



2012 TSSRM President Ken Cearley and Outstanding Achievement Award Recipient Jay Whiteside

Texas Section Society for Rangeland Management
Outstanding Achievement Award
Jay Whiteside

Jay Whiteside is a Technical Guidance Biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and has been the originator and driving force behind the Western Navarro Bobwhite Restoration Initiative (WNBRI) <http://navarroquail.org/>.

The primary goal of the WNBRI is to create and/or maintain enough contiguous suitable habitat to provide abundant forage and essential nesting, brood rearing, thermal, and protective cover for currently isolated populations of bobwhite quail, even during low production years. From an initial membership of 12 active landowners representing 15,000 acres, the cooperative has grown to 32 landowners with a cumulative land base of just under 30,000 acres. Grants from DuPont, Audubon Texas and Trinity Basin Conservation Foundation have been used to buy Roundup, seed and equipment to restore grassland habitats.

Most of the land within the initiative area is privately owned. WNBRC's role is to create an organization of interested landowners and provide a mechanism for education and information dissemination. Landowners within the target area are encouraged to join the

WNBRC. Members receive a free site evaluation and Quail Habitat Management Plan developed by Jay and his colleagues at TPWD. These plans identify the currently limiting habitat quality factors found on the property, and prescribe appropriate management to correct them. Common prescriptive management practices include seeding native warm season bunch grasses and forbs on degraded pastureland; restoring native warm season bunch grasses and forbs on introduced pastures or hay fields; establishing native grass field borders, filter strips, and riparian buffers on croplands pasture; deferment and establishment or manipulation of woody cover; rotational grazing; prescribed burning; strip disking; and prescribed haying of native grasses. Because quail are an early successional species, maintaining their habitat requires constant input and attention. Additionally, through partnerships between government and non-government organizations, the WNBRC directs members towards appropriate technical or financial assistance programs that help them reach their habitat management objectives. Jay has been the driving force in creating and maintaining landowner involvement and enthusiasm.

Jay also worked with others to create an excellent web site for cooperating landowners and others that describe the elements of good quail habitat and the food plants important to quail in the area. He has prepared a detailed strategic plan for restoration of bobwhites in Navarro County, which includes strategies such as linking habitat together, maintaining early successional habitat, maximizing usable space, and developing partnerships and available financial assistance.

On May 27, 2009 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department recognized Western Navarro Bobwhite Restoration Initiative (WNBRI) for their conservation achievements as part of the Lone Star Land Steward Awards.

From an idea of putting together a dedicated group of landowners who could restore grazing lands to bring back the whistles of bobwhite quail to Navarro County, to the achievement of a model focus area of how to address the decline of quail and other grassland birds throughout Texas, Jay's leadership has been the driving force for the success of the WNBRI. His dedication, expertise in range and wildlife management, public service, and leadership is worthy of recognition by the Texas Section, Society for Range Management.