Land Trends in Texas


According to the A&M Texas Land Trends study completed in 2007, Texas is home to over 142 million acres of private farms, ranches and forestlands, thus leading the nation in land area devoted to privately-owned working lands. These lands account for 84% of the state’s entire land area and provide substantial economic, environmental, and recreational resources to the benefit of the state’s entire population. According to data accumulated by County Appraisal Districts, over 2.1 million acres of farms, ranches and forestlands were converted to other uses between 1997 and 2007. Over 40% of this land conversion was related to growth and development associated with population expansion in the state’s 25 highest-growth counties. During this period, 861,785 acres were lost from the agricultural land base in these counties. As a function of population increase, roughly 149 acres of agricultural lands were consumed per 1,000 new residents. For the most current information on these topics please consult A&M Texas Land Trends at http://txlandtrends.org

Over 2.1 million acres of farms, ranches and forestlands were converted to other uses between 1997 and 2007.

By the end of 2007, the USDA Census of Agriculture counted over 247,000 farming and ranching operations in the state. This represents an 8% increase since the census of 1997. In other words, Texas annually gained about 1,500 new working farms and ranches. However, the land base for Texas agriculture has decreased by as much as 2% during the same period. Average ownership size declined from 585 acres in 1997 to 527 acres in 2007. Here are some additional facts:

• By 2007, smaller operations – those less than 100 acres in size – accounted for over 50% of the state’s total farming & ranching operations, while occupying only 3% of the land area. This class of smaller operations increased by 22% since 1997, and was the only ownership size class showing an overall net increase in land area across the state.

• The amount of land in mid-sized farms & ranches (500 to 2,000 acres) has continued to decline at the rate of about 290,000 acres per year.

• Large ownerships – those greater than 2,000 acres in size – accounted for about 4% of all farms & ranches, but they occupy about 62% of the state’s total farm and ranchland. While larger operations have slightly increased in total number since 1997, they have decreased in land area by 461,000 acres.

• The loss or gain in area represented by large operations varied according to ecological region. For example, since 1997 over 2.8 million acres of larger farms and ranches in the Trans Pecos, Edwards Plateau and South Texas were fragmented into mid-sized and smaller ownerships. In other regions – the High Plains, Rolling Plains, Coastal Sand Plains, Oak Woods & Prairies, and Blackland Prairies – about 2.5 million acres of mid-sized properties were consolidated into larger operations.

About a Land Trust

By John Renous Field

What does a Land Trust do? Land trust organizations (such as The Frontera Land Alliance) protect land directly by buying or accepting donations of land or conservation easements. They also educate the public and advocate for the need to conserve land. They can help landowners tailor a conservation easement plan to their individual situation and financial circumstances, and determine the property’s conservation values and future ownership.

What type of land can be protected by land trusts? Land trusts protect a variety of lands, but in our focus area we concentrate our efforts on:

• Natural habitat for wildlife, fish and plants such as arroyos, canyons and the overall desert ecosystem
• Watershed areas such as the Rio Grande
• Scenic landscapes, particularly those with local and community significance
• Working landscapes like farmland and ranchland, which have special significance for growing food

What is a Conservation Easement? One way you can help conserve working ranches and farms and natural areas is by donating a conservation easement to Frontera, thereby ensuring that your land will be protected and preserved in its natural state.

A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land

Frontera and the landowners work together to write a conservation easement that reflects both the landowner’s desires and the need to protect conservation values. A conservation easement restricts development to the degree that is necessary to protect the significant conservation values of that particular property. Every conservation easement is uniquely tailored to a particular landowner’s goals and their land.

Conservation easements are perpetual, and offer great flexibility and benefits to both the landowners and the public. If the donation protects an important conservation resource and meets other federal tax code requirements, it can qualify as a tax-deductible charitable donation.

Conservation easements are attached to the land, binding the original owner and all subsequent owners to the conservation easement’s restrictions. The conservation easement is recorded at the county records office so all future owners and lenders will learn about the restrictions.

Frontera is responsible for enforcing the restrictions that the easement language spells out. Frontera monitors the property once a year to determine that the property remains in the condition prescribed by the easement document and maintains written records of these monitoring visits.

If you are interested in learning more about conservation easements or would like to know if your property is eligible, contact Frontera at 915-351-TFLA.
Seventh Annual “Taste of Frontera” the Very Best One Yet!

We always have fun at our annual Taste, and this year’s Thursday, April 26 event was no exception, but we never forget that the Taste has a purpose as well: to raise as much in funds as we can for land and water conservation. And did we ever raise funds this year! According to Treasurer Charlie Wakeem’s to-the-last-penny accounting, the 2012 Taste of Frontera netted $23,538.09!

By comparison, last year’s Taste brought in just $5,578.37—less than a quarter of this year’s take. Way to go, Frontera Supporters!! Of the $23,538, $10,450 came from sponsorships; prominent among them were (in alphabetical order) Ardovinos’s (for in-kind services), Bain Construction, Hal Marcus Gallery, Hunt Communities, Jobe Materials, Jobe Ranch, Northeast Printing, Raba-Kistner, Rocky Mountain Mortgage, Scott/Hulse PC, Sierra Machinery, SONRI, and Winton Homes. Another $2,466 came from donations. 120 individual tickets were sold, netting $5,975—an all-time record—and more than a hundred of the purchasers showed up for the festivities despite the dust storm that raged in the evening outside. An additional $6,225 was garnered from our second-annual live auction, which was once again a shattering success thanks to superauctioneer Victoria Guellère. Additional monies were earned from “Adopt a Rock” ($275) and the “Wine Toss” activity ($170), whose proceeds were consumed off premises.

Much of our Taste’s success was due to Board and to the fifteen volunteers. Also volunteering their services were four artists—Wefrey Heard, Candy Mayer, Linda Moore and Marie Rhodes.

As proof once again that our Taste really rocks, the Frontera Land Alliance “Rock Award” was given this year to Judy Ackerman, environmentalist and activist extraordinaire par excellence, of whom Frontera President Mike Gaglioti most aptly said: “At every meeting of every committee, Judy’s always there. On every board and in every group, Judy’s always there. At every clean-up and in every pertinent City Council meeting, Judy’s always there. The energy, the devotion, the dogged dedication and the just plain hard work of this super-star volunteer must simply be seen to be believed.” A standing ovation and no thrown stones accompanied Mike’s giving, to Judy, of Frontera’s most solid award.

We will be having two cleaning sessions on June 10th and September 30th at 8 a.m. We will be also hosting a guided hike on June 24th at 8:00 a.m. We will meet at Cadiz; please wear appropriate clothing and bring work gloves.

We will be having a cleaning session on Sunday, July 15th at 8 a.m. We will meet at Oakcliff off of Pebble Hills, please wear appropriate clothing and bring work gloves.

Map of area we work

Dona Ana

Otero

El Paso

Hudspeth

Disclaimer
Frontera retains the right to determine the editorial content and presentations of Information contained herein. Articles or opinion written by guest writers do not necessarily reflect official views of Frontera or its Board of Directors.

Frontera is a charitable, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that was founded to protect in perpetuity a network of lands chosen for their natural and cultural values in West Texas and Southern New Mexico. Frontera cooperates with landowners, donors, government agencies, and other organizations to conserve the beauty and character of the region’s desert, mountains, and rivers for all.

Upcoming Events

Conservation Easement Workshop

November 2012

A Conservation Workshop is being held November 2, 2012 at the Double Tree Hotel, El Paso. Everyone is invited to attend to learn about the conservation tools available to them from the donation of a conservation easement to how wildlife tax exemptions can affect their property taxes. To register or learn about the workshop contact Frontera.

Wakeem/Teschner Nature Preserve at Resler Canyon

June and September 2012

We will be hosting two guided hiking sessions at Resler Canyon. Please wear appropriate clothing and bring work gloves.

Thunder Canyon

July 2012

We will be having a cleaning session on Sunday, July 15th at 8 a.m. We will meet at Oakcliff off of Pebble Hills, please wear appropriate clothing and bring work gloves.

Board of Directors

Mike Gaglioti, President
Richard Teeschew, Vice President
Scott Winton, Secretary
Charlie Wakeem, Treasurer
Scott Cutler, At-Large
John Moses
Kevin von Finger
Doug Erdlin

Staff
Janae Reneaud Field, Executive Director

Design
Phidiev Inc

The Frontera Land Alliance
Janae@FronteraLandAlliance.org
Office Phone: 915-351-TFLA (8352)
Fax: 915-351-8350
Office Address: 1201 N. Mesa St., El Paso Texas 79902
Mailing Address: 3800 N. Mesa, Suite A2-258, El Paso, Texas 79902
www.FronteraLandAlliance.org