

Grass Roots

Photo by Wayne Dunson



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



**Paul Loeffler
President, TSSRM**

The year of 2007 is nearing its end and with it will come the close of another successful year for TSSRM. As my year as President of this great organization ends, there are many things to reflect on. Rest assured, I do not intend to do that in this column. There are a lot of things that happen within our Section and Society in a year, some more visible than others, some positive, some not...but all of them having some level of impact on the current and future state of SRM and TSSRM. I encourage each of you to continue or increase your level of participation in both Section and Society where possible. While it has been said several times, an organization like ours operates on its membership and their activity. PLEASE GET INVOLVED! Little things like voting in the elections, communicating with the officers and board, writing an article for *Grass Roots*, nominating someone for an award or recruiting a new member have a positive impact on the whole.

From my perspective, the upcoming year will be one of continued effort to better inform others of who we are and what we do. While I get to join that elite group of folks who comprise the Past Presidents, our officers and board of directors are already working on both current and new projects for TSSRM. These two groups, combined with input from the membership, are what give direction to our efforts. If you have an idea or a thought, I know one of them would appreciate hearing about it.

I would like to thank each member of the Board of Directors that I have had the pleasure of serving with over the past three years. While we may not have all agreed on every issue, I firmly believe that each person had the best interest of the Section at heart when taking action. Special thanks goes to Cody Scott and Tim Reinke, who came on the board when I was elected Second Vice-President in 2005; it was an enjoyable three years. I am indebted to those individuals who served in appointed positions this year. Folks like Bruce Healy, Robert Moen and Jeff Goodwin make the job of president much easier. There are several people who deserve special thanks for their advice and counsel; you know who you are, and I appreciate you greatly. To each of you who served as the chair or a member of a committee, you have my sincere gratitude and appreciation for your efforts.

Finally, as I said in my remarks at the Annual Meeting in Lubbock, THANK YOU for the opportunity to serve as President of TSSRM. It really is something I have wanted to do for a long time and I appreciate your confidence in electing me to serve and your support during my service.

Happy Holidays,

Paul V. Loeffler

The Inside Story...

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 ciety for Range Management.

Address inquiries to Jeff Goodwin, Editor.

TSSRM New Members

Let us welcome our new members to the section.

Thank you for your continued support for rangeland stewardship.

- Craig R. Funke Floresville, TX
- Mark Mathews Henrietta, TX
- Kathleen P. Middleton Bellevue, TX
- Gad Perry Lubbock, TX
- Sandra Rideout-Hanzak Lubbock, TX
- Travis C. Sagebiel Stephenville, TX

TSSRM Non-Renewed Members

Dear Members,

This is a list of the latest non-renewed members for the Texas section as of October 2007. If you know anyone on this list please contact them and invite them back. Membership is the backbone and the future of our organization; maintaining our numbers will assure a strong and successful society. Thank you for your continued efforts.

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Steven Goertz | Marsh Weiershausen | Cody Mathews |
| Tyler Hawkins | Haley Babb | Georgianne Moore |
| Tyler James | Justin Corzine | Billy Roberts |
| Alyson McDonald | James Everitt | Kenneth Spaeth |
| Matthew Orr | Enrigue Gonzalez | Heath Starns |
| Darren Richardson | John Luton | Dana Vacek |

Attention NRCS Employee Members of TSSRM FINAL NOTICE!

According to currently published USDA/NRCS Ethics rules, you are not allowed to use the NRCS email system for participation in partner organizations like SRM. *Too many of you still are!*

Thus, for TSSRM to comply with NRCS Ethics rules *we need 50 of you* to go to the SRM directory and provide an alternate email address - please make the alternate email address your primary (NRCS is often listed as secondary) so all SRM and TSSRM correspondence is directed to this alternate email address.

TSSRM uses whatever information you have on file with the SRM Office - thus, you need to update your records yourself or work with Lesley Radtke (lrادتke@rangelands.org) accordingly! *Don't send Jeff Goodwin or myself an email with your contact information update, we can't do anything.*

This is the last notice you will receive. This is the last newsletter you will receive if you do not comply with the ethics bulletin.

NO EXCEPTIONS!

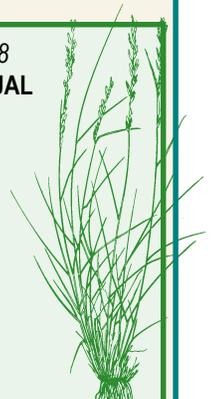
We have politely asked in the past, but apparently not everyone has listened... Won't you please comply?

Bruce S. Healy, TSSRM Secretary

Upcoming Events

Red Buffalo Prescribed Burn School to be held in Mason or Kerr Counties
http://www.myredbuffalo.com/burn_schools.htm
"Red Buffalo" Prescribed Burn Schools
 January 2-6, 2008
 2nd Annual College Student Burn School.
 Blue Mountain Peak Ranch, Mason County
 January 26-31, 2008
SRM & AFGC 2008 Joint Annual Meeting
 Building Bridges: Grasslands to Rangelands

Oct. 8-10, 2008
TSSRM ANNUAL MEETING
 Nacogdoches



You Can Get Involved

Bruce S. Healy, TSSRM Secretary

Having started in a smaller SRM Section, I am surprised at the number of Texas Section members who have approached me to ask how to “break through the glass ceiling” and get more involved. My first thought was always, “Gee, I didn’t know there was a glass ceiling.” But, thinking back to when I first got involved with SRM – in South Dakota – I’ve revised my response.

With Sections the size of Texas (the same applies to the Society), I would suggest:

- **START OUT IN THE COMMITTEE LEVEL.** More work gets done at the committee level, so you can be the most effective and visible on one. Look at the website’s committee directory or the handbook and see what each committee does. Find one or two that interest you. Seek out the committee chair and/or one of the section officer/directors (the section annual meeting is an excellent opportunity to network).
 - **ASK TO GET INVOLVED!** The committee chairs and/or officers cannot possibly know everyone, so they will have a tendency to ask those that they know to be on, or help them find someone to, work on the committee. Ask these folks to get involved – if they don’t respond within an appropriate amount of time; ask them again. Eventually, if the first committee doesn’t respond, move on to the next on your list. Persistence will pay off! Just remember to be assertive without being obnoxious... You want to be memorable for the right reasons. *(If you wait for someone to ask you to become involved, you may end up retiring before you get asked...)*
 - **OKAY, SO NOW YOU’VE MADE IT ON THE COMMITTEE** – Ask the chair to help out, get involved, and be committed. *If you say you will complete a task by a certain date – DO IT!* If something comes up to change your situation, work with the committee chair and/or Board representative. *Ask for help if you need it.* (Please, don’t get involved only so you can get your way paid to the meeting.)
 - If you are an awards committee, but you don’t feel comfortable in front, work it out with others to present the awards.
 - Committee assignments normally are 2-3 years. About done with the first one? Decide if you want to move up to committee chair or if you want to rotate to a new committee.
 - The 1st or 2nd VP are challenged each year to find committee chair or chair-elect. Work hard, and they will find you!
- **NOW YOU’VE SUCCESSFULLY WORKED AT THE COMMITTEE LEVEL AND YOU WANT TO MOVE UP TO THE BOARD.** Let the Nominating and Elections Committee know you are interested in running for the board. Just remember, in a section with nearly 500 members, only 2 candidates make the ballot for 2nd Vice President and 4 candidates for Director, so competition is tight - don’t expect to make it to the ballot on your first try.
- **Volunteer to work at the Section’s Informational Booth at an event.** Check the website and/or contact the 1st VP. Usually, they are looking for folks to work the booth in 2 hour time slots – you don’t have to give up the entire day for the section.
- **LAST**, when you attend an annual meeting, at every meal make an effort to sit with someone you don’t know who is/has been involved (same applies to meeting breaks). You never know how this simple step will lead to greater possibilities. Ask for the person’s business card. It shows you are really interested in talking to them. *Network! Network! Network!*

Work hard, be committed, and you will have to beat the Nominating Committee away from your door ...

Kick-off Award II

By Dr. Jake Landers

Are you ready for another “Kick-off Award”? This one with sheep seeking something to nibble among the limestone rocks resisting the erosion that has taken away the topsoil, what little there was to start with 100 years ago? Sheep may be the culprit in the photo, but in the hill country of the Edwards Plateau, where the photo was taken, cattle and goats are also regular participants in overgrazing, if you let them.

I wonder if a verse I wrote several years ago would get the attention of, and the corrective response from, the land-owner instead of an imaginary removal from the land for poor management as suggested by the award. I entitled it Hellistic Resource Management:

Rain on hills in ages past
Made the soil and grew the grass
That fed the deer and buffalo
Now cattle, sheep and goats, you know.

When the grass was over used
Rocks appeared and soil diffused
Into the river silt and sand
The Pecos and the Rio Grande,
And moved toward the end, you know,
To fill the Gulf of Mexico.



Severe erosion of soil on a hill country ranch.

Now if you have excessive stock
And graze the hillsides down to rock
The soil your heirs should get, you know,
Is in the Gulf of Mexico.

And your eternal price to pay
May rest upon that judgement day
When God commands: “You lay the track,
Return the soil upon your back.”



Sloping land on the same ranch, dominated by little bluestem and sideoats grama, showing minimal soil erosion.

But wait! What are the circumstances surrounding the photo? Obviously, grazing has been severe, but how could a rational human being, called a rancher, justify such a failure of management and expect to survive? How could he or she face the banker who also has an interest in profitability, or the preacher who knows the value of stewardship, or the teacher who prepares a new generation with skills and attitudes of responsibility, or the spouse?

If you would have asked the owner about his

management of the land in the photo, he would have responded that it was only a small part of the ranch, just the waterlot near the working pens. When shearing sheep or goats, or working cattle, large numbers of livestock would be in the waterlot, often overnight. Ranchers call it a sacrifice area, something that gets overused without much choice in the matter.

The owner and manager of the land in the photo was my father, who ran the ranch in Menard County from 1923 until 1990, surviving the depression, great droughts of the 30's and 50's and many shorter ones, sent 4 children through college, was active in agricultural and community organizations, and died with no debts on the land and with money in the bank. He received an award for Excellence in Grazing Management from the Society for Range Management in the 60's.

Except for the waterlot, he left the land much better than he found it as shown in photos from other parts of the ranch. It may have been a mistake to have included the sloping ground in a high-use area to start with, but sometimes it's hard to anticipate the consequences of such decisions. I would hope that his spirit is still overlooking the ranch, and that its new owners hold fast to the principles of good management and keep the sacrifice areas to a minimum. No Kick-off Award this time.



Roger Landers and grandson inspecting the Indiangrass and little bluestem on the ranch in the 1960's when it received the Excellence in Grazing Management Award.

Grasses of the United States and Canada

By Dr. Jake Landers

For those who find grasses challenging to identify, yet so appealing as to study them, the second volume has arrived to replace Hitchcock's *Manual of Grasses* that has served us well for 75 years. It is Volume 24 of *Flora of North America*, Magnoliophyta: Commelinidae (in part): Poaceae, part 1. It describes grasses of North America north of Mexico with exquisite line drawings, distribution maps, ecological characteristics, and keys to identification. It is 8 ¾ X 11 ½ inches and 911 pages. It's a tome as my students used to say.

The book has been assembled by The Grass Phylogeny Group of the Flora North America Project comprised of 13 individuals with editors Mary E. Barkworth, Kathleen M Capels, Sandy Long, Laurel K. Anderton, and Michael B. Piep. Illustrators are Cindy Talbot Roche, Linda Ann Vorobik, Sandy Long, Annaliese Miller, Bee F. Gunn, and Christine Roberts.

Volume 24 covers the BEP clade (Bambusoideae, Ehrhartoideae, and Pooideae) containing familiar genera including *Bambusa*, *Oryza*, *Melica*, *Stipa*, *Bromus*, *Elymus*, *Poa*, *Agrostis*, *Avena*, and many others. Volume 25 was published first so that the key and table of contents in this Volume could correctly refer to its page locations.

If you haven't kept up with grass taxonomy in a while, be prepared for some unfamiliar names: *Nasella* for some of the *Stipas*, *Amelichloa* for other *Stipas*, *Achnatherum* for some of the others, *Leymus*, *Pascopyrum*, *Pseudoroegneria*, for wildryes and wheatgrasses, and many more. Keeping up with the changes may keep you young. That's my only hope.

Volume 24 is dedicated to "the two giants on whose shoulders we stand, Albert Spear Hitchcock and Mary Agnes Chase". An Historical Introduction by M. T. Steiber give a fascinating review of the lives and works of Hitchcock and Chase. Volume 24 is published by Oxford University Press, Inc., 198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY, 10016. I have also found it on Shop.com on the web for \$ 95.00.

Reprinted with permission from *The Cattleman* magazine, September 2007 issue

Creating a Lasting Legacy of Land and Livestock on the Railway Ranch

by Dee Ann Cameron

While ranchers can't control the rain, they can manage their rangelands to help make better use of the rainfall events. Brush and water management are two of the ways ranchers in drought-prone far west Texas can help take control of their land.

The rocky, sandy soils in the area provide ideal growing conditions for brush plants such as prickly pear, tarbush and creosote. An overabundance of these plants inhibits grass growth and limits productivity for livestock.

Water supply for livestock is also an issue in this semi-arid portion of Texas. Ranchers depend heavily on windmills and solar pumps to supply herds with a reliable water source.

Stan Smith has been battling brush and water issues on his ranch near Midland, Texas for the past 30 years. In 1976 Smith's parents, Marvin and Estee, purchased the historic Railway Ranch, gradually adding adjacent ranchland to create the nearly 60,000-acre spread they manage today. Thanks to his dad's urging and foresight, Smith attended Texas A&M University and majored in agriculture. Smith eventually graduated with a degree in ranch management. Armed with a textbook knowledge of ranching, the young Smith was ready to apply the newest ideas and expertise.

"At that time there were lots of new things coming out in the livestock and ranching industry," Smith says.

"Things like artificial insemination and rotational grazing were new ideas then. I was excited to get out on the land and apply some of what I'd learned."

Smith had no previous ranching experience. The son of a drilling contractor, he did not come from a ranching background.

"I didn't start my ranching career with any preconceived notions," Smith says. "It could definitely be said I was not one of those people doing things a certain way because 'that's the way my grandpa did it.'"

"I was pretty naïve," Smith admits. "But I knew where to go to get the help I needed."

Smith assessed the condition of the land and set some short-term and long-range goals for the ranch. His experiences at A&M had taught him to seek the input and advice from the local USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office, as well as Texas Cooperative Extension and Texas Parks and Wildlife.

When the Smiths bought the ranch it had been overgrazed. Smith consulted with NRCS to implement a management program that would help the land recover.

"Cross fencing was one of the first things we wanted to do," he continues. "The pastures on this place were huge and we wanted to make them a little more manageable, with two water sources in each pasture. I knew livestock were an effective way to harvest the vegetation, they just needed to be managed correctly."

Smith divided his award winning Angus cattle into herds of 100 head each in a frequent rotational grazing system. Additionally, that seems to be the number he and his wife Ann, and two sons, Sam and Dan, can gather and work in a day.

"Our original plan was to rotate them in four pastures over a year's time," Smith explains. "But we've been in a 12 year drought, so it's more like six or eight pastures."

Smith says average rainfall for the area is about 13 or 14 inches.

"But 14 inches is rare," he says, laughing. "It's more like 6 or 20."

Through cost-share and technical assistance through NRCS, Smith has constructed over eight and a half miles of cross fences, with two more miles of cross fencing currently in the works. Many of the improvements have been made through the NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

Another of Smith's management goals was to establish watering facilities every 2 miles so livestock and wildlife don't have to travel too far to water. He worked with the NRCS to install 7,600 feet of livestock pipelines, with plans underway for another 5,000 feet, to pipe water to the 30 new water troughs he has put in, with 15 more planned locations.

Smith has built 23 storage tanks and is installing six more in the next year or so. He has drilled three water wells, at a depth of around 250', and has a location picked out for another well to be drilled soon. He has also put in five windmills and four solar pumps to accomplish his goal of being a 'well watered ranch.'

“My main goal from the start was to try to improve the land and get some semblance to historic conditions,” Smith says. He envisions a return to native grass covered rangeland, dotted with a mix of brush for wildlife.

To accomplish this, Smith has implemented aggressive brush management measures. He has treated over 900 acres with the chemical picloram to treat prickly pear. He has used the aerial application of tebuthiuron to treat over 8,000 acres of tarbush and creosote bush.

“I don’t necessarily want to get rid of all the brush,” Smith says. “I know the mesquite trees are good for wildlife. I just want to open up the country so we can grow more grass.”

His efforts seem to be paying off. According to Ray Schimcek, the USDA-NRCS District Conservationist in the Midland office, the forage production on the ranch has increased substantially as a result of the brush control. The native grasses, including sideoats grama, blue grama, black grama, buffalo and tobosa, have increased significantly. The improved vegetation cover has resulted in less soil erosion and greater absorption when it does rain.

“I’ve been ranching for 30 years now and one of the most rewarding things for me is to see native grasses growing on these flats that used to be covered with creosote and tarbush,” Smith says.

In addition to increased forage production for his livestock, the wildlife populations on the Railway Ranch are also benefiting.

“We have worked with the Smiths as they have taken this land from desert shrubland to desert grassland,” Schimcek says. “They have created more mule deer habitat, but white-tailed deer, javelina, turkey, quail, dove and aoudad sheep are all benefiting from their stewardship efforts.”

“A lot of people probably wouldn’t associate this area with an abundance of wildlife,” Smith says. “But we have a big variety.

“In fact, we’ve had some big trophy animals taken off this ranch,” he says, referring to the numerous Texas Big Game Awards the ranch has received from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The Smiths not only practice good conservation ethics, they share their ideas with others. They regularly host tours and workshops on the ranch. In 2006 they opened The Barr Ranch Retreat (www.barranchretreat.com), a bed and breakfast on the ranch. They transformed the original Barr Ranch home, built in 1906, into a special place for visitors to spend the night, weekend, or longer, immersed in the ranch spirit. They are regularly booked with tourists, photographers, nature lovers and people just looking for a weekend get away.

“We really enjoy providing other people with the ranch life experience that we get to enjoy every day,” says Ann Smith. “It helps them develop a greater appreciation for what we are doing on the land and how we are taking care of it.”

While livestock, wildlife, hunters, and tourists are all enjoying the benefits of the Smith’s conscientious management ethics, Stan and Ann both have one ultimate goal in all that they do: to pass the values and stewardship ethics on to their sons.

“The ability to share this ranch life with a lot of people is something that has evolved as we have gone along,” Stan remarks. “But the opportunity to provide our kids with this kind of heritage now and 20 years from now means more to us than anything.”



Weaned calves coming to water on the Railway Ranch.



The Smith family, Dan, Ann, Stan and Sam, all enjoy living and working together on the ranch.



A fresh, ready supply of water for livestock and wildlife is one of Smith’s top management priorities.

SRM Rangeflash

2008 Annual Meeting Registration Deadlines Extended

John Tanaka, Interim EVP, Society for Range Management

Registration deadlines for the **SRM/AFGC 2008 Joint Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky** have been extended!

The cut-off date for **Early Bird** registration is now **December 14th**, and the cut-off date for **Regular Registration** is now **December 28th**.

Registrations received after midnight December 14th through midnight December 28th will be processed at the Regular Registration rate. Registration received after **December 28th** will be processed on-site and at the **On-Site Rate**.

For the best rate, register online now or download the printable pdf of the registration form by going to http://www.rangelands.org/louisville2008/louisville2008_index.shtml.

We hope to see you in Louisville!

