



*2016 Outstanding Young Range Professional Award Recipient Alfonso Ortega-Sanchez and TSSRM President Willy Conrad*

**Texas Section Society for Rangeland Management**  
**Outstanding Young Range Professional Award**  
**Alfonso Ortega-Sanchez**

**Education:**

B.S., Range and Wildlife Management, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, 2004

M.S., Range and Wildlife Management, Sul Ross State University, 2006

Ph.D., Wildlife Science, Texas A&M University, 2013

**Work Experience:**

September 2010-present

East Foundation: Wildlife and Research Manager

*Coordinates research activities on more than 12 active projects and is the wildlife manager of six ranches totaling more than 216,000 acres.*

September 2006-August 2010

### Texas A&M University: Research Assistant

*Worked on the "Evaluation of a translocated population of desert mule deer in the Chihuahuan Desert of Northern Coahuila, Mexico" project under supervision of Dr. Roel R. Lopez and Dr. Louis A. Harveson. Duties include: Trapping and handling mule deer, fitting radio collars, recording aging measurements, collecting telemetry data, running vegetation transects, coordinating field activities.*

August 2004-August 2006

### Sul Ross State University: Research Assistant

*Worked on the "Status, Distribution, and Ecology of Gambel's quail in Trans-Pecos, Texas" project under supervision of Dr. Louis A. Harveson. Duties include: Trapping Gambel's quail with funnel traps, handling Gambel's quail, banding, fitting radio collars, recording aging measurements, collecting telemetry data, running vegetation transects.*

September 2002-August 2004

### Caeser Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute: Wildlife Research Technician

*Worked on the "King Ranch Wild Turkey" project under supervision of Dr. William Kuvlesky, Jr. Duties included: Spotting turkeys, trapping turkeys with walk-in traps and rocket nets, handling turkeys, banding, putting radio collars, taking aging measurements, collecting telemetry data, running vegetation transects.*

June 2001-July 2002

Aldama Experimental Station, INIFAP (Instituto Nacional de Investigacion Forestal, Agricola y Pecuaria): Animal Science Research Technician

November 2000-July 2001

Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon: Wildlife Research Technician

June 1999-August 1999

Patronato de Apoya a la Investagcion Percuaria en Mexico A. C. (PAIEPEME A. C.):  
Ranch Management Internship

### **Community Involvement:**

- St. Martin's Catholic Church, Kingsville, Texas
- Deer capture volunteer. November 2002, Yugo Ranch, Laredo, TX.
- Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute Assistant volunteer August 2002-present.

## **Society for Range Management Activities**

- *Texas Section Society for Range Management:*
  - Member since 2002
  - Active in Young Professionals Conclave
  - Coached Sul Ross University Plant ID team as a graduate student
- *Society for Range Management*
  - Co-Chair, 2016 SRM Annual Meeting, Corpus Christi, TX
  - Active in Young Professionals Conclave

## **Awards and Recognition:**

- *Houston Safari Club Scholarship, 2005 Recipient*
- Sul Ross State University  
Department of Natural Resource Management  
Range and Wildlife Management - Wildlife emphasis  
*Outstanding Graduate Student 2004-2005*
- Texas A&M-Kingsville  
Department of Agriculture, Range and Wildlife Management  
*Outstanding Undergraduate Student 2003-2004*
- Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society, 2004  
*Carl Shoemaker Memorial Scholarship recipient*
- Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society  
Intercollegiate Range Plant Identification Contest, 2004  
2nd place team member
- Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society  
*Undergraduate Poster Presentation Contest, 2004, 3rd place*

- *A. E. Leonard Undergraduate Student Scholarship in Wildlife Management*  
2004 Recipient
- Texas Section of the Society for Range Management  
*Outstanding Range Student Award 2003*
- Texas Section of the Society for Range Management  
*Range Plant Identification Contest, 2003*  
*2nd place individual*
- Texas Section of the Society for Range Management  
*Range Plant Identification Contest, 2003*  
*1st place team member*
- TAMUK Student Wildlife Society Member  
Fall 2002 – 2006
- TAMUK Plant Identification Team Member  
Fall 2002 – 2006
- President of F.C.F. (Facultad de Ciencias Forestales) of U.A.N.L. (Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León) Student Society. February 2001- December 2001

Alfonso Ortega-Sanchez “Poncho” or “Ponchito” to many of us, has had range management and wildlife/livestock interactions on his radar since before he went to college. He has a wealth of experience on both sides of the US-Mexican border and has been quickly recognized as a rising star with a stellar work ethic. Although he appears to have followed in his father’s footsteps, in reality, he has carved his own path while maintaining close family ties.

Poncho relentlessly pursued educational opportunities in range and wildlife management, attending colleges on both sides of the border. His education and extensive research led him to the East Foundation, where he has tremendous responsibility for a vast expanse of rangeland with unique challenges. At first glance, that may not seem unique or unusual, however, he regularly has to replace graduate students who come from across the US to research, only to be intimidated by the language challenges, the remoteness of the location and

simply the overwhelming size of the project areas. They retreat for more comfortable, accessible projects that do not challenge their social awareness as well as their scientific abilities.

He has a unique opportunity as a bilingual range and wildlife manager comfortable on both sides of the border. He has embraced the challenge and is quickly being recognized as both a valuable resource and an expert on both sides of the border. He has challenged cultural norms, starting by obtaining his Ph.D. East Foundation has begun a program under his leadership, “Behind the Gates” where school children from across south Texas get a glimpse in the life of a researcher and learn the fundamentals of range and wildlife management and see what goes on ‘behind the gates’ of a large ranch. Last year alone, he spoke to more than 12,000 school children. Programs such as this open their world to possibilities they may have never dreamed of.



Here, Alfonso Ortega-Sanchez, “Poncho” and Pepe Martinez explain the quantity and quality of runoff and infiltration water to south Texas school children using the TXGLC rainfall simulator.



Not content to simply work for someone else, Poncho practices what he preaches. He and his father “Poncho Sr.” are partners in a livestock operation on leased land near Kingsville. They submitted a plan to the land owner, showing their ideas for improving the range condition through the use of a EQIP contract as well as a significant amount of elbow grease. They want to use their operation to show others that profitable ranching and good land stewardship are compatible. They believe that once the landowner sees their plans come to

fruition, they will have the opportunity to expand their operation by leasing more land. Poncho is most proud to share this venture with both his father and his children, sharing the legacy of sound rangeland stewardship.

Poncho worked tirelessly as Co-Chair of the 2016 SRM Annual Meeting in Corpus Christi, TX. He hosted the SRM board members and officers at their 2014 summer board meeting on the San Antonio Viejo Ranch in far south Texas. Seeing this East Foundation large ranch, it's remote location near the border, and learning of the East Foundation mission and research, as well as enjoying the fellowship of south Texas was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, even for some of the well-traveled range scientists who sit on that board. The Corpus Christi annual meeting earned a healthy profit for SRM and returned \$22,000 back to the Texas Section.

Alfonso Ortega-Sanchez has a promising career ahead of him, teaching others about range and wildlife management, practicing those skills daily for both the East Foundation and himself and serving the scientific community and professional organizations with his time and skills. He is most definitely deserving of TSSRM's "Outstanding Young Professional" honor.