

## Local Environmental Groups to Support in This “Season of Giving.”

Well, according to my mailbox and my e-mail account, many organizations consider this the “Giving Season” and are looking for our support. I assume that most, if not all, of the solicitations I have received are from legitimate, worthy organizations. But I have decided that, since I can’t support every group or organization, I will limit my giving to local organizations doing things to help protect our Hill Country environment and native habitat and to educate everyone about the need to do so.

If you feel likewise, here are my suggestions of organizations to support.

For those in Kerr County, the most obvious organization to support is Riverside Nature Center. This nonprofit organization, located on Francisco Lemos at one of the entrances to the River Trail, is not only an arboretum, native plant garden and nature exhibit visited by over 5000 folks, but also the location and source of over 170 events and programs they hold every year. These programs brought over 3000 children and a similar number of adults to the facility last year to learn about nature. Needless to say, it takes donations for all of that to happen.

Other nature centers in the Hill Country include Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne and Fredericksburg Nature Center in Fredericksburg. All of these nature centers also host numerous events open to the public, both for adults and for children, as well as having interesting and important native habitat available for anyone to stroll through and enjoy nature. None of the Nature Centers receive any government money and most of their operations are conducted by volunteers.

The Hill Country Alliance is a relatively new organization that performs a vital service in the Hill Country. It is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to raise public awareness and build community support around the need to preserve the natural resources and heritage of the Texas Hill Country. Their mission statement is: “The mission of the Hill Country Alliance is to bring together an ever-expanding alliance of groups throughout a multi-county region of Central Texas with the long-term objective of preserving open spaces, water supply, water quality and the unique character of the Texas Hill Country.” They sponsor many educational meetings throughout the Hill Country, often with panels of experts to discuss topics of interest and importance to every Hill Country resident.

The Hill Country Land Trust is a non-profit organization that focuses on the protection and stewardship of land through the holding of conservation easements in partnership with private landowners. A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement that ensures a property will forever be managed according to the landowner's wishes, usually limiting future development. When a landowner places his or her property in a conservation easement, the terms of the agreement are protected in perpetuity by the land trust.

The Nature Conservancy is the world's leading conservation organization with activities all over the globe. The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Their vision is a world where the diversity of life thrives, and people act to conserve nature for its own sake and its ability to fulfill our needs and enrich our lives. In Texas, the Nature Conservancy protects numerous preserves in diverse habitats as well as accepting conservation easements from landowners. In the Hill Country, we have Love Creek Preserve between Medina and Vanderpool.

In addition, we have several State Parks and State Natural Areas in the Hill Country, including: South Llano River SP, Lost Maples SNA, Hill Country SNA, Enchanted Rock SNA, Guadalupe River SP, Honey Creek SNA, Blanco SP, Pedernales Falls SP, Colorado Bend SP, and others. Many of these parks have volunteer groups usually called "Friends of xxx SP or SNA

All of the above organizations have web sites where you can make donations on line as well as find out about volunteer opportunities, and doing so will help the cause of protecting our Hill Country native habitats, our water supply and our way of life. I encourage you to help any or all of the above in any way you can, and if you act before the end of the year, you get a tax deduction!

Merry Christmas to all.

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