



Photo by Wayne Dunson



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*Providing Leadership for the Stewardship of Rangelands
Based on Sound Ecological Principles*



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President's Notes



Paul Loeffler
President, TSSRM

What a spring this has been! Judging from the weather maps and conversations with TSSRM members in different regions, this year could be one for the record books. Let's hope that we continue to receive moisture throughout the growing season. Even far west Texas, not known for receiving good rainfall until July and forward, has set some records and grown some forage. With some luck, maybe we can put the word "drought" on the shelf for a while and use words like "average", "above average" and "outstanding" when describing our precipitation and rangeland production.

Just as spring and summer are times of new growth and beginnings for rangelands, so are they for people. With high school and college graduations taking place almost every weekend, a lot of young people are stepping out into a new facet of their lives. Whether making plans to attend college or entering the work force, this new beginning of growth can be stressful for a high school grad or new employee. A lot of these young people will be looking for some "rainfall" at critical times. This "rainfall" can be a lot of things: a word of encouragement, a bit of advice, a listening ear or a mentoring relationship.

Can you remember the last time you provided a bit of "rainfall" to a young person? As members of TSSRM, each of us has the ability to provide information and leadership to both young and old. Whether speaking to a 4-H club or FFA chapter, at Lions or Rotary, advising an incoming college freshman or mentoring the new employee in your office, TSSRM members have the unique opportunity to provide information and offer advice. Through the diverse membership of our society, we have many chances to guide young people to universities that best suit their interests or employers in the field of rangeland stewardship. I would like to encourage each one of you offer your knowledge and experience with rangeland to one or more young people, either formally or informally.

Each of us, whether new to the field or a veteran of the trade, has knowledge and experience to share with others. Perhaps your "rainfall" will make the difference in someone's direction and maybe even bring a new member to TSSRM. Seize every opportunity you can to talk about rangeland and its importance.

Looking forward to seeing you "Out on the Range" (and enjoying the rain).

Paul V. Loeffler

The Inside Story...

- ★ TSSRM New Members
- ★ TSSRM Expired Members
- ★ Wildflower Tour
- ★ First Native Seed Released for South Texas
- ★ Repairian Notes: Losing Ground
- ★ Texas Section SRM Awards
- ★ 2007 State FFA Range Contest
- ★ ORM Award
- ★ I Need Your Help
- ★ Hogs Gone Wild
- ★ Rules of Thumb for Deer Management

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 Address inquiries to Jeff Goodwin, Editor.

TSSRM New Members

LET US WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS TO THE SECTION.
 THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT
 FOR RANGELAND STEWARDSHIP.

- ERIC J. BOLIN** HOUSTON, TX
TONY A. BRADLEY ARLINGTON, TX
KENNETH F. CRAIG CRANFILLS GAP, TX
ANDREW S. JAMES COLLEGE STATION, TX

TSSRM Expired Members

This is a list of the latest expired members for the Texas Section as of May 2007. If you know anyone on this list, please contact them and invite them back. Membership is the backbone and the future of our organization; maintaining our numbers will assure a strong and successful society. Thank you for your continued efforts.

- Michael Aaron Jennings**
Colin R. Rosser
Mick Savage
Wayne Walker
Eric D. Worsham

Wildflower Tour of Bear Creek Ranch

- **What:** Come see Fort Wort Prairie at the Dixon Water Foundation's Bear Creek Ranch
- **When:** Saturday, June 9th, 10am-1pm
- **Where:** 2701 Bear Creek Rd., Aledo, TX 76008

Owned by the Dixon Water Foundation, the 1700-acre Bear Creek Ranch supports deep-soiled tallgrass prairie, limestone glades, and streamside forest. TNC's Jim Eidson will talk about natural history, and Robby Tuggle, ranch manager, will talk about sustainable grazing. For more information, contact the Nature Conservancy's Jim Eidson, 903-568-4139, jeidson@TNC.ORG

Upcoming Events

July 23-27
Red Buffalo Prescribed Burn School to be held in Mason or Kerr Counties
http://www.myredbuffalo.com/burn_schools.htm
"Red Buffalo" Prescribed Burn Schools
 September 10-14, 2007
 Katy Prairie Conservancy. Waller, Texas
 December 3-7, 2007
 Dyes Air Force Base. Abilene, Texas
 January 2-6, 2008
 2nd Annual College Student Burn School.
 Blue Mountain Peak Ranch, Mason County.

Oct. 10-12
TSSRM ANNUAL MEETING
 Lubbock, TX
 Dates TBD

Oct. 2008
TSSRM ANNUAL MEETING
 Nacogdoches
 Dates TBD



First Native Seed Released for South Texas

The “Kika” de la Garza Plant Materials Center (PMC) in Kingsville, Texas, cooperatively released for commercial development seven native grass seed varieties, the first native ecotypes to be released in the state.

“The importance of providing native seeds for south Texas cannot be understated,” said John Lloyd-Reilley, plant materials center manager, Kingsville, for the USDA-NRCS, the agency that operates 27 plant materials centers across the country.

“Seed sources that are adapted to south Texas, or native to the area, are not readily available at this time,” Reilley said. “The seven ecotypes just released for south Texas will go a long way in providing native seed sources.”

NRCS’s plant materials center developed the released ecotypes with South Texas Natives, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, and the Texas Ag Experiment Station at Beeville.

“Many non-native species planted in the past have become invasive and adversely impact our ecosystems and the wildlife that inhabit them,” said Paula Maywald, coordinator of South Texas Natives. “Making adapted native seed available for sale gives land managers an important tool to assist them in their stewardship efforts.”

The seven grass species released include Catarina bristlegrass blend, Mariah Germplasm hooded windmillgrass, Welder Germplasm shortspike windmillgrass, Atascosa Germplasm Texas grama, Chaparral Germplasm hairy rrama, Dilley Germplasm slender grama, and LaSalle Germplasm Arizona cottontop. Germplasm are the genetic resources or more precisely the DNA of organisms and collections of that material that can be used in conservation of existing species.



Catrina Blend - Bristlegrass



Mariah Germplasm - Hood Windmillgrass



Welder Germplasm - Shortspike Windmillgrass

Scientists at NRCS plant materials centers seek out plants that show promise for meeting an identified conservation need and test their performance. After species are proven desirable through testing and further selection, they are released to the private sector for commercial production.

The “Kika” de la Garza Plant Materials Center in Kingsville was established in 1981. The center sits on 91 acres and serves a 27-million acre area in south Texas. The center has developed and released 15 plants for commercial production.

Additional information about the plant materials program in Texas can be found on the NRCS Texas Web site at <http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/pmc/index.html>.

Riparian Notes

Losing Ground

By Steve Nelle



It is a serious thing to lose riparian ground. There are two different ways that riparian areas can lose ground - either by down-cutting or by channel widening. Either type of erosion can cause long term riparian problems.

Down-cutting takes place as a creek channel cuts deeper and deeper. This type of vertical instability is also called “degradation” since the elevation of the channel is lowered or degraded over time. Down-cutting is extremely critical to overall riparian health and function. Channel degradation literally drains the water table across the entire floodplain, just like shooting a bullet hole in a large barrel of water. Not only does it lower the water level, but it prevents it from ever re-filling to the previous level. These

artificially deepened channels drastically reduce the volume of water that can be stored in shallow riparian water tables. With this reduction in the water table and water storage, aquatic habitat is compromised and some riparian plant species cannot survive or cannot reproduce since the distance to water is too great. Down-cutting dries up riparian areas.

Down-cutting can begin for several reasons. If the creek is artificially manipulated or straightened, this can lead to down-cutting. Disturbances on the upland water catchment which cause accelerated runoff (such as urbanization or overgrazing) can lead to down-cutting. When riparian vegetation becomes insufficient to hold the bottom or the banks of the channel in place, this too can lead to down-cutting. On smaller creeks, roots of riparian species (herbaceous and woody) can form an interwoven matrix of roots under the channel and provide the reinforcement needed to hold the bottom of the channel in place. If this vegetation is lost or damaged, it can lead to channel instability. Often, a combination of these factors occurs simultaneously to initiate the down-cutting process. Unfortunately, a serious side effect of channel degradation is that it precipitates the eventual down-cutting of all other side channels that enter the main channel as they seek a stable gradient. Down-cutting also may trigger a natural adjustment of the channel which normally leads to the second type of channel erosion.

Channel widening occurs when the creek banks become unstable and are unable to hold up. As banks erode and slough, the channel gets wider and wider. This channel widening is also serious since it can reduce the width of the riparian floodplain. When floodplains are lost to channel widening, the size of the riparian sponge is reduced and the capacity to store water for sustained release is reduced. Channel widening can either be a reaction to down-cutting, or it can be caused by inadequate riparian vegetation.

As channels widen, natural sinuosity and meandering is reduced. When sinuosity is decreased, channel gradient increases and water velocity increases which in turn leads to more and more erosion. As channels get wider and wider, their ability to transport sediment is diminished, which in turn, causes degradation of aquatic habitat as channels become shallow and clogged.

Excessive and un-natural riparian erosion often starts a nasty chain reaction. Keeping a close watch of creeks and riparian areas and being alert to subtle changes may allow the manager to act before the damage becomes excessive.

It should be understood that some bank erosion is natural and normal even in properly functioning riparian areas, especially on outside bends. This bank erosion should ideally be offset by the formation of point bars and increased sinuosity. The next issue of *Riparian Notes* will describe how riparian erosion combined with good vegetation can actually build back and restore damaged creeks.

Texas Section SRM Awards

The Awards Committee for the Texas Section of SRM is now accepting nominations for Outstanding Contribution to Rangeland Management, Fellow, Outstanding Achievement, Outstanding Young Professional, and Special Recognition Awards. Award categories, criteria, format, etc. can be found in the Texas Section Handbook at the following website: <http://www.tssrm.org/>

Anyone interested in nominating a member should get in touch with one of the following people:

Jeff White

Awards Committee Chair

jeff.white@utsystem.edu

432-556-2564

George Peacock

Awards Committee Chair-elect

pea01@msn.com

817-509-3211

The deadline to have nominations into the Awards Committee for their reviewing is:

July 1, 2007 for the Fellow and Special Recognition Awards.

August 1, 2007 for the Outstanding Contribution to Rangeland Management, Outstanding Achievement, and Outstanding Young Professional Awards.

2007 State FFA Range Contest

The 2007 State FFA Range Contest was held on April 26, 2007 at Tarleton State University. Twenty three range judging teams traveled to Stephenville, Texas from across the state to participate in the competition. Congratulations to all the winners, the top 5 team and individual results are as follows:

High Point Team

1. Harper
2. Cleburne
3. Brownwood
4. Jacksboro
5. Wall

High Point Individual

1. Mackenzi Haag, - Harper, TX
2. Kyle Harth - Brownwood, TX
3. Beth McMahon - Harper, TX
4. Preston Logan - Cleburne, TX
5. Craig Hughes - Cleburne, TX

ORM Award

The Outstanding Rangeland Management award is one of the more prestigious awards that the Society for Range Management gives out each year. This is the Society's opportunity to recognize the people who apply range management to the land. In the past, we have recognized some of the ranches and ranchers who would be listed in the Who's-Who's of outstanding rangeland managers if their were such a document. It seems that each year, the ORM committee receives fewer and fewer nominations for this award. I sometimes wonder if we have gotten too far from our roots and are becoming to in-grown to take the time and effort required to submit nominations.

The committee is getting a late start this year and I apologize for that. I encourage each of you to take a little time and think about some of the outstanding rangeland managers that you know and then get a nomination form and submit it to the committee. If you do not have a nomination form, please contact me and I will email one to you. I might also add that the same holds true for The TSCRA Stewardship Award which SRM sponsors in connection with Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association.

We have a deadline of July 15th to get the nominations in to the committee. Please email or hard copy the completed nominations to:

Stan Reinke

203 Madera Drive

Victoria, TX 77905

Stan.reinke@att.net

(361)570-0228

I Need Your Help

By Bruce Healy, TSSRM Secretary

The Texas Section Society for Range Management website is in the process of a complete overhaul. It should be online within the next week or two. As soon as the update has been completed, we will send out a "Member Bulletin" encouraging you to take a look (<http://www.tssrm.org>).

Nevertheless, as the website "contact" for the section, just like with the newsletter, *I can only work with what I have access to.*

Thus, I desperately need your help as a member on the following:

- I need good quality digital photos (no hard copies please) of Texas rangelands and rangeland related activities. If you have suggestions of where you would like your photo placed - I'll do what I can to accommodate. I also plan to give photo credit to the photographer (space availability will determine if I can list location). *I would encourage any past winners of the Section photo contests to please submit their photographs.* If you have a good photo, but are not sure if it is something I can use, please email it in - I hope to get photos from a large cross-section of the membership. I will do my best to also coordinate with Jeff Goodwin on the newsletter.
- I have had a request to develop a good quality informational page on "What are Texas rangelands?" What would you like said? What photos would you like used?
 - I know what the areas on I35, I37, I10, US83, 77, and 59 look like, but that leaves a lot of area I haven't discovered. Think about rangeland users of all aspects and what they might like to learn about - if desired, we could add more pages to the website with each targeting a specific rangeland use: digital photography - tips/tricks for plants, wildlife, landscapes; Domestic livestock issues (beef, dairy, sheep, goats); Exotics on the range and their management; Brush Management; the possibilities are endless. I don't necessarily want to duplicate other webpage's, just get you thinking of the possibilities.
 - *As a non-native, I will have to rely on the Section to take the lead on this particular web update.* (I don't expect one person to do it all!)
- I have an extensive page of links - to agencies, private firms, online rangeland education, etc. *What is missing?*
- Anything else you can think of to suggest is appreciated - just remember...I may ask for your help.

Please remember, the website is our online face - without steady input/updates, we have little value in having/maintaining one.

It has been a great effort to get this major update completed and online, but we can't rest on our laurels. Keeping it fresh/current can also help our fundraising efforts for the Section Endowment, Memorial Scholarship, Youth Education Endowment, Youth Activities, Member Recruitment/Retention, and/or any special projects you would like the board to consider.

Thanks for your help!

Hogs Gone Wild

By Wayne Dunson

Spanish explorers were probably the first to introduce hogs in Texas over 300 years ago. Hogs were important livestock to early settlers who usually allowed their animals to roam free. When confronted by war and economic hardships, settlers often had to abandon their homesteads, leaving their animals to fend for themselves. Therefore, many free-ranging domesticated hogs became wild over time.

In the 1930's, European wild hogs (Russian Boars) were imported and introduced into Texas by ranchers and sportsmen for hunting. Many of these eventually escaped from game ranches and began free ranging and breeding with feral hogs. This cross breeding resulted in hybrid hogs and led to the decline of the pure European strain.

The term "feral hog" now applies collectively to all wild hogs as a generalization. Wild domesticated hogs, feral hogs, Russian boars, hybrids, and razor backs all refer to the same species of swine. It is important to note that the hog-like javelina belongs to a different family and is not a feral hog.



Feral hogs are distributed throughout much of Texas, generally inhabiting white-tailed deer range, with the highest populations occurring in East, South, and Central Texas. Reports indicate that populations in North and West Texas are rapidly expanding as well. Feral hogs are the most prolific wild mammal in North America. With adequate nutrition, a feral hog population can double in four months. Breeding occurs throughout the year when conditions are favorable, and seasonally when food supply and diet quality vary. Under favorable conditions, females can produce at least

two litters a year, with an average of four to eight piglets/litter.

Hogs are omnivorous, meaning they eat both plants and animals. They are very opportunistic feeders and will consume almost anything based on seasonal availability. Hogs are also cannibalistic and will consume other hogs when necessary for survival. In one diet study of feral hogs in the post oak savannah during winter, hog represented 30% of the diet composition by volume. They have 44 teeth including four razor sharp canines that grow continually, which are used as cutting tools for killing live prey. Hogs prefer green vegetation, roots, forbs, fruit, mast and insects when available. However, they will readily consume other small animals, eggs and dead animals.

Wild hogs are found in a variety of habitats and have adapted well to a wide range of ecosystems. Only poor habitat and hot, dry conditions seem to limit their distribution. Hogs do not have sweat glands. They regulate body temperature by lying in water, mud, or shade and can't survive without a plentiful supply of water. Therefore they prefer bottomlands such as creeks, marshes, rivers and drainages when available. Hogs usually concentrate in areas where food is plentiful and in areas of dense vegetation that conceals them and protects them from temperature extremes.

The increase in feral hog population and distribution is due in part to improved habitat, wildlife management, disease eradication, and limited natural predators. There seem to be very few limiting factors to curtail the population growth and expansion. However, with an integrated management approach one can try to slow the population growth and keep damage at acceptable levels.

There are no toxicants, repellents, fertility agents or biological control agents registered for use against feral hogs in the U.S. These products have had limited success in other countries, but the cost of developing and registering them for use has been prohibitive.

(continued on following page)

Rules of Thumb for Deer Management

By Al Brothers

1. The most cost-effective way to increase the deer food supply is to reduce the number of animals on the range (deer, livestock or exotics).
2. Maintain deer densities at what they should be for the worst possible year.
3. Kill does until you scare yourself into thinking you have taken too many – then you may be close.
4. Never do brush control on more than 50% of acreage. If quality deer (mature trophy bucks) are a high priority, never control more than 25%. Always do brush control in a good pattern.
5. The best census method is the helicopter, but it always undercounts. Be cautious about recommending an increased buck harvest based on an adjusted helicopter survey.
6. In a herd with good age structure, some bucks will be dying of old age each year.
7. Illegal kill is always higher than you think.
8. The first good indicator of overpopulation is a decrease in yearling weights.
9. Antler measurements and deer weights are of minimal value without corresponding ages.
10. Most losses to predation are an aid to deer management.
11. A properly managed deer herd is in most cases worth more in net income per acre than livestock.
12. A high fence will pay out with proper management.
13. In a supplemental feeding program, beware of maintaining too many deer and their effect on preferred food plants.
14. When using food plots, plant one acre per three deer dryland crops and one acre per two deer for irrigated crops.
15. Most individuals have higher expectations for success than is usually possible in actual practice.

Hogs Gone Wild *(continued from previous page)*

In Texas, feral hogs are unprotected, exotic, non-game animals. Therefore, they may be taken by any means or methods at any time of the year. Only a hunting license is required and there are no seasons or bag limits. According to the TPW Outdoor Annual 06-07, current Texas law does not require a landowner or lessee to have a hunting license if feral hogs are damaging their agricultural crops, livestock, poultry, or personal property. If you have hogs then you probably have damage on your land.

Hog hunting has become popular in Texas and generates income for many landowners and outfitters. Hunting and control techniques are numerous and can include spotlights, night vision optics, snares, traps, tracking dogs, stand hunting, and aerial hunting with proper permits and licenses. Most aerial hunting is done with helicopters. Depending on the amount of damage hogs are causing, the benefits of an aerial hunt can far outweigh the costs. Whatever one's preferred technique may be, the management of feral hogs should be a part of any property management plan.