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*Katherine Goodbar, Editor*

## **HIGH POINT PRAIRIE FOLLOWS THE LATEST CONSERVATION TREND**

Throughout the nation the conflict between development and preserving native land has been a major issue. Development is certainly necessary for housing an increasing population. The concept of integrating low density housing with native land seems an ideal solution where a limited number of home sites are painstakingly blended into the land in one area and the rest is left open and in its natural state. Home sites are provided and the natural prairie is protected.

John Wood and Prairie Home, Ltd. have a grand plan, and fortunately NAPA is a part of the plan. They intend to establish a community on this land where people can live as part of nature, not man apart from nature. Of their 1200 acres, 70% or 840 acres will be in common land, mostly prairies, replete with wild flowers, woods, ponds, wetlands and much wildlife habitat. About 30 % will be in private lots that range in size from 2 to 8 acres. They intend to restrict by deed roughly a third of each private lot so that a portion of the private lots can also be restored to native prairies or managed as woods or ponds.

The first 240 acre area was designated last December with 96 acres reserved for homes and a conservation easement given to NAPA on 144 acres. John Wood and Prairie Home, Ltd. intend to donate easements on 240 acres to NAPA each year for the next four years.

The land lies in Kaufman, Rockwall, and Hunt counties. It contains the headwaters of

High Point Creek and much of its watershed including a 75 acre lake fed by High Point Creek. There are several thousand more acres of contiguous land that may be obtainable to be rolled into this community.

NAPA is delighted to be a part of this plan that may set a good example for other developers!

## **DOUBLE EAGLE RANCH**

The conservation easement on Double Eagle Ranch was given to NAPA by John Byram who also gave us the easement on the Old Weatherby Ranch in Culberson County. This is a composite of two adjacent tracts, the 3,336 acre original Double Eagle Ranch and an additional 5,288 acres. The combined property is approximately ten miles east of Eagle Pass in Maverick County. The terrain of southeastern Maverick County is rolling, composed of ridges and gentle slopes covered with low-growing brush. The ranch is mostly upland brush, but a central flatter area includes reservoirs and fields planted in grasses. Unlike most of South Texas, woody species rarely exceed 7 feet in height except in draws or along tanks.

The large Maverick county irrigation canal loops through the property providing water to fill tanks and reservoirs. Mr. Byram's principal interest is wildlife, and two large reservoirs (~100 acres each) have been built. These are visible from the surrounding hills and support abundant pelicans, ducks, grebes, coot, wading birds, and other waterfowl. The wildlife on the ranch is sensational; seen or

heard were whitewinged doves, cottontails, white-tailed deer, armadillos, coyotes, raccoon, sandhill cranes, blue and bobwhite quail, hawks and many other birds. The ranch manager also mentioned seeing javelina and indigo snakes. The white-tailed deer are numerous with huge racks from the year-round availability of protein-rich browse. With all this food available, there are surely cougar and bobcats.

Then there are the herds of exotic ungulates! There are elk which some say were native to South Texas pre-historically, scimitar-horned oryx, axis deer and fallow deer. There are not enough animals to have a big ecological impact and the ranch is large enough that these animals do not seem obtrusive.

This is NAPA's first preserve in the seriously threatened Rio Grande brush land ecosystem. We are very grateful to Mr. Byram for giving us the opportunity to establish a presence in the area.



Shrubland with quajillo, blackbrush, and amargosa at the Double Eagle Preserve

## KENDRICK-RALSTON PRESERVE

Robb Kendrick and Jean Ralston have given NAPA a conservation easement on their 197 acres of rolling terrain located in Blanco County approximately three miles west of the town of Blanco. One hundred and fifty seven acres of the ranch have been and continue to be managed as native rangeland, while forty acres were cultivated hay pastures in the past that have been fallow for five years. Domestic livestock grazing and farming activity stopped on the ranch in 1996. The property contains and borders several hundred feet of Cottonwood Creek, a minor creek flowing into the Blanco River. When it was seen in December the creek was very strong and reportedly flows about 10 months of the year; there are three waterfalls and many small pools.

The owners are interested in trying to rehabilitate the oldfield areas for the benefit of wildlife. The potential seems good, given the presence of good soil and adequate water. The rest of the property is former Edwards Plateau woodland which, like most of the land in Blanco County, had been overgrown with Ashe juniper and persimmon. At the Kendrick-Ralston ranch these have been entirely removed, leaving scattered mottes of plateau live oak and shin oak and range grasses. There are also large open areas of range grasses.

Along the creek the trees are dense and include riparian species such as possum haw, cedar elm, live oak and a few old junipers. There is a large population of whitetail deer as well as Rio Grand Turkey, Bobwhite quail and many other species of birds on the property. We give many thanks to Robb Kendrick and Jean Ralston for allowing NAPA to share in the protection of this fine property.

