



Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust

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National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Awards Funding to the GBR Trust for Outreach

by Jeff Crosby

As part of the Wells Fargo Environmental Solutions for Communities Program, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation awarded a grant for \$25,000 to the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust (GBR Trust). Over the past year, the GBR Trust has been delivering a series of streamside landowner workshops in portions of its thirteen-county service area. As part of the ongoing mission to preserve the unique, natural heritage of the Guadalupe watershed, the GBR Trust is working to provide outreach and education opportunities to landowners throughout the basin.

Funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will allow the GBR Trust to expand the education programs to more locations throughout the Guadalupe River watershed. With this region being one of the fastest growing in the state, there are a number of changes occurring across the landscape within the basin, including land fragmentation, which is of particular concern around coastal and freshwater habitats, and oil and gas production. Through this project the GBR Trust will present to landowners the options and tools they have at their disposal for protecting the valuable natural resources on their properties.

This two-year project will aim to evaluate and elevate general interest in conservation in the watershed and provide specific information on certain land management practices such as riparian zone function and protection, wildlife management, and invasive species control. In addition to the land management information, the discussion of conservation options for landowners, whether through the various cost-share programs that are offered through state and federal programs or through conservation easements with private land conservation organizations such as the Trust. Conservation easements allow landowners to protect valuable natural resources while still maintaining private ownership, private management and private uses.

These workshops have been well received by attendees and organizations that have partnered with the Trust on delivering them including Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. This funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, will allow the Trust to expand the conservation education programs throughout the basin over the next two years at a time that is critical for the region.

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Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust

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New Farm Bill Provides Funding for Conservation

by Jeff Crosby

In February, the President signed into law the 2014 Farm Bill, which provides more than \$1 billion for conservation over the next 10 years, making it the largest federal source of conservation funding. The consolidated conservation programs in the new Farm Bill will help to save working farms and ranches throughout Texas.



Photo by Jeff Crosby

"This funding is a great investment for future generations of farmers and ranchers in the Guadalupe River and Blanco River watersheds, our local residents and all Americans. Statewide, Texas loses more than 100,000 acres of open space every year, and with over 95 percent of the state being privately owned, these conservation programs that partner with private landowners are critical to protecting our natural resources," said Jeff Crosby, Executive Director of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust. The GBR Trust has protected more than 10,000 acres of farm and ranch lands and wildlife habitat from the Texas Hill Country to the San Antonio Bay.

The \$1 billion in funding will go towards the new Agricultural Lands

Guadalupe watershed and across the state of Texas," Crosby said.

The tools and options that the new Farm Bill offers to ranchers, farmers and other private landowners will continue to address the protection of natural resources throughout Texas and the Guadalupe, Blanco and San Marcos river watersheds. To learn more about these conservation programs contact the GBR Trust office or your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office.



Help Protect the Environment - Shop at HEB in April!

Help support the GBR Trust while you're shopping for groceries all month!

Look for the tear-pads at the registers throughout Texas to make your contribution.





Abandoned

Crab Trap Removal in the San Antonio Bay

by Jeff Crosby

Each year the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) closes the crabbing season for a ten day period in all Texas waters. During this period, TPWD and volunteers along the entire coast remove abandoned crab traps in an effort to make the waters more suitable for wildlife and the people that utilize and recreate in them. This program has been ongoing since 2002 and to date over 33,000 abandoned traps have been removed from Texas bays and estuaries.

Separate efforts were organized coast-wide and those in the San Antonio Bay, where the Guadalupe River empties into the Gulf of Mexico, were coordinated by the San Antonio Bay Foundation. The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust also participated in these cleanup efforts.

It was a warm but overcast morning when we met Dan Alonso, the executive director of the San Antonio Bay Foundation, at the public boat ramp in Austwell, Texas. Standing along the Hynes Bay, which is a finger of the San



Photos by Jeff Crosby

Antonio Bay, volunteers were informed that the day would be full of intense manual labor and that the conditions on the water could make our task a little more difficult.

Volunteers departed from Austwell, heading towards the center of Hynes Bay, where Alonso had marked several abandoned traps with his GPS unit from the day before that he was unable to fit on his boat. With the gray, overcast skies and the choppy water, spotting the white, volleyball-sized styrofoam floats that showed where the crab traps were located proved to be difficult.

When Alonso had positioned the boat close enough to the styrofoam floats, we used a six foot long metal pole with a hook on the end to grab the leader rope that hooked the float to the wire trap on the floor of the bay. Often times the traps were buried in the loamy soil at the bottom of the bay making the job of pulling the trap up extremely difficult.

After locating the abandoned traps in Hynes Bay, trap-removal crews traveled south into the



Lost and abandoned traps have the ability to continue to catch fish and crabs for months and even years resulting in the inadvertent loss of blue crabs, stone crabs and numerous fish species.

San Antonio Bay and found a long strand of traps located about 200 yards off of shore. Each trap had been placed 100 yards from the next one in a line that followed a contour of the bay floor. Judging by the amount of mud and sea squirts that had attached to the traps, it was estimated that these traps had been abandoned for over a year. Often times live crab and even fish were in the traps. Volunteers released anything that was alive in the abandoned trap back into the bay.

Lost and abandoned traps have the ability to continue to catch fish and crabs for months and even years resulting



Photos by Jeff Crosby

in the inadvertent loss of blue crabs, stone crabs and numerous fish species. Boaters and fishermen that use the same waters often have their motors and fishing gear damaged by abandoned traps leading to costly repairs.

Once the crab traps are removed from the water, they are crushed and stacked on the boat and ultimately offloaded in a dumpster provided by the TPWD and located at the boat ramp in Austwell.

The days' work resulted in the removal of twenty abandoned traps. The San Antonio Bay Foundation total effort over the 10 day period resulted in the participation of 55 volunteers, 17 different vessels and the removal of 277 total abandoned crab traps from the San Antonio Bay and associated estuaries. For more details or information on how to volunteer with the San Antonio Bay Foundation next year, contact the GBR Trust at 1-800-413-4130 or Email to: jcrosby@gbctrust.org.



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Leave Your Legacy in Perpetuity

If you are looking for options to support the GBR Trust efforts to help protect the wildlife, scenic views and lifestyle within its 15-county region, you may want to consider including the GBR Trust in your will. You will be helping to continue the conservation efforts throughout the Guadalupe River watershed. If you choose to include the GBR Trust in your will, please contact the staff to initiate the appropriate stewardship choices.

