



Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority
933 E. Court Street, Seguin TX 78155
www.gbra.org

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Senate Praised for Approving Farm Bill Funding to Help Save Working Farm and Ranch Lands in the Guadalupe and Blanco River Watersheds

Waiver Provision Will Allow More Local Landowners to Participate in Conservation Program

For more information

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SEGUIN, TX – The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust (GBR Trust) praised the U.S. Senate's action in approving a Farm Bill conference report that will provide more than \$1 billion for a new consolidated conservation program to save working farm and ranch lands in the Guadalupe and Blanco River watersheds and throughout the United States over the next ten years. The U.S. House of Representatives approved the bill on Jan. 29 and the president is expected to sign it into law.

"This funding is a great investment for future generations of farmers and ranchers in the Guadalupe River and Blanco River watershed, 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 Easement (ALE) program, which consolidates the former Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) and Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) into a single program. FRPP and GRP have conserved more than a million acres of economically and environmentally important agricultural lands, but applications for FRPP and GRP have far exceeded the available funding. The conservation easements with private landowners offered through this program will help secure food and fiber, clean water and wildlife habitat.

"The need to preserve our working lands and wildlife habitat has become more and more important for future generations as development pressures have increased throughout the Guadalupe watershed and across the state of Texas," Crosby said.

The Land Trust Alliance, which represents the GBR Trust and 1,700 other nonprofit land trusts that collectively protect 47 million acres of farms, ranches, forests, wildlife habitat, and other open spaces, worked with Senate and House leaders to secure a provision in the Farm Bill that allows the Agriculture Secretary to waive a local cash-match requirement of 25 percent.

"Many areas across the country don't have any reliable sources of matching funds, and rural counties may not have the tax base to create one," said Russ Shay, director of policy for the Land Trust Alliance. "Allowing the Agriculture Secretary to waive the cash match requirement in special circumstances will provide the Secretary flexibility to target easements in important places where they are needed, but would not happen without the waiver."

About the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust

The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit land conservation organization developed to conserve land in the Guadalupe River Watershed for its natural, recreational, scenic, historic and productive value. The Trust's mission is to preserve the unique natural heritage of the Guadalupe watershed for future generations, by protecting open landscapes, working farms and ranches, and wildlife habitat through conservation easements, education, and outreach that connects people to the water and the land. Details at: www.gbrtrust.org.

About Land Trust Alliance

The Land Trust Alliance is a national conservation group that works on behalf of the nation's 1,700 land trusts to save the



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places people love by strengthening conservation nationwide. The Alliance works to increase the pace and quality of conservation by advocating favorable tax policies and training land trusts in best practices, and working to ensure the permanence of conservation in the face of continuing threats. Details at: www.lta.org/policy.