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What Concerns You Most about the Future of the Hill Country? - Volume 1

By: M. Bruce Pelle

Across the Texas Hill Country, there is a growing sense that something important is changing. Some people see progress. Others see strain. Most see both.

Drive through Blanco County, Comal County, Kendall County, Hays County or Burnet County and the signs are everywhere: new subdivisions, heavier traffic, construction equipment, drilling rigs, water restrictions, Quarry disputes, Rising taxes, and increasing tension at city council and county meetings.

The Hill Country is no longer simply a quiet rural region tucked between Austin and San Antonio. It has become one of the fastest growing areas in Texas.

Can our water supply sustain the current pace of development?

How much groundwater can be pumped before aquifers begin to fail?

Can Canyon Lake and our rivers continue supporting expanding populations during prolonged drought?

How many quarries can communities absorb before dust blasting truck traffic and noise permanently alter the landscape?

How do we preserve the rural character, dark skies, wildlife, and Open Spaces that brought people here in the first place?

Perhaps most importantly: who gets to decide what the future of the Hill Country becomes?

These are no longer theoretical questions. They are becoming daily realities.

Water, in particular, sits at the center of nearly every conversation. Without water, growth stops. Agriculture suffers. Property values decline. Communities divide. Yet many citizens feel they are receiving incomplete or inconsistent information about long-term water availability, infrastructure limitations, system losses, Wastewater planning, and drought preparation.

At the same time, others argue that growth is both inevitable and necessary. Businesses need opportunity. Families need homes. Counties need tax revenues. Young people need jobs. Many local officials are attempting to balance competing pressures and limited authority and limited resources.

The result is a growing tension between preservation and expansion.

This article is not intended to tell readers what to think. Instead, it asks a simple question: What concerns you most about the future of the Hill country?

Is it water? Traffic? Property taxes? Quarries? Wastewater discharge? Loss of rural identity? Lack of government transparency? Over development? Or do you believe these concerns are overstated and that growth simply reflects prosperity and opportunity?

Communities function best when citizens can openly discuss difficult issues without immediately dividing into two opposing camps. The Hill Country deserves thoughtful conversations grounded in facts, transparency, civility, and long-term stewardship.

The decisions being made today about water, land use, infrastructure, and development will shape this region for generations. The future of the Hill Country is being written right now. The question is whether the people who live here will help write it?

The Blanco County News will continue discussing the major issues facing the Hill Country, including water, growth, quarries, traffic, taxes, wastewater, conservation, and government transparency. These issues matter because they affect the daily lives and future of everyone who calls the Hill Country home.

We invite readers to share the concerns they believe deserve attention and public discussion. While these challenges will not be solved in the pages of a newspaper alone, meaningful change begins when inform citizens are willing to participate, ask questions, stay engaged, and vote for responsible leaders who will protect the long-term future of our communities.

Let us know your concerns, your ideas and the issues you believe matter most.

Editor's Note:

M. Bruce Peele grew up hearing family stories that one of his relatives helped popularize the famous Texas battle cry, "Remember the Alamo!" Whether true or not, the story sparked a lifelong interest in Texas history, public service, and the larger questions shaping communities and people.

Bruce's father died when he was two years old, and he was later adopted by his stepfather, Warren D. Peele, an Air Force pilot and professor of electrical engineering at the U.S. Air Force Academy. Because of his stepfather's military career, Bruce lived throughout the United States before attending the University of Colorado, where he earned a degree in psychology with a minor in economics.

He later attended Gonzaga University School of Law before military service during the Vietnam era interrupted his legal education. Bruce entered the U.S. Army and served on the Staff Judge Advocate team handling medical malpractice matters and administrative hearings during a major reduction in Army personnel.

After leaving the Army, he transferred to Texas Tech School of Law in Lubbock, graduating in the top ten percent of his class. He then joined the U.S. Department of Justice Tax Division in

Dallas, where he specialized in tax litigation and bankruptcy matters and received several awards for his outstanding service.

In private practice, Bruce continued working in bankruptcy law and business planning while also writing articles for the Texas Bar.

Alongside his legal career, he became active in Bible Study Fellowship and volunteered teaching religious courses in Spain, Russia, and Africa.

Later in life, Bruce spent years traveling throughout the United States and visiting many of the National Parks. A difficult pregnancy involving his daughter's second child eventually brought him back to Texas, where he unexpectedly settled in Blanco more than twelve years ago.

Bruce served as the president of the Planning and Zoning Department and later he served as Mayor of Blanco beginning in 2015, just weeks before the historic 1,000-year flood.

He describes serving the citizens of Blanco during that difficult period as one of the great privileges of his life.

Since leaving office, Bruce has continued volunteering with the U.S. Forest Service, spending time in remote wilderness areas that deepened his appreciation for silence, reflection, and nature. He now divides his time between writing, and working on a book titled Journey from Fear to Love, which explores spiritual and personal transformation.

Bruce recently began writing articles for the Blanco County News focused on issues affecting Blanco County and the Texas Hill Country. His hope is to provide thoughtful, balanced discussion that informs readers about the opportunities and challenges facing the region's future.