



Pat Merkord, President

NPAT Board Update

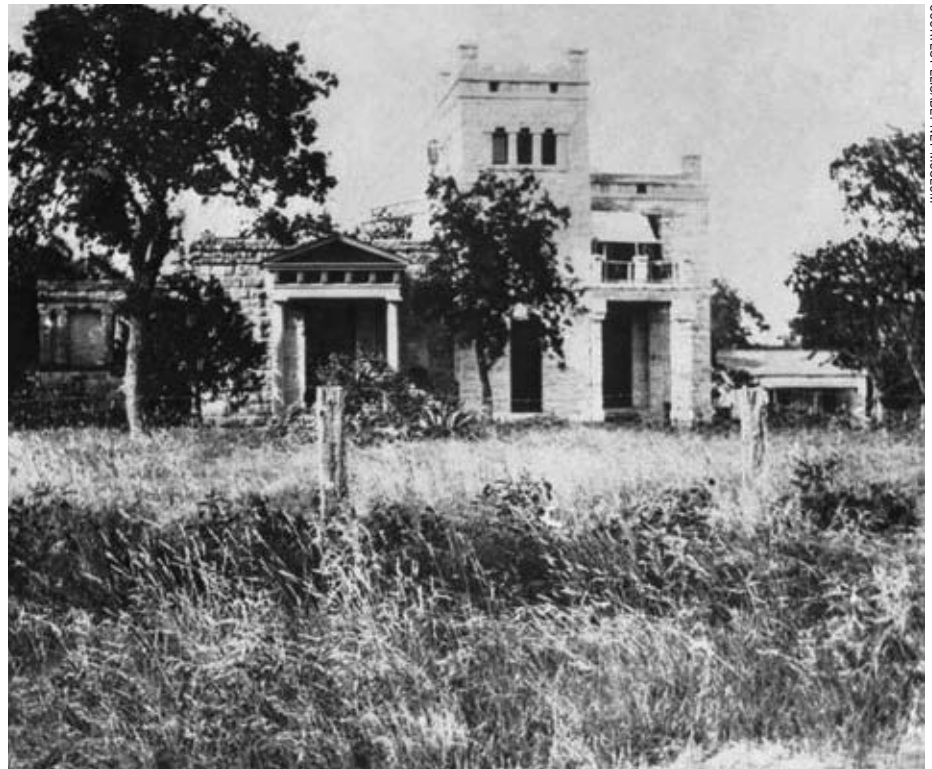
NPAT WOULD like to welcome our new board members, and to thank those who have served and those who continue to do so. We couldn't do it without you! The next two years will be critical in the growth of NPAT as a land trust. We will be going through the process of reviewing and revising all our procedures and policies in order to apply for accreditation at the end of a two year period.

The Board of Directors met in January at the Bamberger Ranch Preserve, and a new slate of officers was elected.

Pat Merkord stepped up to become the President of the Board. Pat has served as secretary, editor and president-elect—and knows NPAT very well! **Kirsti Harms** is now Vice President and continues as the newsletter editor. New board member **Kathleen Darling** will serve as Treasurer. Secretary and President-elect positions are currently vacant. Board members **Leslie Dietz, Aron Flanders** and **Daniel Scognamillo** will *(continued)*

Elisabet Ney Museum

Gateway to the Past—Model for the Future



COURTESY ELISABET NEY MUSEUM

Elisabet Ney's studio, Formosa in Austin, Texas circa 1905

THE NATIVE PRAIRIE that was once a prominent feature of the studio of Elisabet Ney (1833-1907) is currently under restoration. This is part of a comprehensive restoration of the landmark former studio located in Austin. Ney, a noted sculptor of Texas legends such as Sam Houston and Stephen F. Austin was deeply committed to the natural world. She retained the open prairie for her Texas studio, Formosa, (1892-1907). In this natural setting, Ney often hosted gatherings of friends and politicians to discuss the cultural and educational development of Texas. These gatherings, including at one time the entire Texas Senate, led to the

founding of the Texas Fine Arts Association (today Arthouse) and other prominent institutions to support the arts in Texas that continue to this day. The Elisabet Ney Museum is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The museum is also a member of *Historic Artists' Homes and Studios*, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

The restoration is funded, in part, by the U.S. Department of the Interior Save America's Treasures program, Texas Historical Commission, National Trust for Historic Preservation and the citizens of Austin, Texas. Restoration of the prairie at the Elisabet Ney Museum *(continued)*

From the Executive Director

Planned Giving and Tax Incentive Update

TAXES ARE a labyrinth many find difficult to navigate, but I have found that this is one arena where it is definitely better to look ahead; i.e. tax planning can save you or your heirs a large future bill. Like many people my estate is worth more than what I am able to give annually to charity, so I have a will that reflects my values, but I also stay abreast of how to structure future bequests. For example, half of my estate will go to purchase and protect land, however, I change the mechanics of my bequest annually to keep up with the changing tax laws. I know that keeping up with these changes can be confusing, so I thought it might be helpful to give you the latest tax information on how **conservation easements** affect both **estate planning and income taxes**.

HR 4853 renews the **enhanced tax incentive** for conservation easements and while it will be in effect through December 31, 2011; it is also retroactive to January 1, 2010:

- It raises the **income tax deduction** a landowner can take for donating a conservation easement from 30% of their AGI

(adjusted gross income) in any year to 50%

- Allows farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their AGI
- And increases the number of years over which a donor can take deductions from 6 to 16 years.

So if you are considering either a donated easement or a bargain sale/easement—from a tax standpoint—this would be a good year to act. However, there are several steps that need to be taken to qualify, so please don't wait until the last minute (December) to make a decision. For farmers and ranchers who qualify there are also FRPP [Farm and Ranch Land Reserve Program] matching funds that can be applied to a bargain sale.

This package also extends the S corporation donation incentive and the IRA charitable rollover through 2011.

Also extended is the 2001 law that removes the geographic limitations from section 2031(c) **estate tax exclusion** for land protected by a conservation easement through December 31, 2012. That means that even with a \$5 million unified credit and 35% rate, landowners may still

realize up to a \$175,000 estate tax benefit for donation of a conservation easement.

Note: The existing high ceiling exclusion is not the norm, if the amount is lowered to previous ceilings, the estate benefits to heirs becomes even more significant. Conservation Easement Estate Tax benefits have helped many heirs keep family land in lieu of a required sale to pay for the increased land value. And general bequests as I mentioned above in my own will, have benefited heirs as well; leaving a personal/family legacy for future generations.

I am not a CPA and recommend that you speak to an accountant who specializes in these areas, but I will be happy to talk to you about either an **easement** or **bequest**. And you can also go to the Land Trust Alliance website at **www.LTA.org** and click on Frequently Asked Questions and Conservation Donation Rules. Additional information about the Farm and Ranch Land Reserve Program is available from NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service), go to **www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov**.



—Dalmaria Bayne, ED, NPAT

I would like to help conserve Texas' natural heritage by contributing/pledging funds noted to the following program (s):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| _____ Operations | _____ Research & Restoration |
| _____ Acquisition | _____ Outreach & Education |
| _____ Maddin Building Fund | _____ General Fund |
| _____ Property Management Endowment | |
| _____ Easement Legal Defense Fund | |

Check enclosed _____

I am donating _____ on your website (www.texasprairie.org) to be utilized as noted above.

Pledge (Amount) _____ to be paid by ___ check ___ credit card on or before the following date: _____

By _____

NPAT is a Non Profit 501(3)(c) Land Trust

The Native Prairies Association of Texas
2002 - A Guadalupe St. PMB 290
Austin, TX 78705-5609

Wanted Board Members

IF YOU LOVE PRAIRIES and like to organize, NPAT needs you as the next **Secretary**. All types of skills are needed on the Board of Directors. It's a great way to learn more about prairies, and their conservation and restoration. Contact NPAT at info@texasprairie.org or call 512-772-4741. **NPAT needs YOU!**

NPAT Board Update

(continued from page 1)

continue to offer their talents in 2011.

Our great appreciation goes to outgoing President **Jason Spangler**. Jason has served on the Board since 2004 and has contributed much to make NPAT the organization it is today. Jason also helped to bring the prairie surveys to fruition and to secure funding to hire our first staff. *Many thanks to Jason Spangler for his help in NPAT's growth as a land trust.*

Thanks also to **Jason Martinson** who served as Treasurer and provided help with legal advice. **Jason Singhurst** stepped down from the Board but plans to continue in an advisory role on the Property and Acquisition Committee. As a board member Jason Singhurst provided his botanical expertise on our Maddin property and helped with evaluation of potential easements. We are grateful for his input and appreciate all his efforts on NPAT's behalf.

New Board members, **Kathleen Darling** and **Matt Singer** have offered their skills to NPAT. Kathleen is a program manager for JP Morgan Chase and is active with North Texas community and environmental groups. Matt currently serves as conservation lands manager for the Galveston Bay Foundation (www.galvbay.org) focusing on habitat restoration and land conservation.

NPAT is still looking for people to serve on the Board of Directors, particularly those with organizational, financial or real estate skills. We are looking for people to serve on committees as well. The importance of these committees continues to grow. If you have an interest in prairie restoration, conservation, acquisition, education/outreach and/or organization, contact us. These committees are vital to the work of our organization. Because NPAT is a statewide organization, we are also looking for representatives from around the state. **If you have an interest in being an "ambassador" for your region we'd like to talk to you.**

For more information on ways you can help, call 512-772-4741 or email info@texasprairie.org.



The Elisabet Ney Museum grounds are currently undergoing a prairie restoration.

Elisabet Ney Museum

(continued from page 1)

is an integral and important part of the comprehensive restoration of the former studio, both for its significance to Ney and Texas cultural history as well as its growing importance as a cared-for urban remnant of the vanishing American prairie. So the museum is very pleased to be working with Phillip Quast, Outreach Coordinator of the Native Prairies Association of Texas, to develop educational programming for children to be offered this summer. These new programs will use an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to educate children of all ages about what a prairie is, how

prairie ecosystems work, how they fit into the cultural landscape of Texas and how and why prairies are important to us both today and in the future. There will be a special focus on the value of prairies in urban environments and the many benefits they provide in that setting.

The Elisabet Ney Museum is owned by the City of Austin and administered by the Austin Parks and Recreation Department History, Art and Nature Division. Located at 304 East 44th Street, the museum is open to the public Wednesday–Sunday, noon to five. Admission is free. For more information, please call 512-458-2255. www.elisabetneymuseum.org

—Mary Collins Blackmon,
Curator, Elisabet Ney Museum

Houston Chapter Update

THEY ARE OFF AND RUNNING and trying to establish projects. In 2010 NPAT's Houston chapter held five meetings and two workshops, one official fieldtrip and one unofficial fieldtrip. They exceeded the goal of holding four meetings.

While there is no president for the chapter yet, the Vice President is **Linda Knowles**, the Secretary is **Cheryl Sedivec** and Treasurer is **Mark Morgenstern**.

A meeting time and place has been established for the chapter. It will be at Bayland Community Center (6400 Bissonnet, Houston) on the fourth Wednesday of every month, starting at 6:30 for a social and 7:00 for the meeting.

"The Plight of the Prairie Dog" by Pat Merkord was the topic at the March meeting of HNPAT. This talk covered the problems with restoring prairie dogs to native prairies as well as the bigger picture. *Congratulations to this enthusiastic chapter!*

For more information go to www.texasprairie.org.

A Prairie Planting Plan 10 Steps to Include

WHETHER your interest and commitment to a prairie planting is driven by “just for the fun of it”; to produce a semblance of “what used to be”; to provide native habitat for bugs, worms, reptiles, birds, and animals ranging from microscopic bacteria to 1,500-pound bison; or to all of the above—the first and most important step is to write a plan. Good advance planning, as opposed to jumping right in, will help you avoid a few of the many obstacles to success, and will allow nature’s elements to work with you as much as possible, instead of against you. While this article will only mention and list them, future articles will discuss these hindrances in detail. Your plan will need to include these steps:

STEP 1: Goal and Objectives

You will expect your prairie to be around for at least a couple of hundred years. So take your time and ask yourself why you want to do a prairie planting or restoration, and how you will use your prairie. Your answers will become the goals and objectives of your project and will be the first things you write in your plan.

STEP 2: Soils and Site Data

If you have internet access, go to the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Web Soil Survey (WSS), determine what soils you have on your site and print a map of the site. To find the site do a search for web soil survey or go to <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>.

STEP 3: Inventory and Evaluation of Existing Vegetation

While you are still at the WSS, obtain Ecological Site Descriptions (ESD) for rangeland use to discover 1) what plants you have that should be there, 2) what plants you have that should not be there, and 3) what plants you do not have that should be there.

STEP 4: Seed List

Based on the ESD information from

step 3, make a list of what you want to plant on your prairie.

STEP 5: Invasive and Noxious Plant Management

Identify and write down what you will need to do to eliminate the unwanted species. Whether you will do this before or concurrent to the seedbed preparation step will depend on the species.

STEP 6: Seedbed Preparation

Evaluate all appropriate seedbed preparation alternatives for your prairie site and soils, decide which methods you will use, and record in your plan. Prepare a schedule that shows what will be done, when it will be done, and who will do it. Seedbed preparation has to begin early enough for all necessary operations to be completed by September 30.

STEP 7: Planting the Prairie

Evaluate all appropriate seeding methods, decide which is best for your soils, your site, and yourself. Record it in your plan by preparing a schedule that identifies what will be done, when it will be done, and who will do it. March 1 to April 30 is the optimum planting window, but any time from December 1 through May 31 is acceptable.

STEP 8: Management During the First Two Years

Basically you have planted native species, they know what to do, and you must step back and let them do it, although there may need to be some exigencies for step 5.

STEP 9: Long Term Management

Management needs after the second year will be determined by steps 1–8.

STEP 10: Enjoy Your Prairie!

—James Alderson,
NPAT Program Director

PRAIRIE *Events*

Spring Field Trips

NPAT has scheduled three field trips this spring. Dates have been set. Details still to come. Check our website or sign up for our email announce list at www.texasprairie.org.

Marysee Prairie Preserve

Saturday May 7

Liberty County near Conroe

This coastal prairie remnant with mima mounds is owned by the Texas Land Conservancy. www.texaslandconservancy.org

NPAT’s Falls County Easements

Saturday May 14

Falls County near Marlin

Visit several blackland tallgrass prairie remnants in the area of NPAT’s Reisel Prairie.

Clymer Meadow Preserve

Saturday May 28, 10 a.m.

Near Celeste

Visit an 1,068-acre blackland tallgrass prairie. The preserve is part of a larger conservation area that includes land owned by The Nature Conservancy of Texas along with other private owners. www.nature.org.

Maddin Prairie Preserve Breeding Bird Survey and Open Preserve Days

Saturday and Sunday May 21-22

Mitchell County near Colorado City

Check out texasprairie.org/index.php/npat_prairies/location/maddin_prairie_preserve/ Contact Kirsti Harms at kirsti_harms@texasprairie.org or 512-296-9160.

Sheldon Lake State Park

Saturday June 4

Near Houston

Tour this coastal prairie restoration project. www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/sheldon_lake/

An Unplanned Burn: Before and After

NANCY WEBBER's property in Milam County had an "uncontrolled" and unintentional burn in March 2010. The fire lanes she had bulldozed during the previous August actually worked. The fire ran west to east, almost the length of the property, but didn't get into the woods or cross the creek to the north side. The picture (below, right) shows how the fire stopped at the dirt track, and did not jump it.

Nancy's property is about 2 miles, as the crow flies, north of Lake Granger, and includes 60 acres of so-called "unimproved" grassland on both sides of a tributary of Alligator Creek. She has owned it almost 3 years and has been working steadily on brush removal, seeding of native grasses, and fighting the Johnsongrass that comes in near the county road. The stands of little bluestem and Indian grass appear to have been helped by the fire (top right). There is still KR bluestem near the road, but the interior of the property is not as heavily infested.

The creek bottom is wooded with large pecans, cedar and American elms, Texas ash, soapberry, hackberry, Mexican plum, and rusty blackhaw viburnum. Also scattered around are toothache tree, possumhaw, yaupon holly, mesquite, eastern red cedar, and bumelia.

When asked about the name Alligator Creek, Nancy responded, "Besides losing the tall grass and all the diversity it hosts, we've also lost wetlands, which were maintained by beavers, thick everywhere in the United States where there was some water. Their engineering accomplishments would have slowed water, created wetlands, and recharged the water table whereas now we have 'creeks' that are eroded gutters that channel water and soil rapidly away to the Gulf—gone forever." For more on this see the article at www.texasescapes.com/ClayCoppedge/Phantom-Alligators.htm.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF NANCY WEBBER

Spring Plant Sale 2011

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Saturday and Sunday April 9 and 10
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
4801 La Crosse Avenue, Austin
512-232-0100
www.wildflower.org

Choose from more than 270 species of Texas native plants. (The plant list is available online.) The event also features artists and authors signing their works in the store, guided walks and talks and tips for your garden from experts.



6TH ANNUAL FORT WORTH
PRAIRIE FEST
SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 2011
CELEBRATING OUR CONNECTION TO THE NATURAL WORLD

Saturday, April 23, 2011 from 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.

FREE Admission

Tandy Hills Natural Area is a 160-acre prairie remnant
located at 3400 View Street in Fort Worth.

For more information: www.tandyhills.org or 817-731-2787



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Who We Are and What We Do

Mission

NPAT is a non-profit membership organization and land trust dedicated to the conservation, restoration, and appreciation of native prairies, savannas, and other grasslands in Texas. We save Texas prairies.

Less than 1% of the original 20 million acres of Texas' tallgrass prairie remains, so we must act now to conserve our remaining tallgrass prairie heritage.

Conservation

NPAT protects prairies through acquisition, partnerships, and by accepting donations of conservation easements and property to protect native prairie in perpetuity. Learn more about protecting your prairie in perpetuity and potential tax benefits.

We protect over 1200 acres of native Texas prairie, including over 100 acres of endangered/threatened tallgrass prairie.

Restoration

We restore native prairie on our own lands, and promote restoration on other private and public lands to benefit the native plant communities, grassland birds, and other prairie wildlife of Texas. We assist landowners as well as those interested in sustainable land-based endeavors by sharing informational resources and advice on restoration. NPAT also offers fee-based restoration services.

Appreciation

NPAT educates Texans about native prairies, plant communities, grassland birds and other wildlife through workshops, presentations, field trips and many types of volunteer opportunities. We promote the conservation and restoration of Texas prairies.

Partners and Affiliations

NPAT is affiliated with the following groups:

- Coastal Prairie Partnership
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
- Land Trust Alliance
- Native Plant Conservation Campaign
- Native Plant Society of Texas
- North Texas Prairie Coalition
- Plant Conservation Alliance
- Teaming with Wildlife
- Texas Land Trust Council
- Texas Native Lands Alliance
- Texas Prairie Coalition

Board of Directors 2011

Pat Merkord, President
936-827-7973 (m)
pat_merkord@texasprairie.org

President-elect
vacant

Kirsti Harms, Vice President
kirsti_harms@texasprairie.org

Kathleen Darling, Treasurer
kathleen_darling@texasprairie.org

Secretary
vacant

Leslie Dietz
leslie_dietz@texasprairie.org

Aron Flanders
aron_flanders@texasprairie.org

Dr. Daniel Scognamillo
daniel_scognamillo@texasprairie.org

Matt Singer
matt_singer@texasprairie.org

Executive Director

Dalmar Bayne
512-847-7615
dalmar_bayne@texasprairie.org

Program Director

James Alderson
254-939-7976
james_alderson@texasprairie.org

Outreach Coordinator

Phillip Quast
phillip_quast@texasprairie.org

Advisory Board

Dr. Fred Smeins, Scientific Advisor

David Bezanson

Clair Burleson

Mickey Burleson

B.F. Hicks

Johnny Johnson

Bob O'Kennon

Robert Rasmus

Jason Singhurst

David Todd

Carolyn Vogel

Matt White

Financial Report

NPAT's Accountant is completing both the 990 IRS Form for 2010 and a Financial Review; upon its completion we will publish a Financial Report in the Newsletter. The budget for 2011, however, has been approved and the items below indicate NPAT's current fundraising needs.

PROGRAMS & OPERATIONS \$241,612

Includes Outreach/Education, Restoration Workshop/Guide, Monitoring of Properties, and General Operating budget

Raised \$164,750

Balance to be Raised \$ 76,862

STEWARDSHIP/LAND MANAGEMENT \$32,388

Raised \$20,600

Maddin Property Management Fund Balance \$15,963

Balance to be used to purchase equipment \$ 4,175

PROPERTY ENDOWMENTS

Endowments are needed to ensure the perpetuity of existing easements and are required by the Land Trust Alliance for accreditation

Conservation Defense Fund \$36,000

Stewardship Fund \$42,000

Raised \$10,000

Balance to be Raised \$68,000

ACQUISITION FUNDS \$300,000

To purchase Conservation Easements

Raised \$ 91,032

Balance to be Raised \$208,968

MADDIN BUILDING FUND \$77,000

NPAT's plans for "Maddin Preserve" (1100 acres west of Abilene) include realizing its full potential as a preserve through not only restoration, but also through multi-use. By serving as a model for groups, individuals, and the community, we feel its maximum potential will be realized and a building is required for that to happen. Maddin is home to many threatened species including the horned lizard and a managed prairie dog colony

Raised \$37,000

Balance to be Raised \$40,000

Maddin Trailer Wanted

LOOKING FOR LEADS on a **travel trailer**—an inexpensive or donated basic model that sleeps 6-8. Having a place to stay on the preserve would help staff and volunteers with ongoing projects.

Donations may be made on our website at www.texasprairie.org or use one of the mail-in forms in this newsletter.

Thank you for your continuing support of prairies in Texas!

For Your Library

Distribution of Grasses in Texas

by Robert B. Shaw, Barron S. Rector, and Amanda M. Dube

THIS BOOK is a compilation of information about the distribution of grasses in the 12 ecoregions and 254 counties of Texas. There have been 721 species reported for the state and more than 19,000 county distribution records.

Published by BRIT (Botanical Research Institute of Texas), this book includes a checklist of species by ecoregion, summaries of the number of documented species per county, and the number of counties where the top 101 species have been collected. It includes two major lists: The first list is a record of grass species for each county; the second, documents the counties where a particular species has been collected. Data presented clearly indicates that the *Poaceae*, the most economically important of all plant families, is poorly collected across the state. Distribution of cultivars, ornamentals, and noxious or invasive weedy species, as well as numerous native perennial taxa, are poorly documented. Even common species need collecting. The authors hope that this work will stimulate collection of Texas grasses, and that specimens will be properly preserved in Texas herbaria.

Distribution of Grasses in Texas assists collectors, whether they are botanists, gardeners, conservationists, researchers, students or other plant enthusiasts. This compilation is intended to be a baseline upon which new information can build. A website (<http://essmextension.tamu.edu/plants/grasses>) is available to report new county records documented by voucher specimens.

For more information, go to www.brit.org/brit-press/books/.





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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

To Help Save Texas Prairies

Join the Native Prairies Association of Texas (NPAT)

To join online, visit www.texasprairie.org and go to the Support Us page.
Or fill out this form and mail a check to:

The Native Prairies Association of Texas
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Membership Categories: \$1,500 Family Lifetime \$1,000 Lifetime
 \$500 Patron \$250 Benefactor \$50 Family
 \$35 Individual \$20 Student/Senior
 New Renewal \$5000 Adopt-an-Acre
_____ Additional donation

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home/Office Phone: _____

Email: _____

I'm interested in prairies because: _____

I'd like more information about: _____

Please consider including an additional donation with your membership dues. It really helps us out!
Please check here to decline listing in a future member's directory.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE for current and future generations in the preservation of Texas' natural heritage, while enjoying outings and volunteer activities with fellow prairie enthusiasts. Be a part of the solution for the many challenges facing this great American landscape.

We depend on the support of our members to help us conserve Texas prairies. Programs are supported by gifts, contributions, grants, membership dues, and volunteer efforts.

Consider a Conservation Easement

Benefits include: Significant tax incentives: estate, income, and capital gains

- management and restoration advice
- conservation of your family and Texas heritage

For more information, contact NPAT by email at contact@texasprairie.org, call 512-847-7615, or visit www.texasprairie.org.

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