SEEKING SOLUTIONS
for the people & places of Texas

2022 Impact Report

Photo: Kenny Braun for The Nature Conservancy
The Texas Living Waters Project is a collaboration of conservation groups working to ensure Texas has the water it needs for thriving communities and abundant fish and wildlife.
DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE TEXAS LIVING WATERS PROJECT,

It seems that every year brings new water challenges to Texas. 2022 was quietly one of the state’s driest years in the past century. Counties such as Bexar and Erath received their lowest rainfall on record. Inflows to the Highland Lakes dipped far below even recent historical averages. Jacob’s Well ceased flowing. It was a year that reminded us how much we both need and love freshwater in Texas.

While 2022 brought drought, it also brought a wave of new approaches, new investment, and new energy in the Texas water community. The Texas Living Waters Project is leading that wave and it’s why we chose to center our annual report on the theme of solutions. As we all hope for drought relief in the form of a shift from La Niña to El Niño conditions, it’s not only clear that more has to be done to ensure the future resiliency of our communities and unique natural heritage, it’s also clear we have some key solutions at hand. I am proud of the work our team is doing to advance these solutions across Texas.

As part of this growing effort, we welcomed The Nature Conservancy in Texas to the Texas Living Waters family this summer. The Nature Conservancy is home to widely-respected water policy and natural resource professionals and we are so happy to be working with them on the important water issues we are facing in our state.

The National Wildlife Federation, the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy in Texas, and our regional partners Hill Country Alliance and Galveston Bay Foundation all bring a wealth of collective capacity and expertise to our advocacy efforts. Among our many notable accomplishments this year, we produced, for the first time in the history of our partnership, a robust and public-facing water agenda for the Legislature. We are committed to educating legislators about both pressing water issues and the many emerging opportunities to address them.

As you will see in the following pages, Texas Living Waters is focused on urban water management, water for wildlife and climate resilience. Flowing through each of these areas is our team’s commitment to addressing social inequities tied to water. Flood risk, water access, and water pollution remain profoundly unequal burdens in Texas. From our efforts to ensure access to resilient and affordable water supplies for everyone in our communities to our equity-focused engagement with Texas’ Regional Flood Planning Groups, we continue to orient our work towards addressing the state’s persistent water injustices. Each of these project areas are intricately connected and we cannot have success in one area without the other. Water, ecosystems, AND communities are forever connected.

While we are full of energy and optimism for the future of our work, I want to take a moment to acknowledge and appreciate the contributions that Ken Kramer has made to the Texas Living Waters Project and to water resource management in Texas for many decades. He was one of the founders of this partnership and his deep well of knowledge and passion for this topic has changed the course of water management in Texas for the good. He is stepping back from his role and we wish him the very best.

Please join me in congratulating the Texas Living Waters team on a job well done in 2022. I look forward to working with the best water team in Texas in 2023.

Jennifer Walker
Director, Texas Coast and Water Program
National Wildlife Federation
A founding member of the Texas Living Waters Project, National Wildlife Federation is the United States' largest private, nonprofit conservation organization. NWF has worked on Texas water and coastal issues for over two decades.

The newest member of the Texas Living Waters Project, The Nature Conservancy in Texas has protected land and water in the state since 1964. To date, we’ve conserved nearly one million acres of land and more than 200 miles of rivers and streams.
A founding member of the Texas Living Waters Project, the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club is the oldest grassroots environmental organization in Texas.

**SIERRA CLUB**

**CYRUS REED, PHD**  
Conservation Director,  
Sierra Club, Lone Star Chapter

**ALEX ORTIZ**  
Water Resources Specialist,  
Sierra Club, Lone Star Chapter

**Ken Kramer, PhD**  
Former Water Resources Chair,  
Sierra Club, Lone Star Chapter  
*Achieved Living Waters Emeritus Status in 2022*

The mission of the Hill Country Alliance is to bring together a diverse coalition of partners to preserve the open spaces, starry night skies, clean and abundant waters, and unique character of the Texas Hill Country.

**hill country alliance**

**KATHERINE ROMANS**  
Executive Director,  
Hill Country Alliance

**MARISA BRUNO**  
Water Program Manager,  
Hill Country Alliance

The mission of the Galveston Bay Foundation is to preserve and enhance Galveston Bay as a healthy and productive place for generations to come.

**GALVESTON BAY FOUNDATION**

**BOB STOKES**  
President,  
Galveston Bay Foundation

**MIKAYLA PANARIELLO**  
Government Affairs Manager,  
Galveston Bay Foundation

A longtime member of the Texas Living Waters Project, Galveston Bay Foundation is a conservation nonprofit that has served as guardian of Galveston Bay since 1987. Our mission is to preserve and enhance Galveston Bay as a healthy and productive place for generations to come.

Consultants:

**MYRON HESS**  
Principal,  
Law Office of Myron Hess PLLC; Tributary Consulting

**KEN KRAMER, PHD**  
Former Water Resources Chair,  
Sierra Club, Lone Star Chapter  
*Achieved Living Waters Emeritus Status in 2022*
In addition to frequent in-person testimony, the Living Waters team submitted extensive comments on a number of occasions in 2022. Here are some highlights:

**Public Oyster Beds**
TLW Lead: Amanda Fuller
Addressed to: Texas Parks & Wildlife
*March 2022*

**Surface Water Quality Standards**
TLW Lead: Alex Ortiz
Addressed to: Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
*April 2022*

**Regional Flood Plan Comments** (for 6 regions!)
TLW Lead: Danielle Goshen & Arsum Pathak
Addressed to: RFPGs/Texas Water Development Board
*Oct 2022*

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**2022 AT THE CAPITOL...**

### Apr 27
Sunset Hearing on Texas Water Development Board
TLW Testimony from: Amanda Fuller, Danielle Goshen, Alex Ortiz, Katherine Romans, Jennifer Walker

### Jun 22
Sunset Hearing on Texas Commission for Env Quality
TLW Testimony from: Danielle Goshen, Alex Ortiz, Myron Hess, Cyrus Reed, Katherine Romans, Jennifer Walker

### May 10
Senate Committee on Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs
Testimony: Danielle Goshen, Jennifer Walker on water supply and flood infrastructure

### Apr 21
House Ways & Means Committee
Testimony: Danielle Goshen on ARPA funding for water infrastructure

### Aug 23
House Committee on Natural Resources
Invited Testimony: Jennifer Walker on Water Infrastructure

### Aug 23
House Committee on Natural Resources
Invited Testimony: Danielle Goshen on Texas Coastal Spine
In April, National Wildlife Federation’s Amanda Fuller spoke to reporters at the Society of Environmental Journalists annual conference about covering water infrastructure in Texas in the coming years. NWF also hosted a separate event for journalists covering Texas water issues at large.
Developing water reuse for affordable housing

Water reuse helps reduce the water footprint of urban construction, but such projects are often confined to expensive corporate developments. In 2022, we helped bring affordable housing into the water reuse conversation. The National Wildlife Federation conducted nationwide interviews with community organizations, affordable housing developers, and water reuse experts to gather information and produce the first-ever guide to integrating water reuse into multi-family affordable housing projects. The guide makes the case that strategic integration of onsite water reuse can provide lasting financial and quality-of-life benefits to affordable housing residents and owners. We received interest from across the country and were invited to present at venues such as the National Blue Ribbon Commission on Onsite Reuse and the American Planning Association. The project is part of Texas Living Waters’ ongoing commitment to ensuring that everyone in our community can have access to resilient and affordable water supplies.
Bringing One Water to the Hill Country

Deep drought amid continued population growth drew attention to vulnerabilities in the Hill Country’s water supplies in 2022. Countless private wells went dry, and some towns, like Concan, had to truck in their water. One Water strategies, such as wastewater reuse and air conditioning condensate capture, are an important building water supply resilience in the region. Throughout the year, the Hill Country Alliance met with community leaders across the region to discuss how One Water fits into their water supply planning. One Water schools were a focus of many conversations, and the Alliance met with Blanco, Comal, and Fredericksburg ISDs to discuss ways that One Water might be incorporated into school designs. The Hill Country Alliance hosted events to equip local grassroots groups to advocate for One Water in their community. These community partners will be key to seeing One Water strategies incorporated in rural Hill Country communities increasingly burdened by drought and aging infrastructure.

Convening One Water for Texas

National Wildlife Federation took the lead in coordinating the Texas One Water Delegation and developing our state’s Commitment to Action at this year’s One Water Summit in Milwaukee. We convened a dinner for the roughly 50 delegates from Texas who attended the conference and many connections were made that will yield dividends as we all work together to put Texas on a path to sustainable and resilient water supply management. The One Water Summit is the nation’s leading event to gather and learn about how One Water can be deployed in an equitable manner that puts communities first, yields multiple benefits, and delivers water for both people and the environment.
Centering equity and nature in regional flood planning

In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, Texas lawmakers set in motion an expansive state flood planning process that is set to come to fruition in 2023. Throughout 2022, 15 Regional Flood Planning Groups across Texas raced towards the January 2023 deadline to submit their regional plans to the state. During this time, our team convened cross-regional dialogues, where we worked with environmental and public representatives from seven different regions, with the aim of increasing incorporation of nature-based solutions and equitable outcomes in the regional flood plans. By the end of 2022, our team had drafted and submitted public comments on six different regions. Now that the regions have all submitted their plans to the Texas Water Development Board, we look forward to working with the Board in developing a prioritization scheme that centers nature and prioritizes investments in areas that need it most. Further, through our work at the Capitol, we will be advocating for important policy changes, developed from recommendations across the regions, in order to improve communities’ ability to mitigate and respond to flooding.

Facilitating nature-based solutions for the Texas Mid-Coast

As outlined by National Wildlife Federation in 2021, the Texas Mid-Coast faces a mounting tide of climate threats in the coming decades. In 2022, we moved from study to action, as the National Wildlife Federation, through partnerships with Harte Research Institute at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and Refugio County leadership, set to work designing a nature-based project in the region. This work is funded through the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine’s Gulf Research Program. The natural features of Refugio County play a dual role of supporting local fishing and tourism-based economy while buffering the shoreline and reducing wave energy to provide hazard risk reduction benefits. Nature-based solutions can help balance extreme event vulnerabilities, strengthen natural features to withstand these impacts, and support long-term development goals of the community. The National Wildlife Federation is leveraging its topical expertise on nature-based approaches and building upon its local climate adaptation efforts in the Texas Mid-Coast to co-develop this project with the county.
Promoting the protective value of nature in the Hill Country

The last decade of extremes has shown the Hill Country is increasingly vulnerable to both flooding and drought. In 2022, Texas Living Waters partners worked collaboratively with The Texas Hill Country Conservation Network to create a Land, Water, and Natural Infrastructure Plan for the region. Several Living Waters members also served on the core team for the project. The plan aims to define a vision for the future of regional conservation and natural infrastructure projects in the region by identifying shared priorities among partners and community members. Through multiple engagement opportunities including community surveys, in-person events, focus groups, and interviews, the plan takes a holistic view of land, water, and natural infrastructure in the Hill Country and identifies key conservation goals and priorities. The plan, set to release in April 2023, will help guide our work to address the complex threats facing the Hill Country region and protect the region’s long-term health and resilience.

Calling for caution on the Texas Coastal Spine

The proposed Ike Dike, which is a part of the larger Texas Coastal Spine, would be the largest civil engineering project in U.S. history – currently estimated at $32 billion. While the size and scope of this project is unparalleled, the Army Corps of Engineers has not completed sufficient studies on project impacts – causing National Wildlife Federation and Galveston Bay Foundation, and others to call for more information. In 2022, we came together with other environmental organizations in the Houston area to coordinate on our advocacy. Through these efforts, we have revitalized post-pandemic outreach to communities by organizing quarterly webinars for the public, advocating for increased transparency at Gulf Coast Protection District meetings, and highlighting project concerns in the media. While there will likely be a large push for funding for the Ike Dike during the 88th Texas Legislature, our groups are committed to continuing to educate voters about the project and its potential impacts.

Danielle Goshen delivered invited testimony on the Texas Coastal Spine to the House Committee on Natural Resources on Aug 23, 2022.
Advancing protection of critical flows

In 2022, The Nature Conservancy partnered with landowners, local, state and federal water management agencies, corporate and foundation donors, as well as non-profits to advance protection of water for nature and people. The Conservancy executed innovative water transactions to protect instream flows during drought with water rights holders and agricultural producers in the Upper Colorado River Basin, Galveston Bay, and Matagorda Bay for 5,500 acre-feet. We advanced our Sustainable Rivers Program partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to improve dam management for the benefit of downstream ecosystems in the Cypress, Neches, and Brazos basins. At Diamond Y and San Solomon springs, the San Saba River, and the Devils River we continued studies to improve understanding of groundwater-surface water interactions and inform groundwater management. We developed the Trinity Floodplain Planning and Prioritization Tool in partnership with the Corps to inform flood planning and guide nature-based solutions such as protection and restoration of floodplains and watersheds in the Trinity River basin.

Protecting flows in key river basins

In 2022, we participated in the permitting process for seven permit applications to improve implementation of the environmental flow standards and to address key resource threats. We engaged in extensive negotiations on four permit applications to divert water from the Trinity River. Those massive permit applications have the potential to directly reduce river flows and inflows to Galveston Bay by 320,000 acre-feet and to cause even greater indirect reductions by establishing undesirable precedent that might be applied for future applications. We were successful in negotiating greatly improved permit language for inclusion in the two most-upstream permits and on some aspects of the other two permits. Efforts will be ongoing in 2023 to resolve remaining issues on the two downstream permit applications, particularly issues related to ensuring protection of freshwater inflows to Galveston Bay.
Improving state management of water resources

The two state agencies most directly responsible for managing the state’s water resources both underwent review in 2022 — and Texas Living Waters was there throughout the process to offer constructive feedback informed by years of close work with both agencies. As the Texas Water Development Board and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality underwent Sunset Review in 2022, TLW collaborated with a diverse set of water advocates from across the state to meet with Sunset Advisory Commission Staff to discuss how these agencies could be improved, developed comments with broad sign-on from other groups, and provided testimony during Sunset Commission meetings. We believe through our efforts, we were able to get important Sunset Staff recommendations included that addressed the following issues: directing the Water Development Board to analyze information about financial assistance programs to better ensure funds are going where they’re needed most and directing the Board to consult with the State Climatologist in the preparation of regional and state water plans. In 2023, our groups are committed to ensuring recommended changes to these agencies are enacted as the Sunset Bill moves through the legislative process during the 88th Texas Legislature.

Fostering a future for Texas oysters

Listen to testimony from NWF’s Amanda Fuller at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission hearing on oysters on March 24, 2022

Oysters are an important part of Texas’ coastal ecosystem and their reefs provide a critical line of defense to communities from storms in the Gulf of Mexico. The state’s oyster populations are in decline and are increasingly threatened by factors including climate change impacts, water quantity variability, and water quality degradation. In 2022, National Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy, and Sierra Club Lone Star Chapter supported the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s recommendation to close Carlos, Ayres and Mesquite Bays, near Matagorda Island, to allow oysters to grow in that area. Members of our team are serving in work groups designed by the Department to foster open dialogue around regulations and restoration activities between the Department, the oyster industry, restoration practitioners and conservation organizations.
THANK YOU KEN!

At the end of 2022, our co-founder and longtime Texas water champion, Ken Kramer, announced he would be stepping back from an active role as Water Resources Chair for the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, a role that he performed since “retiring” as Director of the Lone Star Chapter in 2012.

The Living Waters Project could never have achieved its decades of impact without the help of Ken’s visionary leadership, expansive wisdom, and, above all, deep love and concern for the waters of Texas. We can not thank him enough for his lifelong labor of love and wish him the best as he continues to keep an eagle-eye on water happenings at the Legislature and across our spring-fed state!
SUPPORTERS OF TEXAS LIVING WATERS

We are grateful for the continued support and engagement from the following organizations:

The Meadows Foundation
The Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation
The Jacob and Terese Hershey Foundation
The Trull Foundation
Shield-Ayres Foundation
The Burdine Johnson Foundation
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Coypu Foundation
The Rachael and Ben Vaughan Foundation
Environment Fund of Texas
Mr. Perry Lorenz

*We are also thankful for additional funders not listed above
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To make a tax-deductible donation visit texaslivingwaters.org/get-involved

Or donate by mail:

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Photo: Kenny Braun for The Nature Conservancy