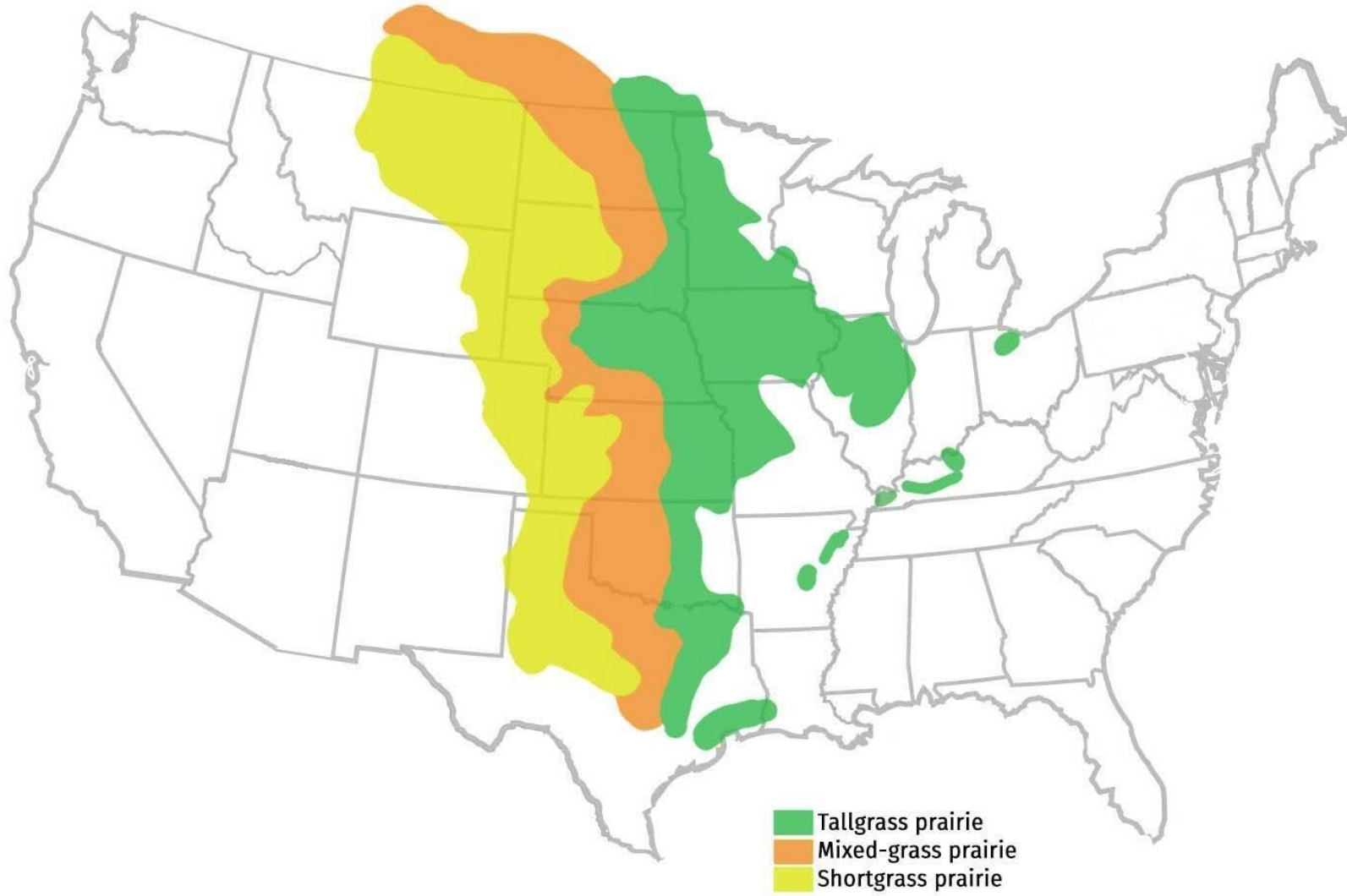


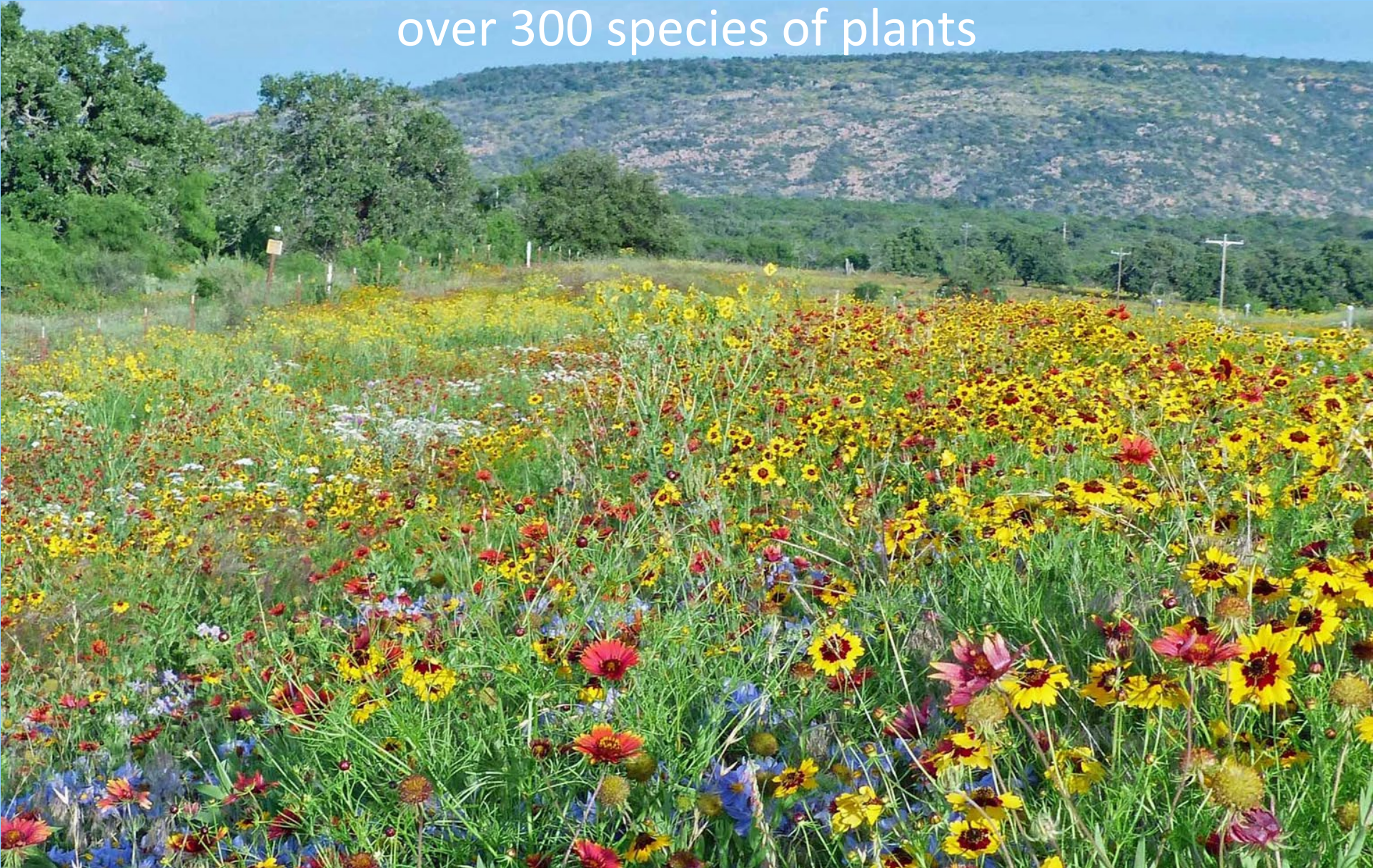


Photo by Sean Fitzgerald





High biodiversity & biomass:
One acre of native prairie can have
over 300 species of plants



Dense and deep root systems



Prairies support wildlife



How do prairies support us?



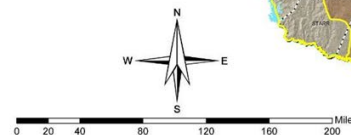


Major River Basins of Texas Over DEM



LEGEND

1. Canadian
2. Red
3. Sulphur
4. Cypress
5. Sabine
6. Neches
7. Neches-Trinity
8. Trinity
9. Trinity-San Jacinto
10. San Jacinto
11. San Jacinto-Brazos
12. Brazos
13. Brazos-Colorado
14. Colorado
15. Colorado-Lavaca
16. Lavaca
17. Lavaca-Guadalupe
18. Guadalupe
19. San Antonio
20. San Antonio-Nueces
21. Nueces
22. Nueces-Rio Grande
23. Rio Grande

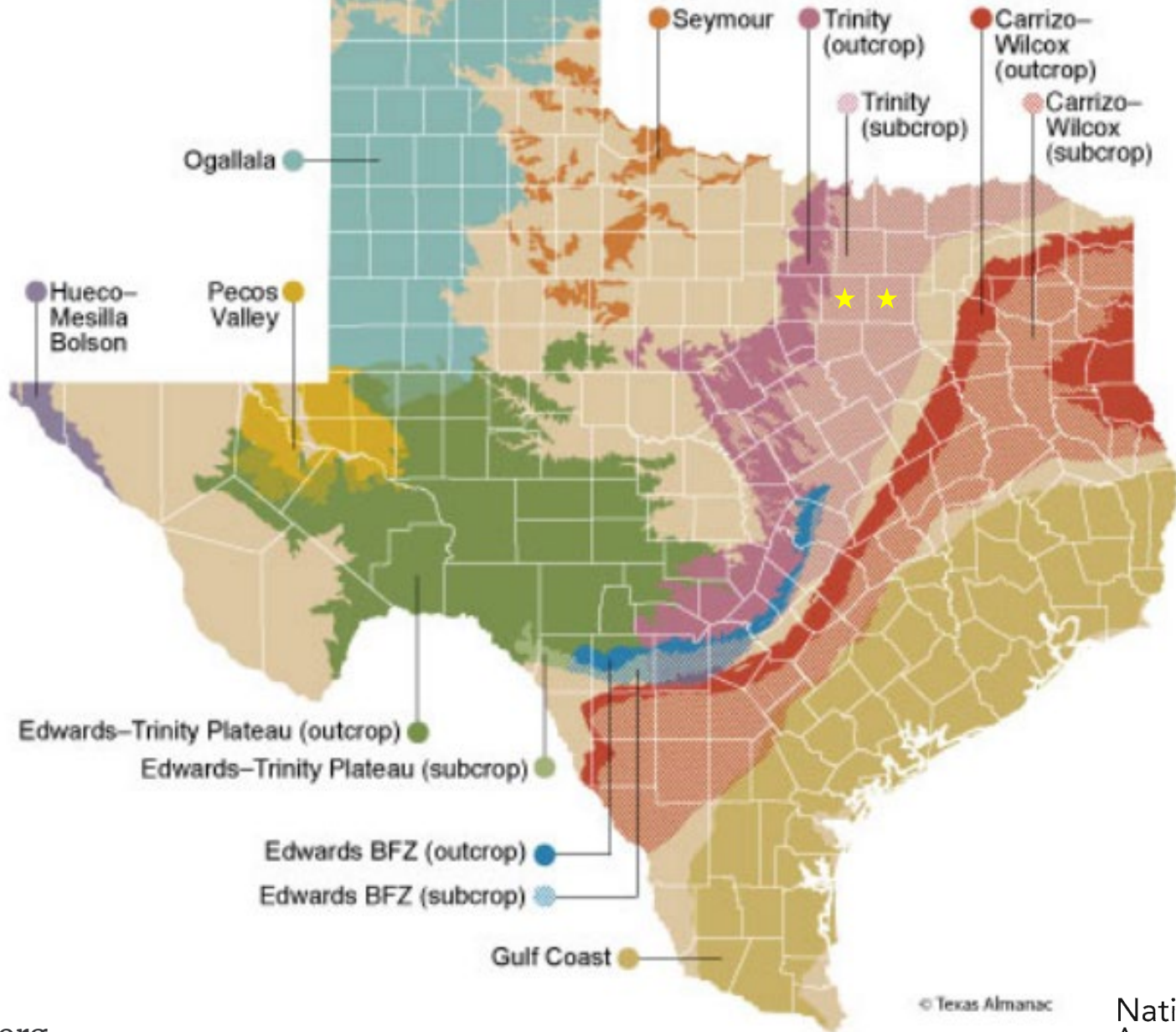


January 2003

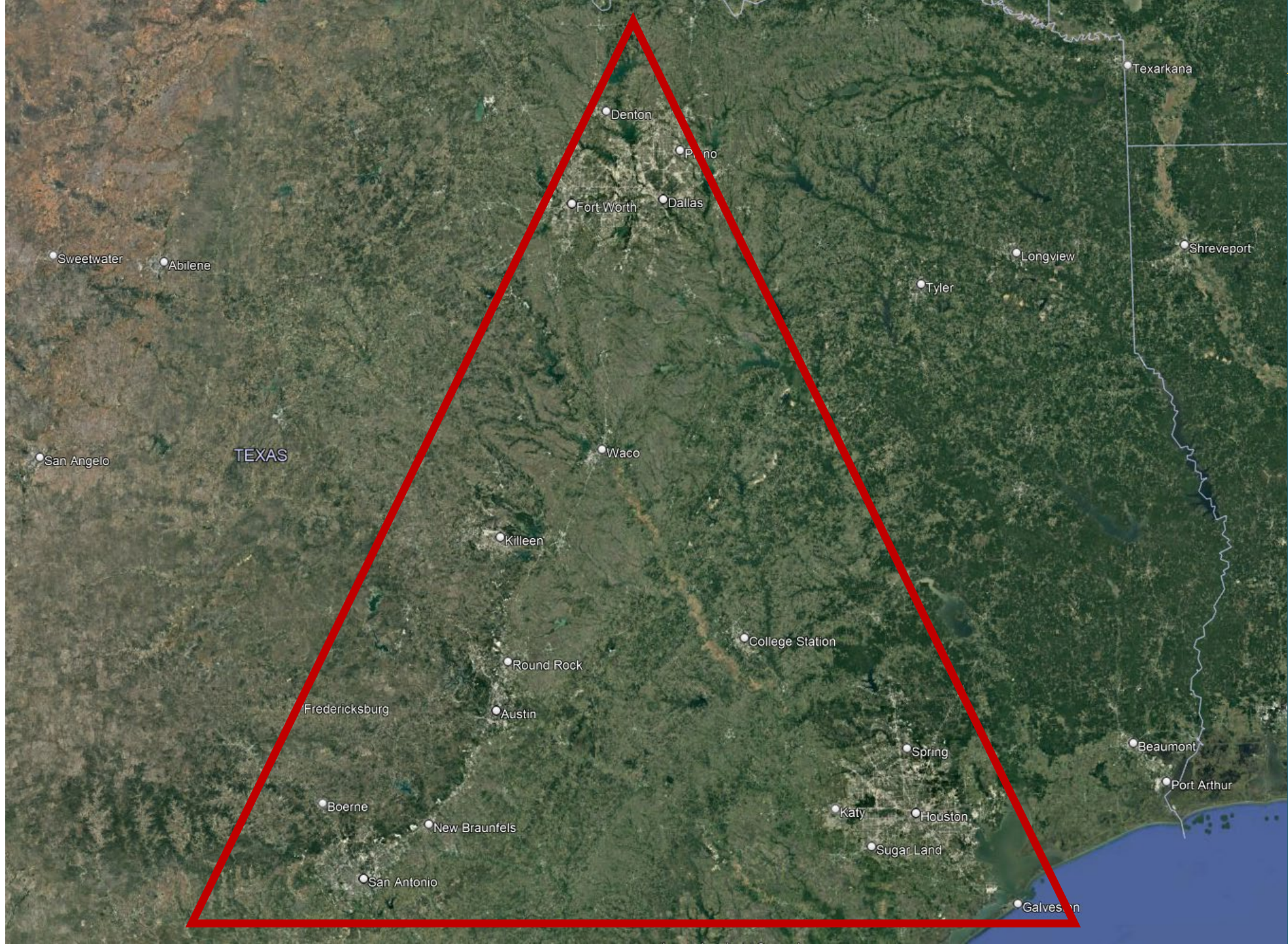
Map prepared by Mark Hayes,
Mapping Coordinator, TWDB
(Mark.Hayes@twdb.state.tx.us)
512-836-0228

DISCLAIMER
This map was generated by the Texas Water Development Board.
No claims are made to the accuracy or completeness of the
information shown herein nor to its suitability for a particular use.
The scale and location of all mapped data are approximate.

Major Aquifers of Texas



© Texas Almanac



Sweetwater

Abilene

San Angelo

TEXAS

Denton

P. no

Fort Worth

Dallas

Tyler

Longview

Shreveport

Texarkana

Waco

Killeen

College Station

Round Rock

Fredericksburg

Austin

Boerne

New Braunfels

San Antonio

Spring

Katy

Houston

Sugar Land

Beaumont

Port Arthur

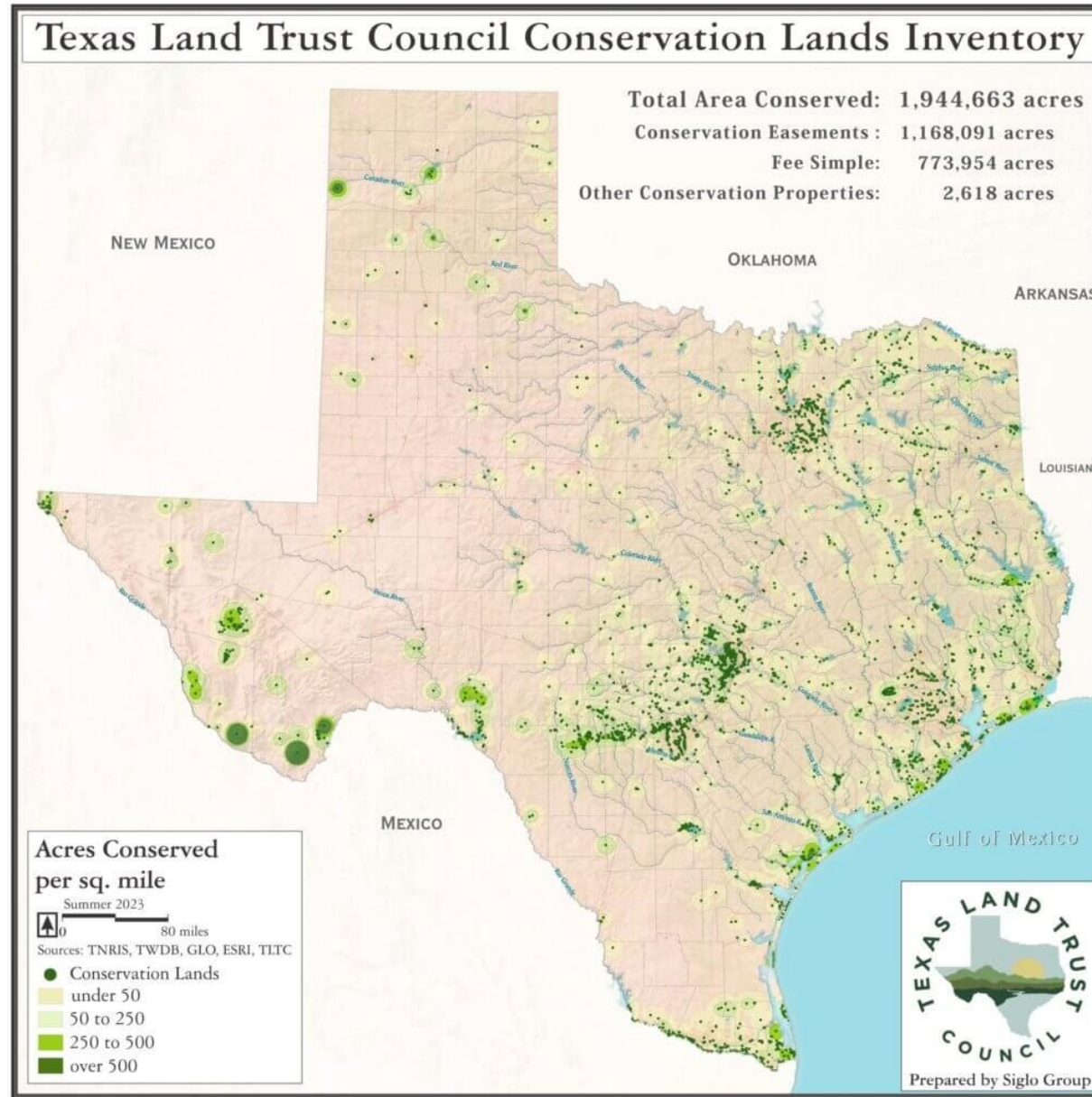
Galveston

Types and methods of land conservation

- Fee Simple (FS) – Complete Ownership of Land
- Conservation Easement (CE) – A voluntary legal agreement that a landowner establishes on their property that restricts certain land usages in order to protect conservation values.
- Acquired through purchase or given as gifts.
- Funds from city or county bonds, state or federal grants, private foundations.
- Conservation Banking



Texas Protected Lands



Texas Protected Lands





- NPAT Properties
- Other Conserved Lands
- State & National Parks

Over 1,100 acres protected to date!

NTPI Success Story | Drake Ranch | Somervell County



Photo by Steve Lincoln

NTPI Success Story | Drake Ranch | Somervell County



Photos by Steve Lincoln

Ebel Ranch | Hopkins County | 521 Acres



Fall Workshop

- Nov. 14 – Landowner Workshop at Rocosa Ridge in Bosque County





Questions?

Rachel_Seets
[@texasprairie.org](https://twitter.com/texasprairie.org)

Speaker Introduction



TJ Gilmore
Mayor
City of Lewisville

A small green seedling with two leaves growing out of dark soil. The seedling is positioned on the left side of the frame, with its two leaves spread out. The soil is dark and textured, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

**The seeds
that
inspired...**

This where I grew up.



So is this- for a few days a year.



water problems in arizona



Google

< All News Images Videos Maps More Tools

About 8,510 results (0.27 seconds)



The Arizona Republic

What's the status of water's future in Arizona? 7 things we know

The future of water in Arizona was discussed at an event organized by the Western Maricopa Coalition.

May 7, 2023



FOX 10 Phoenix

Arizona's water crisis: Colorado river restrictions easing in 2024, but negotiations over future continues

Colorado River restrictions to ease in 2024. As 2024 begins, Arizona's restriction of water from the Colorado River will ease when compared to...

1 month ago



The Washington Post

Arizona and southwest states grapple with water shortages, drought

The decision by Arizona this week to limit residential construction in some parts of the fast-growing Phoenix suburbs is another major...

Jun 4, 2023



Los Angeles Times

Water concerns prompt new limits on growth in Arizona

Arizona will limit development in the Phoenix area after a study found the available groundwater isn't sufficient to meet long-term water...

Jun 1, 2023



water problems in texas



< All News Images Videos Maps More Tools

About 15,300 results (0.27 seconds)



The Texas Tribune

Texas' water infrastructure is broken, jeopardizing quality and supply for a growing state

On a daily basis, water managers in cities across the state move from crisis to crisis hoping to keep the water flowing to residents.

May 3, 2023



CBS News

Texas city strictly limits water consumption as thousands across state face water shortages

Texas city strictly limits water consumption as thousands across state face water shortages ... A small Texas city west of Austin remains under...

Jul 18, 2023



WIRED

Texas Is Already Running Out of Water

Parts of the state are starting the year with low reserves. With light winter rains failing to replenish supply, and a scorching summer...

3 weeks ago



Inside Climate News

Dry Springs in Central Texas Warn of Water Shortage Ahead

Dry Springs in Central Texas Warn of Water Shortage Ahead · Heat, drought and booming population growth have stressed the aquifers that supply...

Aug 15, 2023

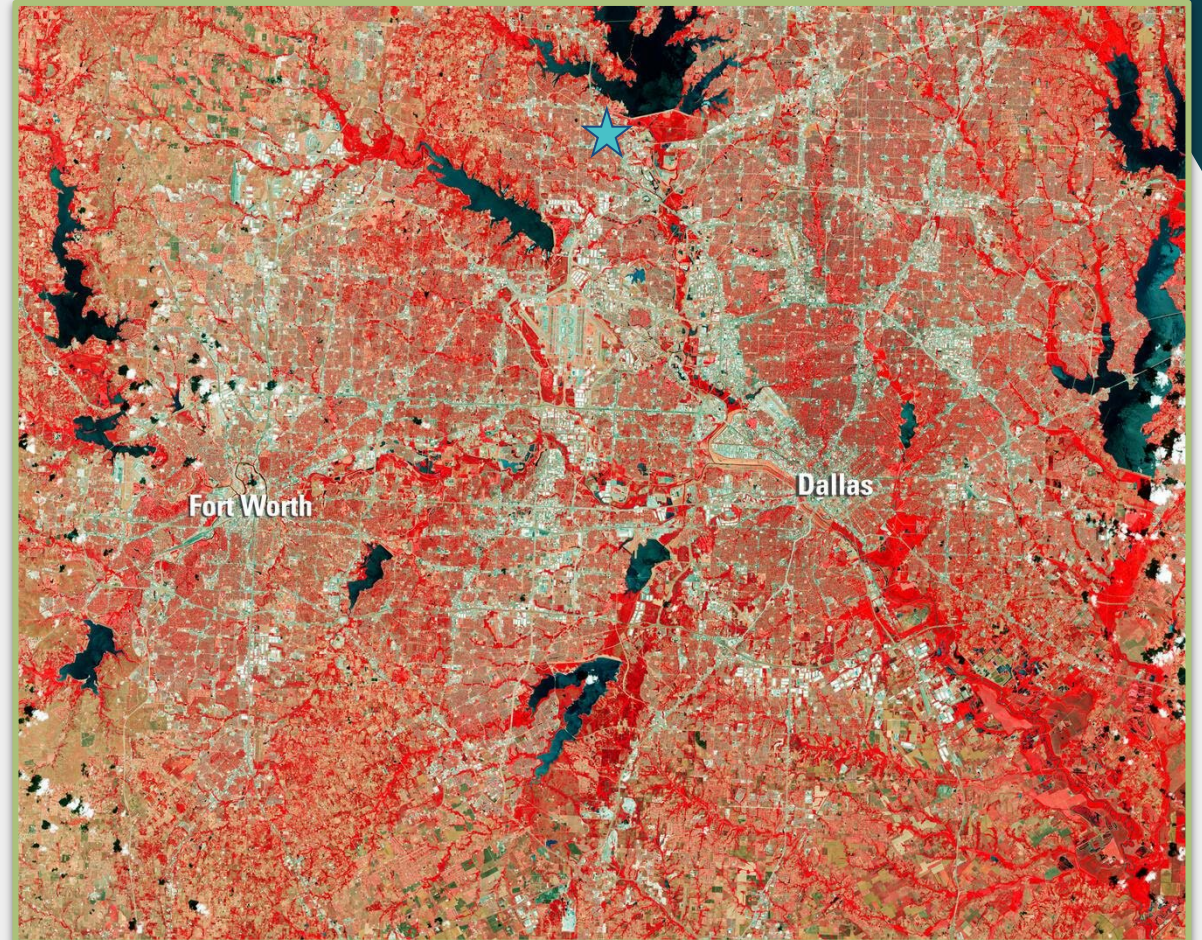
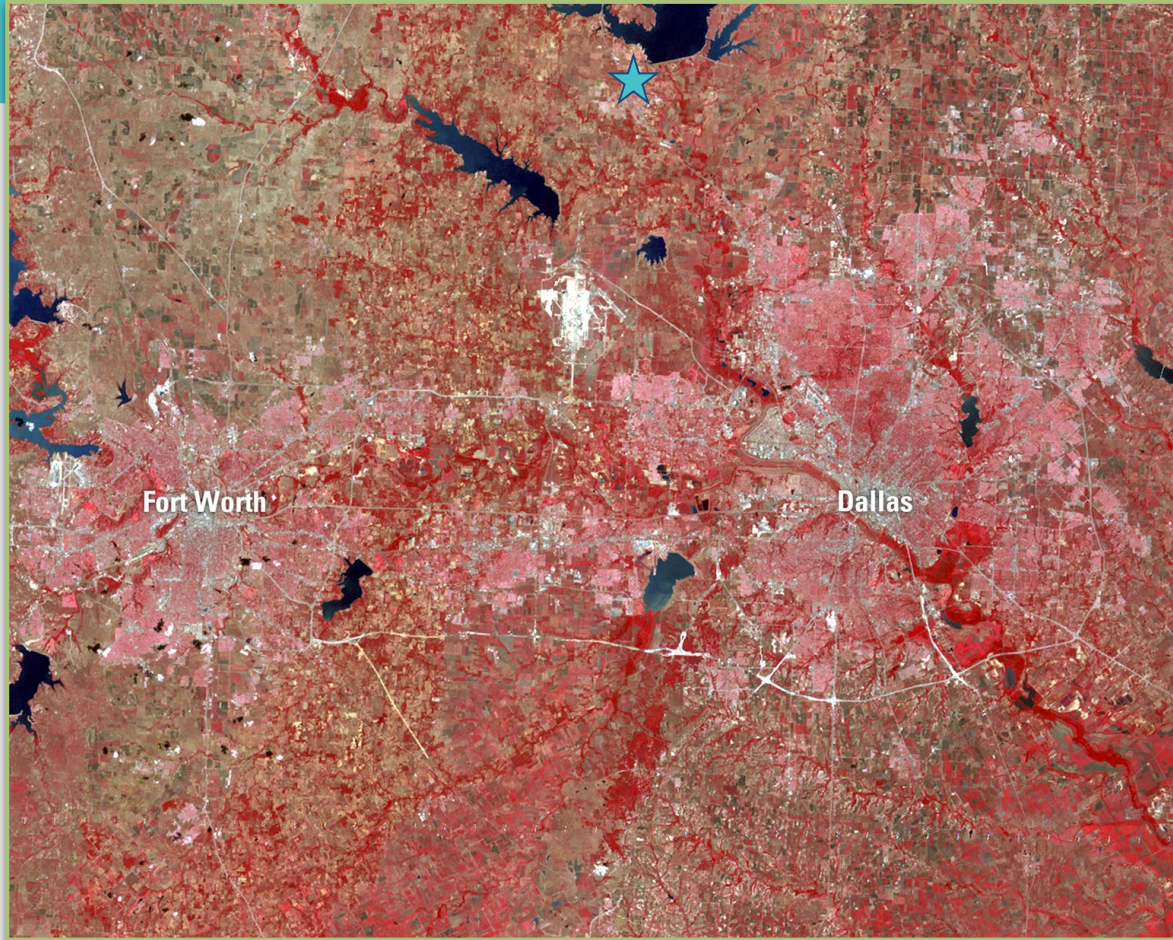


Dallas News

Texas needs smart, long-range water policies



DFW's Past



1972-2022

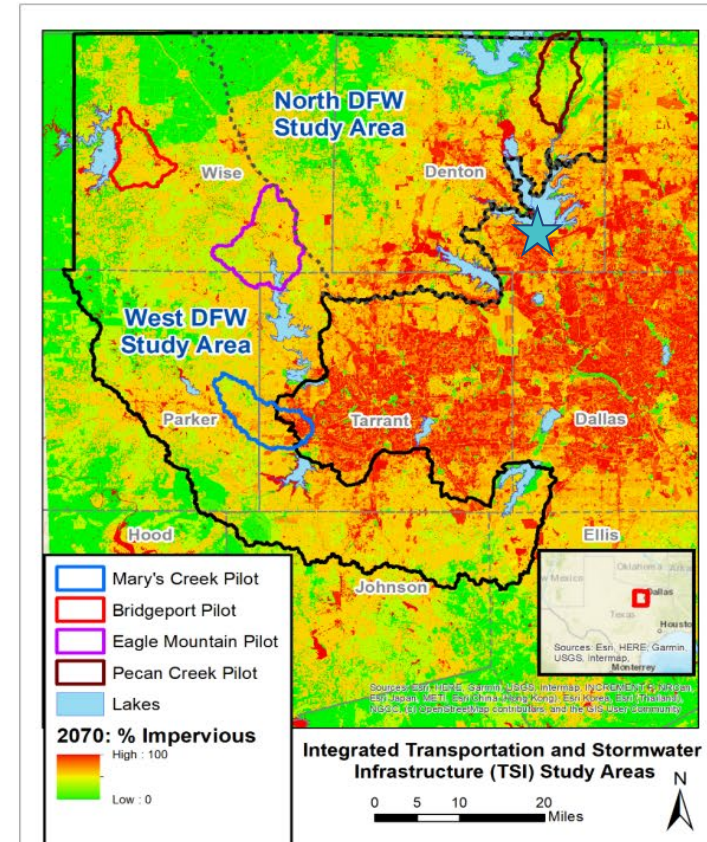
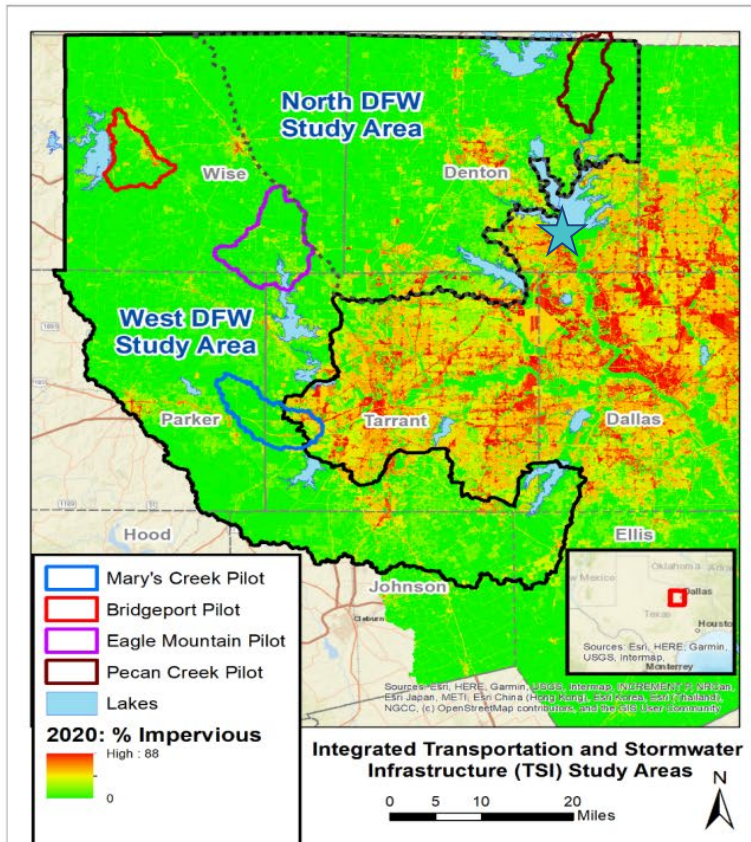
DFW's Future

Background: Impacts of Typical Urbanization

2020 (6.4% Impervious)



2070 (35.2% Impervious)



PROGRAMS

Keep Lewisville Beautiful

- Education Series
- Seed Libraries

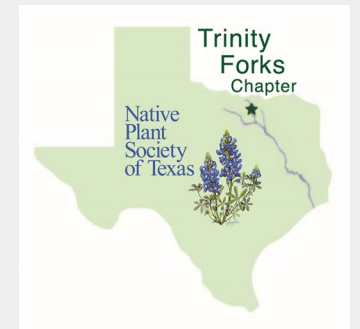


Roots for Wings

- Certified Pollinator Garden Program
- Pilot in 2023
 - 40 participants
 - Day Long Workshop
 - Resources and guidance
 - Certification process
- Formal Programs in 2024 and 2025
 - 69 total participants
- 11 Certified Gardens to Date
- Demonstration Garden at Carey Animal Shelter
- Next Phase - Commercial Properties



Denton County
Master Gardener
Association



ROOTS FOR WINGS



FACING PUBLIC PUSH BACK

Brace yourself: the next slides depict what is is like to handle community feedback.

Politics. Education. Action.



 **Mary Jones Principe**
June 20, 2022 · 🌐

arrive : Please mow your grass! Embarrassment.

😂😱 Terri Graves Domenech, Ganesh Ramaswamy and 56 others

50 comments

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share



Debi Lambert

May 22 at 4:07 PM · 🌐

...

I want to know what is with the "No Mow Zone" on Valley Ridge Blvd. , in front of Solea and the First Baptist Church. I've seen other spots that have flowers growing - NOT HERE! It is a collection of weeds. Tall overgrown, ugly weeds. There's even smaller trees popping up. No mow zone for what? Snakes and mice?



Scott Higginbotham, Kimberly Anne and 45 others

112 comments

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share

May 8 · 🌐 **Abraham**
I understand that the city wanted to have the no mow zones to show off the flowers. Problem those areas are 90%+ weeds and grass. It looks really bad. Need to mow!

👍 Like

💬 Comment

Carol Longacre, Trista Willeford and 118 others

➦ Share

212 comments



Bin Calvin Top contributor

What did your council person say when u called



2w Like Reply Share





Marty Murphy
Lewisville didn't learn anything about that unsightly varmint infested... mound



2w Like Reply Share



Bobby Walker Top contributor

It takes about 3 years to establish. The first few years it's not going to be pretty.

2w Like Reply Share



4



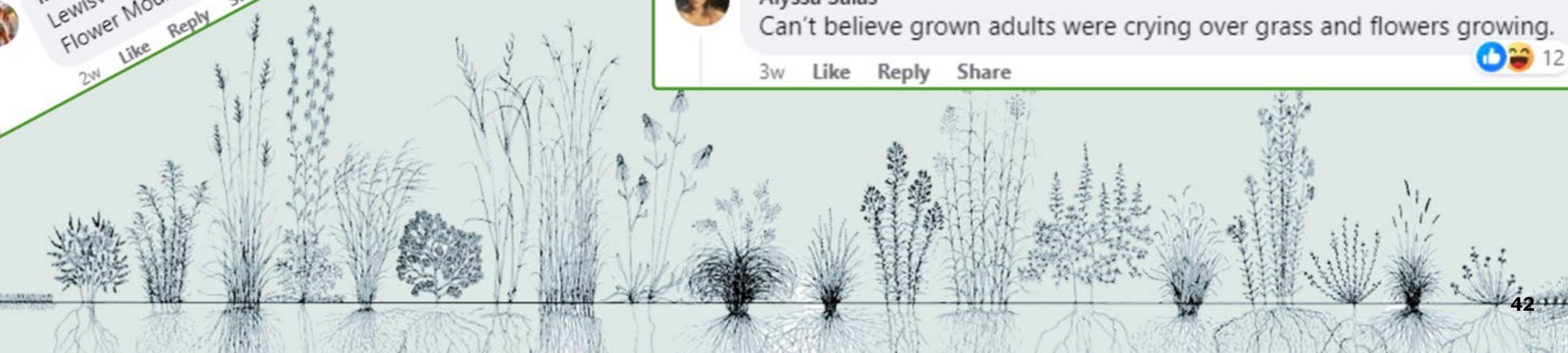
Alyssa Salas

Can't believe grown adults were crying over grass and flowers growing.

3w Like Reply Share



12





Debi Lambert

May 22 at 4:07 PM · 🌐

...

I want to know what is with the "No Mow Zone" on Valley Ridge Blvd. , in front of Solea and the First Baptist Church. I've seen other spots that have flowers growing - NOT HERE! It is a collection of weeds. Tall overgrown, ugly weeds. There's even smaller trees popping up. No mow zone for what? Snakes and mice?



Scott Higginbotham, Kimberly Anne and 45 others

112 comments



Like



Comment



Share

Top comments ▼



Bobbie Jautaun Williams Top contributor

But they sure will file ordinance notices on individuals if they claim their lawn is a butterfly habitat!!!

...

2w Like Reply Share



Lewisville City Hall ✓ Top contributor

Bobbie Jautaun Williams There is a program available for residents to participate. There is more to it than no-mow. It involves soil preparation, proper plant selection, seeding, and periodic removal of unwanted invasives. To simply describe it as not mowing leaves out a lot of important detail.

<https://www.cityoflewisville.com/.../sust.../roots-for-wings>



CITYOFLEWISVILLE.COM

Roots For Wings Residential Pollinator Program | City of Lewisville, TX



2w Like Reply Share



8

ARMING COUNCIL WITH DATA

iNaturalist

University of North Texas

Presentations

Staff Presentations

Experiential Learning

Over 250 taxa have been observed all time

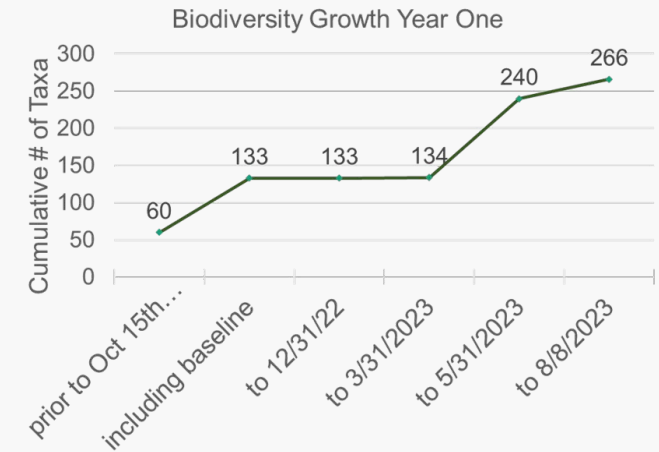
133 taxa since treatment initiated



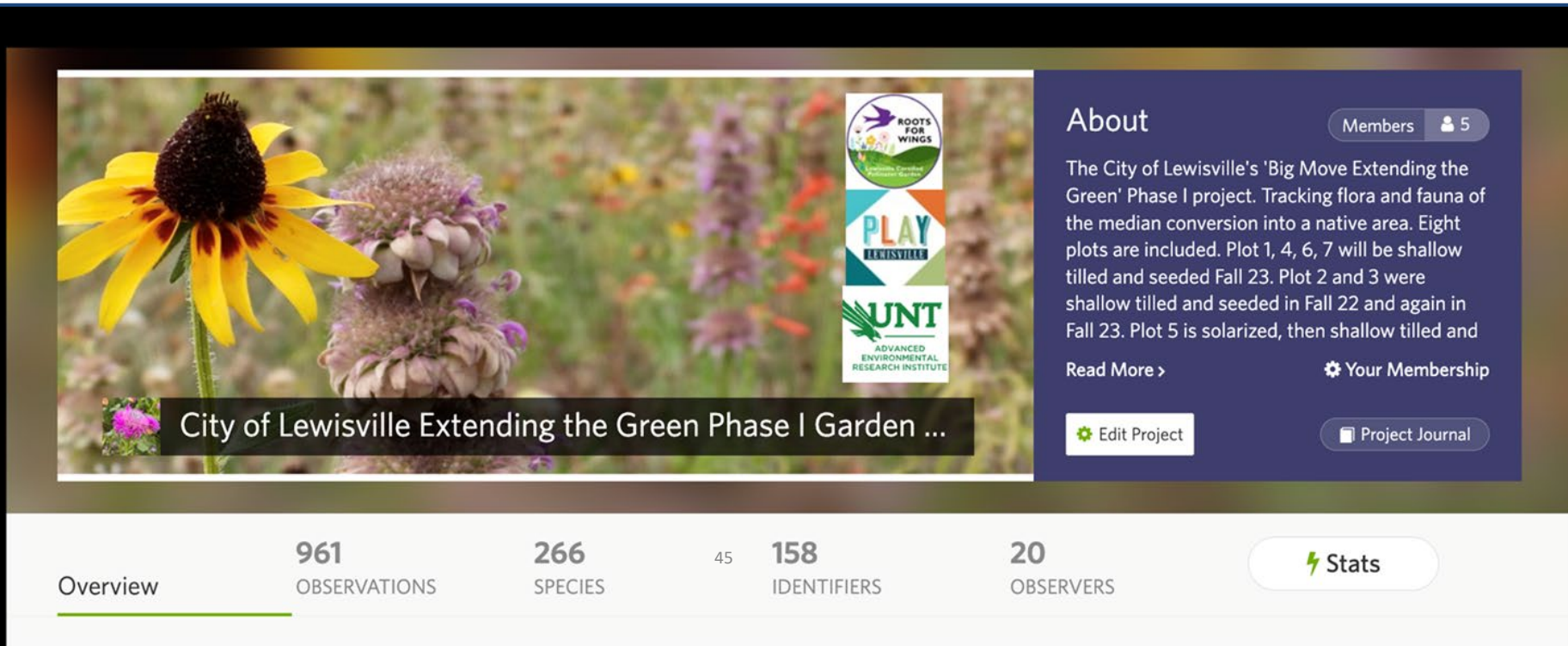
142 plants, 86 insects, and 5 spiders



15 birds, 3 mammals, and 13 Fungi



Tracking biodiversity growth with iNaturalist



The screenshot shows the iNaturalist project page for 'City of Lewisville Extending the Green Phase I Garden ...'. The header features a large image of a yellow flower and a purple flower, with a small inset image of a purple flower. To the right of the image are three logos: 'ROOTS FOR WINGS', 'PLAY LEWISVILLE', and 'UNT ADVANCED ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE'. The 'About' section on the right describes the project as 'The City of Lewisville's 'Big Move Extending the Green' Phase I project. Tracking flora and fauna of the median conversion into a native area. Eight plots are included. Plot 1, 4, 6, 7 will be shallow tilled and seeded Fall 23. Plot 2 and 3 were shallow tilled and seeded in Fall 22 and again in Fall 23. Plot 5 is solarized, then shallow tilled and seeded in Fall 23.' Below the 'About' section are links for 'Read More >', 'Your Membership', 'Edit Project', and 'Project Journal'. The 'Overview' section at the bottom shows statistics: 961 OBSERVATIONS, 266 SPECIES, 45 IDENTIFIERS, and 20 OBSERVERS. A 'Stats' button is also present.

City of Lewisville Extending the Green Phase I Garden ...

About

Members 5

The City of Lewisville's 'Big Move Extending the Green' Phase I project. Tracking flora and fauna of the median conversion into a native area. Eight plots are included. Plot 1, 4, 6, 7 will be shallow tilled and seeded Fall 23. Plot 2 and 3 were shallow tilled and seeded in Fall 22 and again in Fall 23. Plot 5 is solarized, then shallow tilled and seeded in Fall 23.

Read More > Your Membership

Edit Project Project Journal

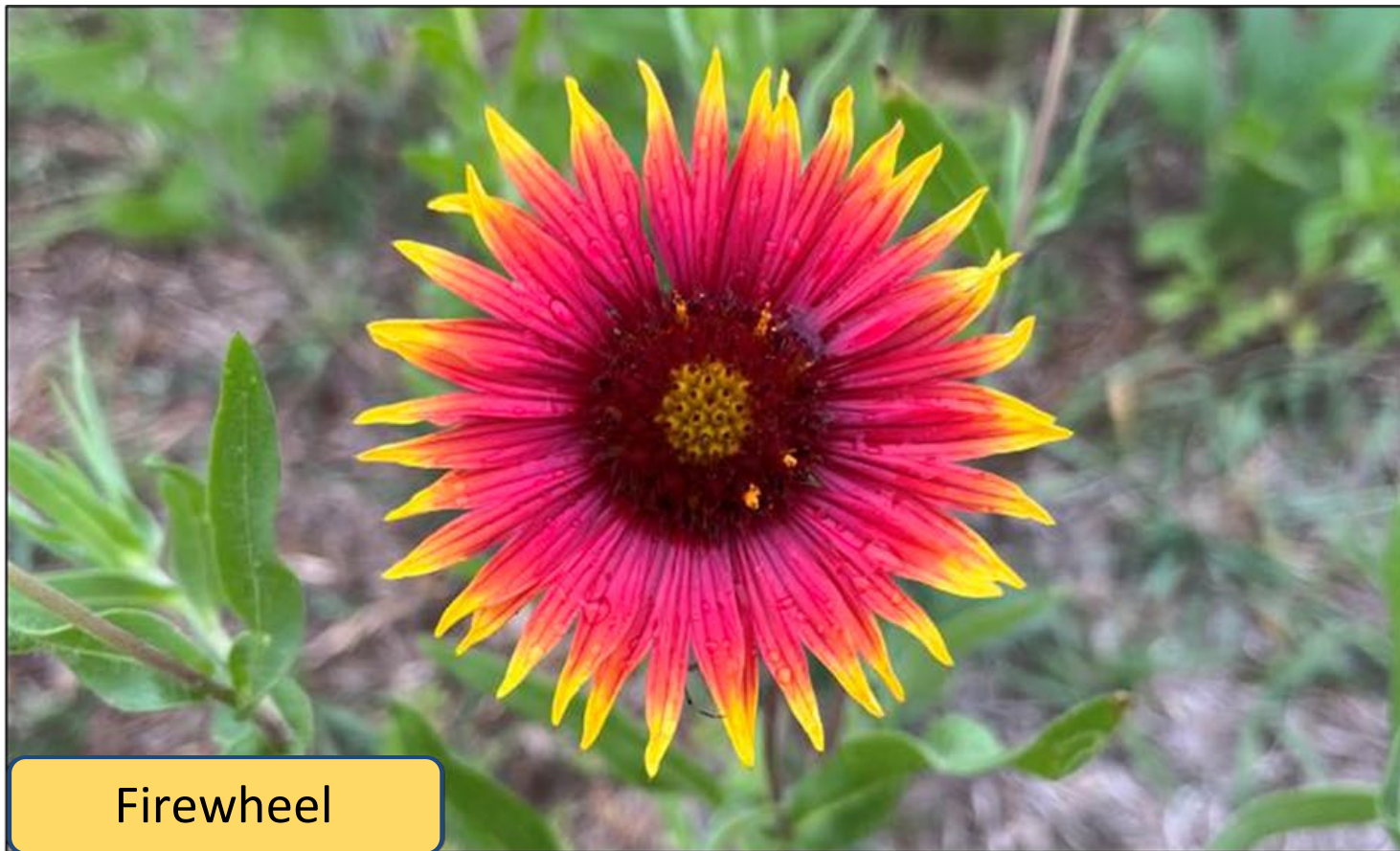
Overview 961 OBSERVATIONS 266 SPECIES 45 IDENTIFIERS 20 OBSERVERS Stats

iNaturalist information

number of observations prior to project	56
number of observations all time to August 2023	961
number of observers	20
number of identifiers	158
number of taxa recorded	266



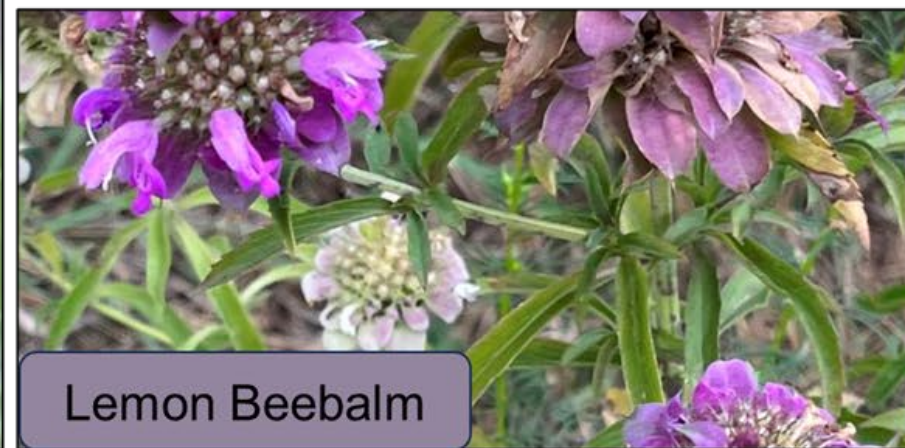
[Click here to see project](#)



Firewheel



Texas Yellow-Star



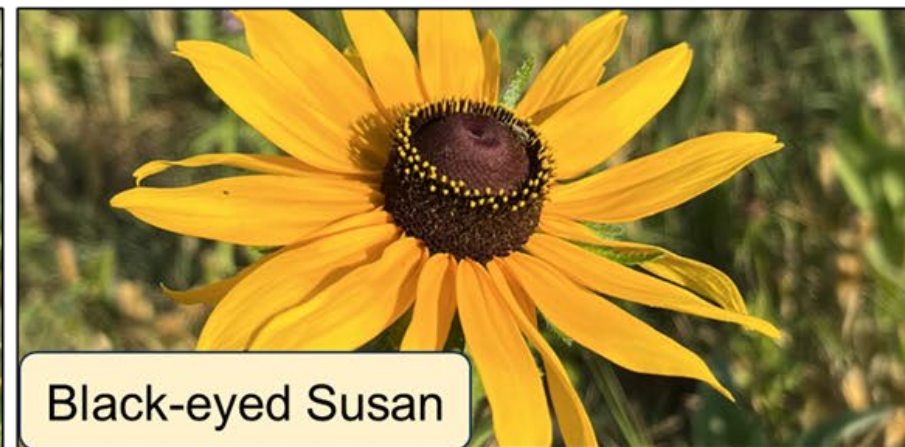
Lemon Beebalm



Standing Cypress



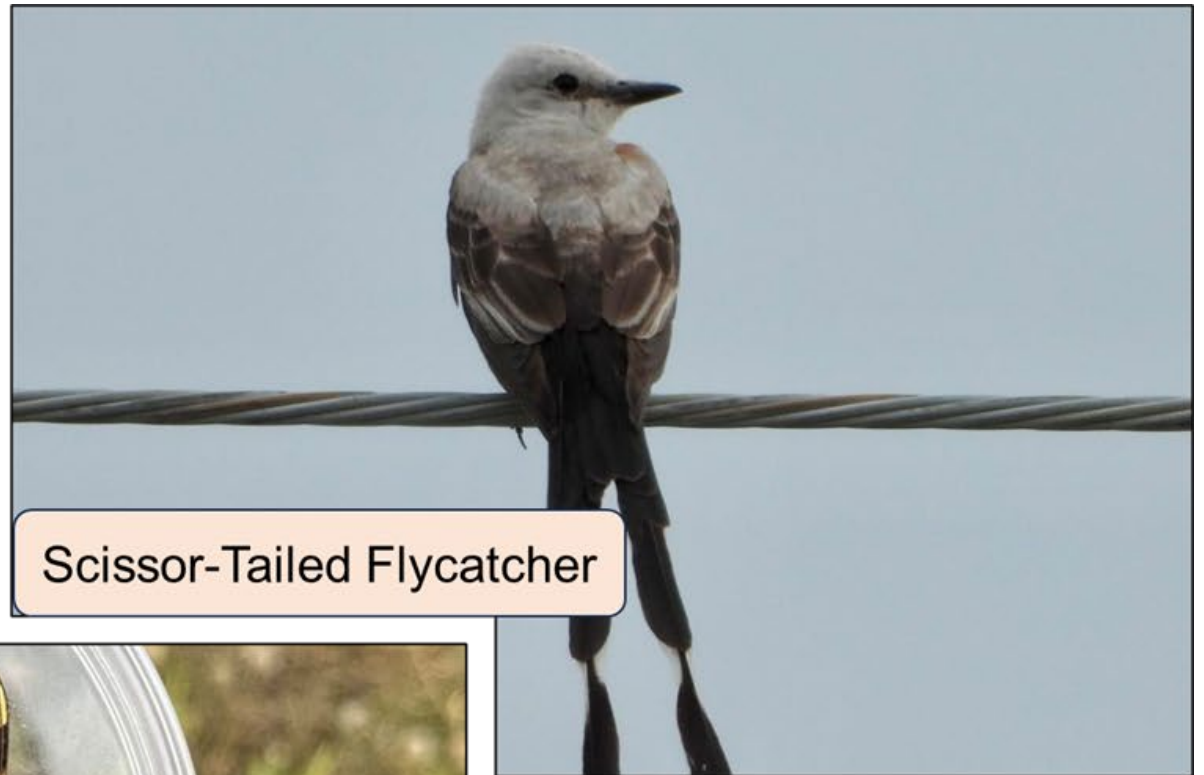
Bluebonnet



Black-eyed Susan



Western Kingbird



Scissor-Tailed Flycatcher



American Bumblebee



Halloween Pennant



Checkered-skipper



ANNUAL SAVINGS



ACREAGE	CONTRACT SAVINGS	IN HOUSE SAVINGS	COMBINED SAVINGS	IN HOUSE HOURS SAVINGS
42.76	\$103,741.10	\$42,020.58	\$145,761.68	382.2

- **Other savings and benefits**

- Water and irrigation
- Ambient heat
- Erosion control and mitigation
- Community signature

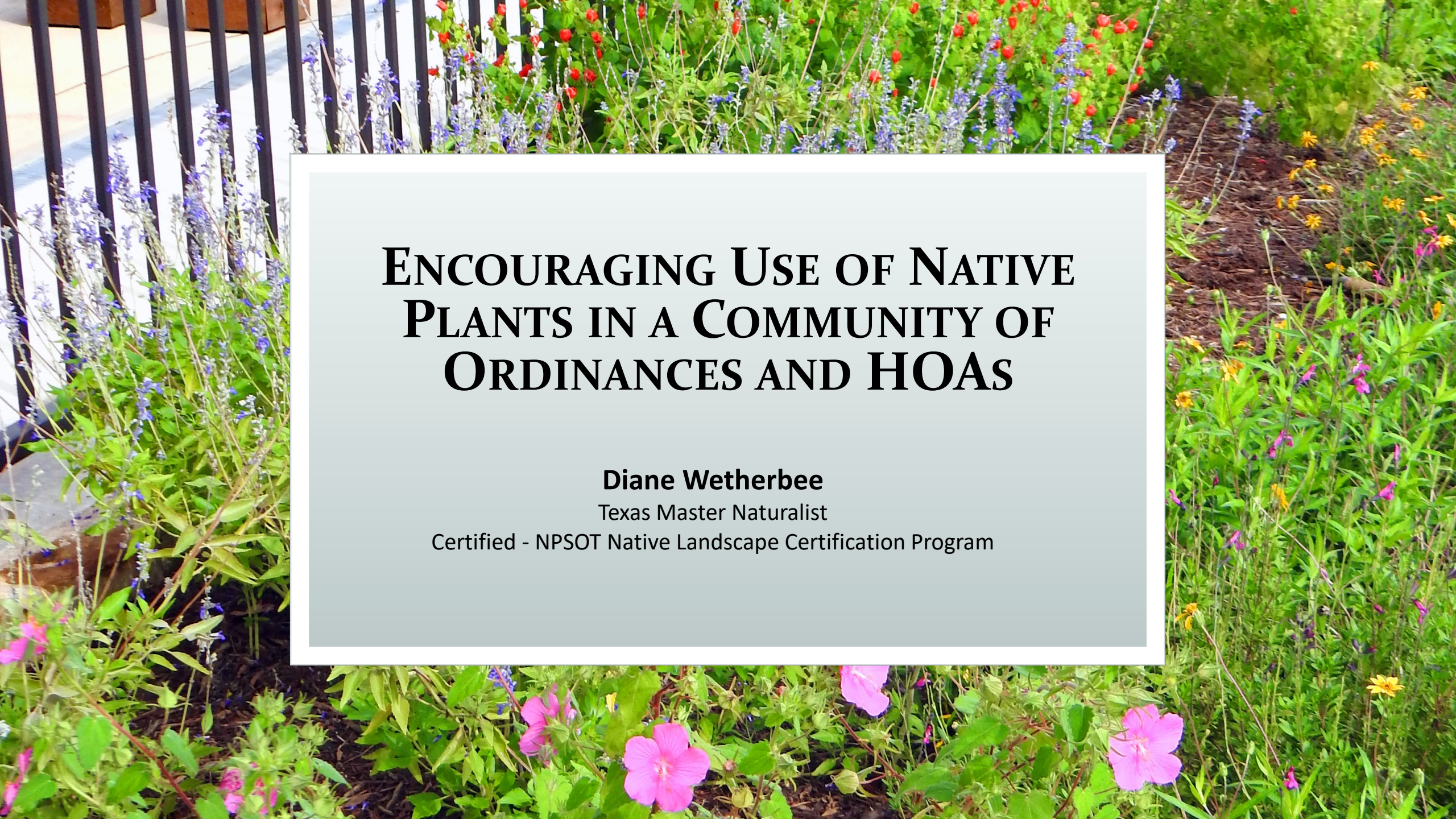
QUESTIONS?



Speaker Introduction



Diane Wetherbee
Texas Master
Naturalist,



ENCOURAGING USE OF NATIVE PLANTS IN A COMMUNITY OF ORDINANCES AND HOAs

Diane Wetherbee

Texas Master Naturalist

Certified - NPSOT Native Landscape Certification Program



LET'S TALK NATIVE LANDSCAPING

WHAT ARE NATIVE PLANTS?



- A plant that has occurred naturally in a particular place without human introduction
- Our native pollinators and other insects and wildlife have evolved with our native plants – food, shelter, nesting material, nesting sites

WHAT ARE NATIVE PLANTS?

- Our native plants have adapted to our sometimes-challenging Texas environment by developing deep root systems.
 - Allows plants to find and absorb water from deep underground
 - Improves soil infiltration; less runoff; improves water quality
 - Increases carbon sequestration
 - Improves soil quality by adding organic material deep underground





BENEFITS OF NATIVE LANDSCAPES TO NEIGHBORHOODS

NATIVE LANDSCAPES BENEFIT US ALL

- Increased biodiversity –
 - When a disease or pest attacks one plant, it won't wipe out everyone's landscape (e.g., rose rosette)
 - Offers a buffet to meet the needs of a variety of native critters
- Reduced water usage
 - Plants are adapted to our periods of flood and drought
 - More native plants killed by overwatering than underwatering



NATIVE LANDSCAPES BENEFIT US ALL



- Reduces the need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides
 - Native plants evolved with the insects in that region
 - Native plants are adapted to that area's soil conditions
- Lowers maintenance costs
 - Cost savings on water bills
 - Reduced yard maintenance requirements
 - Reduced need for costly fertilizers and pesticides

THERE ARE OTHER ADVANTAGES, TOO

- Conservation of diminished water resources during a drought period
- Helps prevent pollution of surface and ground water from harmful runoff
- Attracts beautiful butterflies, hummingbirds, and other wildlife to our yards
- Increased aesthetic value and curb appeal
- Pride in knowing you are doing something significant to protect and beautify our community



A photograph of a garden scene. In the background, a black metal fence with vertical bars is visible. In front of the fence, there are several tall, thin plants with purple flowers. In the foreground, there are pink hibiscus flowers and other green foliage. The text "WHY DO HOAS AND CITIES SAY NO TO NATIVE LANDSCAPES?" is overlaid on a grey rectangular background in the upper right portion of the image.

WHY DO HOAS AND CITIES SAY NO TO NATIVE LANDSCAPES?

HOAs ARE HERE TO STAY



- Estimated 26% of U.S. population lives in an HOA neighborhood, and it's increasing
- HOAs and city codes exist to protect the homeowners' interest and investment.

REASONS HOAs RESIST ENCOURAGING NATIVE LANDSCAPES



- HOAs favor uniformity in landscapes
 - Mowed green non-native turf grasses
 - Similar shrubs in front of all houses, all trimmed into neat rectangles or balls
 - List of approved plants often composed mainly of non-natives

REASONS CITIES AND HOAs RESIST ENCOURAGING NATIVE LANDSCAPES



- Traditionalists think of native landscapes as weedy or unkempt
- General lack of knowledge about native plants and landscaping
- Resistance to change



OVERCOMING CHALLENGES TO NATIVE LANDSCAPES

CHANGE TERMINOLOGY



- Xeriscaping means cactus and gravel to many – usually not acceptable to HOAs in most parts of Texas
- Wildscaping implies an unkempt “weedy” patch

CHANGE TERMINOLOGY

- Native landscape, native plantings, pollinator plants, bird friendly - all sound more intentional and less disheveled
- Waterwise plants sound like a solution to an increasingly common problem
- Native Plant Society of Texas's definition of "wildscape" (I'd present it as "native plant landscape"):
 - "...a way of designing your home's landscape to attract and benefit birds and pollinators by providing the required food, water, and shelter."



PROVIDE EDUCATION



- Provide speakers to community groups
 - NPSOT, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Regional Water Districts
 - Help educate on beauty, plant choice, benefits, landscape principles, maintenance
- Make handouts available to residents of the neighborhood – many free on websites of groups mentioned above
- Post photos of beautiful native landscapes in the community on neighborhood social media groups
- Collaborate with landscape professionals and recommend them whenever possible

MORE EDUCATION RESOURCES

- All area water utilities are running campaigns, sending out materials, and holding online and in-person programs to encourage:
 - Use of native water-wise plants
 - Reduced use of pesticides and herbicides
 - Proper irrigation techniques and amounts; maintenance of irrigation systems
- Area libraries have programs on native landscapes – spread the word to your neighborhood that they are available



NIBBLE AWAY AT THE PROBLEM

- Make it easy for non-gardeners to get started
 - Not all or nothing – encourage even small changes, a single plant or two
 - When someone asks where to buy plants, direct them to nurseries more apt to carry natives. Start with NPSOT's list of NICE nurseries (Natives Improve & Conserve Environments).



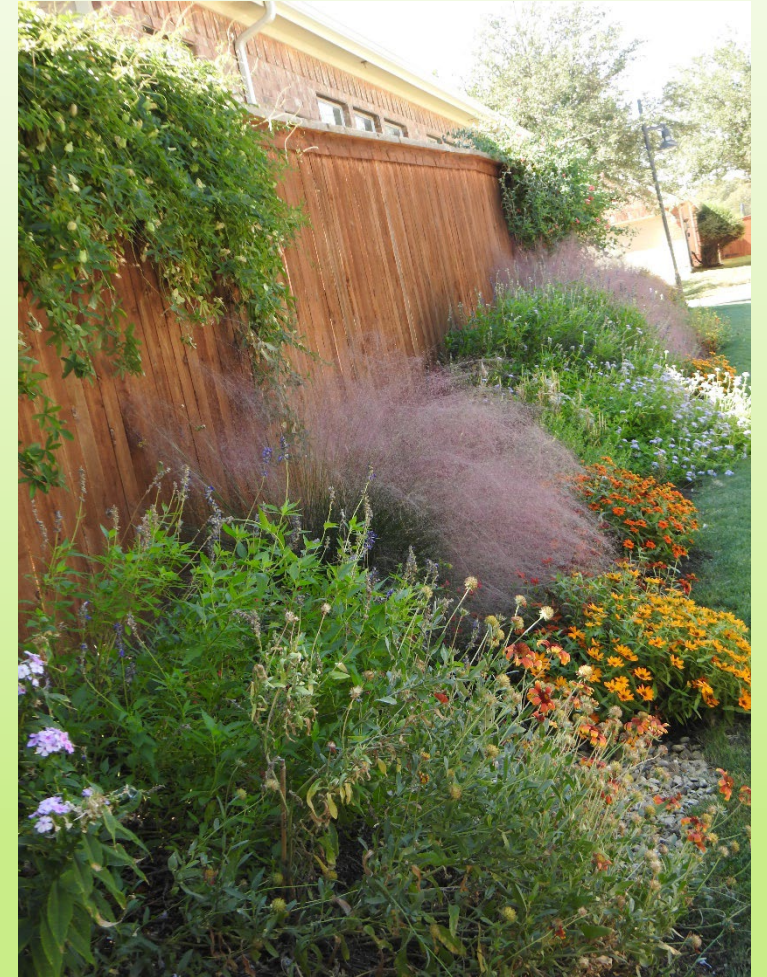
LEAD BY EXAMPLE



- Create a native landscape that looks intentional. NLCP classes can help with that.
- Put a neat border around your plantings
- Keep true weeds at bay
- Put up a sign explaining your native landscape
 - National Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Habitat
 - Monarch Waystation sign from Monarch Watch
 - Signs available for purchase online explaining your native garden
 - NPSOT just introduced a new sign
- Take a lesson from Lewisville and lead the way in city plantings and programs to encourage residents to plant natives

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

- Follow the requirements
- Plant with purpose
- Use predominantly native plants
- Use a variety of plants to have color all year round
- Make the beds look intentional – borders, cut back aggressive plants, etc. Doesn't have to look wild and out of control
- Use wildlife habitat principles – different heights, provide food (nectar/seeds/leaves), maybe a source of water (birdbath)
- Keep curb appeal high – maintain a kept look



WHAT ABOUT THE APPEAL PROCESS?



- Advocate for native plants
- Educate code enforcement or HOA board
- Clarify what are weeds and what are plants and their benefits. Natives suppress weeds!
- Play up your credibility – NPSOT Native Landscape Certification Program, NWF certified landscape, etc.
- Use recognized resources to show the plants are natives – NPSOT's lists, Wildflower Center, Texan by Nature, etc.

CITE THE LAW

- Texas Senate Bill 198, passed in 2013; Texas Property Code, Section 202.007
- Prevents HOAs from prohibiting the use of drought-resistant landscaping or water-conserving turf.
- HOAs can still require preliminary approval of any plans, but control is limited and must be reasonable
- HOAs can still require a certain amount of turf, that beds be clearly defined and neatly edged, certain types of mulching materials
- City codes still need to catch up; training of code enforcement personnel



A photograph of a garden. In the background, a black metal fence with vertical bars is visible. In front of the fence, there are several tall, thin plants with small purple flowers. In the foreground, there are green plants with large, bright pink hibiscus flowers. The ground is covered with green foliage and some yellow flowers.

WHAT'S NEXT?

ADVOCATE FOR NATIVE PLANTS



- Educate, educate, educate...politely
- Sell the benefits
- Encourage people to start somewhere, even with just one plant
- Plant a community native garden – look for grants
- Manage natural landscapes so they don't look unkempt
- Plan activities and education during Texas Native Plant Week

RESOURCES

- Hill Country Alliance: Model Language for HOAs
 - <https://hillcountryalliance.org/resources/hoaguide/>
- Guide to Passing Wildlife-Friendly Property Maintenance Ordinances
 - <https://www.nwf.org/MayorsMonarchPledge/Resources/landscaping-guide>
- Dealing with your Home Owners' Association
 - <https://www.npsot.org/resources/wildscaping-and-your-hoa/>
- City of Lewisville Roots for Wings Residential Pollinator Program
 - <https://www.cityoflewisville.com/about-us/city-services/sustainability/roots-for-wings>
- Hill Country Pollinator Garden Assistance & Recognition Program
 - <https://txmn.org/hillcountry/pgarp/>
- Texas Senate Bill 198 (2013)
 - <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/83R/billtext/html/SB00198F.HTM>

QUESTIONS?

Diane Wetherbee
dwether1@gmail.com



Questions & Discussion



Webinar Feedback

- Please provide your feedback on today's webinar in this brief survey. Thank you!

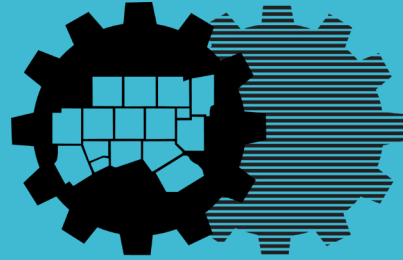
[Provide Webinar Feedback Here](#)

Water for North Texas Online Library

- Resources related to today's topic and other water-related subjects can be found on the [Water for North Texas Online Library](#)

Wrap-Up

- If you have submitted an RSVP for this webinar, you will receive an email with the presentation slides and a link to the recording.
- All webinar slides and recordings are posted on NCTCOG's website under the green banner, "Webinars" here:
<https://www.nctcog.org/envir/natural-resources/water-resources>
- If you did not RSVP and would like these webinar materials, please email aknox@nctcog.org.



North Central Texas
Council of Governments

Thank you for attending!

NCTCOG Webinar
November 13, 2025

Alyssa Knox, NCTCOG
aknox@nctcog.org



*This project was funded by
the U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency through
the Texas Commission on
Environmental Quality.*