

Grass Roots



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FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT**

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



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Dr. John Walker—TSSRM President

Active membership is the most important aspect of any organization. Before I go any further, I want to thank Michael Willson, chair of the Texas Section Membership Committee, for his efforts to encourage members to re-up when their membership expires. If you are one of several that will receive this newsletter that have not renewed for this year, I invite you to contact me if there is a reason, and let's see what needs to change.

I joined in 1976 as a senior at Texas A&M because I decided to apply for graduate school in range science and I needed some re-

sume fodder. Back then I believe membership in professional societies was a more commonly held societal value. My initial reasons would not have sustained my continued membership had I not continued in the profession or had the society not provided other benefits.

My career has always been centered on research with a state Experiment Station or with the USDA Agriculture Research Service. So my main interest was with the *Journal of Range Management* (now *Rangeland Ecology and Management*), both as a source of scientific information and as an outlet for my own research. I was fortunate because my employer paid my expenses to attend annual meetings at the state and national levels. Had that not been the case, I doubt I would have gone to many meetings, at least early in my career. Although I did not recognize it at the time, preparation for the meetings and presenting papers were not only great training for my craft as a scientist, they also honed my abilities, poor as they may be, in public speaking. The

meetings let me meet and interact with other people in my field and keep up with school friends. I became involved in committee work. The good part of committee work was that I got to know members that I would not otherwise be able to interact with. Over the years I have developed many friends and contacts that make my membership worthwhile personally and professionally.

I suspect my involvement in SRM is fairly typical for members that have academically-related employment. But academics are not the biggest source of members. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) employees are the biggest membership group and ranchers are the third largest group. What's in SRM for them? I suspect that first and foremost, as I believe it is for all members, it is a love for the rangeland resource and a desire to promote good range management. The other big motivator for involvement by members is their desire to pass their passion on to youth. Involvement by members in the Youth Activities Committee, College Ac-

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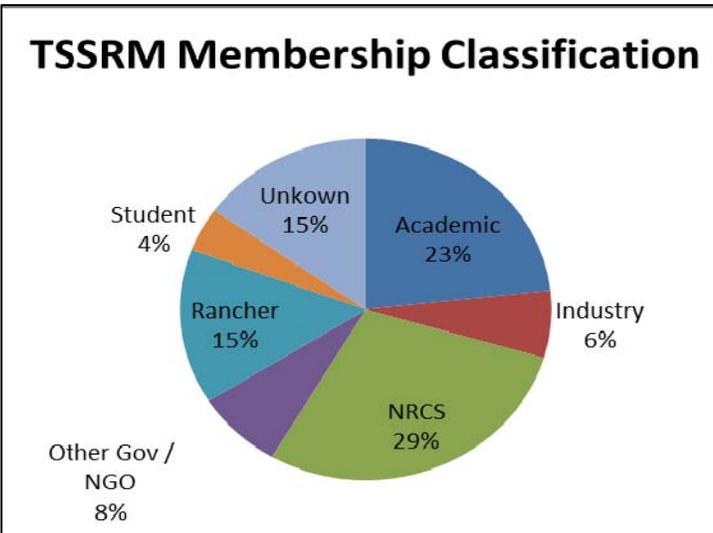
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tivities Committee, Young Professional, Youth Range Workshop, and High School Youth Forum becomes almost fanatical with some members.

The figure shows the breakdown of our member by type of employment. Ranchers at 15 percent may be the most important segment because they are the members that implement the good range management practices our organization promotes. Students are the smallest category, but I suspect many of the unknowns are also students.



Most of our members have been members for a long time, averaging 20 years. Four of our members have over 60 years of service to SRM, with Dr. Bob Ragsdale, a long time Extension Specialist, having the longest tenure. Bobby joined in 1951 and served as the TSSRM presi-

dent in 1970. Speaking of presidents, the average time between joining and serving as president is 23 years. More importantly, we have eight members that joined in 2014: Kadden Heinrich Kothmann, Alexandra Brooks, Myca Rachelle Reed, Megan Rachel Boatright, Aldo Torres Sales, Jeff White, Karl Theodore Flocke, Cooper Dale Swening; thanks and congratulations!

As I study our membership, it's obvious our membership is changing. Although women are only 16 percent of the total membership, they are half of the new members. Agency personnel are becoming a larger segment of our organization. They are certainly the most active, with 38 percent actively involved in committees and other activities compared to 24 percent for the total membership. Participation by our academic members seems to be waning. This may be because there are no longer any Range Science Departments and other professional societies are more important outlets for their scientific endeavors and academic advancement. However, one thing that has not, and will not change is that rangelands are the single largest land type in Texas, the U.S. and worldwide. If SRM membership is trending more toward agency personnel, land managers and industries that serve these constituencies, then we need to see how we can become more relevant to them.

I would love to hear why you are a member of SRM and what TSSRM can do to be more relevant to you. Contact me at: 325-653-4576 /ext 227 or jwalker@ag.tamu.edu.

Society for Range Management—Orlando 2014

-Tyson Hart-



The Society for Range Management met for its annual meeting in Orlando, Florida on February 8—February 13, 2014. As much of the country was feeling a cold blast of arctic air, I sheepishly admit I ran the air conditioner in my hotel room every night. Hats off to the Southern and Florida Sections for putting together a great meeting. The planning committees did an excellent job preparing for, and executing the meeting. There was a lower turnout than usual, but 800 attendees were on hand. This was my first national meeting, and I was thoroughly impressed!

One item that struck me as fantastic, was the planning committee building an iPhone/Android App for the meeting. In the world of furthering technology, I was pleased to see our profession adapting instead of resisting. The App had a location map for finding your way around. It had listings of all the speakers and their topics. And, if you selected a speaker, the app gave you a short biography with their background. I still used my paper program to take notes and read through abstracts, but the App served as an excellent planning tool on the plane ride to determine when and where I was supposed to be.

I did not attend a wide variety of presentations, because I spent my entire time in the Ecological Site Description workshop. Speakers from around the nation presented on the progression and obstacles of Ecological Sites. As with the App development, I was excited to see that the workshop was presented live on-line. We received live questions from across the country, and were able to interact with a larger audience. The workshop was recorded and those interested in watching one or all of the presentations can navigate through: <http://rangelands.org/ESD/index.shtml>. Mark Moseley and I both represented the Texas Section with our presentations.

I did see many familiar faces from Texas. Our section was well-represented and through socializing with others at the mixers, I was told the other workshops went great. The Texas Section had many of its members present, moderate, and share posters. Even better than seeing familiar faces, I really made some important contacts from different sections. Our brainstorming during the meetings have carried over into prolonged conversations post-meeting. As a new attendee, I would suggest to all our membership to try and make plans for next year. The meeting date will be January 30—February 7, 2015 in Sacramento California. Even more importantly, we all need to attend and assist in two years as the meeting will be in our backyard, Corpus Christi!



Recipes for Rangelands

-Tyson Hart-

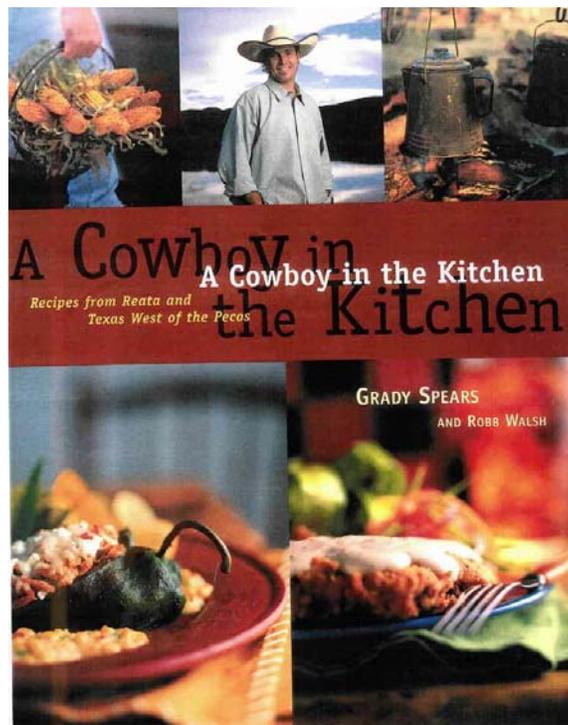
In college I was blessed with great roommates and a great place to live. We rented a house partially-built from petrified wood found near the banks of the Brazos River. We lived about 15 minutes south of College Station on five acres surround by small ranchettes and the College Station Chief of Police, but that's an entirely different story altogether. The three of us enjoyed cooking and experimenting with recipes we'd found or had been passed down from our families. My mom would get tickled at our adventures and began buying me cook books to assist in our culinary journeys.

My favorite cook book she ever bought for me was *A Cowboy in the Kitchen* by Grady Spears. My parents still live in the Dallas area and I have family scattered throughout the metroplex. The Reata restaurant was commonly in the Dallas Morning News for being a superb restaurant with an even more interesting head cook/owner. My dad had even had several business meeting there, and vouched for the quality of the food. So, naturally my mom bought the book for me, after reading most of it herself first, and told me to read the story behind the recipes.

Many of you have probably heard of Grady Spears, but for those of you that haven't, I'll provide a quick biography. After graduating from High School in Fort Worth, Grady wanted to pursue the mystique of being a cowboy. He packed up his belongings and became a ranch hand in Far West Texas. While punching and selling cattle, he quickly realized less romance exists that he originally thought. But, life is full of lessons and he was fascinated by the camp cook. He took to studying the preparation of cowboy meals and the long history of camp-wagon cooks. While working in a restaurant in Marathon to help pay his addiction to the cowboy life, an idea clicked and the rest is history.

He has since opened several restaurants, has four cookbooks, teaches cooking classes, has been featured in a wide variety of magazines, and has graced the sets of the Food Network as a special guest star. I own all of his cook books and I'll admit there are plenty of food stains on the book where my favorite recipes reside.

To make a long story, the three of us living in that old house really enjoyed pretending we were cowboys in cooking those meals. Some of the recipes were pretty complex, which only served as a larger challenge. If you've not heard of Grady Spears or his cook books, I'd suggest you flip through one next time you're in the book store. Including the pre-mentioned, he has written, *Cowboy Cocktails*, *The Texas Cowboy Kitchen*, and *Cooking the Cowboy Way*.



Texas State Parks Welcoming Spring Blooms

-Rob McCorkle-

Fields of bluebonnets and Indian paintbrush, redbuds aglow with blossoms the color of rose' wine and desert cacti and yuccas sporting delicate, colorful blooms confirm that spring is hitting its stride throughout Texas. Texas is blessed with more than 5,000 species of wildflowers. More than 90 Texas State Parks present some of the best and safest places to view and photograph nature's bounty of wildflowers and blooming shrubs and trees.

Photo buffs are reminded they have until midnight, April 14, to submit their best shots and possibly win a Go-Pro© video camera from Whole Earth Provision Co. To enter the contest, visit: www.texasstateparks.org/photography and follow the links to the contest. Sign into Flickr (Yahoo), or for entrants who prefer to sign in with an existing Google account or Facebook account, there's a way to do that, too. Select "Join This Group" to be added to the "2014 Texas State Parks Photo Contest," then upload your entries. For complete contest rules, visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/parks/things-to-do/photo-contest-rules.

Most Texas State Parks are using social media sites, such as Facebook and Pinterest, to provide updates about where to view noteworthy flora in bloom. Recent reports noted good stands of bluebonnets and Indian paintbrush at Lake Somerville State Park and fields of bluebonnets at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site. Postings on Pinterest cited Seminole Canyon's claret cup cactus; Bentsen-Rio Grande's Spanish daggers, lantana and huisache; Lake Brownwood's Texas redbuds; Lake Whitney's bluebonnets; and Palmetto's bluebonnets and Indian paintbrush.

An excellent place to view spring bloomers is the Lady Bird Wildflower in Austin, which as of mid-March reported: Mexican plum, Texas bluebonnets, Mexican gold poppy, Texas redbud, agarita, coralberry and fragrant sumac, among others. To see up-to-date reports, visit: <http://www.wildflower.org/whatsinbloom/>. The Texas Department of Transportation website (<https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/travel/wildflowers.html>) presents ongoing reports from throughout the state. You also may call 1-800-452-9292 for details about where noteworthy stands of wildflowers have been sighted along the state's highways.

In most areas of Texas, state botanists say decent fall rains have resulted in a good crop of wildflowers except in parts of the Hill Country and West Texas where moisture has been scant and sporadic. It should be noted that the blooming season for most of the state west of the Pecos River isn't spring, but mid to late summer. "Because of a continuing lack of rainfall, there aren't many wildflowers in the Edwards Plateau region," reports Jackie Poole, a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department botanist. "I have noticed a few Indian paintbrushes, and in certain spots around Austin, bluebonnets are doing well."

Fellow TPWD botanist Jason Singhurst recently has been traveling the roads throughout Northeast Texas this spring. Among trees in bloom, he reports flowering dogwood, red buckeye, sassafras, redbuds, Mexican plum, mayapples, sand plum and Chickasaw plum. As for wildflowers and shrubs, Singhurst has spotted white trout lilies, goldenrod, wooly groundsel, farkleberry, bluets, bluebonnets, buttercups, Indian paintbrush swamp privet.

A couple of late freezes in east and northeast Texas caught redbuds and Mexican plums just starting to bud and bloom, thwarting their colorful show. There are very few wildflowers blooming and even the azaleas in Tyler have not bloomed, reports Kay Jenkins, regional natural resource specialist in Tyler.

"Dogwood blooms are starting to open up and Daingerfield and Tyler state park are typically good places to see those," Jenkins says. "I did see some mayapples blooming the other day and good parks to see them include Tyler and Caddo Lake state parks. Two of my favorite places to see wildflowers each year are Cedar Hill and Eisenhower

state parks, where coneflowers and foxglove should be blooming soon.”

Some of the most reliable places for viewing dazzling crops of wildflowers crops year-in, year-out are found in rolling, verdant Washington County, and this year is no exception. Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site between Brenham and Navasota offers great wildflower diversity among 293 acres of natural riverside beauty, as well as an informative primer on early Republic of Texas history. Further south, Goliad State Park reports wildflowers are “beautiful.”

If you’re heading to Big Bend country in the next week or two, stop by the Barton Warnock Visitor Center in Lajitas and check out the cactus garden. A number of species, including rainbow cactus, claret cactus, ocotillo, yucca, huisache, agave and Big Bend bluebonnets, are putting on their spring show.

And even further out west in El Paso, Franklin Mountains State Park ranger Adrianna Weickhardt reports nature is putting on a dazzling display of desert marigolds, lyreleaf twistflowers, blackfooted daisies, claret-cup cactus, feather daleas and verbenas, with barrel cacti on the verge of blooming.

Recent sightings reported by TPWD staff elsewhere in Texas State Parks include:

- Mission Tejas (Grapeland) – dogwoods in full bloom
- Meridian – bluebonnets are about a third of the way through the bloom cycle; thicker patches but not as widespread
- Goose Island (Rockport) – bluebonnets, blue-eyed grass, and spiderworts in full bloom in a half dozen different shades, including pink, hot pink, lavender, purple, dark blue and light blue
- Palmetto (Gonzales) – some bluebonnets near the entrance but much needed recent rains should spur more blooming
- Lake Casa Blanca (Laredo) — lots of bluebonnets blooming along Ranchito Road and the north side of the park (just west of the Kiddie Park).
- Fairfield – nice bluebonnets at the headquarters; flowering dogwoods, Indian paintbrush and wild plum also are noteworthy
- Tyler — Mexican plums are in peak bloom right now; violets blooming in the forest and rose verbena blooming in the open woodlands and on the Blackjack hill. Dogwoods just now coming out, Jack-in-the-pulpit about bloom below the dam and floating bladderwort blooming in the swampy areas



2014 Grass Roots Award

The deadline for nominations of this years Grass Roots Awards are July 1, 2014.

You can find the application and information at:
<http://www.rangelands.org/texas/awards/Grass%20Roots%20Award%20Nominationo.pdf>



Please send your completed forms to:

**Stephen Deiss at:
sdeiss08@hotmail.com**

Texas Section SRM Awards

One of the functions of a professional society is to properly recognize members who make significant contributions to the profession. The TSSRM Awards Committee is now accepting nominations for the following five awards and deadlines:

- Fellow Award (Aug 15)
- Special Recognition Awards (Aug 15)
- Outstanding Contribution to Rangeland Management (Aug 15)
- Outstanding Achievement (Aug 15)
- Outstanding Young Range Professional (Aug 15)

Award categories, criteria and nomination format can be found on the website:

<http://www.rangelands.org/texas/awards.htm>

Please submit completed nominations to:

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