

# Grass Roots

Photo by Jeff Goodwin



**PUBLISHED BY THE TEXAS SECTION SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT**



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



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## President's Notes



**Melony Sikes**  
President, TSSRM

It has been my pleasure to serve as your President. There were so many people to pay back for their inspiration and encouragement over the years. I enjoyed holding the spot-light on range stewardship throughout the year.

The one thing I love the most about our organization is the nurturing and encouraging atmosphere at our meetings and functions. We have some of the best stewards and range leaders in the world and some of the nicest people found anywhere on the planet.

We encourage one another and we are happy to see our members succeed in their endeavors. I am touched each year to see so many of our members giving so much of themselves to other people.

I hope you will continue to find ways to put your passion into motion and take action to promote rangeland stewardship. Everyone has something to contribute. This is a good time to look ahead into 2010 to see what kind of contributions you can make to TSSRM in the coming year.

We met with Texas Department of Agriculture, Deputy Commissioner Drew DeBerry In November to introduce the "Texas Certified Range Steward" concept. This will serve as a marketing tool for ranchers who are managing at the stewardship level. Stay tuned in to "Grass Roots" for future developments.

We have a lot to be thankful for as we close out another year. Thank you for the contributions you made this year. Best wishes for continued success in your rangeland endeavors.

Wishing you and your families a Warm and Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays all the way around!

Respectfully,

*Melony Sikes*

### *The Inside Story...*

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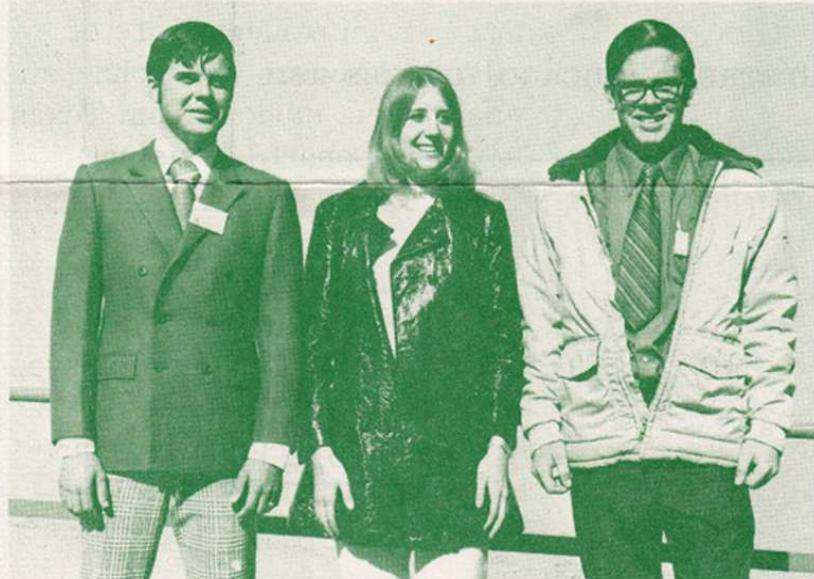
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## TSSRM Flashback

### YOUTH FORUM OFFICERS FOR 1971-72



Youth Range Forum Officers elected for 1971-72 are (L to R) Stuart Speck, Rocksprings, Texas - President; Teresa Hyatt, Hyattsville, Wyoming - Vice President; and Robert Knight, Carson, Nevada - Secretary. This makes five years in a row the President of the Forum has been a Texas Section Representative.



## Upcoming Events

### 63rd SRM Annual Meeting

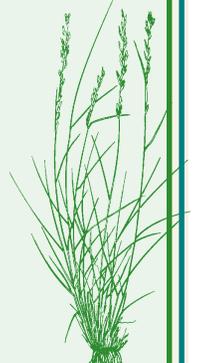
February 7-11, 2010, Denver, Colorado

### TSSRM 2010 Annual Meeting

Odessa, Texas

### TSSRM 2011 Annual Meeting

San Angelo, Texas



## Engelmann Daisy — *Ice Cream of the Pasture*

By Steve Nelle



Engelmann daisy is a preferred, high quality, cool-season, perennial forb common across much of Texas. That says a mouthful. It basically means that Engelmann daisy is a wonderful plant for wildlife and livestock. In addition to its utilitarian values, it is a beautiful addition to the array of Texas wildflowers.

Engelmann daisy is native to all regions of Texas except the Pineywoods but is most common in the central core of the state. Across much of Texas, Engelmann daisy will be the most abundant yellow roadside flower and can also be observed in well-managed rangeland pastures.

The deep, tenacious taproot is what gives this plant its amazing ability to return each year and withstand drought and hardship.

The taproot bores deep into the soil and can find cracks and crevices in the rockiest terrain. Even in dry years, Engelmann daisy is

able to grow as if it has access to some hidden source of moisture.

Engelmann daisy normally begins its yearly growth cycle in the fall when new leaves emerge from the energy stored in the huge taproot. This early cluster of leaves, known as a rosette, persists throughout fall, winter and early spring. Even without flowers, this plant is very easy to identify by the deeply lobed leaves covered by short stiff hairs. During this period, the nutritional value of Engelmann daisy is about 20% protein. Any plant which produces such a large volume of high protein forage year after year during the cool season is a special plant for ranchers and deer managers.

From April through June, it produces a continuous bumper crop of bright yellow flowers, normally with eight petals. After the flowers are pollinated by insects and the petals fall off, the seeds begin to form in the central core of the flower. The seeds mature in staggered fashion providing a rich and prolonged food source for birds during the summer. Various grassland sparrows, finches and buntings are among the



birds that relish the seed of Engelmann daisy. During the hottest part of the summer, the plant usually goes dormant until the cycle begins again in fall.



Ranchers and range management folks classify Engelmann daisy as an “ice cream plant”. Livestock and deer prefer this class of plants above all others. This can be a mixed blessing, because it makes such plants more vulnerable to overgrazing. Plants which are highly preferred by deer or livestock have a hard time persisting unless special management is provided. Lower stocking rates, rotational grazing and reduced deer numbers are usually needed for such desirable plants to persist in pastures.

The presence or absence of Engelmann daisy in a pasture can be used as a barometer of land management. If it is present on the roadside but absent or rare in the pasture, this usually indicates some long-term grazing problem and/or excessive deer population. In this case, a more conserva-

tive grazing program and reduction in deer numbers are needed to hasten the recovery of desirable plants. In some cases, these ice cream plants are present in the pasture but only grow in the protection of thorny plants. This indicates that the plant can recover and spread with several years of good management. In some cases, there is just about as much Engelmann daisy in the pasture as there is on the roadside. This indicates a long-term commitment to good stewardship and is the kind of land management that TWA stands for. For those who want to plant Engelmann daisy, the seed is commercially available. It can be added to a mix of native grasses and should be planted in early winter.

## Jim Wells County Honored by TAC

### Prescribed Burn Workshop Helps Set Model for Other Counties

By Melissa Blair



The Jim Wells County Commissioners Court accepted the Best Practices Award from Texas Association of Counties (TAC) Leadership Foundation for the prescribed burn workshop held in Feb. 2009. Pictured left to right, top row: Wally Alanis, Pct. 3; Javier Garcia, Pct. 4; County Judge Arnoldo Saenz; and Ventura Garcia, Jr., Pct. 2. Bottom row: Dr. Wayne Hanselka, retired, Texas AgriLife Extension Service; Bruce Healy, NRCS district conservationist; Rogelio Mercado, Extension agent, Texas AgriLife Extension Service; Nelda Garcia, Chairperson, Jim Wells County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD); Victor Uvalle, TAC field representative; and Marc Hamlin, immediate past president and National Assn. of Counties board member.

*Alice, Texas* – Jim Wells County is one of 13 counties around the state that were honored this year by the Texas Association of Counties (TAC) Leadership Foundation for Best Practices involving innovative programs that deliver quality services and protect taxpayer dollars. Jim Wells County received the prestigious Best Practices Award for its workshop on prescribed burns.

The on-going 2009 drought posed many challenges for farmers and ranchers, including how to manage their land when burn bans were in place across most of the state. The lack of rain

since August 2008 had left producers in Jim Wells County in a bind on how to manage their brush and pastureland, and the Jim Wells County Commissioner's Court was hearing about it.

"County commissioners are given the authority under local government code to order bans on outdoor burning," said Dr. Lynn Drawe, Texas State Burn Board. "Landowners and land managers frequently find that when conditions are right for an effective prescribed burn, a county burn ban is in effect."

As the drought persisted, the Jim Wells County Commissioner's Court knew something had to be done to address the growing need of their agricultural producers who had prescribed burn plans with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and wanted a way to implement their plans.

"Prescribed burns are a cost-effective conservation practice to suppress brush or raise the brush canopy to allow grass to grow, remove excess litter, and green up forage for livestock and wildlife," said Bruce Healy, district conservationist with USDA-NRCS in Alice. "Prescribed burns safely manage the fuel (forage and litter) that could otherwise turn into wildfires in uncontrolled situations when it is so dry."

The Jim Wells Commissioners Court came up with the idea to work with Healy and Rogelio Mercado, Extension agent with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, to hold a prescribed burn workshop to train farmers and ranchers on conducting a safe prescribed burn. The comprehensive workshop covered all the tools, strategies and information needed to plan and conduct a controlled burn.

Little did anyone know the impact this workshop would have as 150 landowners, land managers and others representing 1.5 million acres of South Texas showed up at the Jim Wells County Fairgrounds in Alice on Feb. 2nd to attend what would soon be rolled out as a resolution template to commissioners' courts statewide by Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples and the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA).

Attendee's names were given to the Jim Wells County Commissioner's Court, and if they had a prescribed burn plan, they were allowed to conduct burns during the ban. After the workshop, three newly trained landowners worked with NRCS to conduct six prescribed burns on their land. Attendees will be able to utilize their training for the next three years to implement prescribed burns as part of their conservation plan on their property, even during a burn ban.

Healy and Mercado conducted an evaluation of attendee's knowledge after the workshop. Attendees were asked 10 questions, and the results indicated that there was a 50 percent increase in fire safety knowledge even though 63 percent of the attendees said they had experience with controlled burns.

As a result of discussions with stakeholders, as well as federal, state and local governments, TDA created a template for landowners and local governments to utilize in establishing burn bans or allowing exceptions to burn bans. The template provides for prescribed burning under specific criteria to ensure natural fuels can be managed when conditions are often most favorable to safely achieve the desired results. The template can be found by searching "burn ban" on TDA's Web site at [www.TexasAgriculture.gov](http://www.TexasAgriculture.gov).

Jim Wells County was presented their Best Practice award on Oct. 26th by Victor Uvalle, TAC field services representative, and Marc Hamlin, Immediate Past President and National Association of Counties Board Member. A video clip produced by TAC was shown that highlighted the reason for the workshop and included interviews with Mercado, Judge Arnoldo Saenz and Healy. The video can be seen online at [www.county.org/resources/library/county\\_mag/v21no5/CBP-jimwells-burn.asp](http://www.county.org/resources/library/county_mag/v21no5/CBP-jimwells-burn.asp).

Mercado and Healy both recognized the Jim Wells Commissioners Court, who were instrumental in the workshop being held and setting the standard for other counties, including County Judge L. Arnoldo Saenz; Commissioners: Zeniada Sanchez, Pct. 1; Ventura Garcia Jr., Pct. 2; Oswald "Wally" Alanis, Pct. 3; and Javier N. Garcia, Pct. 4. Mercado also recognized the workshop speakers including Dr. Wayne Hanselka, retired, Texas AgriLife Extension Service; Dr. D. Lynne Drawe, Texas State Burn Board; Tim Reinke and Jason Hohlt, NRCS range specialists; and Vivian Garcia, NRCS zone range specialist. Melissa Blair, NRCS Zone Public Affairs Specialist, was also recognized for helping promote the workshop.

Healy also recognized the Jim Wells County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Rio Bravo Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D), who helped co-sponsor the workshop.



**Due to the success of the first prescribed burn workshop in Jim Wells, another workshop was held on Nov. 13 with more than 25 landowners in attendance. Beto Gonzalez, technician with Texas State Soil and Water Conservation, assists NRCS and Texas AgriLife Extension Service, with the demonstration prescribed burn that was part of the training. Due to Red Flag Conditions existing the day of the Feb. 2009 workshop, a demonstration burn was not held as part of that workshop.**

## Quail Unlimited Honors Kathy Saunders



Kathy Saunders, one of the Texas Section's newest members, was recognized earlier this year by Quail Unlimited at their 2nd annual Distinguished Lectureship in Quail Management for outstanding effort in promoting the CCRP Quail Buffer Program. Kathy and her husband Tommy ranch in Coleman County, and Kathy is with the NRCS in Ballinger.

## ATTENTION - TSSRM Photographers



Peter Burns of Allen Press (**publisher** of *Rangelands & REM*), announced that they are interested in doing a completely new backdrop for their SRM booth of ***all color rangeland photos from our photo contests.*** TSSRM is the only Section providing photos.

If you submitted a digital color photo the last 2 years, then you are "in consideration" - your PHOTO (and name?) could be featured. TSSRM will provide the 30-35 photos for them to choose from. If all goes well with the display development, Allen Press may ask SRM's permission to use the booth at other convention events.



## TWS Fellow Misty Sumner



Misty Sumner, TPWD Biologist, has been selected by The Wildlife Society Council to be a TWS Fellow in recognition of her exceptional service to the wildlife profession. TWS Fellows are appointed for life and serve as ambassadors for The Wildlife Society.



## Live Auction Donors and Additional Annual Meeting Sponsors

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Mandi Ligon  
Katy Prairie Conservancy  
TSSRM

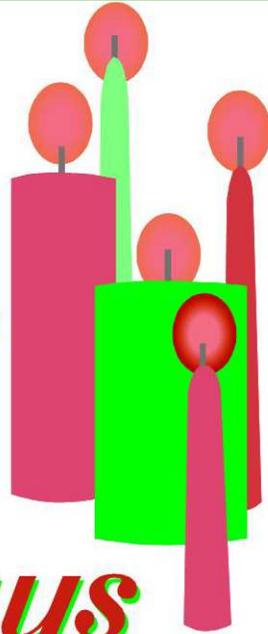
### High Bidders

Joe Franklin	Scott Petty
Chris Janak	Charlie Hart
Wesley Newman	Fred Fitzsimmons
Chuck Stanley	Lynn Drawe
Diaz Murray	Steve Hartmann
Johanna Pate	Lee Knox
Paula Maywald	Diane Arnold
Lem Creswell	Don Cox
Farris Hightower	

**Many Thanks to our donors and bidders for  
a successful live auction in Beaumont!**



*Happy  
Holidays*



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