The Respect Big Bend (RBB) initiative is a project launched by the Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation in 2019 to utilize solid science and critical stakeholder input to develop a blueprint for conserving the unique resources and iconic communities of the Big Bend region of Texas. The RBB mission is to inspire and empower stakeholders to conserve the unique resources and protect the iconic communities of the Big Bend region of Texas while developing energy responsibly.

An assemblage of stakeholders from Brewster, Jeff Davis and Presidio counties was convened to identify priorities and shape a shared vision of how to balance future energy development with the attributes that make this part of Texas special. The stakeholders included landowners, mineral owners, community members, and conservation partners. Together they identified important values that define the region, such as ranching heritage, grasslands, wildlife corridors, community and quality of life. RBB researchers combined spatial proxies of these values to create a science-based decision framework that can assist landowners and energy developers as they navigate important development decisions. Reports from the Respect Big Bend effort can be found at https://respectbigbend.org/final-report.

One of the principal recommendations from our stakeholders was for BRI to build on its role as a local leader in providing landowner and community resources. BRI staff are focused on providing resources and technical guidance to area landowners to assist them in their conservation and management goals. BRI is currently working with university officials, its conservation partners and funders to help establish a center at BRI to serve West Texas landowners and communities in this capacity.

To better emphasize the resources that BRI can provide to industry, as well as highlight much of the great land conservation work that many energy companies are already doing, we are hosting a Summit on Healthy Lands and Energy Development in Midland on January 20, 2022. Please see the “Save the Date” on page 4 for more information.

Energy development in West Texas is potentially at odds with commonly held values like ranching heritage, but the Respect Big Bend coalition is working to facilitate local stakeholder involvement in the region’s future. Top: “The Drive Home” © Vicki Leblanc. Above: AdobeStock photo.
From the Director — Inspiring Conservation

As we near the end of another year and prepare to celebrate the upcoming holiday season, it’s a good time to reflect on those who inspire us with their commitment to conservation.

John L. Nau III has long been a supporter of science-based conservation research and has championed BRI’s work since our inception. We are deeply grateful for Mr. Nau’s continued commitment to BRI, as detailed in the article below.

We are also grateful to those who inspire us through art. Most of us in the conservation community have had a predictable path to our careers. It likely started with a love of the outdoors. And when college came around, we gravitated to degrees in agriculture, natural resources, or environmental sciences. But there are others who underscore their commitment to conservation through their love of the arts. I’ve always had a deep admiration for artists and their ability to connect people with their works, especially for artists that inspire an appreciation for wild things and wild places.

As a tribute to artists that inspire conservation through their works, BRI recently launched the Big Bend Artists for Conservation initiative (read more on page 3).

Thank you to all those that support, admire, or inspire conservation!

—Louis A. Harveson

BRI Receives $1 Million for Habitat Enhancement Research

Thanks to a generous donation from a longtime supporter, the Borderlands Research Institute is enhancing West Texas habitat research efforts that will benefit native wildlife. John L. Nau III has committed $1 million over the next five years to support BRI’s Habitat Enhancement Project.

“If we are to be successful in restoring rangelands to functioning systems, we must evaluate different and novel techniques. The Habitat Enhancement Project is designed to develop best management practices for a variety of natural resource conditions, and the generous gift from Mr. Nau is an investment in using good science to combat the natural resource challenges that landowners face in the region.”

—Louis A. Harveson

John L. Nau III has committed $1 million to BRI to study habitat enhancement methods in West Texas.
West Texas Safari Club Donates $10,000 for Wildlife Research in the Trans-Pecos

The West Texas Chapter of Safari Club International has made a $10,000 donation to support two wildlife research projects at the Borderlands Research Institute. One project is examining the diets of desert bighorn sheep, mule deer and aoudad in shared habitats. The second study seeks to validate age estimates of wild ungulates, including pronghorn, desert bighorn sheep and mule deer.

“We’ve supported BRI projects in West Texas for several years now, and our members appreciate making investments in our own back yard,” said Brandon Bredemeyer, Board President of the West Texas Chapter of Safari Club International. “We hunt in West Texas, and we appreciate the work BRI does to conserve the species that are so important to us and to all who appreciate wildlife in Texas.”

Borderlands Research Institute Students Awarded $34,000 in Scholarships

Seven Sul Ross State University graduate students at the Borderlands Research Institute have been selected to receive $34,000 in scholarships from five different sources, including the first ever Women in Conservation Science Scholarship from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation.

BRI students also received the Virginia Matthews Law and the Franklin and Virginia Law scholarships, and scholarships from Houston Safari Club, the West Texas Chapter of the Safari Club, and the Desert Bighorn Council. We are proud of all of our students who have been selected for these extremely competitive scholarships!

Big Bend Artists for Conservation

There is a unique nexus between the art world and the world of conservation. For ages, artists have shared their vision of the natural world, instilling a deep appreciation for the world around us.

The Big Bend region of Texas has been a source of inspiration for artistic expression for centuries. The awe-inspiring landscapes and rich diversity of flora and fauna have been the muse for artists of all kinds, including painters, sculptors, filmmakers, musicians and photographers. As we connect with their work, we make the connection that inspires conservation of these natural treasures.

BRI is proud to launch the “Big Bend Artists for Conservation” initiative to highlight the link between artists and conservation in the Big Bend region of Texas. By sharing their stories and their magnificent creations, we hope to inspire those who are working to conserve the Borderlands region of Texas. Check out our featured artists at bri.sulross.edu.

Scholarship winners, left to right: Emily Card, Maya Ressler, Olivia Gray, Daniel Wilcox, Erin O’Connell, Brooke Bowman, and Lilly Morin

Ben Masters is our first featured Big Bend Artist for Conservation. Pictured here in the mountains of West Texas, Ben has crafted a career making films specializing in wildlife and adventure stories.
SAVE-THE-DATE

A Summit on Healthy Lands and Energy Development

JANUARY 20, 2022
9 AM - 5 PM

Bush Convention Center, 105 N Main St, Midland, TX

Energy industry developers who are interested in wildlife habitat restoration: this event is for you! Explore ideas for reducing negative impacts of energy development through collaborative, voluntary projects that engage landowners, community leaders, and energy companies.