

WATERSHED WEEK IN REVIEW



Join us in Mason May 20

The Alliance Board of Directors will hold its first in-person meeting in over a year on May 20, *outdoors* at Camp Discovery behind the M. Bevin Eckert Memorial Library.

The library is located at 410 Post Hill St. Turn south off the square at the jail. Camp Discovery, an outdoor learning center for children, is located next to the parking lot.

The meeting begins at 6 pm and the public is invited.

The Freeze and Oak Trees

Likely you have noticed that many oak trees, especially live oaks, have not leafed out this spring since the February freeze.

What is going on?

To be honest, there is uncertainty in the professional community.



Photo : Texas A&M Forest Service

The Texas A&M Forest Service recently issued a press release regarding this concern with one primary take-home message.

Be patient!

One additional stressor that is not mentioned in the press release was the heavy infestation of webworms this year, probably the worse this editor ever remembers seeing. Let's hope for the best!

Alliance at the Legislature

Last week, the Alliance offered testimony before the House Natural Resources Committee re Representative Andy Murr's House Bill 2426. The bill would provide the North and South Llano rivers protections from future quarries along the rivers. The legislation piggy backs on a 20-year pilot program established in 2005 by the Legislature that protects sections of the Brazos River under the John Graves Scenic Riverway from degradation by quarries.

The Alliance testimony focused on the importance of the river to the local economy and the community's efforts over the years to protect the resource through participation in the Guadalupe Bass Restoration Initiative, South Llano River Paddling Trail, and Upper Llano River Watershed Protection Plan. We specifically noted that no existing quarries would be impacted by the legislation.

[Click here to read Alliance testimony](#)

Under Rep. Murr's proposed legislation, the North and South Llano river in Kimble County would be designated the Coke Stevenson Scenic Riverway and would be afforded the same protections as the segment of the Brazos along the John Graves Scenic Riverway. These protections include the prohibition of the *construction or expansion of a quarry* located between 200 and 1,500 feet of the river unless operators satisfy several requirements related to preventing erosion, siltation, and runoff to the waterway and damage to fish and wildlife habitat. In addition, the legislation requires TPWD and LCRA to coordinate aerial inspections and water sampling along segments of the proposed Riverway.

At this time, the bill has not been voted out of the House Natural Resources Committee to the House Floor. Unfortunately, the Texas Aggregate and Concrete Association registered opposition against the bill, even though there are no existing quarries that would be affected by the legislation.

Alliance Begins Riparian Site Visits



Photo: Ryan McGillicuddy, Texas Parks and Wildlife

Does your riparian area look like this?

The Llano River Watershed Alliance has begun offering on-site technical consultation to assist landowners whose riparian areas need some assistance returning to their properly functioning condition.

During these visits, we will help landowners identify areas where Best Management Practices could be employed to increase vegetative growth and reduce erosion, allowing the riparian area to trap sediment, store more water, and provide shade to improve habitat for aquatic species.

There is no charge for this consultation or for the plantings, which will be delivered in the fall.

If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact southllanoriver@gmail.com.

The Challenges of Being an Oak Tree in the Texas Hill Country

By David Hillis
Mason County News
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When we think of the many reasons that the Hill Country of central Texas is so attractive (to humans, as well as to our diverse native flora and fauna), our beautiful oak savannahs come immediately to mind. Most of our oaks are distinctively different in growth form and character from the dense, closed-canopy oak forests found in the eastern United States. Eastern oaks must compete with one another, and with many other forest trees, for access to sunlight. So those oaks grow tall and straight towards the canopy, reaching for a little piece of sky.



Photo by David Hillis

In contrast, our local oaks have access to abundant sunlight. They branch out relatively close to the ground, and spread their branches far and wide. Our most abundant oak species, the Plateau Live Oak, keeps green leaves all year long, dropping its leaves in the spring as it grows a new set. Live Oaks may not grow especially tall (at least in comparison to many eastern oak trees), but they make up in breadth what they lack in height. Many visitors to the Hill Country marvel at our ancient, twisty, sprawling oaks with branches so low that they sometimes touch the ground. Children (and adults who retain the heart of child) take delight in climbing high into these magnificent and ancient branching labyrinths.

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