

## Annual Accomplishments 2018

The East Foundation's ranchlands are at the center of the legacy left by the East Family. This land, over 218,000 acres, holds some of the most productive native wildlife habitat in the nation and it has a long history of cattle ranching. Our mission is to support wildlife conservation and other public benefits of ranching and private land stewardship. Pursuing our mission requires teamwork and collaboration with partners. Here are some of the highlights of what we accomplished during 2018.

### MANAGING THROUGH DROUGHT

Most of our rangelands were under severe drought conditions through the winter and spring of 2017 and 2018. Starting in August of 2017, our nine-month accumulation of rainfall was below the long-term average, and by February accumulations were less than 50% of average. This was a drought severity not experienced since the spring of 2013. This had an impact on several research programs as well as the development of our cattle program.

### DEVELOPING OUR CATTLE PROGRAM

In early 2018, we reduced cattle stocking rates across most of the Foundation's rangelands – by late spring we vacated more than 70,000 acres. By the end of 2018 our breeding cows were reduced by 20%, this being led by a 33% reduction on the 150,000-acre San Antonio Viejo Ranch. We also reduced the herd by 25% across the 27,000-acre El Sauz ranch and about 40% at the 15,000-acre Buena Vista ranch. By the end of the year, we removed 743 mature cattle along with about 1,200 replacement heifers and over 500 yearlings.

Our herd now includes 2,900 breeding cows, 124 bulls, and 390 replacement heifers.

On the El Sauz ranch we continued to avoid infestation by cattle fever ticks – this following four years of infestations on cattle, nilgai, and deer on adjacent land. Working with Texas Animal Health Commission and USDA, we have so far, been successful in implementing an intensive management plan designed to prevent tick infestations.

As of 2018, we have contained an outbreak of Trichomoniasis. "Trich" is a sexually-transmitted disease that limits reproductive performance in infected cows. In 2016, we discovered almost 25% of our bulls were infected. Through targeted culling, we reduced the infection rate to 12% in 2017 – and we appear to have contained the problem as we continue to monitor over the coming years.

### RESEARCH THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

During 2018, East Foundation scientists put six publications into peer-reviewed scientific journals and made 64 scientific presentations at state and national conferences.

Since 2015, East Foundation scientists have authored and co-authored 24 publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals. At present there are another 23 publications in process – either in review or in press.

We averaged 12 university researchers working on East Foundation Ranches per day (or 4,389 researcher-days), with peak activity months from March–July.

At our Buena Vista ranch, we initiated a new research effort to determine the influence of hunting on bobwhite quail.



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**ENGAGING UNIVERSITIES**

Our field research involved 17 graduate students and two post-doctoral fellows from two universities, along with 150 student volunteers and field technicians from 15 different states.

We trained three university interns from Texas Tech University, Sam Houston State University, and Blinn College.

Our white-tailed deer capture and release project provided hands-on experience to over 100 students from eight Texas universities. Students came from as far away as Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, and Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

We had five students receive graduate degrees and move on to new opportunities in 2018:

- o Andrea Bruno, Ph.D., Research Scientist, East Foundation
- o Rachel Fern, Ph.D., Ecologist, USGS Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center
- o Victoria Haynes, M.S., Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- o Janel Ortiz, Ph.D., Post-doc Research Associate, University of San Diego
- o Michaela Rice, M.S. from Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M University-Kingsville

We conducted our second annual Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) competition for our graduate students. This competition challenges students to deliver their thesis or dissertation research in three minutes using language that non-scientists understand. Finalists and award winners can be found on our website at <https://eastfoundation.net/program/east-foundation-3mt/past-competitions/2018>.

We held the first 3MT® competition at the Texas Section Society for Range Management Annual Meeting in Lubbock. 17 students from eight

universities delivered their dissertation or thesis in only three minutes.

**EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

We partnered with IDEA Public Schools to deliver adventure-based, natural resource programming at Camp Rio. Over 136 program-days, we impacted 16,320 K-12 students.

In partnership with the Texas Wildlife Association, our *Stewarding Texas Resource Guide* reached 3,089 students. Additionally, 204 teachers received access to the Guide online, with a potential reach of more than 80,000 students. Our new *Stewarding Soil* module reached more than 10,000 students statewide.

In partnership with the Texas Wildlife Association, our Educators stationed in South Texas delivered *Wildlife by Design* lessons to 19,719 students and our teacher workshops presented 320 teachers with curriculum on natural resources and land stewardship.

We held field lessons on the San Antonio Viejo and El Sauz ranches reaching 598 students and more than 100 adults.

Our *Behind the Gates* field days brought 2,886 students and 98 teachers from Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, Zapata, Webb, Brooks and Jim Hogg counties to the El Sauz and San Antonio Viejo ranches. Through a day of hands-on activities with partners CKWRI, Witte Museum, The Texas Zoo, TWA, TPWD, Las Huellas, IDEA Public Schools and the Museum of South Texas History students learned first-hand about the many public benefits of ranching and private land stewardship.



Students are now a common sight on the East Foundation's San Antonio Viejo and El Sauz ranches.

## OUTREACH

We staffed East Foundation information booths at ten meetings and conventions, reaching 13,120 attendees. These events represented the main statewide functions for ranchers, range management professionals, wildlife scientists, landowners, and oil and gas professionals.

We co-hosted one book signing event for *Horses to Ride, Cattle to Cut: The San Antonio Viejo Ranch of Texas*. The event was held at the Houston Country Club. Approximately 100 were in attendance.

Social media efforts using Facebook yielded 1600 new followers. Each post reached on average over 6000 accounts. In the final three months of 2018, our Facebook posts reached nearly 200,000 accounts with an engagement rate of about 15%. Most users originate from San Antonio, Kingsville, Austin, Houston, and Laredo. For Instagram, we have over 1000 followers, with each post reaching 2400 accounts. Our post engagement rate averages over 10% exceeding the industry standard of 6%.



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**eastfoundation** It is hard to know the exact age of this fence at the Coloraditas Water Lot. Could it have been constructed prior to 1900 when most of the other slick-wire fences were made from wire brought from Belgium as ship ballasts, strung through hand bored holes in cypress posts shipped from Louisiana? In the end it might not matter that much. What does matter is that we pass along some of the century-old legacies that are still on the land fulfilling their original purpose. Appreciating the fact that water wells and fences are still working and doing their job after 100 years is a good departure from our fast-paced world. Old things that still work long after those that built them are gone tend to give us perspective and remind us that our time here on Earth is fleeting. Just as the stewards before us built things to last, our intent at the East Foundation is to build upon a legacy of private land stewardship that continues to endure. #eastfoundation

*A post about posts may seem like a trivial subject, but the sentiment it depicts engages a significant audience through social media.*

## MANAGING OUR LAND

On the Santa Rosa ranch, we completed Phase Two of our Vegetation Management project. Nearly 3,800 acres of mesquite encroached rangelands were aerially treated with Sendero herbicide bringing the total area treated to 9,200 acres. This project has improved wildlife habitat, cattle gathering efficiency, and increased carrying capacity by over 350 cattle, while also providing a 3,153-acre relief pasture for drought management purposes.

On the El Sauz ranch, we maintained more than 20 miles of fire break in preparation for prescribed fire across 3,798 acres in 2019. This is in addition to the 4,253 acres we burned over the last two years.

## DEVELOPING INFRASTRUCTURE

We installed two solar wells, a high capacity electric well, and over six miles of high capacity water line; allowing retirement of seven windmills while eliminating areas with poor water distribution across 20,000 acres.

We built a 3,000 square foot pavilion that will enhance our education and outreach opportunities.

We built a new road to our Coloraditas Research and Demonstration Area, a distance of 5.9 miles.

We replaced old fuel tanks with a new 7,500-gallon fuel station meeting all safety and environmental regulations.

We installed a state-of-the-art facility for drying forage samples to aid in our rangeland vegetation monitoring efforts. The drying facility is constructed from a 20-foot-long shipping container which is thermostat controlled thus allowing us

to dry herbaceous vegetation samples within five to ten days of sampling.



*Andrea Bruno-Montalvo collects vegetation samples in preparation for drying.*

We built 3.03 miles of fence, dividing the 10,000-acre Agua Dulce pasture at the San Antonio Viejo.

We installed dedicated fiber internet service at our Hebronville office with internet speeds ten times faster than the previous service.

We installed a high-capacity reverse osmosis system to provide water to the entire San Antonio Viejo headquarters.

Our staff restored "Robert's House" on the El Sauz ranch so that we can overnight staff and guests on the ranch. We renovated this important historic structure by renovating the bathroom, kitchen, porch, floors, and installing a new septic system.



*The sand, sun, and wind of El Sauz had taken their toll on "Robert's House." East Foundation employees all pitched in to remodel it themselves; a true team effort!*

We renovated the East Family Cemetery including new fencing and a sprinkler system to maintain landscaping.

## PROTECTING ASSETS

For 2018, we had no significant safety issues or severe injuries, no significant property loss due to security issues. We had no evidence of successful poaching or drug smuggling across the ranches. We did however, have three incidents of smugglers crashing into our fences while being pursued by law enforcement officers. We attribute this overall positive record to the direct measures taken by our security manager and the cooperation we receive from DPS, TPWD Game Wardens, and U.S. Border Patrol Agents.

Using a safety services consultant with Texas Mutual, we initiated an annual safety training for all field employees, including ranch hands, and field research staff.

Our service department maintained a fleet of 19 passenger pickups, 13 Polaris Rangers, 25 trailers, and 30 other pieces of equipment such as a skid steer, front end loader, tractors, shredders, disks, trenchers, welding machines, hydraulic squeeze chutes, etc.

Our service department maintained 23 structures including 15 buildings at San Antonio Viejo Ranch Headquarters (residences, offices, lodge, workshop, bunk house), and eight other buildings across our properties to include the Hebronville Office.

## NEW EAST FOUNDATION EMPLOYEES

Landon Schofield joined us as a Range and Wildlife Biologist in February; Rafael Guerra Martinez joined us as Maintenance & Groundskeeper in October; and Nick Rangel joined us as Chief Financial Officer in January 2019.

## THANK YOU

This year's accomplishments give us momentum for our work in the coming year. We are not ready to rest. Thank you for supporting our mission through your interest and partnership.

Many of our accomplishments were in collaboration with these partners:



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