

Texas General Land Office Buys 353,785-Acre Brewster Ranch

By Eric O'Keefe

Photography by Laurence Parent



RIO TEXICO RANCH. This component of the Brewster Ranch is an assemblage of six renowned ranches — the Asa Jones, Bullis Gap, Cow Creek, Rancho Verde, San Francisco Creek, and the Slaughter.

The largest privately owned ranch on the market in Texas has sold to the oldest state agency in the Lone Star State. The Texas General Land Office (GLO) has acquired the 353,785-acre Brewster Ranch from Texas Mountain Holdings, owned by Brad Kelley. The sale closed on October 24. The ranch had been listed for \$245,678,330. No financial details were released.

“As Texas Land Commissioner and the steward of more than 13 million acres of state land, I am proud to have acquired this beautiful property for the State of Texas,” said Commissioner Dawn Buckingham, MD. “By securing this large swath of land along our southern border, the GLO is not only blocking foreign adversaries from purchasing this land but also ensuring this mineral-rich property will be generating revenue for the school children of Texas.”

James King and Harrison King of King Land & Water in Fort Davis represented Texas Mountain Holdings. Eric DeJernett of CBRE Group in Austin and Sam Middleton of Chas. S. Middleton and Son in Lubbock represented the Texas General Land Office.

A Great Day for Texas

“The Brewster Ranch acquisition by the Texas General Land Office ranks as one of the most significant public purchases of land in the history of Texas,” said James King. “This is a great day for our state and a demonstration of Texas investing in Texas. The leadership of Commissioner Buckingham along with the yearlong efforts of the GLO staff and the buyer’s brokers were inspiring.”



SAN FRANCISCO CREEK. The waters on the uppermost four miles of this Rio Grande tributary run year-round on Rio Texico Ranch.

Historic Assemblage of 28 Ranches

Located in the Big Bend region of Far West Texas, Brewster Ranch is an assemblage of 28 historic ranches in Texas’s largest county that was parceled together by Kelley over a two-decade span. After bringing it to market in 2019, James and Harrison King wore out two trucks touring potential buyers on the 552-square-mile Brewster County landholding, which stands at the intersection of desert, river, and mountain where Northern Mexico ecosystems blend with the southern extension of the Rockies.

More Than a Million Acres of Parklands

Brewster Ranch borders Black Gap Wildlife Management Area, the Rio Grande Wild & Scenic River, and Big Bend National Park. The combination of these pristine parklands creates a sanctuary of more than 1.25 million acres in the Chihuahuan Desert.

At its height, Brewster Ranch totaled 431,846 acres. Three tracts — 22,940-acre Horse Mountain Ranch, which was listed for \$26 million; 19,814-acre Tesnus Ranch, which was listed for \$14 million; and 34,308-acre YE Mesa Ranch, which was listed for \$20 million — were marketed and sold separately by King Land & Water.

Ranked No. 9 on the Land Report 100 with 1 million acres, Kelley had been the largest private landowner in Texas. The acquisition of Brewster Ranch elevates Texas Pacific Land Corporation (TPL) to the top spot with 873,000 acres. The Birthplace of American Ranching, King Ranch, now ranks second with 836,000 acres.



DOVE MOUNTAIN RANCH. These 335,952 acres are home to a huntable population of desert bighorn sheep.