

The Nature Conservancy of Texas
More than 40 Years of Saving Texas' Great Places
Milestones

1964

- Texas Chapter of The Nature Conservancy was established, with Edward C. “Ned” Fritz serving as the first Texas board of trustees president. Fritz helped to create the Texas Committee on Natural Resources and became a leader in the establishment of the Natural Areas Preservation Association, one of the oldest land trusts in Texas.

1965

- The Nature Conservancy of Texas' first land acquisition was 2,626 acres near Eagle Lake (west of Houston); conveyed to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the establishment of the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge for protection of the Attwater's prairie chicken, the most endangered bird in North America. An additional 840 acres was acquired for that refuge in 1967.

1968

- Acquisition and establishment of Texas' first Nature Conservancy preserve, Ezell's Cave near San Marcos.

1972

- Acquisition and establishment of 97-acre Tridens Prairie Preserve in the Blackland Prairie of North Texas.

1977

- Beginning with a gift of land from Temple-Inland, established Sandyland Sanctuary Preserve in the Piney Woods of East Texas. The Conservancy now owns 2,847 acres at the preserve and holds conservation easements on another 2,806 acres of Temple-Inland land.
- Purchased and conveyed 2,700 acres to USFWS for creation of the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge.

1978

- The Nature Conservancy hired its first Texas staff member, Ike McWhorter.
- Acquired and conveyed 1,640 acres to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) for the establishment of Enchanted Rock State Natural Area in the Hill Country.
- The first prescribed burn in the history of The Nature Conservancy of Texas was undertaken at Sandyland Sanctuary.

1980

- Scott Spann became the Conservancy's first Texas state director.
- Acquired and conveyed 365 acres to USFWS to help establish the Lower Rio Grande Valley Wildlife Corridor.

1981

- Acquired and conveyed 12,780 acres to USFWS to establish Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge on the gulf coast.
- Acquired and conveyed 1,825 acres to Texas Parks & Wildlife Department to establish Honey Creek State Natural Area.

1982

- Andrew Sansom was named Texas state director and served until 1987. From 1988 to 2001, Sansom served as executive director of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

1983

- The Nature Conservancy of Texas acquired its first conservation easement on 30 acres in East Texas. Conservation easements convey land development rights to qualified conservation organizations, permanently protecting the land from incompatible development.
- The Conservancy and the state of Texas established the Texas Natural Heritage Program to document the rare plants and animals of Texas.

1984

- Acquired and conveyed 77 acres to TPWD for expansion of San Jacinto State Historical Park.

1985

- Received a gift of 67,200 acres, conveyed to the National Park Service in 1987 for the expansion of Big Bend National Park.

1986

- Acquired and conveyed 11,500 acres to USFWS for the establishment of Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge.
- Acquired 114 acres to establish Clymer Meadow Preserve (now 1,068 acres) in North Texas.
- Initiated the Texas Land Stewards' Society to recognize private landowners for their conservation efforts.

1987

- Acquired and conveyed 5,700 acres to TPWD to establish Mad Island Wildlife Management Area in Matagorda County.
- Acquired 9,800 acres to establish Brushy Canyon Preserve in West Texas.

1988

- David Braun became Texas state director.

1989

- The Nature Conservancy of Texas celebrated its 25th anniversary, with 202,800 acres conserved in Texas.
- Received a gift of 3,162 acres for the establishment of the Clive Runnells Family Mad Island Marsh Preserve in Matagorda County, now encompassing 7,000 acres. Since 1997, the preserve and surrounding area has ranked No. 1 in North America for the greatest number of bird species sighted in the Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count.

1990

- Received a gift of 3.5 acres for the establishment of the Eckert James River Bat Cave in Mason County, seasonal home to between 4 million and 6 million Mexican free-tailed bats.

1991

- Established Chihuahua Woods Preserve in the Rio Grande Valley.
- Established the Dolan Falls Preserve, now 4,500 acres, on the Devils River. Dolan Falls is the largest waterfall by volume in Texas.
- Acquired and conveyed 2,200 acres in the Austin area to USFWS to assist in the creation of the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge.
- Began acquiring and conveying land to TPWD for the expansion of Caddo Lake Wildlife Management Area, completed in 1997 and totaling 6,500 acres.
- Acquired and conveyed 5,384 acres to USFWS for the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

1992

- Acquired and conveyed 1,292 acres to TPWD for Boca Chica State Park at the mouth of the Rio Grande on the Gulf of Mexico.
- The Conservancy begins working at Fort Hood to coordinate scientific research and habitat management for the conservation of black-capped vireos and golden-cheeked warblers, both endangered songbirds, through an agreement with the Department of Defense.

1993

- Established the South Texas Private Lands Initiative in the Rio Grande Valley to assist landowners wishing to revegetate their lands with native plants to promote wildlife conservation.

1994

- Established Barton Creek Habitat Preserve, now 4,000 acres, in Austin to protect endangered songbirds.
- Initiated the Coastal Conservation Education Program with a small grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. The program now serves about 4,000 schoolchildren and community members annually through outreach programs and through field-based programs at Mad Island Marsh Preserve, Texas City Prairie Preserve and Southmost Preserve.

1995

- The Nature Conservancy of Texas established the Northeast Mexico Program to assist Mexican conservation organizations with habitat protection and encourage cross-border collaboration.
- Received a gift from Mobil Oil of 2,094 acres for the establishment of Texas City Prairie Preserve, providing habitat for one of only two populations of the imperiled Attwater's prairie chicken.
- Established Shamrock Island Preserve on the leeward side of Mustang Island in Corpus Christi Bay – a crucial rookery for colonial nesting birds.
- In the first conservation-buyer project in Texas, the Conservancy sold 13,700 acres on the Devils River to a private landowner while retaining a conservation easement to permanently protect the land.

1996

- Established the 998-acre Caddo Lake Preserve, later renamed for the late Fred and Loucille Dahmer, who spent their lives working to conserve Caddo Lake.
- Facilitated the donation by Amoco of 170 acres to the Houston Audubon Society for the expansion of High Island Sanctuary on Bolivar Peninsula.
- Robert Potts became Texas state director. In 1998, he was named director of the Conservancy's South Central Division, overseeing the conservation work of Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas and the country of Mexico.
- Released seven juvenile captive-bred Attwater's prairie chickens at Texas City Prairie preserve as part of an effort to recover this imperiled bird that continues today.

1998

- Purchased 18,000 acres of the U Up, U Down Ranch in the Davis Mountains in Far West Texas to establish the Davis Mountains Preserve, now totaling 32,000 acres. This is the Conservancy's largest preserve in Texas.
- Successful election campaign in Austin for a \$65 million ballot initiative to preserve land for open space and watershed protections. We then assisted the city as land negotiator.

1999

- Acquired land to establish the Lennox Foundation Southmost Preserve, 1,000 acres at the southernmost tip of Texas on the Rio Grande.
- Received the largest gift in the history of the Conservancy's Texas Program, a conservation easement on 4,700 acres of the Shield Ranch in Austin from the Ayres family.
- Began assisting the city of Austin as a land negotiator in the purchase of 15,000 acres for watershed protection and open space.

2000

- Acquired 1,400 acres in Bandera County in the Hill Country to establish Love Creek Preserve.
- Acquired 24,500 acres on South Padre Island, habitat for nesting endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtles. In 2001, 23,000 acres were conveyed to USFWS as an addition to the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge; the remainder of the land became South Padre Island Preserve.

- Began acquisition of 19,740 acres in West Texas to create Independence Creek Preserve, completed in 2001. Here, Caroline Spring delivers 5,000 gallons of water a minute to Independence Creek, a major contributor to the Pecos River.
- Assisted Mexican conservation partner Pronatura Noreste in the acquisition of the 7,000-acre Pozas Azules Reserve in the Cuatro Ciénegas Valley, then the largest private land purchase for conservation in Mexico's history.
- Campaigned for the successful Prop 3 ballot initiative in San Antonio, providing \$45 million to protect the Edwards Aquifer. Began assisting the city as a land negotiator in the purchase of land for aquifer protection..

2002

- James Sulentic was named Texas state director.

2003

- In the largest private conservation land deal in Texas, the Conservancy purchased 87,760 acres surrounding the headwaters of the Devils River, the most pristine river in Texas. The land will be protected from incompatible development through conservation easements and sold to conservation buyers, with the Conservancy retaining a small preserve on the river.
- Acquired the 86-acre Cowleech Prairie Preserve in Hunt County.
- The Conservancy launched the Blanco River Project, opening an office in Wimberley to provide outreach to private landowners.

2004

- Carter Smith is named Texas state director.
- The Nature Conservancy celebrated 40 years of saving the best of Texas, with 33 nature preserves, 27 projects in partnership with private landowners, and conserved lands in Texas approaching the million-acre mark.
- An additional 10,000 acres was acquired in the Davis Mountains, connecting the Davis Mountains Preserve and the Madera Canyon Preserve. The contiguous 32,000 acres was consolidated into the Davis Mountains Preserve.
- Las Estrellas Preserve, 415 acres in Starr County, was created in part to protect the endangered star cactus, threatened by a worldwide network of cactus rustlers.

2005

- The Conservancy led the successful election campaign for the Aquifer Protection Initiative in San Antonio, raising \$90 million to buy land and easements both in and out of Bexar County.
- Worked with partners to win a parks bond election in Travis County that included the purchase of 2,400 acres at Reimers Ranch and Pogue Hollow to protect the Pedernales River and Edwards Aquifer. The Conservancy negotiated the land deal for the county.

2006

- Launched the Pedernales River Project, opening an office in Johnson City to assist private landowners to conserve land and water resources.
- Purchased 251 acres in San Marcos for protection of the San Marcos River and the Edwards Aquifer. The land will be conveyed to the city for the creation of Sink Creek Nature Park.