Catchment ID 44193

The Upper San Saba River

[image] Steep Rocky- Oak/Juniper/Woodland in foreground. Loamy Bottomland-San Saba River in background

The spring-fed San Saba River is a valuable resource to West-Central Texas. The relatively constant flows of the river provide recreational opportunities, habitat for unique plant and animal communities, and critical water supplies to local communities and ecosystems, especially during drought. The proactive protection and preservation of the river and its watershed is an economic, cultural, and environmental concern. As the majority of the San Saba watershed is privately owned, effective methods for protecting the the river need to result from the coordinated actions of informed landowners at a local level. To facilitate these interactions, The Nature Conservancy has designed this on-line tool, the LandOwner Catchment Assessment (LOCA), for the Upper San Saba watershed. The LOCA helps inform landowners on effective stewardship practices, the best methods for implementing these practices, and potential funding sources for landowners working together to protect their resource.

The LOCA Tool

The Nature Conservancy's *LOCA* is unique compared to other watershed management tools based on its array of content and its scale. The content is based primarily on the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Ecological Site Assessments. These assessments, based on soils, utilize a model to describe the state of the plant communities and the potential pathways that may result, given certain land-use practices. These unique assessments aid landowners to develop a better understanding of what the land looked like in pre-settlement times, how it has been transformed, and what appropriate management practices, if any, are available to help restore and improve their lands. The Ecological Site Assessments are primarily geared toward assisting agricultural producers, so additional information from Texas Parks and Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, and other Texas conservation organizations, such as Hill Country Alliance and Texas Riparian Association are included to provide management strategies for landowners interested in an array of stewardship goals. Traditional watershed plans provide owners with land stewardship suggestions for an entire watershed, often at scales in excess of several thousand square miles. The LOCA provides landowners suggestions at the catchment, or sub-watershed scale. In the San Saba watershed, these catchments average about 2,000 acres in size. Once a user selects their parcel of land from the display map showing the Upper San Saba, they are provided information regarding the NRCS Ecological Site Descriptions that fall within the selected catchment. In addition, information on hydrology, geology, soils, slope, canopy cover are also provided to assist the landowner with identifying areas within the catchment where additional management considerations, such as slope or canopy cover, are warranted.

Landowner Goals

Ultimately, it is up to you, the landowner, to decide if the land is to be managed for agriculture, wildlife, a combination thereof, or something completely different. This on-line tool assists in understanding the degree to which the land has undergone changes from its reference (historic) condition, what stewardship practices can be implemented to undo some of the changes, and sources of funding to implement those practices. The tool also provides

landowners a realistic expectation of the results from implementing these practices given the state of degradation from reference conditions.

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ESD	EcoName	Acres
R081BY337TX	Low Stony Hill	745.0
R081BY350TX	Steep Rocky	281.7
R081BY326TX	Clay Loam	80.7
R081BY334TX	Loamy Bottomland-Riparian	44.0