

...Conservation License Plates

(Continued from page 3)

“We expect this plate will appeal to a variety of people, including wildlife conservationists, hunters, people who have a fondness for desert wildlife, and the obvious Dodge Ram truck owners,” added Johnson.

The new Bighorn Sheep plate will be available late April on TPWD’s website, www.conservationplate.org, the TxDMV website, or your local county tax assessor-collector’s office. You do not have to wait until you receive your renewal notice, you can order at any time and the cost will be pro-rated. All conservation plates are available for cars, trucks, motorcycles, trailers and RVs.

Conservation easements focus of Texas Land Trends report

by Gary Jonier
TFB Radio
Network Manager

Texas landowner participation in land conservation easements and their value to agricultural production, water and wildlife are addressed in a new Texas Land Trends report of Texas A&M’s Natural Resources Institute (NRI).

About 83 percent of lands in Texas are classified as privately-owned working lands. Land-use conversion, including fragmentation, accounted for the loss of about 1.1 million acres of working lands in Texas between 1997 to 2012, according to NRI. “Privately-owned farms, ranches and forests that produce food and fiber support rural economies and provide wildlife habitat, clean air and water and recreational opportunities,” NRI Director Dr. Roel Lopez said. “But increasing population growth and development has put extra pressure on working lands, often leading to their fragmentation into smaller parcels or conversion to other land uses, such as residential development.”

The amount of land fragmentation and conversion is likely to increase over the next decade, as lands will likely pass to younger generations who may have less experience and lack financial capital or the motivation and interest needed to sustain family operations, Lopez noted.

According to the Texas Land Trust Council, conservation easements have been an effective tool used by land trusts, government agencies and conservation groups to protect about one million acres of private land in Texas. It offers a voluntary alternative to assist private landowners in keeping their lands intact while promoting good stewardship and land management practices.

Most of the conservation easements in Texas have been implemented in the past two decades.

“A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement between a landowner and a qualified nonprofit land trust or

government entity through which the landowner commits to minimize or avoid certain types of non-agricultural development on their property by selling or donating certain property rights,” Lopez said.

Lopez said the institute, in collaboration with the council and Texas Agricultural Land Trust, incorporated several datasets, including those from the Texas Comptroller and U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Census of Agriculture, to develop a framework for evaluating the conservation value of lands currently protected under conservation easements.

“We were able to assess the value of all conservation easement acres in Texas within three broad categories of ecosystem services—agricultural production, water and wildlife—to illustrate the value of the natural goods, services and benefits conservation easements provide,” Lopez said.

Texas has about 248,000 farm and ranch operations, accounting for more than 142 million acres of land use, Lopez noted.

“In 2017, these agricultural operations generated about \$23 billion in cash receipts and are reported to contribute over \$100 billion annually to the food and fiber sector,” he said. “And agricultural employment also plays an important role in the state’s labor force.”

Lopez said using Texas Comptroller land productivity data, which captures the value of the land based solely on its ability to produce commodities, conservation easements in Texas can potentially provide more than \$63.1 million in agricultural commodities annually.

He said another value of conservation easements to the state is in protecting land-water contributions for current and future water supplies.

“According to the latest Texas State Water Plan, the state will have a nearly nine million acre-foot water deficit by 2070,” he said. “Conserving undeveloped, permeable working lands can help mitigate both issues by capturing rainfall, reducing water runoff and increasing groundwater recharge. And by conserving vital floodplains, we can also reduce the risk of flooding.”

Lopez said a NRI study concluded conservation easements are six times more efficient than non-land conservation strategies.

He noted wildlife also plays an important role in both the state’s economy and ecological well-being, and many landowners are



Beautification! Coke County Girl Scout Troop #376 spent time recently planting new rose bushes and potted plants to help beautify Bronte Elementary.

now managing their lands to benefit wildlife.

The use of conservation easements could bring more than \$5.8 million per year in value to wildlife.

“Texas Land Trends data shows wildlife management on Texas working lands has increased by over 5.6 million acres since 1997,” Lopez said. “The interest in wildlife is also reflected in the 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, showing about 104 million Americans are involved in some type of passive or active wildlife-related recreation.”

He said the NRI’s analysis suggests that conservation easements in Texas have the potential to provide about \$5.8 million in total wildlife value annually.

More than 88 percent of conservation easements in the state were executed in the past two decades, indicating an increasing interest and willingness among private landowners to use conservation easements, according to Lopez.

“We have also had a positive response from landowners to our surveys related to their land management needs, which also shows us there are opportunities to expand the use of conservation easements in Texas, but the financial incentive to do so isn’t where it needs to be,” he said. “While data support the viability of conservation easements as a tool

to conserve land and resources, in Texas funding from state and federal sources to purchase conservation easements has been limited, and this has restricted its use as an effective conservation tool.”

The full report can be found online at txlandtrends.org.

6 Tips from Doctors for a Healthier Heart

Nearly half of all U.S. adults are living with high blood pressure, putting them at an increased risk of heart attack and stroke, according to the American Medical Association (AMA). But there are several easy steps you can take to lower your risks.

“We urge all Americans to take control of their heart health by knowing and monitoring their blood pressure levels and making healthy lifestyle changes that can significantly reduce the risk of serious health consequences associated with high blood pressure,” says Barbara L. McAneny, M.D., president of the AMA. “We know that by empowering more patients to monitor and control their blood pressure, we will continue to help improve the health of patients, while reducing health care costs.”

To help you get started, Dr. McAneny and the experts at the

AMA are offering six tips.

1. Know your blood pressure numbers. Visit LowerYourHBP.org. The site contains tools, resources and information for both patients and physicians, and was launched by the AMA as part of an effort to reduce the number of Americans who have heart attacks and strokes each year. Having a better understanding of your numbers and taking necessary steps to get your high blood pressure, also known as hypertension, under control will reduce your risk of heart attack or stroke.
2. Commit to manage high blood pressure. Work with your doctor to create an individualized treatment plan that includes healthy lifestyle changes that you can realistically stick to long-term to help you maintain a lower blood pressure and lower your risk for negative health consequences.
3. Be more physically active. Regular physical activity can help reduce the risk of developing high blood pressure. It is recommended that healthy adults 18 to 65 years of age get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity, or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activity.
4. Eat a healthy diet. Making simple dietary changes can help

Bronte Body Shop, LLC

**Complete Auto Body Repairs & Paint
Insurance Claims Welcome
Formerly Paul’s Body Shop
PAUL KNIGHT**

123 N. State
(325) 473-2425

Bronte, Texas
(325) 450-2281

Finding Solutions for Your Financial Needs



Tommy E Neal, AAMS®
Financial Advisor
2412 College Hills Boulevard
Suite 102
San Angelo, TX 76904
325-223-8244
www.edwardjones.com

Edward Jones®
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING