

President's Address

As I write my last President's address, I am struggling what to say. It has been one helluva year. We adapted. TSSRM looked really different this year. And I think that was a very positive thing! We remained true to our roots, while embracing all the challenges and changes 2021 threw at us. I learned just how resilient we are, and I think all of us has a renewed spirit in our rangeland relationships.

Undoubtedly, this has been the most rewarding year of my professional career. I cannot express how thankful I am to have had the opportunity to serve as President of the Texas Section. It is truly an honor to have the confidence of the TSSRM membership to be elected and serve as President. But at the end of the day and the year, I reflect on the relationships that prospered, that endured growing pains, and the ones that became even more cherished.

I hope all of you have had the time to reflect on times working together. All of us have witnessed friends and colleagues go through the good times and survive challenges. I hope you have shared laughs, reminisced about friends and colleagues that are no longer with us, and shared all the important parts of life that come into focus when faced with adversity.

I know few will remember the publications, presentations, projects, awards, or grants that we received. But, the ranch tours, "that one meeting in Victoria", or "that one time Jeff was late for the bus" will always be remembered, cherished, and shared. Those conversations and these relationships are what elevates TSSRM to a stronger, impactful, and heartfelt place in our lives. It is what stands us apart from the other sections. We make sacrifices for this organization because of the relationships TSSRM embodies, creates, cultivates, and saves. The legacy that we leave lies in the children we raise and the impact we leave on our colleagues and fellow humans.

In summary, I am truly grateful for the opportunity to serve as TSSRM President not because of what we collectively accomplished but for the experience and opportunity to work with a truly great group of individuals. The relationships that I have been fortunate enough to form during my time as a TSSRM member and President are truly special to me.

Happy New Year from my family to yours. I wish my TSSRM family abundant blessings as we reflect on 2021 and look forward to 2022. Trust me, Dr. Fox has even bigger and better plans in store for TSSRM. His leadership will undoubtedly raise TSSRM to powerhouse level.

Happy New Year!

-Morgan

Plant of the Season

by Dr. Jake Landers

Mistletoe

(Phoradendrum tomentosum)

Most people don't think of Mistletoe as a range plant. Most think of it as a Christmas decoration with clusters of pearly white berries and green leaves to hang up in an appropriate place anticipating a kiss underneath it. Certain animals, however, especially goats and deer, would rather eat it than kiss beneath it. And Mockingbirds like just the berries.

Mistletoe, *Phoradendrum tomentosum*, is a parasite of woody plants with its roots, called a haustorium, growing into the sapwood of the upper branches of Hackberry and Mesquite, most commonly, in southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Its green leaves and stems indicate it has chlorophyll to make food from sunlight, but it depends on the tree for water and minerals. I call it a range plant because it grows in abundance on our ranch in central Texas and is consumed by goats and deer as high as they can reach. I've seen it consumed by cattle, also, when Mesquite was being bulldozed.

It is relished by these animals, and are they benefiting by it? Some energy, vitamins and minerals perhaps, but does it have poisonous properties similar to the Mistletoe of Europe? I found no substantive information on toxicity of Mistletoe to livestock in the U.S., so out of scientific curiosity. I tried an experiment on goats at the ranch.

My cousin had a little flock of goats on the ranch I had been trying to get rid of because they were getting to a point of over using browse for deer. I told him to move his goats or I would start an experiment on them. He delayed, and I started by cutting down a dozen small hackberry trees with abundant clumps of Mistletoe. The next day I cut some more. Whether or not the experiment showed me anything about Mistletoe toxicity, I was generating more browse by cutting the hackberry which would generate many sprouts of desirable browse at a lower level.

Almost overnight the branches were picked clean of Mistletoe leaves, berries and small stems. The goats showed no harmful effect and hung closely around when they heard us cutting firewood with a chainsaw, wanting more. Then my cousin moved his goats, and my experiment ended inconclusively, except they were well when they left.

It's tiresome to see the concluding statement on so many of our rangeland research projects that "More study is needed". Of course, but I'm going to be busy putting up my Christmas decorations.

-Jake Landers

Is your SRM membership information up to date?

Please take a moment to log-into your SRM account to make sure your contact information is current (mailing address, e-mail, etc.)

This is the contact info. that TSSRM uses to send out RangeFlashes, newsletters, mail, etc. If you know a member that hasn't been receiving TSSRM correspondence, they may need to update their information!

Incoming 2nd Vice President Spotlight

Dr. Humberto L. Perotto-Baldivieso

Name

Humberto L. Perotto-Baldivieso

Education

B.S. in agronomy, M.S. in forestry, and Ph.D. in Rangeland Ecology and Management

Occupation

Associate Professor

Tell us a little about yourself. (hobbies, family, etc.)

I am originally from Bolivia. My wife and I have three Children. My hobbies are cooking, fishing, and gardening.

How long have you been a member of TSSRM?

Since 2015.

What would you describe as your greatest accomplishment to date?

My family.

What do you like most about your job (or role with TSSRM)?

I enjoy the interaction with students and their professional development. The smile in their face when they have accomplished their goals.

How has TSSRM helped you in your career development?

It has helped me build a network of colleagues and friends who helped me understand the importance and role of Rangelands in Texas, the country and its global importance for humans, agriculture and wildlife.

What advice would you give to students pursuing a career in the range discipline?

Always keep the motivation to work the land. Read, learn, and practice what you learn and apply it in the field.

What is your favorite part of TSSRM?

The annual meeting. It is a great opportunity to interact with practitioners, faculty, and more importantly, students.

Do you have a teacher/mentor that has played a significant role in your life? If so, who and why?

Many people have played an important role in my professional life: M.S. Rosario Torrico, my undergraduate mentor, who inspired the passion for research; Dr. Ben Wu, my Ph.D. advisor, my lifelong mentor and my friend for always being there to help me be a better person and professional; Dr. Elvia Melendez-Ackerman, who taught me the values of conservation; Dr. Lenny Brennan, a great friend who inspired me to become a better scientist every day; Dr. Poncho Ortega, for his support and mentorship as a friend and as a colleague; Dr. Bill Kuvlesky, for his mentorship in the art of being a professor, Dr. Tom Thurow, for his mentorship and support in my career, Dr. Steve Whisenant, who helped me tremendously during my early career, Dr. Daniel Leskovar, a great friend and mentor, and many other people who touched our lives in so many ways to become a better person and

a better professional. My most sincere apologies if I forgot someone in this list.

If you were a range plant, which one would you be and why?

An oak.... It reminds me of my dad...

Incoming Director Spotlight

Steven Evans

Name

Steven Evans

Education

BS Rangeland Ecology and Management Texas A&M University 1992

MS Rangeland Ecosystem Science Colorado State University 2001

Occupation

Ranch Manager /Range and Wildlife Education

Tell us a little about yourself. (hobbies, family, etc.)

I was raised in southwest Texas eventually moving to College Station. At Texas A&M I met my wife, LaGina, now of 32 years. We lived 3 years in Colorado while attending graduate school. We have 3 children Caleb, Will, and Olivia, who were raised on the ranches I managed for 21 years in Edwards/Uvalde Counties. I enjoy training our horses, dutch oven cooking, and playing music with family and friends, and of course the road trips with students to events such as the TSSRM annual meeting.

How long have you been a member of TSSRM?

I have been a member off and on for several years, but really became more involved with TSSRM when I started bringing students to the meetings for plant id contests in 2012 and in 2016 as a member of the annual meeting planning committee.

What would you describe as your greatest accomplishment to date?

Besides raising a family, I have also enjoyed being able to help educate so many students in rangeland management, who then move into their careers and help manage so much of the land we all care about.

What do you like most about your job (or role with TSSRM)?

Getting to play a role in helping students develop into future rangeland managers. I enjoy discussing with current and former students about their range management experiences and solutions to range management issues they are encountering. I am really looking forward to serving as a director for TSSRM and working towards TSSRM continuing to be a leader in providing resources for rangeland management in Texas.

How has TSSRM helped you in your career development?

By getting to know so many great professionals in our field. I have learned an incredible amount from their presentations I've heard and conversations I've been able to have with them over the years. I've also picked up a lot of new plant knowledge from the Rector and Nelle plant id competitions. As I have mentioned to them before – to me there is a fine line sometimes between a humbling and humiliating experience – but those experiences ultimately make us better.

What advice would you give to students pursuing a career in the range discipline?

Find good range management mentors and get as much experience under them as possible out on the land, get involved with folks in the discipline thru organizations like TSSRM to help build your knowledge and to build your professional associates, and approach everyday looking for something new to learn.

What is your favorite part of TSSRM?

In addition to the learning from so many knowledgeable people in our field, it's getting to associate with so many great folks who share the same passion for managing rangelands in Texas.

Do you have a teacher/mentor that has played a significant role in your life? If so, who and why?

That's a tough one to narrow down. I've had so many great folks help me out over the years and I know I'd inadvertently leave someone out if I started a list. These folks play such an important part in moving

young people forward. I wouldn't have been able to do what I've done if it hadn't been for the encouragement from folks to apply to A&M, mentoring me (especially the first years as a ranch manager), and words of advice based on real life experience. If I started writing about each of these people and the influence they have had on me, it would take up the whole newsletter.

What is your favorite range plant and why?

I don't think I have one particular favorite plant. I've always liked exploring interesting plant communities that have unique diversity, such as the canyons of the western Balcones escarpment and transition areas (I always found it intriguing to stand in the middle of a Pinyon pine, Guajillo, and Blackbrush community located in one range of hills on a ranch I managed north of Uvalde). I guess a favorite plant in the moment might be any plant I'm managing for more of, and more of it actually showing up.

Texas Drought Outlook

Our drought map is looking quite a bit different than it did just a few short months ago!

Across the state, almost 87% of the state is abnormally dry or worse (D0-D4) with 36% of these falling within the range of D2-D4.

The good news, according to Outlook + Water's Robert Mace, is that we are experiencing a relatively weak La Nina and have a 60% chance of La Nada (neutral conditions) returning by April.

For the latest update from Texas + Water, click the link below!

Keeping the Fire Burning on Texas Rangelands

by Deann Burson

Earlier this month I had the pleasure of listening to Meredith Ellis deliver the opening plenary speech at the National Grazinglands Coalition Convention in Myrtle Beach. As I listened to her speak, fervently taking notes during her presentation, it occurred to me that Meredith truly has a gift for igniting a “fire” within rangeland managers and folks that love the land. If you don’t understand what it means to be “on fire” for the future of rangeland management, I beg you to attend an event in which Meredith is speaking or to watch her video here (<https://vimeo.com/362132387>).

As a student of range science, especially one that has the fortune of being mentored by Dr. Morgan Treadwell, I have learned many of the ecological benefits from the proper application of prescribed fire. In the same way that dead or decaying plants can inhibit organisms from accessing nutrients, a “stale” mentality within our organization could prevent the kind of innovation we need to fight back against the challenges threatening our Texas rangelands. From a changing demographic to the steady decline in acres of rangeland because of conversion to nonagricultural uses, it seems like the fire in our hearts can begin to dwindle. With the right ingredients (heat, fuel, and oxygen), we can keep a fire going to put life back into the “soil” that is comprised of our rangeland community.

Heat

To start a fire, there must be a source of heat. Texas ranchers are certainly ignited by the seemingly constant challenges thrown our way. Drought, market fluctuations, invasive species, predators, urban encroachment, and rangeland fragmentation only scratch the surface of the list of issues facing Texas rangelands. At times, it can feel like we are fighting an uphill battle. Undoubtedly, we will continue to “feel the heat” of future trials and tribulations, but let’s not forget that HEAT can release ENERGY. To combat the problems we face, it’s going to take a tsunami of energy from a community of people standing together against a common enemy, and from that energy will come innovation for the next generations.

Fuel

When we think about the cultivation of our natural resources, we must recognize that there is a human component to ranching. Where a rangeland specialist may look at a piece of land and see years of overgrazing that has jeopardized the land's condition, former generations may look at the same property and remember the sacrifices they made to feed their families. As much as we would like to think that proper management is all about smart decision making, there is often a social or even emotional component fueling our choices. *Passion*, whether it be for the land or family, is the kind of fuel we need to sustain a fire that will lead to change.

Oxygen

As a fire requires oxygen to be sustained, I believe that new ideas are necessary to breathe life into our rangeland community. From my viewpoint as a doctoral student at Texas A&M University, I am encouraged by both the range stewards that have pioneered before me AND those in upcoming generations that are excited about learning and motivated to better our lands. If you need proof of the power of both these resources, just spend a day or two with the students at Youth Range Workshop this summer! Not only do we have a society of people focused on bettering our lands, but we also have access to a wealth of accumulated knowledge every day right at our fingertips on our cell phones and other devices.

To keep the "fire" burning *for* our Texas rangelands, it will require a fire triangle of a different sort. With a combination of circumstantial "heat" that releases energy, passion for the land, and new ideas and innovations, we can foster a flame that will promote the health of our Texas Society. Together we can create lands that will not only sustain themselves, but also thrive.

STAY TUNED...
The RWF^M Stewardship
webinar series will be back in
February!

Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) licensed agricultural pesticide applicators can earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs) through the RWF^M Stewardship Webinar

2022 SRM Annual Meeting:

"Sustainability through Culture and Innovation"

**Albuquerque, NM
February 6-10, 2022**

Join us in the heart of New Mexico for the 75th Annual SRM Meeting to be held IN-PERSON! The beautiful high desert rangelands, diverse cultures, authentic art, and painted skies of Albuquerque will make for a great meeting.

What will a hybrid meeting look like?

In-person meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Feb. 6-10th. All of those who attend the in-person meeting will also be given access to the online virtual meeting site. SRM will once again be using the Cadence platform to house its virtual meeting page.

The in-person meeting will not be replicated on the virtual meeting site; rather, several sessions from the in-person meeting will be live-streamed and recorded, and made available to virtual meeting registrants, these will include:

Plenary Session

Business Meeting and Awards

2 rooms will be designated as "live-stream" rooms in ABQ with multiple sessions being broadcast. These will be announced shortly.

Poster Session: all those who will present a poster in ABQ will be encouraged to post their poster on the virtual meeting site as well for individuals to view.

Sessions not live-streamed: Presenters will be encouraged to post their talks/presentations on the virtual site for viewing by virtual attendees AND those who may have missed it in ABQ.

*Virtual sessions and posters: those who have requested to present virtually will do so through the virtual site"

Designated dates will be announced for "live hours" on the virtual site in which virtual attendees and those who attended in-person will be encouraged to log-in and interact

Questions? Stay tuned for more information and dates; ***virtual registration is coming soon!***

Virtual Registration Costs:

\$100 SRM member

\$125 non SRM member

\$50 SRM student member

\$75 non-SRM student member

Contact Kelly Fogarty for more: operations@rangelands.org

The meeting will be held at the Albuquerque Convention Center. Host hotel information provided below:

Hyatt Regency Albuquerque

The SRM has reserved a block of rooms at the Hyatt Regency for the Annual Meeting with a room rate of \$129/night. The Hyatt is located directly across the street from the Convention Center. Click the red button below to reserve your room.

If you wish to call to reserve your room, call: +1 [505-842-1234](tel:5058421234). You must reference the "SRM Annual Meeting" in order to receive the meeting rate.

Student Block

A student block of rooms has been established at The Hyatt Regency. These rooms are Quad-Rooms (capacity) and available at a \$94/night rate. [Email](mailto:operations@rangelands.org) Kelly Fogarty for the reservation link: operations@rangelands.org.

*Complimentary airport shuttle is provided by the hotel.

REGISTER HERE!

Bill Fox

President

william.fox@ag.tamu.edu

Doug Tolleson

1st Vice President

douglas.tolleson@ag.tamu.edu

Humberto Perotto

2nd Vice President

humberto.perotto@tamuk.edu

Morgan Treadwell

Past President

morgan.treadwell@ag.tamu.edu

Katy Hoskins

Director '22-'24

hoskins.katy@yahoo.com

Steven Evans

Director '22-'24

steven.evans@ag.tamu.edu

Matthew Coffman

Director '21-'23

matthew.coffman@usda.gov

Carrie Seiler

Director '21-'23

carriekseiler@gmail.com

Caitlyn Cooper

Director '20-'22

caitlyn.cooper@ag.tamu.edu

Michael Wilson

Director '20-'22

MSWillson1981@gmail.com

Robert Moen

Treasurer

rmoen@sonorctx.net

Cody Scott

Treasurer

cody.scott@angelo.edu

Lee A. Knox

Archivist

leeaknox@yahoo.com

Deann Burson

Newsletter Editor

deann.burson@ag.tamu.edu

Jenny Pluhar

Social Media

jenny.pluhar@gmail.com

Carrie Seiler

Social Media

carriekseiler@gmail.com

Tanner Bryant

Webmaster

tanner@nobleintegrationsllc.com

Calendar & Events

- February 6-10, 2022: SRM Annual Meeting-Albuquerque, NM

For additional events or more information, check out the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension calendar at <https://calendar.tamu.edu/agrilifeextension/>.

For calendar submission, please contact Deann Burson at deann.burson@ag.tamu.edu

If you would like to submit future newsletter content, please contact the Newsletter Editor at deann.burson@ag.tamu.edu.



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Our mailing address is:

Texas Section Society for Range Management
3524 Knickerbocker Rd.
Suite C 328
San Angelo, Texas 76904

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