

GULF CORDGRASS AND FIRE

Cattle ranching is important to our state’s economy and our nation’s food supply. Gulf cordgrass reduces the productivity of native rangelands when it becomes mature and unpalatable to cattle. Fire, and corresponding gulf cordgrass regrowth, increases the productivity and nutritional value of native rangelands. However, it is unknown how best to apply fire to coastal rangelands dominated by gulf cordgrass in the South Texas Sand Sheet to maximize benefits to cattle.



© Wyman Meinzer

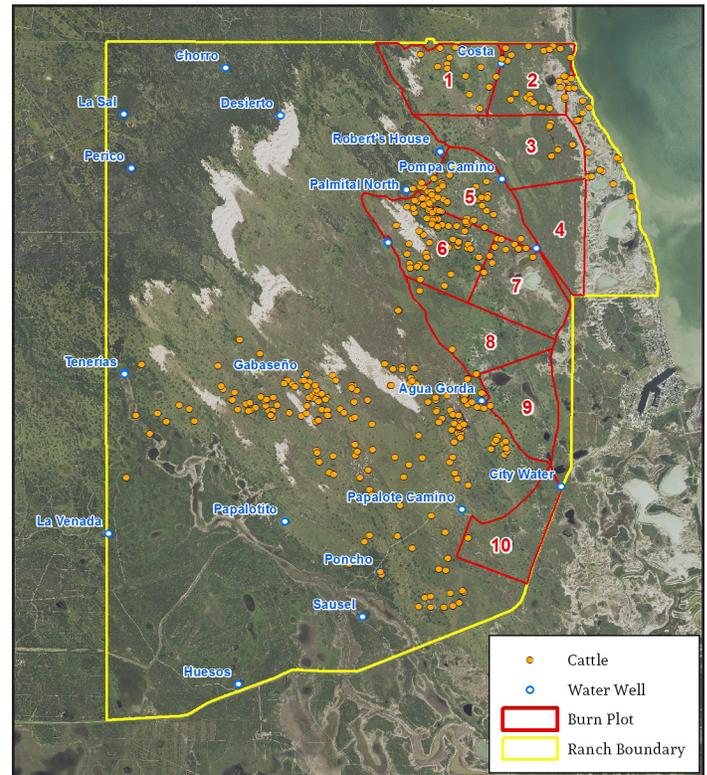
The East Foundation is implementing a 3-year study on its coastal El Sauz property to determine:

- If burned cordgrass communities are preferred by cattle
- If so, how long this preference lasts and whether there are different cattle preferences according to season of burn
- Cattle movements in response to fire conducted in different seasons
- Nutritional values of gulf cordgrass following burns conducted in different seasons

The ultimate goal with this work is to produce prescribed fire recommendations for gulf cordgrass-dominated rangelands occurring deep in South Texas’ coastal communities.

Using operational-scale burn plots of 500 acres, we will:

- Burn 2 plots in the fall of 2015 and 2016
- Burn 2 plots in the spring of 2016 and 2017
- Monitor cattle movements before, during, and after burns using GPS collars
- Monitor gulf cordgrass regrowth and composition before, during, and after burns



Through these efforts, the East Foundation will produce valuable information needed by landowners charged with raising cattle and operating ranches in gulf cordgrass-dominated communities. There are 2 graduate students working on this project. Thereby we are producing more management-minded scientists and more science-minded managers – one of the overarching purposes of the East Foundation.

Partner: Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute