



PROTECTING LAND AND WILDLIFE

Nearly 50 landowners learned ways to protect family land and wildlife through conservation easements and other local, state and federal programs at an Oct. 20 workshop at McKinney Roughs Nature Park in Cedar Creek.

During the White-tailed Deer Management Workshop, landowners also learned that proper management can help promote a healthy white-tailed deer population and successful hunting season while protecting land resources at the same time.

"The hunting heritage and wildlife species are critical to our way of life in Texas," said Jeff Crosby, executive director of the Colorado River Land Trust, which co-hosted the seminar. "It's important to protect the land and water on which deer and other wildlife depend. Texas landowners can use a variety of tools and techniques to protect their property for the future, and we encourage them to take action now to make sure their wishes are followed for years to come."

During the meeting, professionals discussed issues related to managing white-tailed deer populations, including the need for proper nutrition and diet; deer population surveying; the importance and benefits of managing the white-tailed deer population; farm, ranch and recreational insurance; and why protecting private land is critical to wildlife conservation and successful hunting opportunities.

The Colorado River Land Trust and Lower Colorado River Authority's Creekside Conservation Program hosted the workshop, which was sponsored



by Capital Farm Credit and Blair Wildlife Consulting. Speakers at the event included representatives from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, Plateau Land and Wildlife Management, Texas Farm Bureau, the Bastrop County Game Warden, LCRA and Colorado River Land Trust. During the event, Rick Castello of the Vacek family farm in Fayette County told landowners he and his family participated in the LCRA Creekside Conservation Program to incorporate land management practices to enhance their farm's soil, water and wildlife. They also established a conservation easement with the Colorado River Land Trust to protect the family land for future generations.

"Our family has been on this farm since 1899, running a cattle operation and introducing each generation to hunting and the outdoors, and we want to make sure that it stays that way," Castello said. "The partnership with the Colorado River Land Trust and LCRA Creekside Conservation Program has allowed us to protect our farm and manage the land, water, and wildlife in a more productive way."

Through the conservation easement, the family maintains private ownership and management of the land, while still protecting the land's natural resources and achieving the family goal of preventing the farm from being developed or sold off into small parcels. The family also maintains its cattle and hunting operations.

Marshall Trigg, natural resource conservation coordinator at LCRA, told the crowd that the LCRA Creekside Conservation Program offers cost-share incentives to help eligible landowners plan and implement conservation practices that reduce soil erosion and protect water resources. This program is augmented by an EPA Clean Water Act "319 grant" passed through the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board. Agricultural producers in Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Colorado, Fayette, Lampasas, Llano, Matagorda, San Saba, Travis and Wharton counties are eligible to participate in the LCRA Creekside Conservation Program.

Since 1990, the LCRA Creekside Conservation Program has worked with about 300 landowners to plan and execute conservation projects on more than 175,000 acres throughout the lower Colorado River basin, Trigg said.

The Colorado River Land Trust works to conserve land and water resources in the Colorado River basin to benefit future generations. By working with private landowners throughout the region, CRLT helps protect the river's health, reduces potential sources of water pollution and continues to be a responsible steward of the basin's natural resources. For more information, visit coloradoriverlandtrust.org.

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