

2022

Wild Spirit Wild Places

Annual Report





From the CEO

Karen Looby, PhD

In July 2020, Desert Door Distillery started Wild Spirit Wild Places® (WSWP), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, to help protect the wild lands of Texas. In just two years, WSWP implemented three land stewardship projects, began educational programming, and started connecting the community.

Juniper was cleared at Spoke Hollow Ranch in Wimberly to restore the natural balances of Ashe Juniper necessary to maintain the aquifers that feed groundwater on the ranch and the Blanco River, sustain a healthy terrain, and support the needs of native wildlife.

A prescribed burn was conducted at the Baggett Family Ranch in Ozona to improve the grassland ecosystem on this generational working ranch.

WSWP joined the city of Austin and installed pollinator gardens to support the work of the Xerces Society and Bee City USA. Bees pollinate some \$587 million worth of crops every year in Texas and are facing population declines due to urban sprawl and increasing use of pesticides.

WSWP also launched its WILD TALK series in 2022. These interactive events provide community members with opportunities to engage with distinguished experts and one another to develop a community committed to conserving the lands and wildlife of Texas.

Partnership and collaboration are key strategies for the work of WSWP. We join forces with other like-minded individuals, organizations, and businesses to support our land conservation and education efforts. We believe the power of partnerships will allow us to elevate and extend exemplary work being done in the Texas land conservation space and create opportunities for community connection and engagement.

Our motivation is simple – we don't want to be the generation that sat idly by while our wild places disappeared.

The purpose of this inaugural annual program report is to communicate the work WSWP conducted in 2022 and provide a baseline for tracking program progress and results long term.



WILD SPIRIT WILD PLACES® CREATES CONNECTIONS AND BUILDS A COMMUNITY COMMITTED TO PROTECTING THE EXPANSIVE WILD LANDS OF TEXAS THROUGH CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION EFFORTS.

NEED

Today, the expansive wild lands that are the hallmark of Texas are under threat from increased land development and fragmentation. Approximately 95% of Texas' land is privately owned (Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute, 2020). From 1997 to 2017, Texas lost approximately 2.2M acres of working land with a loss of nearly 1.2M acres within the last 5-year period. The reduction of open and working lands in Texas has significant implications for the state's economy, food security, and conservation of water and other natural resources.

Private land stewardship is considered the most effective way to protect and improve natural resources in the state (Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute, 2021). Land stewardship keeps soils, native vegetation, and water bodies intact and healthy, benefiting wildlife and their habitat.

THEORY OF CHANGE

If

we connect and engage our communities through conservation and education efforts to help protect the wild lands of Texas...

Then

we can create powerful and sustainable networks committed to mitigating the effects of land development and fragmentation by keeping soils, native vegetation, and water bodies intact and healthy, benefiting wildlife and their habitat.





Connections

CONNECTION

to the land and to one another are critical to protecting the expansive lands of Texas. Building strong relationships and fostering engagement is considered by many to be a vital measure in protecting the environment and leveraging resources towards sustainability.

OZONA, TX

In February 2022, WSWP partnered with the Ozona Chamber of Commerce to conduct prescribed burn training and host conservation education event with the goal of educating local residents, landowners, and visitors from around the state about responsible land stewardship and the many benefits of prescribed fire. Across the two-day event, approximately 150 participants completed prescribed burn training sessions and attended seminars conducted by over 15 professionals and respected instructors in various conservation fields. The prescribed burn covered approximately 65 acres to maintain and improve the grassland ecosystem on a working ranch outside of Ozona.



HULLABALOO 2

Hullabaloo 2, an education and fundraising event, hosted 168 attendees in August 2022. A special screening of a short documentary film highlighting the prescribed burn training and conservation education event in Ozona, Texas kicked-off the evening and was followed by a special address by Thomas Janke, Texas state coordinator for Quail Forever and Pheasants Forever and “burn boss” for the Ozona burn. Janke spoke about the need to ensure (native and vital habitat continues to be recognized as a critically important driver of abundant wildlife populations and health of our ecosystems.



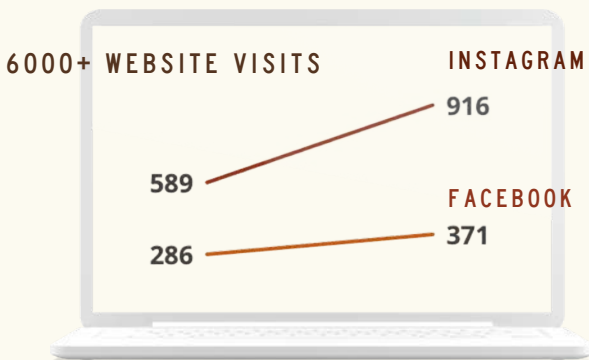
Community

TEXAN NATURE™

In Spring 2022, WSWP was welcomed into Texan by Nature’s Conservation Partner network, founded by former First Lady Laura Bush. Texan by Nature partners deeply with conservation groups and business, acting as an accelerator for conservation groups and a strategic partner for business. Texan by Nature connects projects with the strongest resources and funding to make the biggest impact for Texans, our economy, and our natural world. Get involved and learn more at www.texanbynature.org.

SOCIAL MEDIA

WSWP significantly grew its social media connections. Website visits increased throughout the year growing from 1,800 in December 2021 to 6,007 visits in December 2022, a 233% increase. In 2022, WSWP had a 30% increase in Facebook followers and a 56% increase in Instagram followers.



COLLABORTATIVE PARTNERS

Over the course of the year, WSWP significantly increased connections within the conservation community. WSWP collaborated with 23 organizations on both conservation and education efforts throughout the year.

- Austin Science and Nature Center
- Big Bend Night Skies
- Borderlands Research Institute
- Devils River Conservancy
- Central Texas Seed Savers
- Edwards Plateau Prescribed Burn Association
- Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA)
- Merlin Tuttle Bat Conservation
- Ozona Chamber of Commerce
- Quail Forever
- San Antonio Zoo
- Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve
- Shumla Foundation
- Spoke Hollow Outfitters
- Texan by Nature
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
- Texas A&M Biodiversity Research & Teaching Collections
- Texas A&M Forest Service
- Texas Agriculture Land Trust
- Texas Parks and Wildlife
- Upper Llanos Prescribed Burn Association
- Waterloo Greenway
- Xerces Society for Invertebrate Research



CONSERVATION

"is the state of harmony between man and land," said Aldo Leopold. Land stewardship keeps soils, native plants, and water bodies intact and healthy, benefiting wildlife and their habitat.



PRESCRIBED BURN

In 2022, WSWP conducted a prescribed burn on a working ranch in Ozona, TX. The purpose of the burn was to remove old vegetation to make room for new growth. Within two to five years following a prescribed fire, burned areas often sustain more grasses and forbs offering abundant food and habitat for local wildlife and improves the quality and quantity of groundwater. The use of prescribed fire also improves landscape resilience, promoting a diverse and vibrant ecosystem that supports and sustains underlying water tables.

POLLINATORS

WSWP supported the City of Austin in earning its Bee City certification from the Xerces Society. In that effort, WSWP installed pollinator gardens and conducted education events to support pollinators. The primary message for the pollinator garden work was, "Plant native plants." Native plants provide the pollen and nectar that are the primary food source for bees. Five pollinator gardens were sponsored and installed by WSWP volunteers, many of which included Desert Door employees and students from the University of Texas.

Texas bees and pollinators are experiencing a rapid decline in population due to loss of habitat and pesticides. They are critical to Earth's ecosystems, enabling the reproduction of over 85% of all flowering plants and 67% of agricultural crops.





EDUCATION

builds the knowledge and skills needed to address complex environmental issues and take action to keep our land healthy. It is a critical step towards inspiring and empowering us all to protect our wild places.



WILD TALK

WILD TALK! This education series connected community members with distinguished experts to develop a sustainable network interested in protecting the expansive lands and wildlife of Texas. Over the course of the year, WSWP hosted 14 WILD TALK events that included educational lectures, workshops, and meet and greets for approximately 475 attendees. Topics included land stewardship, planting native plants, native bees, bats as pollinators, rock art research, dark skies, and bird migration.

OUR SPONSORS

Corporate sponsorships were critical to the development of Wild Spirit Wild Places® in 2022. The funding directly supported our work and provided an opportunity to acquire new supporters. Our sponsors demonstrated a commitment to land stewardship and education to protect the expansive wild lands of Texas.

<p>We are thankful for our sponsors.</p>				



Financials

FINANCIALS

Still considered a newly established organization and building from the ground up, financial contributions to Wild Spirit Wild Places in 2022 were dedicated to current year program and operational costs and set aside for future program expenses and building reserves necessary for a financially healthy organization.

Most contributions in 2022 came from corporate sponsors. However, private donations were on the rise from the year prior as the community began to learn more about the work of WSWP.

	<u>2022</u>
Revenue	
Contributions	161,894
Grants	5000
Total	\$166,894
Expenses	
Program	69,222
General	16,333
Fundraising	24,300
Total	\$109,855
Net Income	\$57,036

EXPENSE RATIOS

Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance recommends that at least 65% of the nonprofit's total expenses should be for programming. They also recommend no more than 35% of a nonprofit budget be spent on fundraising. Charity Navigator also assesses nonprofits on fundraising efficiency. This is a calculation of how much money it costs a nonprofit to raise \$1. WSWP's fundraising efficiency ratio was .28, or 28 cents to raise \$1.

2022 WSWP EXPENSES



NEXT STEPS

Increasing revenue in future program years will enable WSWP to spend more on programming to accomplish its mission and to build reserves needed to build a sound, sustainable organization.



JOIN US

Wild Spirit Wild Places® has multiple land stewardship and education projects underway and planned for the future. Your financial support will make a meaningful difference in our efforts to protect Texas' diminishing wild lands. Wild Spirit Wild Places is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; tax ID #85-1968152. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extents allowed by law.

Stay informed and follow our work @wildspiritwildplaces on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#). Sign up for our newsletter through our webpage, www.wildspiritwildplaces.org, where you can learn more about WSWP's conservation efforts and opportunities for engagement and support.



Thanks to you!

**Wild Spirit Wild Places® is growing a community
dedicated to protecting the land of Texas.**

**We appreciate your support in helping us
Keep Wild Places Wild®.**