LRWA Watershed Report

*Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily shared by LRWA

Editor/Layout & occasional author: Linda Fawcett

SELECTIONS FROM THE ANNUAL HILL COUNTRY ALLIANCE (HCA) SUMMIT, Sept. 25

For the 5th year in a row, LRWA sent representatives to HCA's annual summit (theme: *Rooted in Relience*), and this was the third consecutive year that LRWA was an official Grassroots Sponsor. Attending this year: LRWA Board member, **Glen Coleman**, and LRWA President, **Linda Fawcett**.

Not surprising after this past summer, this year's summit focused on water, with added emphasis on flood recovery and the Hill Country's challenging climate.

Challenges of the Hill County Climate

First speaker; **John Nielsen-Gammon** ***(atmospheric scientist, Texas A&M & Texas state climatologist).*** "Weather shapes the landscape." The special weather changes in the Hill Country is what distinguishes it from the rest of Texas. Temperatures in Texas can vary from cold air straight from the Arctic North to South – "flirts with freezing," while the opposite happens in summer. There is a 20-30% difference in weather from North to South – kind of unusual compared to the rest of Texas.

Water demands are increasing. Some reservoirs like the O.H. Ivie Reservoir (on the Colorado and Concho Rivers, located in Concho, Runnels, and Coleman counties) will never fill up again. The line between West and East Texas (in terms of not enough rain) is steadily creeping eastward. Canyon Lake (relatively near New Braunfels, between Austin & San Antonio) has not been near full since 2022.

The hills of the Hill Country affect the air alternately lifting up and down that in turn directly affects rainfall. Also, rainfall in the Hill Country is so erratic – often caused by hurricanes and tropical depressions. And... Even if the Hill Country "looks OK" – as in we've had "normal" rainfall for a couple of years – rainfall has declined significantly in the last 50 years – the reservoirs will continue to decline in terms of water levels. Climate change models have both Texas getting rainier or hotter – big variations. This extended period of drought and erratic rainfall is expected to continue.

From 1900-1960s, droughts were common in the Hill Country (especially during the 1950s). Since the '60s – no prolonged drought until 2011, and then again beginning 2022 – that may very well become the second worst on record (even if more or less "normal" rainfall continues). So we're looking at a massive downward trend.

Balcones escarpment, Texas Hill Country

Much of the Hill Country is located in the **Balcones Escarpment.** It is a natural cliff face and geological feature extending across central and southern Texas, formed by the Balcones Fault Zone. It marks the boundary

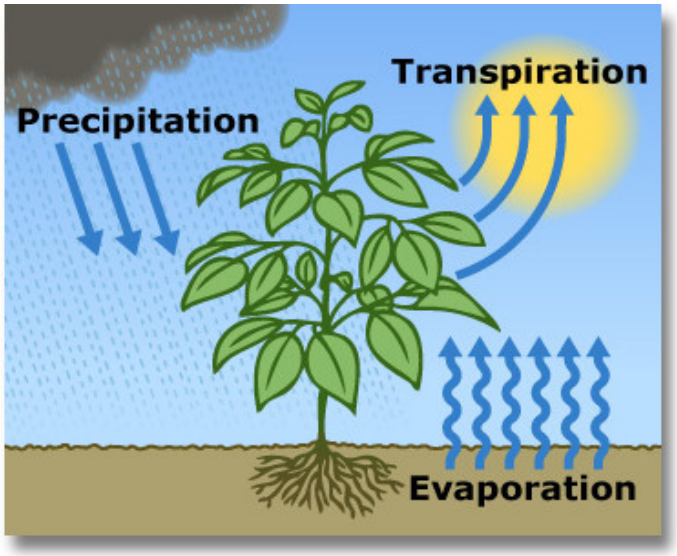
HCA Summit Continued next page...

between the Gulf Coastal Plain and the Hill Country, with a significant elevation change and the Austin Chalk limestone formation. It is very prone to 100-year floods even though mostly isolated events. Examples: 1) Sept. 1921, east of Austin 36" in 18 hours, 2) July 1932 – 20" in Hunt in 6 hours, 3) May 1935, just north of D'Hanis, 22" in less than 3 hours – a record. ETC ETC leading up to the big floods of 2025.

There has been around a 15% increase in 100-year floods in Texas and this trend will likely continue because of climate change. However, temperatures will go up consistently even as total rainfall stays the same, thus soil moisture will decrease and average runoff amounts will also decrease, making us feel droughts more quickly and acutely.

And then there's WILDFIRE. Texas now has 2 seasons: March-April and July-August. The worst conditions for Wildfire are set up by 1) lots of rain the previous year to build up the grass amounts, 2) cold, dry weather over the winter that dries out vegetation and the soil, 3) hot, dry weather continuing even in the Fall.

VEGETATION LEADS TO TRANSPIRATION…



Transpiration is the process by which plants lose water vapor from their leaves and stems into the atmosphere. This loss of water vapor is essential for plant survival because the transpiration process pulls water and dissolved minerals up from the roots, supplies water for photosynthesis, and helps cool the plant. Bare ground cannot support transpiration, a bad thing. This leads to 1) higher soil and air temperatures, 3) reduced water transport of essential minerals from the soil into plants, 4) increased soil erosion, 5) rapid moisture loss that further hinders plant growth, 6) **Disrupted water cycles – transpiration plays a major role in the water cycle** by returning moisture to the atmosphere, where it can contribute to cloud formation and rainfall. *The absence of transpiration in an area disrupts this natural cycle.*

HOW DO DEVELOPMENTS FIT INTO THIS?

1. Too much impervious surface, that when it rains, enhances the power of the continuing large amount of runoff.
2. Negative effects of clearcutting natural vegetation to make new developments.
3. Not enough water available. It may be technically feasible to import water from East Texas, but just NOT politically feasible.

Remedies for Bare Ground

1) Mulching, 2) planting groundcover (low-growing plants that compete with weeds), 3) sowing seeds of native grasses and wildflowers that also supports local wildlife and pollinators, 4) erosion control on slopes using plant "mats."

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HCA SUMMIT: LAND STEWARDSHIP LESSONS FOR DROUGHTS and FLOODS. *Panel: Ryan McGillicuddy, TPWD (Moderator); Shelby Taber, Upper Guadalupe River Authority; Daniel Oppenheimer, Hill Country Alliance; Joan Bryant, San Antonio River Authority.*

Water crosses so much private land in Texas (private land is 97% of Texas).

Three questions: 1) Strategies for promoting land stewardship; 2) How have recent events influenced you? 3) What Are Strategies for Drought?

Shelby Taber (upper Guadalupe River Authority/GRA):

In 2019 the Guadalupe River Authority (GRA) concentrated on improving highly eroded riparian areas, such as taking invasives out, putting in native grasses, and terracing property (but unfortunately the terracing was taken away during the Kerrville flood). Needless to say, the Guadalupe area was severely impacted by the July 4 flood. GRA personnel had to totally shift gears to help people along the river, then debris clean-up began. This process was difficult because of the misguided "help" of the State – bulldozing that lost a lot of plants. Many resources had to be quickly re-organized and identified. Everywhere different types of restoration are now required, tailoring solutions to individuals and continued stewardship to landowners. Urban dwellers are more concerned with "landscaping," but are being urged to be water-wise and add water capture. Another good strategy: offering grants to "smart" (nature-based) land developers.

Daniel Oppenheimer (Hill Country Alliance/HCA, Land specialist)

Our major focus has been to conduct many workshops, such as hillside stewardship (to mitigate erosion) and strategize to pull different entities together. The Hill Country has 17 counties. Even though most of Oppenheimer's focus for several years has been conservation at or near Camp Bullis (near San Antonio). Kerr County is included in the Camp Bullis area so his team immediately went there to help directly. They held four events in Ingram, Kerrville, Center Point, and Comfort, and developed one-page resources on how to **reuse** woody debris (versus bulldozing it away). A 6-month job done in 6 days! The HCA Land team is also growing many, many riparian trees to replant in the flood zone – ALL HCA Land programs have reshifted in light of July 4. New workshops are now planned related to floods and their aftermath. Much focus has been and will continue to be working with landowners, both generational and new, meeting them "where they're at," teaching land stewardship, how to read the land, what are the stressors, and where and why there is erosion. Also, sometimes finding financial help for landowners. One landowner at a time, and some landowners continue the work by building pro-conservation relationships with their neighbors.

Joan Bryant (San Antonio River Authority/ SARA)

Bryant grew up exploring rivers and drainage areas, and has worked with flood prevention, flood mitigation, flood warning systems, and stream restoration. Bexar County has dedicated $21 million to upgrade river/stream gauges and warning systems, making sure all is ready and updated, although some of this will take several years to complete. Another good project: all data is (or will be) uploaded in real time and linked to Google Maps. Therefore, when driving, you can re-route your trip when needed.

Not surprisingly, the focus of the San Antonio River Authority is mostly urban, providing technical information and help in getting FEMA funds. Also floodplain mapping. With David Oppenheimer's (HCA) help, the SARA received a grant – the ***Camp Bullis Sentinel Landscape*** – looking for "win-wins" that both help nearby landowners and communities ***and*** benefitting the military camp. SARA works on novel ideas with mostly non-official cooperation. But SARA did receive a lot of funding from the Dept. of Defense – especially to control floods using natural plant and nature-based solutions – to make resilient landscapes – right now still in the designing phase, then implementation can begin.

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HCA SUMMIT KEYNOTE, ANGELA BLANCHARD: Leading in an Era of Upheaval

Website: https://angelablanchard.com

Angela Blanchard (retired from the City of Houston) "Born for Storms" (slogan from her website) - Angela's three decades of experience supports leaders across multiple sectors in navigating growth, change, and upheaval from natural disasters, and developing solutions for organizations, communities, and cities around the world.

"FIRST LESSON: no one is coming..."

First lesson:

"No one is coming." So we need to move at the speed of need, and go to work.

So many of us see our own area as attractive. But even if we try to be good stewards of a place and want to be safe and stable, the reality is: **we are all vulnerable**.

- Catastrophe can be personal and/or community-level.
- Disaster stays as a "Before and After marker" in our lives. (For Houston, the Before and After was Katrina.)
- After a Disaster – there is no "normal" – it can only be a new normal. Resilience.

The Seven Stages of Recovery (from a disaster):

1. **Survival/ Sanctuary** – from Terror of Abandonment to the Relief of Rescue. "I am still here, but where are my loved ones and my pets?" Survival – who can stand up quickly?
2. **Chaos/ Collisions** – how to navigate the "rescue systems" – dealing with inevitable bureaucracy and rules while under emotional stress, anger and frustration. Political realities, navigating "eligibility."
3. **Limbo** – the inevitable Lull: the appearance of giving up/leaving, internal resignation. What was easy is now difficult. What was difficult now seems impossible. A fish out of water; suspended, exhausted. Many are looking for Wisdom, Watching for Signs. "We no longer have roots; we have 'aerials.'"
4. **Resignation/ Acceptance** – Having to maintain an acceptance of moving goal-posts and how long it all takes. Also, there is an art to "forgiving anyway."
5. **Reckoning** – Comes at about a year after the event. An inventory of your assets.
6. **Building Anew** – Opportunities appear out of the damage. A mismatch of what is needed in a year versus what's available, continues to be one of the hardest parts for Leaders. Biggest needs: A power supply, safe water, and feeling secure.
7. **Home Again**

Advice for LEADERS:

- It is very harmful to tell another's story. So easy to be at odds with reality...
- What is hardest is controlling the many, many people who want to help!
- Let there be no invisible people – pockets of rage and despair will quickly turn too dangerous/ too expensive. A leader always says: "Do we have Everybody?"

HCA Summit KEYNOTE continued next page

HCA Summit KEYNOTE cont.....

- Know all your fellow leaders, have their cell #s and know what they do well.
- But allow everything that is not destructive. **Especially Art and Music! Get the artists back! Art communicates across languages.** An example: If having to conduct meetings in multiple languages, break it up with children's performances.
- Whole communities are suspended for such a long time. Smaller communities feel invisible.
- At every milestone, there will be gratitude and grief in equal measure, because when walking into the new, you will inevitably remember the lost. ("Take off your shoes for this place is holy.")
- Learn how to "build a funeral" – celebratory rituals – either for individuals or for entire communities. IT IS ALRIGHT TO MOURN PLACES. In acknowledging the lost, then the new can be embraced.
- Complaining hides the real hope for a better future. So ask: "What is it you're Imagining?"
- Don't forget the first responders!
- REMEMBER that the PREDATORS will roll in also.

ALL SECTORS MUST JOIN – **Public, private, philanthropic.** It's a three-legged stool. Collaboration and improvisation are so often ignored, especially in Texas. Private money is more flexible. But know that there will be enough to go around; it's only a Distribution problem, not a scarcity problem. Long-term solutions must Guide short-term fixes.

Be Creative when looking ahead. Don't be afraid to entertain creative what-ifs. For example, what if the state of Texas designates the Hill Country as a region of 'special interest,' and drafts legislation to protect it from irresponsible development?

"BE A GOOD ANCESTOR." Counties need to step up. Development NEEDS PRUDENT RESTRAINT.

THE LLANO RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE PLANTS NEW TREES AT THE JUNCTION CITY PARK

On the morning of September 27, LRWA Board members and volunteers began planting seven native, riparian trees at the City Park, donated by the LRWA and Friendly Natives in Fredericksburg. Our LRWA tree expert is board member Glen Coleman, who was in charge of this project. This activity was also part of an annual party for old friends and newcomers alike to come find out what the LRWA is and has been doing!

Glen and volunteer Javier Lujan with the first tree, a Lacy Oak, in the ground!

BELOW: *excerpts from Linda's notes when she attended a Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance (GEAA) general members meeting in San Antonio on August 16, a meeting that also doubled as a Hill Country Alliance Regional Get-Together of other Hill Country grass-roots alliances.*

ONE MORE LOOK AT THE RESULTS OF THE 89TH FULL SESSION NOT PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ON*

* See also LRWA Watershed Reports: February 3, March 31, June 1, and especially July 24.

Compliments of Rachel Hanes, GEAA Policy Manager)

★ **WE MUST pass Proposition 4** (derived from HJR7) on the ballot in the General Election on November 4. (SEE INSET AT RIGHT.) We especially need to emphasize that the new money each year ***entering the Water Fund would potentially fund flood control infrastructure (Badly needed).*** And because many of us just received a lot of rain this summer means nothing to Texas' overall bigger water problems; therefore we need PROP 4's funds for sources of new water as well as funds for ongoing water conservation needs (like repairing or replacing infrastructure). All are covered! **PLEASE SPREAD THE WORD and help explain all this to your neighbors!**

★ **GOOD BILL Vetoed: Improvements to the Texas Water Trust.** The Texas Water Trust (TWT) is an important tool to ensure that Texas rivers, streams and springs keep flowing. Unused water rights can be held in the Trust to meet environmental or conservation needs, but the statute previously focused on authority over surface water donations. HB 4530 by Rep. Ramon Romero, Jr., would have enhanced

VOTE FOR PROP 4 (HJR 7) on November 4!

Alejandra Martinez, Texas Tribune: The ballot language: *"The constitutional amendment to dedicate a portion of the revenue derived from state sales and use taxes to the Texas water fund and to provide for the allocation and use of that revenue."*

What it means: Texas' water supply is facing numerous threats, including an increasing demand for water due to rapid population growth, millions of gallons of water leaking out of old infrastructure, and climate change contributing to more droughts and altering precipitation patterns. By one estimate, the state's municipal supply will not meet demand by 2030 if a major drought were to hit the state and no water solutions are implemented.

A Texas 2036 report estimated that the state needs nearly $154 billion by 2050 for water infrastructure, including $59 billion for water supply projects, $74 billion for leaky pipes and infrastructure maintenance, and $21 billion to fix broken wastewater systems.

To help the state boost and protect its water supply, state lawmakers are asking voters to approve $20 billion for water projects over the next two decades. If approved, up to $1 billion of sales tax revenue would be deposited into the Texas Water Fund each year starting in 2027. The money would go to fixing aging pipes and other infrastructure; developing and increasing new water sources, such as desalination; flood mitigation projects; and supporting conservation efforts to help meet water demands. The amendment would also give the Texas Water Development Board flexibility in distributing funds.

the Trust and its support for environmental flows by making a small but important clarification to the process to help facilitate the donation of groundwater rights. But although the bill passed, it was vetoed by Governor Abbott. In his veto proclamation, the Governor stated that HB 4530 "fails to explain how groundwater percolating below the surface of the Earth is to be transferred to a surface water trust." (Editor comment: he seems to have missed the point about the purpose of the TWT.)

Comments on Good Bills that passed or at least need mentioning:

- ★ Water Utilities will now have to report all water losses from leaky infrastructure – not just cities, but now private investor utilities will also have to account for themselves.
- ★ Representative **Cody Harris** (Republican) filed five good bills that actually (get ready...) *challenged the Texas "right of capture" for aquifer wells and private reservoirs* ("you own the water under your feet" and can therefore pump all you want for domestic and ag use). These bills came out of complaints about a wealthy landowner, **Kyle Bass**, who owned property over the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer (a major groundwater source in Texas stretching from the Louisiana Border to the Mexican border). Bass said he wanted to pump 15.9 million gallons using 41 groundwater wells in 3 counties in Northeast Texas (roughly equal to one-fifth of Austin's total annual water consumption). His permit said it was for conservation, but it turned out he is going to pump water for export out of the counties.

  Needless to say, this issue has thrown the Republicans in disarray, so for now these bills DID NOT pass, but the conversation has begun…

Closely related to the aforementioned Harris bills… there was a legislative committee hearing on August 16 about the two bills below (yet keep in mind, at this point, this is merely a preliminary information-gathering; the 90th Legislature is not until 2027):

1. **HB 24** would apply to all groundwater conservation districts (GCDs) in the state. It would limit the amount of water that could be transferred out of a district as an export to no more than 5% of the district's **Modeled Available Groundwater (MAG).**
   ** The MAG is a number calculated by the **Texas Water Development Board (TWDB)** based on a district's **Desired Future Condition**, essentially a cap on the total amount of water that can be pumped by all permit-holders in the district each year.
2. **HB 27** would only apply to the Neches and Trinity Valley GCDs, which is where half of Bass's wells would be located. The bill would direct TWDB to do a study on the amount of groundwater that's actually available in the district, and it would impose a moratorium on any new or amended permits in the district until after the report is completed.

Random Gardening TIP: Even though there is a lot of phosphorus in most Hill Country soil due to the limestone formations below, the phosphorus in our typical limestone alkaline soil DOES NOT GET ABSORBED by your plants. Therefore, you still will probably need to add iron (EDDHA powdered chelated iron is best, easy to find online) and phosphorus (I use Hi-Yield Super Phosphate fertilizer - LF) But I have to add that an Agrilife soil analysis of your garden is also recommended from time to time.

WHAT ABOUT THOSE INTERIM SESSIONS? GEAA ANALYSIS of the TWO 89th INTERIM SESSIONS

FYI: Note that every Interim session tries to pass bills, but also may instead strategize to lay the groundwork for the next session and to be able to file early.

Yes, the 89th legislature proclaimed that this Interim would be all about "Flood Fixes," at least, before the Governor ordered a mid-decade redistricting of voting maps and other topics... **GEAA Executive Director, Annalisa Peace**: *"At our most recent visit to the Capitol, while Rachel** and I made the rounds meeting with legislative staffers, on the House floor they argued for hours about making Ivermectin more available and worrying about who uses which bathrooms. Meanwhile, bills to address flooding and emergency management - issues vital to the welfare and safety of Texans - were left unscheduled for a vote. All in all, the main purpose of the special sessions seemed to be to provide a venue for the most extreme members of the legislature to grandstand on cultural ephemera."*

*** Rachel Hanes: GEAA's Policy Manager (GEAA: Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance)*

The first special session ended with no legislation passed, but the second special session produced **some signicant flood response wins** yet also some significant setbacks. [NOTE: GEAA maintains that it has been advocating for regulations to prevent and mitigate flooding for the past 20 years...!]

First, flood response WINS -

- **House Bill (HB 1)** is one of the camp safety bills; it prohibits permanent camp buildings in most floodplains, with penalties and regulations for camps.
- **Senate Bill (SB 1)** is another one of the camp safety bills; it prohibits residential camp buildings in floodways and most floodplains, with penalties and regulations for camps, and defines floodway for the first time in the state code.
- **SB 3** provides updated rules, outlines updated programs, and provides funding for disaster early warning systems.
- **SB 5** provides funds for disaster relief, early warning systems, camps to meet new safety regulations, and meteorological stations to enhance disaster preparedness. GEAA wa disappointed, however, to see that the funding for local government communication improvements was stripped from the final version of this bill.
- **SB 18** grants certain entities with dams the ability to fix their existing dams and temporarily store flood waters without going through exhaustive permitting, all to enhance flexibility.

And then, the flood response MISSES – the bills GEAA was sad to see fail in the second special session:

- **HB 2** would have outlined and required major improvements to state and local government coordination and response during and after disaster events.
- **HB 3** would have provided funding to local governments to upgrade their disaster response programs and to ensure coordination with other entities.
- **SB 2** would have outlined and required major improvements to state and local government coordination and response during and after disaster events.

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... Continued: Interim Session Flood Response MISSES

- **HB 108/SB 45** would have allowed counties to establish drainage utilities, charge drainage fees, and regulate land use for flood management and flood infrastructure. Counties are **not** currently able to do so, restricting their ability to properly address flood impacts or build and maintain appropriate infrastructure.
- **HB 117** would have authorized counties to regulate impervious cover to address flood management in unincorporated areas of the county. Counties are not currently allowed to do so, leading to inappropriate development and downstream impacts.
- **HB 125** would have authorized counties to fully meet all stormwater management permitting requirements. Counties are currently restricted in their ability to implement stormwater management programs, leading to increased flooding impacts and inappropriate development.
- **HB 225** would have authorized counties to be able to implement higher building codes and standards in unincorporated areas of the county. Counties are currently restricted to the 2006 International Building Code, even as cities are able to build to a more recent and more effective code and standards, placing rural residents in counties at risk of flooding impacts.

Power Line Pathways Proposed Traversing the Hill Country and the San Saba Corridor

(Note: Power lines were a major topic during the open session of the Regional Get-Together of Grassroots Alliances on August 16)

There's been a lot of information circulating around recently concerning proposed routes for new power lines to go through the heart of the Hill Country, and also the San Saba River Corridor. Here is a synopsis of the information if you are new to this subject.

WHY and How?

In 2023, the Texas Legislature enacted House Bill 5066, which required the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) to direct ERCOT to develop a reliability plan for the Permian Basin region. ERCOT published a reliability plan outlining several options for the Permian Basin region in July 2024. The PUC approved the Permian Basin Reliability Plan in October 2024 and in April 2025, ordered 765-kV electric transmission import paths as part of the approved plan.

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WHAT ARE THE LINES CALLED?

Their names signify the electricity providers that are proposing the lines, as in:

- AEP/CPS High Voltage Power Transmission Project (also referred as the Howard-Solstice line).
- LCRA/Oncor: 2 connecting lines that travel east to west: From the Bell County East Switch (Oncor) to the Big Hill Substation in western Schleicher County, that continues west to the Sand Lake Switch (Oncor).

MAPS OF PROPOSED ROUTES

Please refer to these 3 Maps, entitled 1) AEP_CPS Power Lines.jpg, 2) Oncor-LCRA_Eastern Half.pdf, and 3) LCRA-Oncor_WesternHalf.pdf.

WHAT's DIFFERENT FROM EXISTING POWER LINES?

These power lines will be 765kV transmission lines, a first for Texas, carrying over twice the voltage of existing lines. 765kV lines are extremely heavy and carry so much electricity that they require huge, broad based, multi-armed steel lattice towers to support the conductors and wires. **They also require a minimum 200-foot horizontal right-of-way and all trees or structures in the right-of-way have to be removed.**

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE & NEGATIVE EFFECTS FOR LANDOWNERS

- The LCRA/Oncor line proposed routes would all negatively affect the **San Saba River Corridor**, increasing flooding potential (from clearing of vegetation) and causing a massive increase of sedimentation entering the San Saba River.
- Property values will be negatively affected
- FYI: the power coming over the lines will not be available to our local electrical substations. Our localized grid will not be improved by these lines.
- These lines cross major bird migratory routes between North and South America
- One unknown: the volume of sound and atmospheric effects on humans and animals in the immediate vicinity of the lines.
- Tourism all-year round will be affected (especially important to the economy of the Hill Country).
- Affected Hill Country areas contain pristine river segments, among the last in Texas.
- Dark skies will be marred by lighting on the transmission towers, including effects on localized airport runways along the route.

TEXAS GROWTH HAS TO HAVE MORE ELECTRICITY, SO IS THERE A BETTER SOLUTION FOR ALL CONCERNED?

Why not run these lines in other areas where easements are already established, along highway corridors that are already cleared for power lines, and in areas where fewer people will be affected by them, or where the landscape is not as beautiful, native, or critical?

For more information, look at:

- **FOSS (Friends of the San Saba):** https://friendsofthesansaba.org/ They have an incredibly effective video that you can watch on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08SrpsjfzbM
- **Hill Country Preservation Coalition** (https://www.facebook.com/preservethehillcountry)

THERE IS A LANDOWNERS BILL OF RIGHTS in TEXAS

FYI, here is a link to an A.I. summary of the Texas Landowner's Bill of Rights regarding property condemnation, detailing the rights of landowners and the procedures for eminent domain.

DID YOU KNOW? (PART 1)

In recent disasters, counties with many low-income residents without insurance were shorted on FEMA recovery funding. Plus, folks who owned their property outright (so therefore FEMA could not require flood insurance) and who chose not to have flood insurance, also prevented their county from getting as much recovery money as possible.

DID YOU KNOW? (PART 2)

FEMA says that their required homeowner flood insurance gets a discount if the structure is built to a higher zoning standard than required – double win – BUT counties in Texas first have to have building standards! And if someone builds foolishly, essentially all of us pay for it, demonstrated by how insurance keeps going up with each hurricane or flood.

(NOTE: There is a 2006 International code, and also 2021 and 2024 International Building codes that have some restrictions, but they are all too outdated and generic. *FEMA is redoing its flood maps*... but MUCH BETTER would be the more dynamic flood mapping procedure now being pursued by the Texas Water Development Board, to reflect recent data and local input from cities and counties.

If only... FEMA would seek approval from the TWDB before finishing their new Texas maps)...

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Meanwhile, counties/ communities need to be able to create PREVENTATIVE STANDARDS for floods and other historical disasters. As it now stands, cities can have regulations, but not counties; counties can only adopt the very generic and outdated international building codes as noted above.

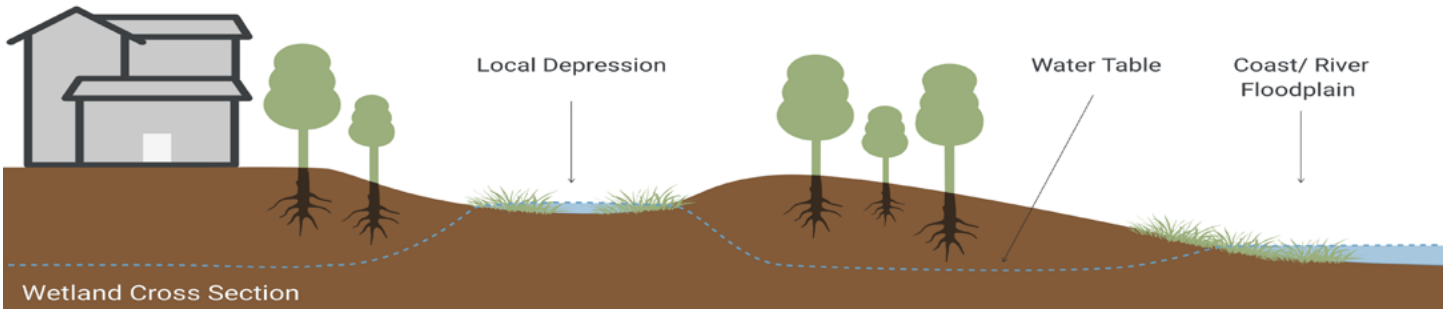
Building regulations *could* include:

- Placement of the structure (NOT in a floodplain, please).
- Impermeable surface limits.
- In general, do everything possible to mitigate flood risk and promote drainage and conservation. NOTE that building up high on the hills is not always the solution because it encourages more runoff below if not done properly!
- The absolutely only good result of the July 4 floods was showing how bad the death toll and property damage can be from poorly placed developments and homes/ buildings in general.

KEEP IN MIND: Even if new regulations were granted by the State that allowed counties the right to control anything, county residents still have to go to their county commissioners and ask them to pass those regulations (nothing is automatic).

* TCEQ probably should add required permitting to regulate flood stormwater drainage (assuming their permitting rules are effective).

Think of the potential **effects of un-controlled, POLLUTED stormwater!**



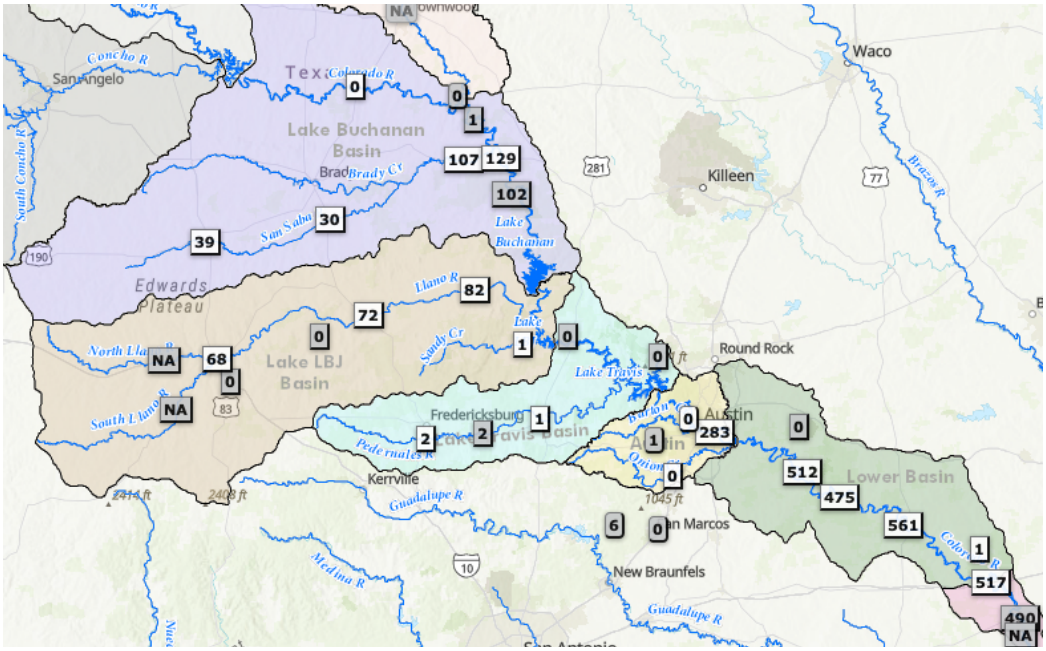
WASTEWATER NEWS

TCEQ is FINALLY making PDF versions of wastewater draft permits available on its website, along with all other documents related to a permit application.

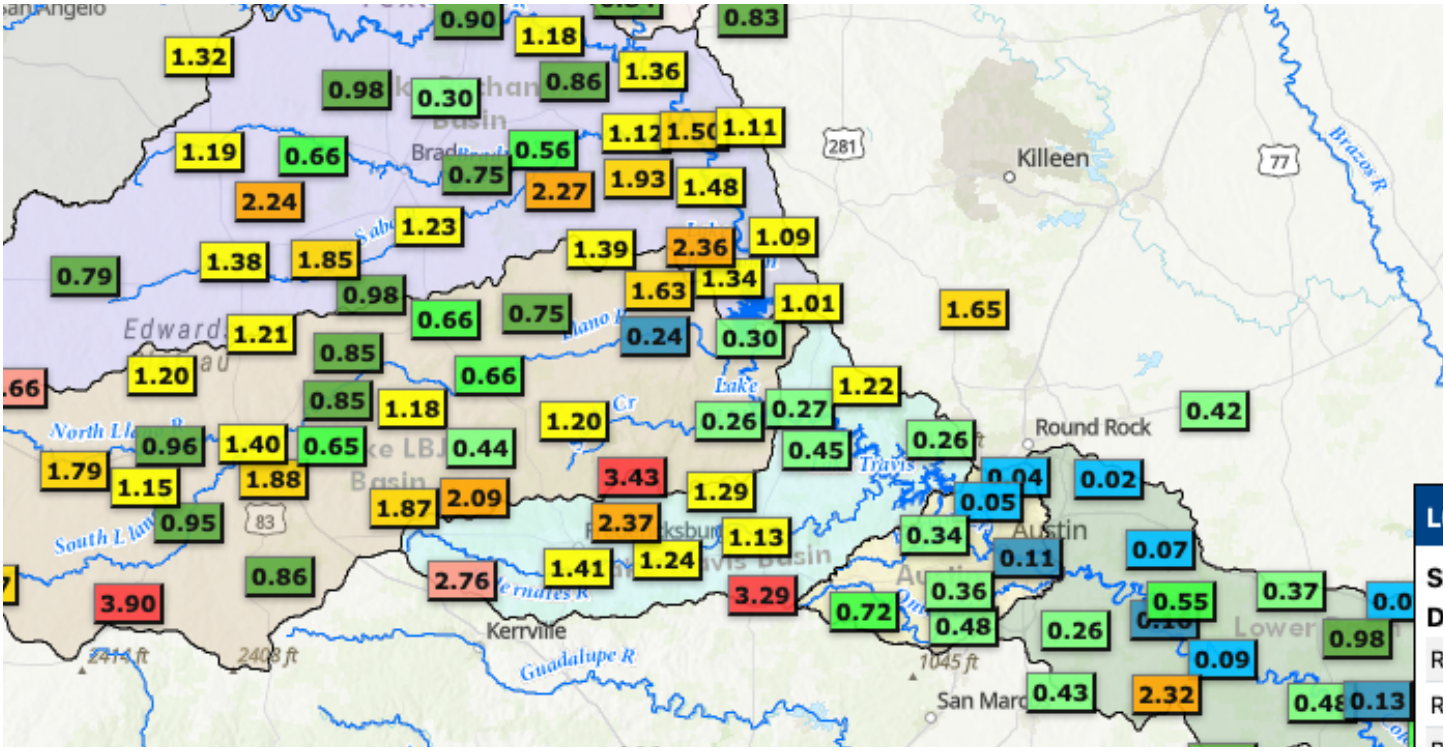
The main page is here:
https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/wastewater/pending-permits

When you click on Permit Types, you'll get a menu showing TPDES discharge permits and TLAP irrigation permits. The direct links for each:
https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/wastewater/pending-permits/tpdes-applications
https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/wastewater/pending-permits/tlap-applications

LCRA Hydromet Stream Flow as of 10.2.25



Lower Colorado River Authority's Hydromet is a system of more than 275 automated river and weather gauges throughout the lower Colorado River basin in Texas. The website displays gauges maintained by the City of Austin and USGS. The Hydromet provides near-real-time data on stream-flow, river stage, rainfall totals, temperature and humidity. https://hydromet.lcra.org



LCRA Hydromet Rainfall Last 30 days (as of 10.2.25)