



*2014 Outstanding Achievement Award Recipient Billy Kniffen and TSSRM President John Walker*

## Texas Section Society for Rangeland Management Outstanding Achievement Award Billy Kniffen

Kniffen led in organizing the Menard County Prescribed Burn Association and Assisted with the Edwards Plateau Prescribed Burn Association. He assisted with the development of the Texas Master Naturalist program and was on its first advisory committee. He designed a simple 4 plot rainfall simulator and built or provided assistance in construction of an estimated 50 simulators used all across Texas. He also provided plans or simulators to several other states.

He served as a director on the Native Prairie Association and Plan-It Texas Coalition and served on planning committees for the Plant Material Center in Knox City. He assisted with the Youth Range Workshop on the planning committee and cook for a meal with the Menard SWCD.

He developed a 4 session on-line course on "Rainwater Harvesting for Livestock and Wildlife" and authored or co-authored several publications on rainwater and land stewardship. He developed the educational program for the American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association and taught classes, gave programs, workshops or put on demonstration systems in 17 states in the USA (and had people from most every state) and provide support on rain catchment in several other countries. Efforts are to assist in aquifer recharge, water

conservation and stormwater reduction. He lives in Menard in a home totally supported by rainwater. He has taught about rainwater harvesting and/or put in demonstrations in most every county in Texas.

He led in the establishment of the Menard County Wildlife Management Association and it has become one of the larger coops in the state. He led in the organizing of the DeWitt County Swine Producers Association and they started one of the first wild hog hunting contest in the state.

He organized the Menard ISD "Outdoors Day" where every student in the 1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade spend time exploring things about outdoor life, land and water health and every student kayaks or canoes down the San Saba River. Also every graduating senior is a helper along with game wardens and many local volunteers.

- **Education:**

- B.S. (Animal Science, Minor, Biology), Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX, 1971
- M.S. (Agriculture Education) Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas.

- **Work Experience:**

- **Water Resource Specialist** – Texas AgriLife Extension Service (Biological and Agricultural Engineering Department) Total emphasis – Rainwater Capture, April 2008 – 2011 (currently assisting as needed on hourly basis)
- **County Extension Agent**-Agriculture/Natural Resources, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Menard County, 2001 – 2008
- **County Extension Agent**-Agriculture, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Hays County, 1987-1995
- **County Extension Agent**-Agriculture, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, DeWitt County, 1987-1995.
- **County Extension Agent**-Agriculture, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, San Saba County, 1984-87.
- **County Extension Agent**-Livestock, Texas Agricultural Extension Service Nueces County, 1982-84.

- **Recent Activities - Civic or Others:**

2013 – Establishing an educational and community garden for the Menard Library with rain collection, rain gardens catching stormwater from the street, vegetables, native plants, and paired watershed plots using money (\$25,000) sought from the family of a pioneer woman in Menard County.

2013 – Taught Sustainable Ag Workshop Fairbanks, AK

2013 – Taught Rooftop Reliant Landscaping course in LasCruces, NM and constructed system

2012 – Taught a 3 day wildlife watering workshop in the Sandia Pueblo near Albuquerque, NM and constructed 3 wildlife guzzlers

2012-2013 – Worked with the University of Guadalajara, Mexico, on 3 occasions teaching 2 professors and 8 students about land stewardship and rainwater harvesting. They stayed at my home for 7 days. They are also translating a training manual into Spanish for TAMU.

2012 – Established a rainwater harvesting system at a children’s home in Gallup NM

2011-2012 – Gave presentation to the eastern and western USA Sustainable Ag program

2007-2009 – Texas Rainwater Catchment Association’s first President

2004-2013 – TCE State Rainwater Harvesting Task Force

1982-2013 – Texas County Agricultural Agents Association member

2007-2011 – Menard church of Christ, Elder (currently member)

2003-2008 – Edwards Plateau Prescribed Burn Association

2004-2008 – Menard Game Management Association

2004-2005 – Menard City Beautification Committee

2000-2010 – Men’s Businessmen Association Member

1993-2005 – Texas Hunter Education Instructor

**Publications:**

2010 – “Rainwater Harvesting: System Planning” manual – co-author

2010 – Fee based web course: Rainwater Harvesting for Livestock and Wildlife

2010 – Trifold brochure “Rainwater Harvesting” to compliment demonstration systems in Texas Counties

2009 – Videos on constructing rain barrel, using the rainfall simulator and using a rain barrel

2009 – Constructing a Rain Barrel - co-author

2009 – Plant List for Rain Gardens

2009 – Contributed to the ASPE “Rainwater Catchment Design and Installation Standards” (Used in developing the IAPMO Green Supplement to the Uniform Plumbing Code)

2008 – Rainwater Harvesting in Texas

2007 – Video Clips on website: <http://rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu>

2007 – Rainwater Harvesting For Livestock – E-450

2005 – “Just Add Water...A Look at Texas Rangeland Water Issues” Abstract author

2005 – “Rainwater Harvesting- Educational Model” National Rainwater Capture Association Second National Meeting Book- abstract author

2004-05 – “Rainwater Harvesting in West Texas” - Booklet - author

**Membership and significant activities in Professional Societies:**

- **American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association**  
National Board member 2007-13 - vice president 2011-13  
2008-13 ARCSA Education Committee chairman, Accredited Professional Workshop designer and lead trainer
- **Native Prairie Association of Texas**  
1997- 2005 - member  
2005 State Conference Planning Committee

2000 – 2005 – Ranch Restoration Committee

1998-2002 – State Director - 4 years 2004

- **Plan-It Texas Coalition**

1996-2000 – Plan-It Texas Coalition Director

2000 – Field Day Planning Committee and Speaker

- **Texas Master Naturalist**

2004-11 – Western Edwards Plateau Master Naturalist Chapter Advisor

2000-03 – Texas Master Naturalist State Advisory Committee

2001 – State curriculum committee

2000 – Curriculum director selection committee

1997-99 – Texas Master Naturalist State Steering Committee

- **Texas Forestry Service Oak Wilt Advisory Committee**

2000-08 – State Advisory Committee Member

- **Natural Resource Conservation Service Knox City Plant Material Center**

2002-04 – Advisory Committee

• **Society for Range Management Activities:**

1999-09 – Member

2005 – State Promotion Committee Member

2000-05 – Youth Range Workshop Director (2000-2012 assisted with meal)

2001-03 – Scholarship Committee, 2003- chairman

TSSRM - County Based State Award

• **Awards and other recognition received:**

2013 – Texas Water Development Board “Raincatcher’s Award”

2010 – Texas A&M AgriLife Vice Chancellor’s Award in Excellence

2010 – Texas A&M AgriLife Vice Chancellors’s Team Award in Excellence

2009 – Extension Superior Service Team Award

2009 – Texas Rainwater Catchment Association Pioneer Award

2009 – LBJ National Park Recognition Award

2009 – On the cover of Rural Life magazine and recognized in 4 other national publications

2008 – Menard Citizen of the Year Award

2007 – Abilene Christian University Aggie Alumni Award

2006 – TAMU Board of Regents Fellow Service Award

2006 – TCE Specialists Association Agents Recognition

2003 – Distinguished Service Award in Community Development - TCE Specialists Association

2002 – Natural Resources/Environmental Stewardship Award - TAE4-H

2000 – Distinguished Service Award, TCAAA , NACAA