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CONSERVATION EASEMENT ON GUNSIGHT MOUNTAIN RANCH PRESERVE DONATED BY DOROTHY MATTIZA

One of the most unique parts of Texas is the southwestern edge of the Hill Country, where the Balcones Escarpment becomes most rugged and eastern forests meet West Texas deserts. Despite the crowds at resort towns such as Bandera and Leakey, most of the area is still uncrowded and privately owned.

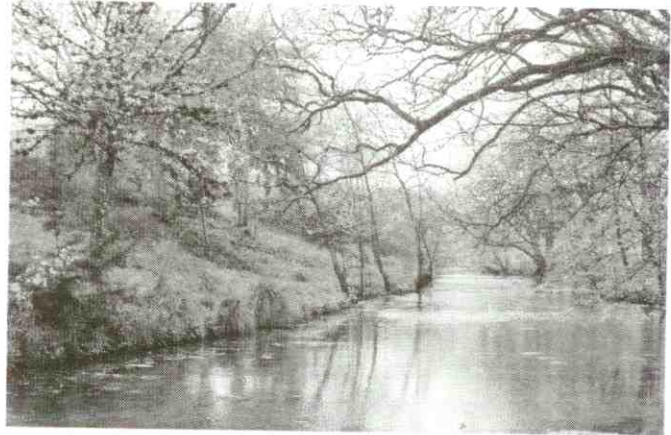
Now, rancher **Dorothy Mattiza** has taken the step of donating a conservation easement on her ranch in Bandera County to ensure that her land will keep its rural character and natural beauty.

Ms. Mattiza, owner of Gunsight Mountain Nursery and long-time member of the Native Plant Society of Texas, has managed the 502-acre ranch to promote its amazing plant and wildlife diversity. Located near Tarpley, the ranch contains outstanding examples of the mountains and wooded canyons of the Bandera region. The ranch protects part of the Williams Creek valley including more than a mile of the creek, which flows into the Hondo River.

The ranch's name comes from a hill to the south which is separated from the next hill by a notch, resembling a gun sight. The hill was named by the first settlers in the region.

More than 500 species of plants have been found on the ranch, including American smoke-tree (which is known only from a few counties in the United States) and other rarities. Wildlife includes mountain lion, bobcat, porcupine, wild turkey, quail, and songbirds — more than 100 species of birds at least.

On the first weekend in April, Dorothy invited



Williams Creek flows through Dorothy Mattiza's Gunsight Mountain Ranch.

NAPA members to the dedication of the Gunsight Mountain Ranch Preserve. In spite of the drizzling rain, guests enjoyed a long hike over the ranch and a delicious chuck wagon meal cooked and served by a Lubbock caterer. NAPA members met and talked with many of Dorothy's neighbors. Now, Dorothy is pitching to her neighbors the benefits of donating conservation easements to preserve the special qualities of their valley.

We are grateful to Dorothy Mattiza for preserving her ranch in one of Texas' most scenic places!

RUSSELL FAMILY PRESERVES LITTLE- DISTURBED EAST TEXAS FOREST

Before Anglo-European settlement, the bottomlands and slopes along the Trinity River in East Texas supported forests of huge pine and hardwood forests. Construction of reservoirs such as Lake Livingston destroyed much of the bottomlands, and most of the uplands have been logged many times. **Marjorie and Kenneth Russell** and **George Russell** are making

sure that some remaining forest will be conserved. The Russell family has purchased more than ten miles of lakefront along Lake Livingston to preserve the diverse landscapes of the area, ranging from bottomlands and pine woods to prairies and sandstone outcrops.

In December 2001, Marjorie and Kenneth Russell donated a conservation easement on 312 acres of the least-disturbed shoreline, nestled between coves of the lake. The land has not been logged for decades, and some areas were probably never logged intensively. The property is entirely forested — an expansive wilderness of slope forests, creek drainages, and swamps. Like most native forests of East Texas, many areas of woods are open and park-like. Tall loblolly pines, post oaks, white oaks, water oaks, and southern red oaks grow along with 40 other kinds of trees.

The Russells' donation will preserve forever an island of natural forest in the fast-growing area of southeast Texas.



Trees tower over a trail on Marjorie and Kenneth Russell's property

SECOND EASEMENT PRESERVES MORE OF BLANCO RIVER NARROWS

Also in December 2001, a new conservation easement preserving a central Texas landmark was donated by **Robert and Mary Cocke** of Austin. The donation preserves the Cockes' 72.7-acre property along the "Narrows" of the Blanco River, and adds to the previous conservation easement donated to NAPA earlier in 2001. Together, the two easements bring the protected acreage at the Narrows to 415 acres.

The Narrows of the Blanco River is a geologically and ecologically unique feature in Texas, formed where the river has carved a gorge through the porous limestone of an ancient reef.

Dr. and Mrs. Cocke plan to build one house on the upland, out of sight of the river. The canyons and bluffs will remain undeveloped and cloaked in native vegetation. All the landowners at the Narrows are working together to create a model for development that preserves the natural and scenic values of the Hill Country.

LANDOWNER DONATES INTEREST IN TRACTS IN EAST AND WEST TEXAS

Sometimes the most significant natural areas seem unsuitable for most other uses. Often, natural areas in Texas are most valuable for the oil and gas under them, which in some cases can be extracted without permanently hurting the conservation values. Landowners may retain their mineral rights but donate the land to a land trust to manage for wildlife conservation.

Robert Hitzelberger of Dallas has donated to NAPA his interest in two pieces of family property containing unique features. The first tract is located in Houston County near Kennard, in the Davy Crockett National Forest. The land is a sandy area, with extensive seeps. The timber

