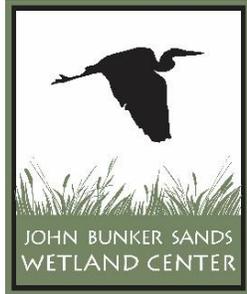


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 19, 2022



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John Bunker Sands Wetland Center Receives Texas Leopold Conservation Award

Combine, TX (May 19, 2022):

The John Bunker Sands Wetland Center is the recipient of the 2022 Texas Leopold Conservation Award®.

Given in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, the award recognizes farmers, ranchers and forestland owners who inspire others with their dedication to land, water and wildlife habitat management on private, working land.

In Texas, the award is presented annually by Sand County Foundation and national sponsor, American Farmland Trust, in partnership with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Lone Star Land Steward Awards program.

The state's highest honor for private land conservation and its \$10,000 award will be presented to John DeFillipo, John Bunker Sands Wetland Center Director, representatives of The Rosewood Corporation, North Texas Municipal Water District, and Bunker's family at the Lone Star Steward Awards banquet on May 25.

"Our vision is to engage students in conservation, encourage stewardship of natural resources, and inspire sustainable solutions. On behalf of our wetland center team, board of directors, and founding partners, we are honored to receive this recognition," DeFillipo said.

"The recipients of this award are examples of how Aldo Leopold's land ethic is alive and well today. Their dedication to conservation shows how individuals can improve the health of the land while producing food and fiber," said Kevin McAleese, Sand County Foundation President and CEO.

The first Texas Leopold Conservation Award was presented to Richards Ranch of Jacksboro in 2005. San Pedro Ranch of Carrizo Springs received the 2021 award.

"As the national sponsor for Sand County Foundation's Leopold Conservation Award, American Farmland Trust celebrates the hard work and dedication of the Texas recipient," said John Piotti, AFT president and CEO. "At AFT we believe that conservation in agriculture requires a focus on the land, the practices and the people and this award recognizes the integral role of all three."



The Leopold Conservation Award in Texas is made possible thanks to the generous contributions from American Farmland Trust, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Lee and Ramona Bass, Dixon Water Foundation, Sand County Foundation and McDonald's.

In his influential 1949 book, *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold called for an ethical relationship between people and the land they own and manage, which he called "an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity."

Sand County Foundation presents the Leopold Conservation Award to private landowners in 24 states for extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation. For more information on the award, visit www.leopoldconservationaward.org

ABOUT THE JOHN BUNKER SANDS WETLAND CENTER

John Bunker Sands was a cattle rancher, land steward, and wetland conservationist.

As manager of his family's Rosewood Ranches in the 1980s and 90s, he rotationally grazed beef cattle, increased the land's ecological diversity, and provided outdoor recreational opportunities for others. Bunker's passion was reestablishing wetlands on more than 2,100 acres of ranchland spread across four counties. His conservation efforts earned a Lone Star Land Steward Ecoregion Award in 1996.

At the East Fork of the Trinity River, Bunker recreated a wetland at his family's ranch that had long ago been drained to grow crops. Since his untimely passing in 2003, something remarkable has blossomed there.

It's now part of a 2,000-acre system of 28 wetland cells that filter natural and treated wastewater from the Trinity River. The Rosewood Corporation and Bunker's family agreed to sell ranchland to the North Texas Municipal Water District to make the project possible. They formed a public-private partnership with the water district to construct, oversee, and manage a nature center named in Bunker's honor.

The East Fork Water Reuse Project couples Bunker's land ethic with the water district's vision to provide millions of people with clean water. A sustainable water supply is vital in a region where the population of 5 million people is projected to double by 2050.

Nearly 90 million gallons of water are naturally filtered daily after spending a week to 10 days flowing through the system of wetlands. A pump station then transports the cleansed water through a 43-mile underground pipeline to Lavon Lake for storage, blending, treatment, disinfection, and delivery to municipal water utilities.

A closed-loop urban water cycle that doubles as habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife provides a unique opportunity to teach people about the importance of wetlands, water conservation, and wildlife ecosystems.



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Since opening in 2010, the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center has increased the conservation literacy of more than 50,000 students and 25,000 adult visitors. Middle and high school students perform field studies in wetland ecology. Careers in conservation are encouraged by giving students an idea of what it's like to be a researcher or property manager.

The center hosts research conducted by nearby universities in the areas of water reuse and quality, wetland systems, and wildlife conservation. Small islands amid the wetland cells are planted with native vegetation to provide feeding and nesting habitat for birds.

The center's director, John DeFillipo, describes it as a looking glass into an important ecosystem. Along its boardwalks, the public gets an up-close look at its water supply's connection to birds, fish and wildlife in a natural setting. Despite its uniqueness, DeFillipo said this laboratory of education and research could be replicated elsewhere.

Just as the Center's namesake did decades ago, prescribed burning is used to control the spread of cattails, and beef cattle are still rotationally grazed at the Center and on adjacent ranchland owned by the Rosewood Ranches.

The John Bunker Sands Wetland Center, and the land that surrounds it, are testaments to how one man's conservation ethic can positively impact the landscape, water, wildlife, and the lives of millions of Texans.

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LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD PROGRAM is a competitive award that recognizes landowner achievement in voluntary conservation. Sand County Foundation presents the award in California, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, and in New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont). www.leopoldconservationaward.org

SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION inspires and empowers a growing number of private landowners to ethically manage natural resources in their care, so future generations have clean and abundant water, healthy soil to support agriculture and forestry, plentiful habitat for wildlife and opportunities for outdoor recreation. www.sandcountyfoundation.org

AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST is the only national organization that takes a holistic approach to agriculture, focusing on the land itself, the agricultural practices used on that land, and the farmers and ranchers who do the work. AFT launched the conservation agriculture movement and continues to raise public awareness through its No Farms, No Food message. Since its founding in 1980, AFT has helped permanently protect over 6.5 million acres of agricultural lands, advanced environmentally sound farming practices on millions of additional acres, and supported thousands of farm families. www.farmland.org



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TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

The mission of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department is to manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/>

ABOUT THE ROSEWOOD CORPORATION/ROSEWOOD RANCHES

Established in 1976, The Rosewood Corporation is a multi-generational, family-owned, and operated company with investments in public and private securities, commercial real estate, energy and other interests. Rosewood Ranches is dedicated to responsible breeding practices, preserving our family's rich ranching heritage and conserving our land for and benefit of future generations. Each of Rosewood's business lines is committed to the highest standards of performance. We maintain a tradition of excellence in all areas of operations and are committed to preserving the legacy of Caroline Rose Hunt. Learn more at www.Rosewd.com

ABOUT NORTH TEXAS MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT

The North Texas Municipal Water District (NTMWD) was created in 1951 as a special district of the state. Today, NTMWD is a regional wholesale provider of water, wastewater and solid waste disposal services for approximately two million residents across 10 counties – a service territory covering 2,200 square miles. With an annual operations budget of \$570 million and 900 employees, NTMWD serves about 80 communities with drinking water, more than 1.3 million people with wastewater collection and treatment, about 900,000 people with waste management services, and operates one of the largest advanced water treatment plants with a capacity of 876 million gallons per day. Learn more at www.NTMWD.com

