



L.I.P. Bulletin

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WILDLIFE

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The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) is administered by the Private Lands and Public Hunting Program of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Wildlife Division. In partnership with the TPWD Inland Fisheries Watershed Conservation Program, LIP strives to meet the needs of private landowners wishing to enact good conservation practices on their lands for the benefit of healthy terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. The LIP Bulletin is the venue for showcasing the great work of our landowner partners as well as providing program information and opportunities to get involved.

MEGAN BEAN, TPWD WATERSHED ECOLOGIST, INLAND FISHERIES

Landscape Conservation through the Guadalupe Bass Restoration Initiative: A collaborative initiative between state, federal, and local partners

Guadalupe Bass is a native black bass found only in Texas and is primarily restricted to streams of the Edwards Plateau. Within the Edwards Plateau, Guadalupe Bass is one of the most often targeted species by river anglers.¹ The riverine fisheries in the Edwards Plateau generate an estimated economic impact of \$71 million per year which is an important source of economic activity to the many smaller communities within the species range.

While Guadalupe Bass is an important component of the recreational fisheries in the Edwards Plateau, it is also a species of greatest conservation need and faces multiple threats including hybridization with Smallmouth Bass and multiple forms of habitat degradation. To address landscape scale issues impacting river health and Guadalupe Bass populations, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Texas Parks and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, The Favrot Fund, and many other partners have been supporting conservation of rivers and Guadalupe Bass populations through the Guadalupe Bass Restoration Initiative (GBRI). Since 2010, these conservation programs have supported conservation and restoration efforts in the Texas Hill Country primarily focused on the Llano, Pedernales, and Blanco rivers. Biologists worked with landowners to implement projects through the Landowner Incentive Program to restore over 7,700 acres of spring, riparian, and upland habitats in the Llano River watershed to benefit Guadalupe Bass and the Llano River in Edwards, Kimble, Menard, Mason, and Llano counties. This article highlights some of the projects that were supported in the Llano Watershed and provides an example of how voluntary landowner stewardship and cooperation combined with the dedication of many conservation professionals can conserve our state's natural resources.

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PROJECT 1: EDWARDS COUNTY RANCH

This biologically diverse ranch is situated in the headwaters of the Llano Watershed and is characterized by steep bluffs and draws typical of the western Edwards Plateau region. The property has over three miles of rivers and streams which support a diverse riparian corridor utilized by fish and wildlife species. The ranch has an ecosystem management approach targeting enhanced vegetative diversity and improved groundwater recharge. Invading Ashe Juniper is actively controlled on the uplands through a brush management program utilizing a combination of mechanical and hand treatments. Brush removal has taken place in mosaic patterns to minimize soil erosion and maximize wildlife habitat. This project focused on hand clearing and prescribed fire to remove small, understory Ashe Juniper. The project also incorporated the treatment of prickly pear cactus with chemicals in historically overgrazed areas. The juniper, prescribed fire, and prickly pear treatments restored 1,787 acres of habitat and are benefiting the river, riparian area, and upland flora and fauna.

PROJECT 2: EDWARDS COUNTY RANCH

Another important headwater ranch in the Llano Watershed located in Edwards County is characterized steep bluffs, draws, river, stream, and large spring habitats. The ranch encompasses approximately 5 miles of the Llano headwaters and contributes a significant amount of flow from the spring systems to the Llano River watershed. The ranch is implementing a holistic landscape approach to conservation by clearing understory juniper in the uplands, implementing prescribed fires, and conservatively stocking livestock. To protect spring discharge and habitat, the landowner removed 300 acres of understory juniper in the pasture around a large spring complex. Subsequent monitoring of the project showed a successful colonization of grasses in the grassland and an increase in upland and riparian plant diversity.

PROJECT 3: KIMBLE COUNTY RANCH

This ranch, located in the headwaters of the Llano Watershed in Kimble County, was severely impacted by the Oasis Pipeline Fire and the severe drought in 2011. The fire completely consumed most of the landscape leaving only remnants of scorched trees. This not only displaced wildlife but also put soil at risk for severe erosion. The goal of this project was to stabilize the steep slopes to reduce soil loss and erosion, re-establish annual and perennial plants, and build exclosures around trees to promote root regeneration and prevent browse by wildlife (specifically browse from native whitetail and non-native axis deer). The landowner installed rock trincheras and erosion control blankets perpendicular to the slopes to capture eroding soil which was very successful even with small rain events. Dead Ashe Juniper trees were cut down by hand and stacked in wind-rows perpendicular to the slope to capture soil and create protective cages for vegetation trying to colonize the area. The landowner wanted local youth to participate in the restoration process so he worked with them to make seed balls. Seed balls are created by rolling a mixture of seed, sand, water, and clay into a ball and then allowing them to dry. The ball's materials protect seed from depredation until rainfall is adequate for germination. The seed balls were dispersed along trincheras, erosion mats, wind-rows, and under small brush piles. This method of re-seeding coupled was successful in getting plant diversity back on the scorched landscape. The landowner has worked hard for the past several years to see this project succeed; the plant diversity and recovery observed on the property is a testament to his dedication and hard work. The landowner has also been documenting the recovery of the land with

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periodic photo points which have been a valuable tool to show other landowners how to implement these techniques and the results that can be achieved.



PROJECT 4: KIMBLE COUNTY RANCH

This project was a great example of how small landowners with a lot of dedication can make a big difference in the watershed. The property is less than 40 acres but located on an important section of the South Llano River.

The landowners wanted

to work with the Guadalupe Bass Restoration Initiative to decrease the amount of erosion taking place on the property from rainfall events and the wind. The banks along the river were eroding and the landowners wanted to address the loss of property as well as protect the health of the river. After surveying plant diversity, topography, and invasive species, a plan was created to start restoring the property. Along the eroding river bank, invasive Chinaberry trees were treated but left in place so the roots could continue to help stabilize the banks. To address the game trails creating erosion along the bank, brush piles were stacked along the bank to discourage deer from using the eroding areas. The small brush piles also provided natural vegetation cages that protected vegetation like Switchgrass as it was starting to colonize the bank. To promote the growth of riparian vegetation just above the eroding bank, erosion control blankets were installed on mostly bare, level ground to protect the soil and provide a place for grass to become established. The landowners picked low lying areas on the property that retained water more easily and reseeded grasses and pollinator plants to increase plant diversity. After years of hard work and labor by the landowners, they are seeing success in increased plant and grass diversity (they have even documented a milkweed vine!) and are maintaining the project sites by removing encroaching mesquite and continuing to manage game trails along the river by creating natural barriers.

PROJECT 5: KIMBLE COUNTY ON THE SOUTH LLANO RIVER



Elephant Ear are an invasive, non-native ornamental plant that the public can easily purchase at many landscaping and gardening stores. As attractive as the plant may be to some, it causes a lot of ecological harm by replacing important native riparian species. The Llano River Watershed Alliance, Texas Tech University, and TPWD partnered with landowners on the South Llano River to treat this invasive species to restore native riparian habitats. Treatments have been very successful on the South Llano River and partners have been surveying the river every year to make sure new colonies are documented and treated. This has been a successful project that demonstrates how local landowners and partners can work together to care for and restore riparian and river habitats.

PROJECT 6: MENARD COUNTY

This ranch in the Llano River Watershed consists of Live Oak, Ashe Juniper, Mesquite mosaics with Texas Persimmon, tascajillo, white brush, and native grasses on Clay Loam, Loamy Bottomland, and Sandy Loam soils. The property also has a small creek and riparian area that the landowner wanted to protect from cattle. After a technical guidance site visit, TPWD biologists worked with the landowner to create a project that included building a barbed wire fence along both sides of the creek to create a protected riparian buffer, managing understory juniper and regrowth mesquite to create more diverse wildlife habitat mosaics, and reseeding a pasture with grasses. The landowner was able to successfully create more diverse habitat mosaics to benefit wildlife like turkey, deer, and Bell's Vireo; built over 8,000 feet of fence to create the protected riparian area; and planted an old agricultural field with a diversity of grass species. To monitor wildlife on the property, the landowner has installed a game camera along the creek. This game camera data will allow him to work with his TPWD Wildlife Biologist to estimate deer density

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and create a harvest plan for the ranch to sustain the healthy habitat he is working hard to maintain.

PROJECT 7: MASON COUNTY



This ranch is located in Mason County and contains important portions of the James River, riparian corridor, and springs. TPWD has been working with the ranch and biologist for the past several years to implement a holistic landscape approach to conservation. During the drought the landowners removed cattle from the property allowing the habitat to rest and weather an extremely dry drought period. Two years ago, the cattle were put back on the ranch at a conservative stocking rate and are grazing under a rotational system. To protect the important spring and water contributions to the James River, the landowner has fenced out these fragile spring and riparian habitats from grazing. Since the springs have been protected, water quality and quantity have improved, grass species are establishing and stabilizing eroding soils, and riparian species like button bush are recolonizing the area providing important wildlife habitat. The button bush and other riparian species have provided important butterfly habitat and food sources making the springs especially beautiful during butterfly migrations. The landowner has been working on clearing understory Ashe Juniper from around springs, riparian areas, and upland habitats and has seen a large increase in grassland habitat. In one area of low grass diversity, the landowner undertook a grassland restoration project planting many species of native grasses to improve the grassland habitat. To maintain grassland habitats from encroaching species like juniper and mesquite, the landowner has also implemented a prescribed burning program. The restored grassland areas are responding beautifully to the prescribed burns. These projects and the

other work the landowner is implementing has benefited the James River, a pure Guadalupe Bass population, Texas Horned Lizards, pollinator species like Monarch butterflies, and a population of freshwater mussels found in the James River. To monitor changes over time the landowner is working with TPWD to record recovery of the habitats with a time lapse camera. The images created through this process will provide important information on recovery of the aquatic systems and will be incredibly beneficial resources for biologists to show other landowners to protect and recover spring and riparian habitats.

PROJECTS 8 AND 9: MASON COUNTY



These neighboring active cattle ranches have worked with TPWD to create a more effective rotational grazing system, protect stream and riparian habitats, and fenced out springs to provide high quality wildlife habitat. Feral hogs were creating substantial amounts of damage, contaminating the springs, and ripping up native riparian vegetation. The landowners fenced out the springs but had to use net wire instead of barbed wire to exclude hogs. The net wire still allows the use of the spring by small mammals and is short enough that deer can also still access the spring. TPWD worked with the landowners to create alternate watering troughs for the cattle since they were also excluded from the spring. Since the springs were fenced, water quality and quantity have improved, riparian grasses have exploded in the enclosures, and riparian plant diversity has increased. The landowners continue to work with TPWD to monitor the recovery of the springs with time-lapse cameras and report on the successes of grassland restoration that utilize more effective rotational grazing strategies.

1. Thomas, Z.A., T.L. Arsuffi, and S.J. Magnelia. 2014. Fishing Warmwater Streams with Limited Public Access: Angling Behavior, Economic Impact, and the Role of Guadalupe Bass in a Twenty-Four-County Region of Texas.

DR. JIM ROGERS, LANDOWNER
CHADD MALONE, TPWD NATURAL RESOURCE SPECIALIST

My Sand Country Journey

A private Texas Landowner's insights, experiences, advice and adventures

The title of this article is a play on words to give credit to one of the founders of wildlife management, Aldo Leopold, and the many other people and organizations that continue to play a role in the preservation of our natural resources. Preparing an article for the Texas Parks and Wildlife LIP Bulletin has given me the opportunity to reflect upon my journey from typical city dweller to wildlife and land manager.

After practicing medicine in Amarillo, Texas, for 20 years, I became ill and was forced into early retirement, making my future unclear. Some 20 years earlier, I watched my own father's health likewise deteriorate. Yet he experienced a new lease on life after moving from the city onto a small, 30-acre piece of land just outside the city. He had a tremendous love for the land that I did not understand at the time. He lost his small Wheeler County farm during the severe drought of the early 1950s and I feel he missed it until the day he died. He could barely walk across the living room when I began my practice in 1982. But within a few years after moving onto his small acreage, he was taking care of a few horses and cows and even bucking hay bales. Something about clean air, wide open spaces, physical labor, and watching the grass grow, was medicinal and added ten years to his life. Faced with a similar circumstance, I decided to try it for myself.

I trained first as an engineer and then a surgeon but had never heard the term "habitat" until months after I purchased a ranch in the rolling sand hills of Donley County, Texas. I was a sporadic quail and turkey hunter, so I had some exposure to the outdoor life. I knew to hunt quail on crop edges early and late in plum thickets and other cover the rest of the day. I was a successful turkey hunter when accompanied by a good caller. Since I thought food plots were essential for hunting when I first bought my ranch, I might have plowed it up had I not

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been exposed to sane wildlife practices. Before acquiring a tractor and plow, I fortuitously attended several of the Texas A&M Extension "Appreciation" seminars – specifically quail, deer, turkey, and predator appreciation. After asking some probing questions at the Turkey Appreciation Seminar, I was pulled aside by Gene Miller, who at the time was a TPWD wildlife biologist in the Panhandle. Gene introduced me to Heather Whitlaw and Duane Lucia, fellow TPWD biologists, Weldon Sears, Donley County NRCS district conservationist, and John Hughes, wildlife biologist at U.S. Fish and Wildlife (FWS). Those seminars introduced me to the principles, programs, and personalities that were essential to my understanding "habitat." At the forefront of my education was the QuailMasters program hosted by Dr. Dale Rollins. Even though I completed a BS in Chemical Engineering, a medical degree, and an orthopedic surgery residency, it was one of the best courses I have ever attended. It got me hooked on habitat and laid the groundwork for utilizing the other resources available. I have since completed multiple LIP projects with TPWD, Partners projects with FWS, and EQIP and CSP projects with NRCS.

My favorite and most successful projects thus far have been water development. My 1,700 acres, though at purchase overgrazed, still exhibited a good mosaic of grass and brush cover. However, it only contained one marginal but intermittently working windmill, an AC powered well, a marginal solar powered well, an abandoned well, and a couple of leaky livestock tubs. Utilizing LIP and then FWS Partners funding, we accomplished the restoration of the abandoned well to solar, conversion of the old windmill to solar, refurbishment of the marginal solar well as well as establishing new solar powered wells. All were completed with large fiberglass livestock watering tubs. Each livestock watering tub provides an adjacent overflow area for wildlife that functions as a mini-riparian area, a source of surface water for wildlife, bugging areas, and amphibian habitat.

Partners, LIP and EQIP projects have provided cost share projects for waterlots and fenced livestock watering tubs. Livestock are redistributed to different parts of the pasture simply by opening and closing waterlot gates, insuring better pasture distribution and grazing. Some of the overflows have been fenced as well, providing cleaner wildlife water and undisturbed, protective stands of vegetation.

I have measurable results from the addition of water, for wildlife, livestock, pasture health, and habitat. Originally, I observed turkey only in an isolated 60-acre riparian area. After distributing surface water over most of the ranch, I now see them nesting across the majority of the pasture. Deer quantity and distribution have also increased. Quail numbers have not only increased but the water sources have contributed to their survival during the recent intense drought.

Lesser prairie chickens have also benefited greatly from the projects that LIP funded. By removing cross fencing and controlling brush on the property, we have really opened up the prairie chicken habitat. Less brush means more desirable tall bunch grasses which provide good ground cover for prairie chickens as well as ideal nesting cover. Removal of unnecessary barbed wire fencing also provides a safer habitat for chickens since they can be injured or even killed by impact with those fences. By controlling grazing, and removing unnecessary fencing and brush, I have seen the habitat begin to move back towards the historical sandy grassland prairie that it once was.

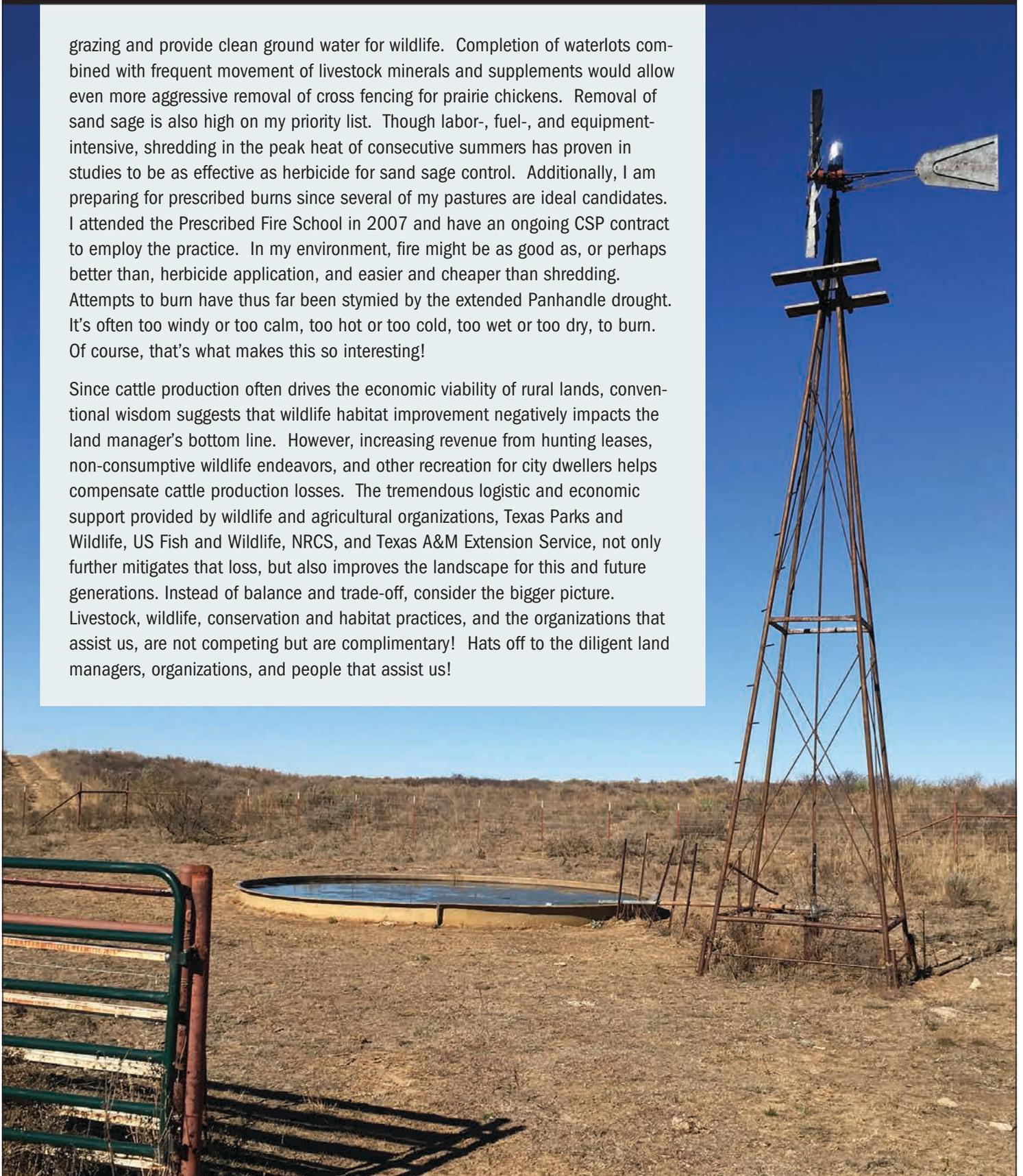
Although brush management is essential for prairie chickens and other ground nesting birds, it remains my toughest challenge. I was initially intrigued with the chemical sculpting techniques, especially GPS controlled aerial spraying. The challenge though, was caused by both technical and logistic problems. I discovered that the spray valves do not function well when required to open and close frequently. My small ranch was not, therefore, a good fit for the technique. Consequently, several bull mesquite mottes that served as excellent white-tailed deer habitat were destroyed and other troublesome areas were left untouched by poor herbicide application. I would like to eliminate large quantities of sand sage overgrowth but the new cotton hybrids are already sprouted before sage is mature enough in the spring to be treated with herbicide. Applicators cannot risk destroying a neighboring cotton crop in order to spray herbicide to kill sand sage on my ranch.

Installation of wildlife escape ladders in all my livestock water tanks was recently completed. Other projects are ongoing, several are in the planning stage, and several more in the "still dreaming" stage. I would like to complete waterlot and overflow fencing at every livestock tank to further improve

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grazing and provide clean ground water for wildlife. Completion of waterlots combined with frequent movement of livestock minerals and supplements would allow even more aggressive removal of cross fencing for prairie chickens. Removal of sand sage is also high on my priority list. Though labor-, fuel-, and equipment-intensive, shredding in the peak heat of consecutive summers has proven in studies to be as effective as herbicide for sand sage control. Additionally, I am preparing for prescribed burns since several of my pastures are ideal candidates. I attended the Prescribed Fire School in 2007 and have an ongoing CSP contract to employ the practice. In my environment, fire might be as good as, or perhaps better than, herbicide application, and easier and cheaper than shredding. Attempts to burn have thus far been stymied by the extended Panhandle drought. It's often too windy or too calm, too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry, to burn. Of course, that's what makes this so interesting!

Since cattle production often drives the economic viability of rural lands, conventional wisdom suggests that wildlife habitat improvement negatively impacts the land manager's bottom line. However, increasing revenue from hunting leases, non-consumptive wildlife endeavors, and other recreation for city dwellers helps compensate cattle production losses. The tremendous logistic and economic support provided by wildlife and agricultural organizations, Texas Parks and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife, NRCS, and Texas A&M Extension Service, not only further mitigates that loss, but also improves the landscape for this and future generations. Instead of balance and trade-off, consider the bigger picture. Livestock, wildlife, conservation and habitat practices, and the organizations that assist us, are not competing but are complimentary! Hats off to the diligent land managers, organizations, and people that assist us!



JILL NOKES, PRIVATE TEXAS LANDOWNER AND CONSERVATIONIST

*adapted by the author from an essay published in
The Society for Ecological Restoration quarterly newsletter www.txser.org*

The Mindful Conservationist

In this essay, I hope to share some lessons about restoration that we, as new landowners in Llano County, have learned over that past six years. In our efforts to help our land recover and improve, we have tried to combine science-based strategies with personal “place making” efforts that provide satisfaction in the short term, and fuel commitment over the long haul.

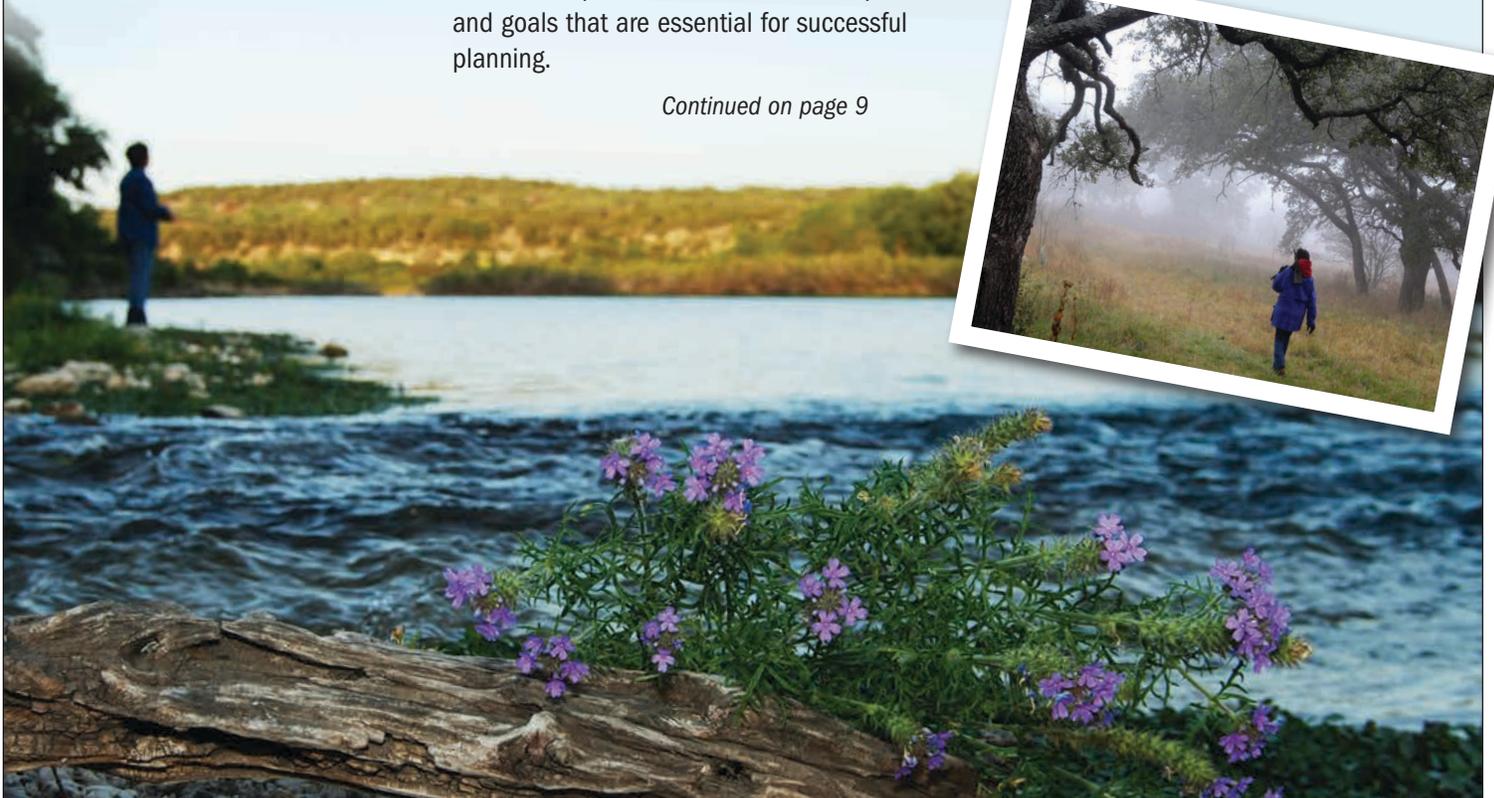
OVERVIEW

The rigorous structure of scientific inquiry can often offer guidance to the average landowner, but I have found that outcomes are more successful when protocols take into consideration the personal experience of working on the land. Many new landowners discover that they are more successful when they plan their projects within a psychological framework that continuously re-connects them to what inspired them to buy their property in the first place. Typically it’s some aspect of scenic beauty such as a high vista, live water, or other appealing landscape feature that draws people into land ownership. Yet after the deed is signed it’s not long before more questions arise: “What am I seeing? What is it supposed to look like? Where do I start first? What is the best tool and method? How long does it take? What does it cost? What are reasonable expectations for success?”

FIRST DO NO HARM

The most powerful tool a landowner can employ is patience. Taking time to learn one’s property, to develop an intimate relationship over several climate cycles, to devote time to just being present in the landscape will offer owners knowledge beyond price. Patience helps landowners avoid common mistakes such as hasty extensive clearing, or wasteful spending on “beautification” projects that yield few ecological benefits. Taking the time to slowly observe changes in the land will help landowners refine their questions and goals that are essential for successful planning.

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FOSTER PLACE ATTACHMENT

I'm often amazed by landowners who, when showing me a fantastic feature such as a steep box canyon, don't have even a rough trail to reach it by foot. It may be obvious, but making even temporary wide paths helps develop a sense of scale and a way to recognize landmarks, to easily notice seasonal changes, and to monitor results of different projects such as seeding or clearing. Engaging the family to designate place names on aerial maps is another simple but powerful tool to encourage exploration, discovery, and deep knowledge of place. Access to "sweet spots" such as a riparian corridor or wooded lot can offer relatively easy initial "low hanging fruit" projects such as removing juniper from beneath the canopies of a few large trees. These kinds of small-scale projects are good ways to begin to get a feeling for the work involved while also providing the instant satisfaction of seeing positive change after a few hours.

YOUR TEACHERS ARE WAITING

I've also been amazed by the abundance of experts, aficionados, and agencies that are out there to help landowners seeking information and advice. If folks remain curious and open-minded, they will discover plenty of experienced people eager to answer questions in ways the Internet alone could never match.

SET REASONABLE GOALS

It's easy to get overwhelmed and distracted by the innumerable projects needing attention on one's property, but setting clear goals will help the landowner more effectively distribute her/his resources of time, effort, and money. Examples proposed in this simple planning exercise below may help some to articulate their values and intentions, whether they are doing the work themselves or hiring help.

I. Objectives: *(Identify those higher aims that reflect the larger landscape and your stewardship legacy), such as:*

To assist in the recovery and enhancement of the landscape in a steady, incremental way that encourages greater diversity of wildlife and plants, increased resiliency during drought cycles, and higher functioning of natural systems.

II. Goals: *(Aspirations specific to your property) examples:*

1. The recovery and enhanced diversity of native grasslands

2. Improvement of woodland habitat, especially along riparian corridor
3. Elimination of gullies and eroded slopes
4. Increase in wildlife activity and variety

Strategies: *(Going about the plan by following integrated steps) examples:*

1. Efforts will be focused on a series of discrete zones, each over a three to five year period. Results will be evaluated each year before expanding to a new area.
2. White brush, prickly pear, Mexican persimmon, and tasajillo will be selectively removed where they encroach and compete with the high value hardwoods along the riparian corridor. Certain areas will remain untouched for wildlife cover.
3. Native grass seed will be consistently added to soils disturbed by brush clearing or by burning brush piles. Seed mix will be evaluated and adjusted based on results.
4. High value trees and shrubs will be protected from browsing.

Tactics: *(Add as many specific details as needed. For example, seed lists, chemical names, dates, etc. Provide a timeline, and decide how you are going to decide if your methods have been effective.) examples:*

1. Use tractor, chemical, and hand clearing to reduce prickly pear coverage. Compare results.
2. Re-sprouting mesquite and lotebush will be controlled with herbicide.
3. Seed will be sown from November-February and results compared.
4. Remnant big trunks from old brush piles will be harvested for use in erosion control.
5. Fencing and brush corrals will be installed to protect seedlings.

Having this plan on hand will help the landowner focus his attentions and resources on smaller, discrete areas and also provide opportunities for "course corrections" if the strategy or climate cycle has affected outcomes. It will also help when a sister-in-law asks if she can bring over her unwanted llamas or geriatric donkeys because "you have so much room." If conservation-minded owners have articulated the objectives for their precious piece of earth, they will quickly recognize which actions serve the land – and them – best.

Landowner Spotlight: Jill Nokes



Jill Nokes is a landowner in the Texas Hill Country with property along Marschall Creek in the Llano River Watershed. She is active in the ecological restoration and landscape design community through her writing, presentations to a variety of audiences, and willingness to use her property as a demonstration site.

Jill holds a membership with the Texas Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration, serves on the board of the Hill Country Land Trust, and provides valuable input on an advisory committee of the Hill Country Alliance. Jill has had several projects collaborating with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Through her projects, questions she tries to answer are “What techniques for healing the land are most successful, and how much do they cost?” “What adaptive, incremental steps are feasible for most people with ordinary skills and resources?” and “What are some aesthetic components of landscape design that can be embedded in restoration efforts to help people read the landscape, gain greater understanding of natural processes, and commit to long-term stewardship?”

She actively engages TPWD and other resource professionals to get the best science about land and wildlife management and her implementation of monitoring practices after projects is providing valuable long-term information. She has hosted several groups of landowners at her property to give other insights about projects that have worked, why they have worked, and the ecological benefits for doing the restoration projects. Not only does she host people on-site, she tries to extend her message to a wider audience by writing about her restoration experience through a blog (www.nokeslandscapedesign.com/index.html), popular articles, and articles in the Landowner Incentive Program newsletters. Information about Jill’s projects is on several posts on her blog. Jill’s strong stewardship ethic and passion of sharing her knowledge to others has been wonderful to work with. In her own words, “As I mentioned earlier, our little project along Marschall Creek will not have any significant effect on the watershed. But we hope to show our gratitude for the public funds that underwrite the LIP program by offering the lessons learned on our place – including and maybe especially the mistakes, to help other landowners, so that collectively our collaboration with Mother Nature will have a positive impact over a larger area of our fragile Hill Country.”

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The Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) program provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners to restore or enhance habitat for fish, wildlife, plants and pollinator species. The key is partnerships! Working together to meet local needs, address issues, and take advantage of local opportunities. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife program will fund and offer technical assistance to landowners to restore or improve habitat for wildlife. Some activities include brush management, prescribed burning, grassland restoration and replanting native vegetation.

Anyone can be a partner. We work with ranchers, urban landowners, local agencies, private organizations, corporations, educational institutions, state governments and anyone interested in the conservation of wildlife habitat on private lands. About 95% of Texas is privately owned and contains some of the most important fish and wildlife habitat in Texas, which makes working with private landowners essential to conserve wildlife and their habitats in Texas. Together, we can restore and protect wildlife habitat and contribute to the health of the land and the quality of life of the people living on it.

PFW has an open enrollment process, so all you need to do to get started is contact one of our biologists, Douglas Phillips or Brendan Witt, and schedule a site visit.

Texas Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Program



The Texas Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Program (TFRLCP) was first established by the Legislature in 2005 as a program of the Texas General Land Office. The Legislature transferred the TFRLCP to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) effective January 1, 2016, and appropriated \$2 million to TPWD to fund the program.

The goal of the TFRLCP is to fund conservation easements on working lands with high values for water, fish and wildlife, and agricultural production, especially lands at risk of development. TPWD hopes to generate interest and awareness among land trusts and landowners, attract qualified applicants, and leverage the state appropriation with resources available from other sources to fund as many high-quality projects as possible.

The Council approved the project scoring criteria at a meeting in early January 2016. The selection process and other information for potential applicants is available on TPWD's website. Check frequently for updates. www.tpwd.texas.gov/texasfarmandranch/

Pedernales Watershed Landowner Assistance Opportunity



Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Southeast Aquatics Resources Partnership (SARP) is working with landowners in the Pedernales Watershed to restore riparian areas, restore aquatic habitats, improve water quality, increase water quantity, reduce erosion, and remove non-native species. Funding for these restoration projects is provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation through SARP. If you have property in the Pedernales Watershed, please contact Preston Bean (TPWD Conservation Biologist) at preston.bean@tpwd.texas.gov or (830) 866-3040 to see if your project might be a good fit for the program.



LANDOWNER INCENTIVE PROGRAM 2016 UPDATES

The Texas Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) is a collaborative effort between Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Wildlife and Inland Fisheries Divisions and the US Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, designed to meet the needs of private, non-federal landowners wishing to enact good conservation practices on their lands for the benefit of healthy terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

At this time the LIP program has 18 active LIP projects underway and is in the process of contracting with private landowners to begin nine more projects with treatments involving invasive brush management, native prairie establishment, riparian restoration, pollinator and monarch habitat restoration and much more for the benefit of Texas wildlife and watersheds.

Think your property might be a good fit for the LIP program? Contact your local TPWD or USFWS biologist to learn more! Go to www.tpwd.texas.gov/lip to learn more about the program and to find your local biologists. A deadline for new project pre-proposals will be set for late spring so be sure to check the website for updates and to see what's new with the program!

PASTURES FOR UPLAND BIRDS 2016 UPDATES

Historically, native tallgrass prairies and prairie-oak savannahs dominated over 24 million acres in east-central Texas. These ecosystems provided essential habitats for many forms of wildlife, including for grassland birds. Grassland birds that were part of the native prairie ecosystem included: Eastern Meadowlark, Northern Harrier, Le Conte's Sparrow, Short-eared Owl, Dickcissel, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Mourning Dove, Northern Bobwhite, Eastern Wild Turkey, and others.

Over the last century and a half, the region's native prairies and savannah grasslands were converted to agricultural land uses and have virtually disappeared. One of the obvious consequences of this massive prairie conversion was the loss of millions of acres of natural biological diversity and wildlife habitat.

In partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program the Pastures for Upland Birds Program (PUB) provides cost-share incentives and technical guidance to private landowners to restore native grass and forb vegetation on pastures and hayfields dominated by exotic grasses such as Bermudagrass, bahiagrass, and Old World bluestems.

At this time the PUB program has 18 active PUB projects underway restoring nearly 1,000 acres in east-central Texas coinciding with portions of Blackland Prairie and Post Oak Savannah.

Want to learn more about the PUB program?

Go to www.tpwd.texas.gov/pub



Executive Director
Carter P. Smith
Editor, L.I.P. Bulletin
Arlene Kalmbach



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