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FEBRUARY 2023

We promote the advancement of land stewardship through ranching, science, and education.

FROM THE CEO

Grass Matters

NEAL WILKINS

We spend a lot of time on grass – thinking about grass, studying grass, managing grass, praying for grass, working to keep the right kind of grass, and working to control the “wrong” kind of grass.

In this issue of our newsletter, we feature some work that is focused on both the right kind of grass and the “wrong” kind of grass. Anthony Falk, Director of the Texas Native Seeds program at Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute addresses the opportunity for restoring native grasslands following disturbance created by the construction of transmission lines. There are now hundreds of miles of transmission lines planned for construction throughout South Texas – and without some careful planning and restoration the long-term impacts could be severe. Dr. Falk’s work will at least give us all a starting point for restoration.

Also in this issue, Andrea Montalvo, a scientist with the East Foundation gives an overview of some of our work aimed at managing the

expansion of tanglehead, a grass that has invaded thousands of acres of South Texas rangeland. Once a pasture is colonized by mature tanglehead, the forage is of low quality for cattle and the habitat is poorer for quail – both things matter to us. Dr. Montalvo’s work also provides us a starting point for how to manage tanglehead with the combination of well-timed grazing and fire.

HOLDING THE LAND TOGETHER

In the history of South Texas, the drought of 1789 to 1790 was perhaps one of the harshest, only to be rivaled by the prolonged drought of 1950 to 1956. Throughout parts of South Texas, it was the drought ending in 1790 that triggered major migrations of sand dunes, the traces of which are still apparent in much of the landscape of Willacy, Kenedy, Brooks, and Jim Hogg counties.

These counties represent the heart of the South Texas Sand Sheet, a landscape of about two million acres of mostly deep, well-drained sandy soils originating at the Gulf Coast

and spreading over 65 miles inland. When these soils are exposed, all it takes is windspeeds exceeding about 13 miles per hour to move the sand – and this does happen with some frequency. Grass is what mostly holds these sandy soils in place and protects them from wind erosion. A combination of drought, wildfire, and overgrazing can remove the protection provided by large expanses of native grasses.

Once these sands are exposed, heavy winds can then create depressions in areas of accumulated sand – these are called “blow-outs” and these result in active sand dunes immediately downwind from the erosion. Once established, these active sand dunes can grow and migrate across the landscape with prevailing winds from the southeast. Most such dunes are eventually stabilized as they are revegetated with grass through periods of higher-than-normal rainfall.

So, why was the drought of 1790 so devastating to the grasslands of the Sand Sheet? Well, the drought



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Hebbronville

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37216 Highway 186
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San Antonio
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Grass con't.

alone was likely not the full story. The hurricane of 1791 made landfall at Padre Island and flooded the mainland to the west. The unnamed hurricane then blew into the territory of New Spain that would one day become part of Texas. The area was so unpopulated that its impact was assessed only in the livestock that perished – it was reported that 50,000 cattle were lost.

During the 18th Century, this storm was only one of two hurricanes reported along the Texas Coast (the other struck modern-day Galveston in 1766). Not much more is known about this unnamed hurricane, but it probably left its scars across much of the South Texas Sand Sheet. It was not just the storm that had an impact, but it was the fact that it arrived on top of a drought that was among the harshest of the past 250 years.

Work done by geologist Steven Forman¹ has shown that the last major dune migrations throughout the Sand Sheet were triggered by the drought that ended in 1790. The hurricane that followed likely magnified the disturbance to these grass-starved dunes. This ultimately had an impact across much of the two million acres of the Sand Sheet. The triggers that started these dune migrations only took a few years, but the recovery was slow. And many of these large migrating dune systems tended to remain somewhat unstable until about 1900, following a wet period of 1865 to 1900. Once these large sand dunes lost their stabilizing grass cover, all it took was consistent windspeeds of at least 13 miles per hour to move the particles of sand. Foot-by-foot and year-by-year, these sand dunes were moving northwest across the Sand

Sheet until they finally grew enough grass to hold the sand together.

The process described above was repeated, perhaps on a smaller scale, following the prolonged drought of 1950 to 1956. On a more local scale there are examples where site disturbance on the sand sheet can weaken the protective grass cover resulting in blow-outs and migrating sand dunes. This provides us with a lesson as we plan for projects that could impact the grass and soil in this unique part of Texas.

Whether it's for cattle grazing, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, or literally holding the land together... grass matters. For more on the South Texas Sand Sheet, see our May 2021 newsletter [here](#).



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Stabilized sand dunes like these are frequent throughout the South Texas Sand Sheet. But, these dunes were perhaps migrating and unstable in the recent past.



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Migrating sand dunes on El Sauz Ranch.

¹Forman et al. 2009. Late Holocene dune migration on the south Texas sand sheet. *Geomorphology*. 108:159-170. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0169555X09000038>

GUEST ARTICLE

Texas Native Seeds – Making Restoration of Energy Development a Reality

ANTHONY FALK

As human populations continue to grow, there is a subsequent increase in energy needs. Providing and distributing this energy requires infrastructure, such as solar production facilities on individual properties and transmission lines that impact numerous landowners. While some landowners welcome these activities with open arms because of the financial benefit they can bring, many others do everything they can to avoid them. Unfortunately, when it comes to things such as transmission lines and substations that are part of the greater good, landowners are often left with little choices other than trying to mitigate the damages.



Areas damaged from construction, like the transmission line above, can be restored with native seed varieties. Varieties from the Texas Native Seeds program helps landowners restore native grasses.

Luckily for many in Texas and especially in South Texas, there are proven native seed varieties commercially available to restore areas impacted by the construction of energy infrastructure. The Texas Native Seeds program of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M-Kingsville has spent the last 22 years selecting and researching species and methods

to restore native grasslands throughout the state. From this work there are currently 20 different native seed varieties commercially available today at the scale needed to complete re-seeding following these large energy developments.

Restoring native grasslands following any construction project is critical to preserving our diverse native landscapes throughout South Texas. These landscapes provide the livelihood for many landowners through livestock production or wildlife leases. Restoring native grassland communities provides the necessary habitat for many species across the region, and is critical for livestock production. Additionally, our research at Texas Native Seeds has shown that if native grassland species can be established following a disturbance such as the construction of a new transmission line, then the ingress of non-native species such as Guineagrass or Old-World Bluestems can be limited.

While many landowners in South Texas fight to preserve our native landscapes, often times energy developers are more worried about the towers and lines, and the vegetation is an afterthought. Thankfully that is changing in South Texas, with a prime example being American Electric Power's (AEP) Cruce - Del Sol transmission line.

While this project is still in the permitting phase, AEP has reached out to Texas Native Seeds for help in identifying the most appropriate

commercially available native plant varieties to seed following construction. The seed mix for this project will be made up of 25 different native grasses and flowering plants. Most of these varieties were developed by the Texas Native Seeds program or its partner the E. "Kika" de la Garza Plant Material Center, and all of the varieties have proven success in reseeding research projects conducted throughout the region.



Native grasslands throughout South Texas are a unique and important part of the landscape. Working with partners like Texas Native Seeds helps to keep invasive grasses from dominating these landscapes.

While there are still many unknowns when it comes to native grassland restoration in South Texas, one thing is certain: having the right seed absolutely makes a difference. We cannot control the weather, but we can use the most appropriate native seed material to provide the best chances for successful restoration, which in turn preserves our wonderful native grasslands found throughout South Texas.

Dr. Anthony Falk is the Dan L Duncan Director of the Texas Native Seeds Program at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M Kingsville.

In Progress, in Perpetuity: Evaluating Rangeland Response to Fire and Grazing on a Tanglehead-Dominated Pasture

ANDREA MONTALVO

In the past three decades, shifting environmental and management regimes have resulted in the expansion of the native grass tanglehead (*Heteropogon contortus*). This expansion presents a challenge for South Texas ranch managers. Cattle avoid grazing mature tanglehead, and dense stands reduce diversity. Decisions to use prescribed burning to remove mature biomass and encourage grazing may offer a solution for managers.

WHAT WE DID

East Foundation began monitoring the impacts of these management decisions on a 232-acre pasture dominated by tanglehead on the San Antonio Viejo Ranch. We sampled forage biomass (lbs./acre), canopy cover, and species composition before burning and at two intervals post-burn (49 and 84 days), but prior to grazing. At 92 days post-burn, we brought in 318 heifers at 740 lbs. each for eight days (11 Animal Unit Days per acre). We grazed the pasture three more times from July to December based on the ranch manager’s assessment of pasture condition. We sampled at three additional intervals after grazing initiation (at 121, 213, and 289 days after burning).

HOW DID FORAGE STANDING CROP CHANGE?

Before burning, tanglehead comprised 74% (3157 lbs/acre) of the total biomass on the pasture and decreased to 34% (391 lbs./acre) of the total 289 days (December 2023) after burning and grazing (Figure 1). The total percent composition

of other native grasses increased from 9% (394 lbs/ acre) pre-burn to 23% (264 lbs/acre) after burning and grazing; however, non-native buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*) has also steadily increased and surpassed tanglehead as the dominant species by the 289-day sampling period (Figure 1). Importantly, as of September 2022, tanglehead remained in a vegetative state and was accessible and acceptable by grazers. Removing the mature, accumulated tanglehead with burning increased its utilization.

DID BURNING AND GRAZING AFFECT COVER AND COMPOSITION?

Grass cover did not change (60 and 55%) from pre-burn to end of summer growing season (September 2022, 213 days) but decreased by 29% from September to December 2022 (289 days). We also recorded

the highest bare soil percentage (50%) in December. This increase in bare soil could be beneficial for early forb growth with the onset of spring precipitation.

Species richness (the number of species) increased by 127% (11 to 27 species) after the initial burn and peaked at 121 days (June 2022) after the first introduction of grazing. Evenness (proportion of species present; high index value indicates a higher proportion of many species) and diversity (higher index value indicates higher diversity) were also highest at this 121-day mark. We recorded the second-highest measure of diversity (9.14) at the 289-day mark. While burning and grazing have increased diversity on the pasture, our samples through this spring will be a better indicator of management impacts on tanglehead.

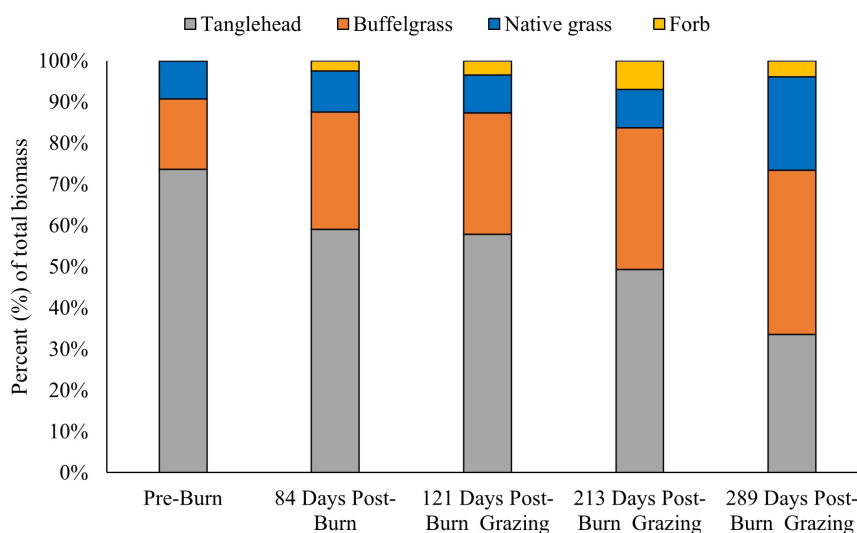


Figure 1. Percent of total herbaceous forage standing crop (lbs/acre) over four sampling periods separated by tanglehead, buffelgrass, native grass, and forbs on the San Antonio Viejo Ranch, Jim Hogg County, Texas. Note: no biomass was collected 49 days post-burn.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Learning how to utilize tanglehead is an ongoing endeavor. We will continue to regularly sample and graze this pasture to evaluate how the initial burn and repeated grazing impact composition and regrowth over time. The goal of this project is not to eradicate tanglehead, but rather for cattle managers to effectively utilize a tangle head-dominated pasture and potentially shift species density and composition through management decisions about application of grazing and fire.



ALUMNI PROFILE



JACOB DYKES

Jacob was born and raised in the small town of Amory, Mississippi. Growing up, he spent most of his time in the woods hunting or on a shoreline fishing. After high school, he realized his hobbies were passions and sought out a career in the wildlife field.

Jacob attended the College of Forest Resources at Mississippi State University, where he received a B.S. in Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture in 2013. After a quick stint as lead deer trapper for the Mississippi State University Deer Lab, he returned to student status and pursued a M.S. in Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture. His M.S. research investigated the influence of plant nutrients on white-tailed deer diet preferences.

After graduating in 2018, he moved to South Texas and attended the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute to pursue a Ph.D. in Wildlife Sciences. In doing so, he joined the East Foundation, where he spent four years capturing and collaring deer and cattle to evaluate the influence of summer heat on deer and cattle behavior. Aside from his research, Jacob helped lead the

East Foundation's annual deer captures and assisted with other East Foundation research.

Jacob earned his Ph.D. in 2022 and joined Texas A&M University as an assistant professor in the Rangeland, Wildlife and Fisheries Management department and an extension wildlife specialist for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Jacob currently leads applied wildlife research to improve the way we manage natural resources and makes sure the knowledge gained from that research gets into the hands of landowners and managers for application.

In his own words:

"The East Foundation is a special organization. Their dedication to natural resource management and conservation is unmatched. I have always referred to their ranches as playgrounds for biologists because they are ideal for investigating ways to better manage natural resources. The size and diversity of the ranches, as well as the values of the East Foundation, offer unique opportunities for research. I will always be thankful for my time with the East Foundation as a graduate student and look forward to working with them as a professional for many years to come."

Upcoming Events

FEBRUARY 15 AND 24

2023 Wildlife Committee Seminars at the San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo

FEBRUARY 22-24

Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society Conference in Houston, Texas

FEBRUARY 26-28

Southeast Deer Study Group in Baton Rouge, Louisiana

FEBRUARY 27 - MARCH 3

Behind the Gates at El Sauz Ranch

FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 1

Investment Committee Meeting at El Sauz Ranch

EMPLOYEE PROFILE



ASHLEY REEVES

Ashley Reeves is from Eads, Tennessee, a small town about 40 minutes east of Memphis. She attended Mississippi State University for her bachelor's degree and then the University of Tennessee for her veterinary degree and Ph.D. Ashley has been working in veterinary clinics since she was 16. During college and vet school, she was a veterinary assistant with a higher focus in surgery and anesthesia. While working on her Ph.D. she worked as a small and large animal veterinarian for three years, gaining additional experience in emergency and shelter medicine.

Before she joined the East Foundation team, she worked with us for her Ph.D. research. During trapping season, from November to April, Ashley live-trapped and collected samples from wild cat populations on East Foundation ranches. In the off season, she traveled to various labs, universities, and zoos to continue reproductive training, analyze samples, and perform reproductive procedures on various cats. Through her graduate work at the Foundation, she was able to become engaged in other facets of the Foundation

such as the cattle branding, deer captures, nilgai captures, and controlled burns.

As the East Foundation's Research Veterinarian Ashley will continue her work with ocelots and other wild cats on our ranches which entails reproductive assessments, gamete collection and storage, and disease surveillance. This work allows wildlife professionals to assess the health of individuals and populations, examine new methods for reproductive sciences and make decisions regarding conservation of endangered species.

In her free time, Ashley enjoys playing soccer with her husband in adult co-ed leagues, playing fetch and frisbee with her border collies, going to the beach, running, working out, travelling, and exploring new places.



FROM THE FIELD

A Day in the Life of an Ocelot Capture Team

ASHLEY REEVES

It takes a large team effort to prepare to catch and work-up an ocelot! The first few weeks are full of material purchasing and preparation of the traps. The live traps are cleaned, the separate pigeon cages attached to the live traps, and water and food bowls are placed for our pigeons. Next, all materials are organized into toolboxes for our capture processing and a precise list is followed to make sure we have all we need to process the ocelots we capture.

Our field technicians will spend a day scouting trap sites that would be enticing for ocelots to not only walk by our traps but beg their attention when they do. To set traps, it takes several days of physically demanding work, which includes clearing brush patches to place traps while also ensuring they are camouflaged enough to not deter an ocelot. Five to six people will load all the traps on a trailer and haul these to the locations for setting.

Each trap is equipped with a pigeon which resides in the security of the attached bait bird box and is provided with food and water. The trap and bait bird box are then placed into the brush to be disguised as part the landscape. The trap floor must be covered with sand or dirt and sprinkled with leaf litter to look identical to the surrounding ground cover. We want the ocelot to know no difference between the landscape outside of the trap and inside. From planning, to managing logistics, to placing traps out in the field, it can take weeks to months to when the first trap gets opened.

Once traps are set and opened, technicians are in charge of opening traps each afternoon, ensuring the

birds have proper levels of food and water, and checking the traps each morning at sunrise for an ocelot. If all the pieces of preparation fall in line and luck is on our side, the bird will catch an ocelot's attention and once they set to pounce the unobtainable pray, the trap door shuts, and they await our arrival for processing. Once an ocelot is captured, the field technicians must alert the team via a message group and available team members travel for work up.

There are many procedures performed during an ocelot work-up with a few including monitoring equipment to make sure they are safe under sedation, passive integrated transponder placement for individual identification, blood sample collection for health assessment, and commonly a GPS collar will be placed for spatial monitoring throughout their habitat. For some individuals, genetic material (sperm specifically) will be collected and frozen to store valuable genetics in hopes of expanding the genetic diversity of the last remaining ocelot populations in the United States. Ocelot conservation is a large team effort with dedicated scientists, biologists, and health professionals devoting their time and energy every year to work with these amazing cats so we can continue to enjoy them into the future.

Upcoming Events

MARCH 4

Texas Brigades Conservation on the River in New Braunfels, Texas

MARCH 24-26

Cattle Raisers Convention & Expo in Fort Worth, Texas

MARCH 30

Texas A&M AgriLife Veterinary Science Day Camp at San Antonio Viejo Ranch

APRIL 1-2

Land Stewardship Ambassadors Weekend at San Antonio Viejo Ranch

APRIL 4-5

Professional Advisors Meeting at San Antonio Viejo Ranch

FROM THE RANCH

Springtime for Teamwork

GARRETT STRIBLING

Spring on the ranch is the best time of year. It's a new beginning, from the plants coming out of dormancy to the newborn calves hitting the ground. It's your first glimpse at the fruits of your labor supplementing cows through the winter. Even though we are still dry like much of the state, it's hard not to have a positive outlook once spring rolls around.

While work never stops on the ranch, springtime gets busier with a whole host of other activities. Along with branding fall calves, pregnancy checking fall rollovers, and shipping steers, our cattle crew also operates as our prescribed fire outfit. Prescribed fire is just one tool we use to manage our landscapes, and when weather conditions allow it, we use fire to manage fuel loads to decrease risk of wildfires, reset mature forages back to a palatable state, and clean up herbicide applications on large tracts of mesquite regrowth. We systematically plot out burn units across our ranches, and prioritize and prep them so if conditions allow us to burn, we can.

This requires foresight and planning to manage grazing in a way that allows for fine fuel accumulation, and then getting a burn plot prepared for the right wind direction and conditions. Our burn plots will vary from approximately 100 to 1,000 acres, based on terrain, volatile fuel load, amount and height of brush, and the number of people on hand to complete the burn. It's an exciting and stressful time, but returning a fire interval to these landscapes has been shown to increase forage response and

diversity when the rains come, and open up some country that has been underutilized due to the limited accessibility. When used appropriately, prescribed fire is an invaluable tool.



Teamwork is a big part of what makes East Foundation's cattle crew successful.

Everyone's favorite activity during the spring is branding. It's a cultural event that has been going on for generations and will continue on into the future. The branding pen involves hard work, but it gives your team the opportunity to work together to accomplish a common goal. Everyone is valuable in their own way, and some may have different skills than others, but in the branding pen, everyone drags and everyone flanks. It builds camaraderie amongst your crew, and you're better for it after the work is done. We still drag all the calves we can, it's the old way and sometimes the tougher way, but it teaches valuable skills for your people and your horses. It also bonds everyone together in a way that meetings and typical work can't. It's a true team-building exercise, and it's even better in the spring.

IN MEMORIAM

Harry Flavin



Harry Flavin, an active member of our Investment Committee since March 2015, passed away on November 28, 2022, after a long fight with cancer.

He brought a wealth of investment experience, wisdom, and positivity to our committee. He was a man of great faith, serving as a deacon in the Catholic church for many years. His positivity was infectious. He showed up to meetings with a big smile on his face, ready to share his wisdom and actively participate in our investment meetings.

Throughout his long life Harry always gave back. He was a member of the Board of Trustees and Chairman of the investment committee of the Catholic Community Foundation of San Antonio and on the Board of Trustees of the Wyoming Catholic Ministries Foundation of Cheyenne.

He was a member of the San Antonio Chapter of Legatus International and volunteered many years of service to Habitat for Humanity and the San Antonio Metropolitan Ministries homeless shelter.

We are thankful for his years of service and inspired by his charity.

RAINFALL REPORT

Less Rainfall this Winter

TODD SNELGROVE

Winters are dry in South Texas and this year is no exception. A typical South Texas winter yields on average 2.94 inches of rain on average from December to February. As one would surmise in a region like South Texas, it would be foolish to expect a normal winter. Case in point, starting in the winter of 2022, seven out of the last 10 winters have been drier than normal. The winter of 2023 is trending that way as well.

Since mid-November, we have received well below

“normal” rainfall across all East Foundation ranches except for El Sauz where we are trending just below at about 90%. The rest of the ranches range from less than 15% of normal (San Antonio Viejo) to 50% of normal (Santa Rosa). Even by South Texas standards this is a dry winter!

No surprise, this brings us to where we are today. According to the most recent U.S. Drought Monitor (Figure 1) our ranches continue to be abnormally dry along the coast with our western ranches in the throes of a severe drought.

With little or no relief in the short-term forecast, we turn our thoughts to the Pacific Ocean as the La Niña conditions driving our current drought appear to be weakening. If this trend holds, South Texas could be in store for more normal conditions as we approach our traditionally wetter months of April, May, and June. In the meantime, we'll continue to keep the blessing of rain at or near the top of our prayer list.

For more information on drought and other weather events or to view information specific to your part of the state please visit: <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>.

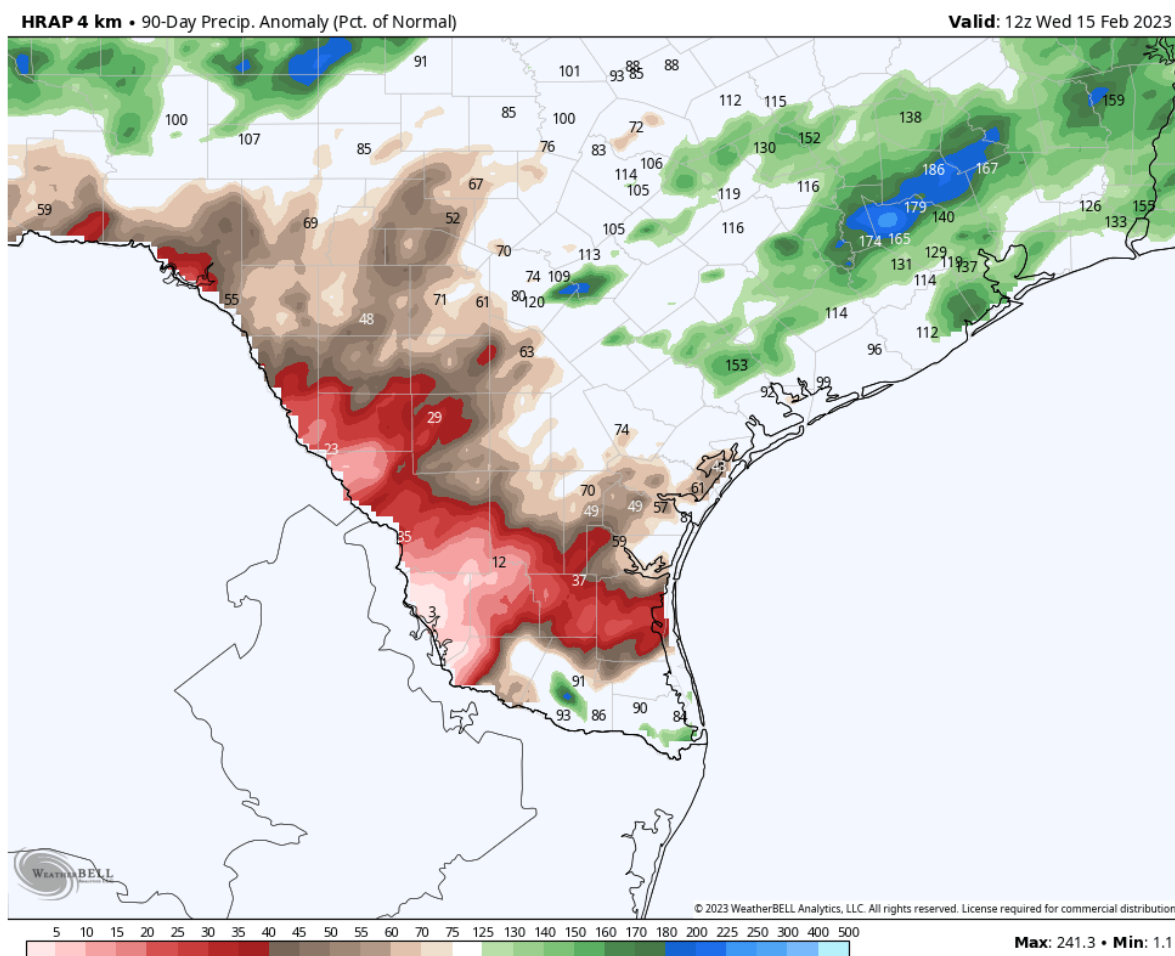


Figure 1. Drought status of South Texas, February 9, 2023. U.S. Drought Monitor.

EMPLOYEE PROFILE



LANDEN ADDISON

Landen Addison is a native Texan. She was born in Lubbock and raised just to the southwest in Brownfield. Landen comes to us with a farming background. She is from a fourth-generation farming family. They grow watermelons, pistachios, pumpkins, and many other crops that thrive in the area.

Landen has an M.A. in Mass Communication and B.A. in Communication Studies with a double minor in Media Strategies and Political Science from Texas Tech University. While working on her graduate degree Landen worked as a teaching assistant for a business and professional communication course on campus.

As Digital Communications Coordinator for East Foundation Landen will manage our social media accounts and continue to expand our online presence. Her goal is to show our growing audience why each person at the Foundation is passionate about the advancement of land stewardship through ranching, science, and education.

Agriculture has always been a core part of Landen's life. She's excited to continue working in this industry through her work at East Foundation.

In her free time, Landen loves to spend time with family and friends. She likes singing, creating stained-glass pieces, finding unique restaurants to eat at, going to the lake, and traveling to new places.



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute (NRI)

BRITTANY WEGNER

The Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute (NRI) is made up of about 100 scientists, project leaders, and conservation experts stationed throughout the U.S. We're just as much a group of educators as we are researchers who are continually learning. We're passionate about the future as much as we are analytical about past failures; we're both local and national; we're stewards of discovery who are in constant pursuit of landscape-scale conservation led by the positive actions of urban and rural communities across Texas and beyond. Between our in-house expertise and our extensive partner network, we're uniquely positioned to identify information gaps existing anywhere from natural resource policy to the knowledgebase of private landowners.

Most recently, we've been working with a few partners to offer a [new perspective on ecosystem services](#) and our ability to add a monetary value to benefits like clean air, clean water and flood mitigation based on what we invest to maintain or conserve them. The weight of a report like this can't be summarized in a few sentences but we're looking to create more opportunities and resources like this to provide clarity for land managers, conservation organizations and policymakers as they work to gain a better grasp of the full economic benefit Texas receives from vital open space lands—and the potential costs of overlooking their contribution to society.

ALUMNI PROFILE



STACY HINES

Stacy, a North Carolina native, is ecstatic to be back in South Texas and with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service as an Assistant Professor and Extension Rangeland Habitat Management Specialist.

Stacy first experienced the unique South Texas landscape in 2012 when she started her Ph.D. program and conducted research with the East Foundation on cattle, deer, and nilgai interactions. The project investigated how the grazing activities of these large mammals impacted rangeland grasses and forbs and the ecological feeding niches that cattle, deer, and nilgai occupy. Studying ecological feeding niches provided insight into whether cattle, deer, and nilgai were eating similar or different types of food. Upon completion of her Ph.D. in Wildlife Science with Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute from Texas A&M University-Kingsville in 2016, she moved back east.

From 2017 to 2022, she worked in teaching faculty positions with Mountain Empire Community College in Virginia; then developed a new, 100 percent online Master of Science in

Conservation Education degree program for the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture at Mississippi State University. In the summer of 2022, Stacy's colleagues informed her about the Rangeland Habitat Management Specialist position with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and encouraged her to apply. She did and was offered the position. Stacy moved back to South Texas last October.

In her own words:

"I am so glad my colleagues told me about this position; it's my dream career. Now, I can apply everything I learned from my time on the East Foundation ranches. The East Foundation lands are a true working laboratory. They provided me with the opportunity to gain knowledge and first-hand experience on how scientists and managers work together to address wildlife and rangeland habitat management issues. This experience helped prepare me for my current position as the Rangeland Habitat Management Specialist with AgriLife Extension Service because my job is to provide science-based solutions for the sustainable management of our Texas rangelands that meet our stakeholders needs. I am grateful for the experience the East Foundation provided; it helped me get to where I am today. I look forward to continuing to learn from and work with the East Foundation now that I'm back in South Texas."

SECURITY REPORT

Whacking Moles at the East Foundation

RICHARD DOUGLAS

"It often seems to me that's all detective work is, wiping out your false starts and beginning again."

*Agatha Christie,
Death on the Nile*

Endeavoring to surveil a vast area of ranchland includes regular false starts. Attempting to predict when and where uninvited guests will traverse one of the various East Foundation properties at times feels like the amusement park game of "Whack-a-Mole." Just when you think you have a problem area resolved, I'm quickly made aware of some other "mole poking its little head up."

One of the tools we try to use in our quest to monitor human and vehicular traffic on the ranches is the common game camera. Although, "common" really doesn't do justice to the technology we find in today's game camera. The sensitivity, picture quality, storage capacity, and versatility of the modern iterations of these little gadgets is truly impressive.

Utilizing an array of game cameras to assist our quest for awareness is a force multiplier to physically patrolling the entirety of East Foundation properties. Cameras don't require sleep, days off, lunch breaks, or get sidetracked by family activities. However, most people would be astonished at the game camera's appetite for AA batteries!

Utilizing our cameras to watch the comings and goings of gate activity is straight forward enough. However, the individuals who surreptitiously transit the properties

routinely change their routes and use many modern technological advances of their own to circumvent the security camera network in place. Now is when the game of “Whack-A-Mole” comes in to play. Our camera network is constantly adjusting to the changing patterns of our unwanted visitors.

While I may not have “the patience of Job,” it certainly doesn’t hurt for me to remind myself I need them when I routinely feel like the little fella pictured here desperately trying to anticipate which game piece will expose itself next. Along with a healthy dose of patience, persistence (aka hard-headedness) helps achieve a modicum of success in the surveillance realm.

Our partnership with federal, state, and local law enforcement has been tremendously important to our successes. I would not have near the success without the assistance of the U.S. Border Patrol, Texas Department of Safety, Texas Game Wardens, and the many local officers working with Governor Abbott’s Operation Lone Star initiative. The men and women of these organizations should continually be applauded for their tireless efforts patrolling the South Texas regions we live and work in.



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