

LIVING. GIVING.

GRASSLANDS.

INDEX

SOUTHERN
PLAINS &
PRAIRIES
CONFERENCE

Bringing together the best minds in prairie conservation from the states of Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and beyond.

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PRE-CONFERENCE TOUR

Urban Praries by Light Rail

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SCHEDULE

6 Thursday, **November 12, 2015**
8 Friday, **November 13, 2015**
10 Saturday, **November 14, 2015**

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PRE-CONFERENCE TOUR

NOV. 12, 2015

9:00 – 11:00 AM

URBAN PRAIRIES

Tour three urban prairie restoration sites in Houston's Hermann Park/Texas Medical Center with Jaime González of the Katy Prairie Conservancy. Each of these restorations has been built on collaboration, and each project connects to a broader movement to reestablish prairies in the public consciousness.

THURSDAY

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE NOV. 12, 2015

Our presenters and experiences will focus on three key areas: techniques and theories of prairie restoration; the economics of prairie restoration, management, ecosystem services, and recreation; and creating connected, diverse prairie landscapes.

2:30 – 2:35 PM Conference Welcome

2:35 – 2:40 PM Welcome from the Houston Zoo

2:40 – 3:15 PM **Why Prairies Count: Viewing Prairies Through Varying Lenses** | John Davis, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)

RESTORATION 

TALKING ABOUT PRAIRIES 

PRAIRIE LANDSCAPES FOR POLLINATORS, BIRDS, & MORE 

3:30 – 4:00 PM

Restoration of Louisiana Cajun Prairies
Christopher Reid,
Louisiana Department of
Wildlife and Fisheries

Connecting People and Prairies Through Public Murals
Dixie Friend Gay, Artist

Native Bees in Texas and Grasslands Management
Michael Warriner, TPWD

4:10 – 4:40 PM

Prescribed Burning
John Weir, Oklahoma

Strategies for Engaging Private Landowners in Wildlife Habitat Conservation
Jon Hayes,
Oaks & Prairies Joint Venture

Microbes in the Prairies: Facilitating Restoration a Different Way
Betsy Ross,
Sustainable Growth Texas

4:50 – 5:20 PM

Working with Other Landowners for Prescribed Burning
Larry Joe Doherty,
South Central Texas
Burn Association

One Prairie-One Voice: The Process and Promise of the 2015 Prairie Conservation Assessment
Jaime González,
Katy Prairie Conservancy

Geography of Grassland Birds
Jim Giocomo,
Oaks and Prairies Joint
Venture/ American
Bird Conservancy

5:30 – 6:30 PM **MIXER** All tracks

 TRACK 1

 TRACK 2

 TRACK 3

9:00 – 9:05 AM Welcome Back

9:05 – 9:50 AM **KEYNOTE Why Save Prairies: A Cajun Scientist Reflects**
Larry Allain, Botanist, USGS—National Wetlands Research Center

RESTORATION  **PRAIRIE ECONOMICS**  **PRAIRIE LANDSCAPES FOR POLLINATORS, BIRDS, & MORE** 

10:00 – 10:30 AM

You CAN Handle the Truth...That Bison are a Keystone Species in Prairie Conservation
Rob Denkhaus,
Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge

Prairie Economics: Are There Sufficient, Focused Political, Economic, and Ecological Efforts to Preserve and Restore the Natural Ecosystems of the Coastal Prairie and its Multiple Ecosystem Services?
Fred E. Smeins,
Texas A&M University

Monarch 101
Anne Stein, Xerces Society

10:45 – 11:15 AM

The Role of Remnant Native Vegetation and Land Management Practices in the Reclamation of Little Bluestem Prairies
Heather Bass,
Botanical Research Institute of Texas

Audubon's Conservation Ranching Program—Saving Grasslands and Keeping Ranchers on the Land
Brian Trusty, Texas Audubon

Habitat Fragmentation and the Northern Bobwhite Population Decline: What We Think We Know Versus What We Really Know
Leonard A. Brennan,
Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute

11:20 AM – 12:00 PM

The Nature Conservancy of Texas, Identifying and Developing Native Plant Species for Restoration Success
Aaron Tjelmeland,
The Nature Conservancy of Texas

Generating Revenue on the Katy Prairie While Maintaining Its Ecological Integrity
Mary Anne Piacentini,
Katy Prairie Conservancy

Wintering Grassland Birds Use Restored Prairies in Eastern Texas
Cliff Shackelford,
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

12:00 – 1:00 PM **LUNCH** All tracks

1:00 – 1:30 PM

Manufacturing Meadows: A Springwoods Village Case Study
Beth Clark, Clark Condon

Supporting Conservation and Restoration with Sustainable Tourism
Miles Phillips,
Texas Agrilife Extension Service

Pastures for Upland Birds: Building Habitat and Conservation Principles in a Fragmented Landscape
Tim Siegmund, TPWD

1:45 – 2:15 PM

Prairie Restoration Experiences in Texas
Jason Hohlt, USDA-NRCS

Using Farm Bill Programs for Native Grassland Restoration and Management
Chuck Kowaleski, TPWD

Texas Coastal Prairie: Geomorphology and Restoration
Andy Sipocz, TPWD

2:30 – 3:00 PM

The Prairie Liberation Army of Armand Bayou Nature Center
Mark Kramer,
Armand Bayou Nature Center

Bringing Back the "B's"—Restoring Quail Habitat on the Coastal Prairie
Jim Willis,
Wildlife Habitat Federation

Grasshoppers in Coastal Tallgrass Prairies: What Factors Affect Grasshopper Communities, and Do They Matter To How Prairies Function?
Chelsea Prather, PhD,
Radford University

3:15 – 3:45 PM

Microbes: A Prairie Underground
Student Presentation:
Kelly Shields,
University of St. Thomas

Creating An Ecosystem Services Market for Prairies
Jim Blackburn,
SSPEED Center,
Rice University

Biodiversity of Urban Pocket Prairies
Student Presentation—
Cassidy Johnson,
Rice University

6:00 – 8:00 PM **DINNER** Awards & Silent Auction
Featured Speaker: Randy Johnson, Randy Johnson Organics



9:00 AM - 1:30 PM

TEXAS CITY PRAIRIE PRESERVE

Texas City, TX

This tour offers participants the chance to experience a category of coastal tallgrass prairie known as the Salty Prairie. It includes intact and degraded areas and will show ongoing and planned treatments that the Nature Conservancy of Texas staff and volunteers are undertaking in an attempt to transition degraded areas into a functioning native tallgrass plant community. The tour also shows participants how the Conservancy is building its capabilities to restore these areas at the preserve through equipment acquisition, facilities, and local partnership efforts. Lunch included.

9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

LAWTHER—DEER PARK PRAIRIE

Deer Park, TX

This special workshop is led by Native Prairies Association of Texas and designed to empower local educators (formal and non-formal) to teach about local prairies and wildlife.

8:30 - 11:30 AM

KATY PRAIRIE

near Waller, TX

Participate in Putting Down Roots, a large, volunteer-driven prairie planting on the Flat Out Wonderful Katy Prairie just west of Houston. Learn what it takes to organize and execute a large public planting at your location from Mary Anne Piacentini, Katy Prairie Conservancy Executive Director. Mary Anne will also tell the larger story of the Indiangrass Preserve restoration project and the roles that volunteers are playing in bringing this property back to life.

8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

WILDLIFE HABITAT FEDERATION

Catspring, TX

The day will include pre-tour instruction, a bus and walking tour of nearby relict tracts and those restored as part of Wildlife Habitat Federation's Wildlife Corridor Program and a barbecue lunch. While visiting the prairie remnants, participants will have a hands-on opportunity to learn to recognize native prairie species guided by some of the top plant identification experts in the state. Registration includes transportation from the Catspring meeting site to restoration areas and lunch.

PRESENTERS

BIOGRAPHIES



LARRY ALLAIN

After receiving a bachelors degree in Horticulture from the University of Southwestern Louisiana in 1975 Larry worked as a nurseryman eventually running his own nursery and landscaping company. In 1992 he returned to the University of Southwestern Louisiana to get his masters in biology. From 1995 to present, he has worked as a botanist at the National Wetlands Research Center where his research focuses on Coastal Prairie ecology including fire effects, invasive species, pollination biology, and restoration. Larry is a past president of the Cajun Prairie Preservation Society, a founding member of the Coastal Prairie Partnership, and the Louisiana Native Plant Initiative, and has authored several papers and digital products on the coastal prairie.



HEATHER BASS

Heather Bass is a native of Fort Worth, Texas who received a BS in Biology and an MS in Environmental and Earth Sciences from the University of Texas Arlington. She previously worked on projects researching the effects of climate change on plant and insect communities in Arctic tundra ecosystems but has now focused her research more locally. Heather's thesis work examined outcomes of land management practices employed for the purpose of restoration of native prairie ecosystems in North Central Texas. She now works for the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT) where her research is primarily focused on botanical based sustainability initiatives within agricultural and urban settings to promote the preservation of native Texas ecosystems.



LEONARD A. BRENNAN

Since 2001, Leonard has been a professor and C.C. Winn Endowed Chair for Quail Research at Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute. He was also the Director of Research at Tall Timbers Research Station from 1993–2001. Leonard was a Small Game Research Faculty Scientist, Mississippi State University from 1989–1993. He received his Ph.D. from Cal-Berkeley in 1989, M.S. at Humboldt State University in 1984, and in 1981, his B.S. at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA. He grew up in southern New England. In 1975, he became a distinguished graduate of Wheeler High School in North Stonington, CT.



JIM BLACKBURN

Jim Blackburn has been a practicing environmental lawyer and planner since 1973. He is a professor in the Practice of Environmental Law in the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department at Rice University where he teaches environmental law and sustainable design courses. He is co-director of the Severe Storm Prediction, Education and Evacuation from Disaster (SSPEED) Center at Rice University. He is also a Rice Faculty Scholar at the Baker Institute and Director of the Undergraduate Minor in Energy and Water Sustainability. Jim is owner of a planning firm called Sustainable Planning and Design and teaches courses in sustainable design and environmental law

in Civil and Environmental Engineering at Rice. He authored *The Book of Texas Bays* published in 2004 by Texas A&M Press and is writing a new book on the Texas coast scheduled for publication by Texas A&M Press in 2016. Jim has also authored numerous legal papers and has received several local, state, and national awards for environmental advocacy.

BETH CLARK

Beth received her Bachelor of Science in landscape architecture from Texas A&M University in 1977. In 1985, she co-founded Clark Condon Associates. She resigned in 1994 to move to Australia with her family. In 2004, she returned to Houston and rejoined Clark Condon, bringing with her a history of award-winning landscape design. She provides an extensive knowledge of suitability of plant materials in various natural environments. Beth has furthered her knowledge of native plants and sustainability by gaining her LEED® accreditation. Beth's passion for native plant studies and prairie restoration gives her a unique perspective on project design, allowing her to create resource conserving planting plans and enhance the natural environment. Beth is a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, Organic Horticulture Benefits Alliance, and the Native Plant Society. She sits on the Board of Urban Harvest.



PRESENTERS

BIOGRAPHIES



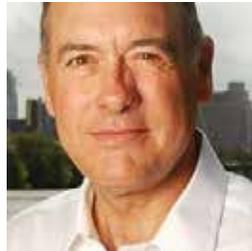
JOHN DAVIS

John began his career with Texas Parks and Wildlife around 1990 as a rare species biologist but quickly transitioned to working in urbanized areas to conserve habitats and connect people to them. It is working in those environments that gave John the full appreciation of the various ways the public values native habitats. John currently manages teams of biologists dedicated to discovering / conserving species and habitats of conservation need as well as generating public support for such treasures to ensure their continuation.



ROB DENKHAUS

Rob Denkhaus has been the Natural Resource Manager of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge since 2006 and is responsible for managing the resident bison herd, planning and conducting prescribed burns, and other activities on the 3,600 acre City of Fort Worth natural area. In addition to his FWNC&R duties, Rob is also chair of the TPWD Wildlife Diversity Advisory Committee, Director of the Teaming With Wildlife: True To Texas Coalition, and an adjunct professor in the Environmental Science program at Texas Christian University.



LARRY JOE DOHERTY

Larry has worked as a Trial Lawyer for over 45 years now. Has been board certified in Personal Injury Trial Law in 1978: first group in State to be board certified. His sub-specialty is representing victims of lawyer misconduct and malpractice. His practice is the Law Firm of Doherty & Wagner. Larry presided over the Court TV show "Texas Justice" from 2000–2005 as "Judge." In 2009, he formed the Lone Star Water Forum in Brenham, TX and was elected the first President of PBAT in 2011.



DIXIE FRIEND GAY

Dixie Friend Gay is a nationally acclaimed artist whose prolific career spans more than three decades. The remarkable breadth of her artistic production encompasses public art, sculpture, painting and drawing. She is perhaps best known for her numerous public art commissions, including those at George Bush Intercontinental Airport, the Port of Miami, Indianapolis International Airport, Sam Houston State University and Texas A&M Galveston. Whether large scale architectural projects or intimate paintings, Friend Gay's work is fueled by awareness of the natural world and its ability to induce altered states.

Her public art has been recognized by Americans for the Arts "Public Art Year in Review" and has received multiple Craftsmanship Awards. Friend Gay was recognized as Texas Artist of the Year in 2003 by the Texas Commission for the Arts. Her studio

art can be found in the collections of the Federal Reserve Bank in Houston Texas, Rice University, the Huntington Museum of Art in West Virginia and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston among many others.

Friend Gay grew up on the plains of western Oklahoma on her families cattle ranch. As soon as she could, she moved to New York City. She relocated to Houston in 1989.

JIM GIOCOMO

Jim received a BS in Biology from Millersville University of Pennsylvania and an MS in Ecology from the Pennsylvania State University. His Master's work focused on songbird productivity in forest settings, especially Ovenbirds and Wood Thrush in Pennsylvania. Jim earned a PhD in Natural Resources from the University of Tennessee where he monitored and modeled productivity of Henslow's Sparrows, Grasshopper Sparrows, Field Sparrows, Bachman's Sparrows, Dickcissels, and Eastern Meadowlarks at Fort Campbell Army Base working in the drop zones used for training by the US Army's 101st Airborne Division. Jim has also worked for Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Audubon Pennsylvania, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.



PRESENTERS

BIOGRAPHIES



JAIME GONZÁLEZ

Jaime González is the Conservation Education Director for the Katy Prairie Conservancy and is responsible for designing and offering KPC's educational programming, is a point person for grassland restoration (both on the Katy Prairie and on urban pocket prairies), and works on strategic collaborations with other conservation groups and local universities. In 2009 he co-founded the Coastal Prairie Partnership (CPP) and has won numerous awards for his conservation and education efforts including a 2015 Catalyst Award from Houston Tomorrow and the 2014 Prairie Preservationist Award from Native Prairies Association of Texas.



JON HAYES

Before moving to Texas, Jon received a B.S. in Biology from the University of Colorado and an M.S. in Natural Resource Conservation from the University of Montana, where he studied landowner values and attitudes towards sage grouse conservation and energy development in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming. In Texas, Jon has worked for TPWD and the Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture to deliver programs and strategies aimed at increasing the amount of grassland bird habitat provided on private working lands in Texas. Jon lives in Hallettsville with his wife Calle and spends his free time running, hunting, camping, and fishing.



JASON HOHLT

Jason Hohlt is the Zone Rangeland Management Specialist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Bryan, Texas. In this role, he provides leadership, technical support, and training to NRCS field offices within a 50 county area in east Texas. He has 12 years of experience working for NRCS and holds a bachelor's degree in Range Science and a master's degree in Animal Science. His primary interests are grazing management, ranch economics, and wildlife habitat enhancement.



CASSIDY JOHNSON

The students presenting are Rice University undergraduates participating in a Conservation Biology lab course. The course is designed to address an authentic, local conservation issue facing the greater Houston area. The students have been responsible for the project design and for the collection and analysis of the data. The hope is that the information collected will help Rice University as it moves forward in the restoration of a coastal pocket prairie site on campus.

RANDY JOHNSON

Randy graduated from Texas A&M with a degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. He is the past Director of Horticulture at Texas Discovery Gardens in Dallas and he currently serves as the Horticulture Manager at The Dallas Zoo. Through his personal business, Randy Johnson Organics, he sells native plants and seeds, he also offers consultation services on several topics. Randy serves on the Board of Directors at Peckerwood Garden in Hempstead, TX and Lake Highlands Community Garden in Dallas and is the current Dallas chapter president for the Native Plant Society of Texas.



CHUCK KOWALESKI

Chuck has served as the Farm Bill Coordinator for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and their liaison with U.S. Department of Agriculture for the past 14 years. Chuck is a member of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Agricultural Coordination Committee and Co-Chairs one of its farm bill working groups. Chuck chairs the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative's technical committee which is leading a national initiative that would require USDA to consider using native plants for conservation work wherever feasible. Chuck received his B.S. at TAMU in wildlife ecology with a minor in range science and his M.S. in Biology at Sul Ross State University where he worked on northern Chihuahuan desert grassland birds.

PRESENTERS

BIOGRAPHIES

MARK KRAMER

Mark Kramer has served as the Stewardship Coordinator at Armand Bayou Nature Center since 1995. Mark's duties include habitat restoration, wildlife management, and environmental education. His work as a restoration ecologist and his lifelong passion for being in the outdoors has given him a unique perspective when interpreting the natural sciences of coastal Texas. Mark grew up on Prairie Street in the upper Armand Bayou watershed and began exploring Armand Bayou in his youth. He is this year's recipient of the Bayou Preservation Association Terry Hershey Bayou Stewardship Award.



PAT MERKORD

Pat Merkord, Executive Director of Native Prairies Association of Texas has been with the organization since 2006 as a board member and recent President. She also owns Bluestem Environmental Consultants, a wildlife management and habitat restoration consultation company, has a Masters Degree in Biology from Texas State University and also taught high school Biology and Chemistry for many years and developed science curriculum for Austin Independent School District. She lives in Conroe, Texas and has established new NPAT chapters in Houston, Fort Worth, Dallas and Austin.

MILES PHILLIPS

Mr. Phillips is an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist with Texas Agrilife Extension Service. His specialty is Nature Tourism and he is a member of the Recreation, Parks and Tourism Sciences Department at Texas A&M University.

In his current position he supports program development for the extension agents in all 254 counties. He also works directly with clients across the state. He is a member of the Texas State Tourism Agency Council, the Texas Travel Industry Association Nature Tourism Council and one of the 8 members of the National Extension Tourism Design Team.



MARY ANNE PIACENTINI

Mary Anne Piacentini, Executive Director, Katy Prairie Conservancy, is responsible for coordinating the Conservancy's land protection programs, conservation assistance to private landowners, and fundraising as well as facilitating community partnerships and relationships with diverse stakeholders. Ms. Piacentini received a Master of City Planning from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and a Bachelor of Arts in political science from the University of New Hampshire. Previously she served as Executive Director of various non-profit organizations, including Friends of Hermann Park, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and the Cultural Arts Council of Houston. She also served as the Senior Policy Planner for the City of Houston Community Development Division. In 2014 Ms. Piacentini was named one of four women in Texas to receive the

Terry Hershey Texas Women in Conservation awards, which recognizes outstanding women leaders in today's conservation movement throughout the Lone Star State. In 2005 she received the Army & Sarah Emmott Conservation Award from the Citizens' Environmental Coalition. She is currently a member of the Advisory Board of Directors of American Festival for the Arts, past chair of the Board of Directors of the Texas Land Trust Council, and past President of the Municipal Arts Federation.

CHELSEA PRATHER

Dr. Chelsea Prather grew up in the rolling hills of Northern Kentucky, and was always the girl outside getting dirty and trying to catch animals. She received her Bachelor's of Science in Biology in 2003 at the University of Kentucky, and her PhD in Biology from the University of Notre Dame in 2011. She has since had appointments at Florida State University and the University of Houston, and she is currently an Assistant Professor at Radford University. Chelsea is especially interested in what factors control invertebrate communities, and how these invertebrate communities affect how ecosystems function. She currently has funding from the National Science Foundation and the United States Department of Agriculture to determine what factors affect insects in coastal tall grass prairies, and if the diversity of insects affects how grasslands function.



PRESENTERS

BIOGRAPHIES



CHRISTOPHER REID

Chris has served as the Louisiana Natural Heritage Program Botanist for 13 years. He was trained in forestry at Louisiana State University and botany at University of Louisiana at Monroe. His interests include flora of the central Gulf Coast region, Cyperaceae, Poaceae, and Xyridaceae. Coastal prairie conservation is a major focus of his work, and a top priority for his agency.

BETSY ROSS

Betsy Ross is CEO of Sustainable Growth Texas, a consultancy and biological services company operating in Texas. Rejuvenation of native and prairie pastures as well as commercial sites has become her trademark using natural, biological methods.

A love for native plants grown and sown when growing up in Sonora, Texas, Betsy has come full circle back to natives as the most durable, nutritious and beautiful plants for hardy, natural growing systems. She pioneered the use of liquid compost extract on larger sized grazing, prairie lands and commercial projects in Texas.

Betsy earned a B.S. degree the University of Texas in 1959 and an MBA from UT in 1980.



CLIFF SHACKLEFORD

Cliff Shackelford is a 7th generation Texan. For more than 18 years, he's been the statewide Nongame Ornithologist for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. For the last 2 years, he's hosted a live radio show on birds that airs on National Public Radio's Red River Radio station. Cliff is the first author of the book Hummingbirds of Texas that was first published in 2005 by Texas A&M University Press. He also has authored over 70 publications on birds, many of which have appeared in peer-reviewed journals.

KELLY SHIELDS

Kelly Shields was born and raised in Houston, Texas and is pursuing a BS in Biology at the University of St. Thomas. She is a current member of a research team studying plant and microbial diversity in Houston's prairies. In 2015, she presented her findings at both the University of St. Thomas and Baylor IRACDA Research Symposiums. Her passion for the environment drives her to learn all she can and explore what Houston has to offer.



ANDREW SIPOCZ

Andrew Sipocz received a Forestry degree from Purdue University and a master degree in Wildlife Ecology from Texas A&M University. He has worked for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department since 1990, first reviewing the effect of development projects on coastal fish, wildlife and plant communities and currently as the SE Texas natural resource coordinator for the Department's State Parks Division. He is officed out of Sheldon Lake State Park in Houston. Current projects include prairie wetland, hardwood swamp, coastal dune and prairie restoration and the management of wildlands on about 18 State Parks.

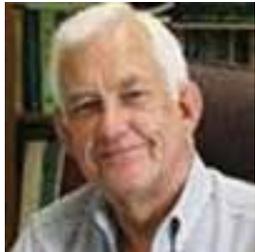
TIM SIEGMUND

Tim was born and raised in Giddings, TX. He attended Stephen F. Austin State University earning a bachelor's degree, and participated in various research projects involving black bears, songbird research, and an immense amount of vegetation sampling in forests and savannah habitats. He has been employed with TPWD for six years based out of College Station, and is actively involved with the Pastures for Upland Birds Program restoring Native Grasslands in the Post Oak Savannah and Blackland Prairie of Texas.



PRESENTERS

BIOGRAPHIES



FRED E. SMEINS

Fred is a Professor of Ecology in the Ecosystem Science and Management Department at Texas A&M University. He conducts research and teachings on factors controlling the structure and function of natural grasslands, wetlands and shrublands and restoration of these ecosystems. Research has been conducted within the Coastal, Blackland, Edwards Plateau and High Plains ecoregions, Kenya, Morocco, Venezuela, and Argentina.

ANNE STINE

Anne Stine has worked for The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation since May 2014. She provides guidance and technical support in the central region of the United States.



AARON TJELMELAND

Aaron Tjelmeland is the Upper Coast Project Director for The Nature Conservancy. He works primarily on grassland systems along the upper Texas coast. He manages the Texas City Prairie Preserve and the Nash Prairie Preserve and has been working on development of a prairie restoration program for the Conservancy. Aaron is originally from Iowa, where he grew up and studied Ecology and Botany at Iowa State University. He came to Texas in 2004 for graduate work where he studied grassland restoration and wildlife management at Texas A&M University-Kingsville and later worked for the university in avian ecology and invasive plant research programs.

BRIAN TRUSTY

Brian Trusty has enjoyed a 22-year career in parks and recreation, land and habitat management, tourism, and economic development including executive management responsibilities in private for-profit, private non-profit, and public organizations. Brian leads Audubon's conservation and environmental education programs in Texas and throughout the Central Flyway. He's received multiple awards from state and local organizations, including the 2007 "Innovator of the Year" award in Maryland given by the Daily Record, Maryland's leading legal and business journal.

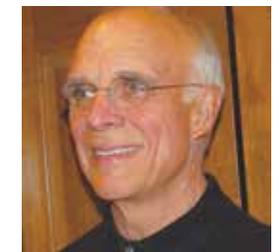


JOHN WEIR

John teaches two prescribed fire courses, conducts fire ecology research and has extension responsibilities relating to prescribed fire training and working with land owners to form prescribed burn associations. He has assisted with forming over 30 burn associations in seven states. In the past 25 years he has conducted over 1,000 prescribed burns in vegetation ranging from shortgrass prairie to Oak-Pine forest in seven states. He also authored the book *Conducted Prescribed Fires: A Comprehensive Manual*.

JIM WILLIS

Jim has a farm background. He has a BS, MS Ag Econ, and Department of State Certificate of Latin American Studies. Jim is a Soviet Specialist/Rice Analyst for FAS/USDA/DC, foreign service officer for 3 American Embassies, and owner of two farm equipment dealerships. Jim is the President of Int'l Programs for US Rice Producers Association and President/Co-Founder of Wildlife Habitat Federation. He has received various awards from SWCS, TWAF, Quail Coalition, and Coastal Prairie Partnership.



WHY PRAIRIES COUNT: VIEWING PRAIRIES THROUGH VARYING LENSES

John Davis, TPWD

There are many ways that society defines value. Fittingly, prairies are valued from multiple perspectives. None is “the right way” as there are many benefits of prairies to be appreciated. What matters most is that prairies ARE valued and appreciated. This is critical, for only when something is valued will it be cared for, protected, and conserved.

GEOGRAPHY OF GRASSLAND BIRD CONSERVATION

**Jim Giocomo,
Oaks & Prairies Joint Venture**

Many prairie birds are in steep decline due to habitat loss. The presentation will discuss how International Bird Conservation efforts are linked to actions in your backyard. Specifically, it will present efforts in Texas and Oklahoma to help assure their long-term conservation of priority grassland birds.

PRESCRIBED BURNING

John Weir, Oklahoma

Prescribed Burning will be providing information about prescribed burn association needs, activity and future. It will show the importance of statewide associations at the local and regional level.

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PRAIRIES THROUGH PUBLIC MURALS

Dixie Friend Gay, Artist

This is a fast-paced visual presentation of the process to create large public art projects, interactions with government and administrators, architects and city planners. It involves research, reading, understanding the political forces, the essence of a place, and the natural history.

NATIVE BEES IN TEXAS AND GRASSLANDS MANAGEMENT

Michael Warriner, TPWD

Native bees, and other native insect pollinators, are receiving increased attention from the conservation community. This group of insects typically serve as the most efficient and effective pollinators in open habitat types. This presentation will discuss native bee diversity along with recommendations for management.

“TAKE THE WILD OUT OF FIRE” FORM YOUR OWN GROUP AND GROW

**Larry Joe Doherty,
South Central Texas Burn Association**

This presentation will give a short history of Prescribed Burning in Texas. It will also describe how and why to form a PB association. The point of PBAT is Neighbor Helping Neighbor—No charge! You can participate in Houston even without owning land. You Can't Burn Alone —Doctor's Order.

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING PRI- VATE LANDOWNERS IN WILDLIFE HABITAT CONSERVATION

Jon Hayes, Oaks & Prairies Joint Venture

Compelling human action that is beneficial to native grasslands and the wildlife that depend on them is a priority for the grassland conservation community. But in order to restore native grasslands at the landscape scale, conservationists must be able to understand not only the biology of these ecosystems, but also the sociology and psychology of the people that reside there. This talk will explore the way values and attitudes inform rural landowner decision-making and the implications this has for delivering grassland conservation throughout the working lands of Texas.

MICROBES IN THE PRAIRIES: FACILITATING RESTORATION A DIFFERENT WAY

Betsy Ross, Sustainable Growth Texas

Understanding the use and role of the soil food web to heal, restore and build prairies in Texas is so different to the ‘tried and true’ way of restoration that it requires paradigm changes on many levels.

Betsy will highlight some of these required changes as she steps you through several projects - including large and small acreage, as well as urban and park sites.

The George W Bush Library Prairies, the MD Anderson Prairie, Waco Ranches and Berry Springs Park in Georgetown, Texas will be highlighted.

ONE PRAIRIE—ONE VOICE: THE PROCESS AND PROMISE OF THE 2015 PRAIRIE CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT

Jaime González, Katy Prairie Conservancy

In early 2015, Coastal Prairie Partnership led a process to assess the collaborative needs of the Greater Houston Region's prairie community. What was found could change the scope and focus of prairie conservation for decades to come.

RESEARCH AND STEWARDSHIP ON COASTAL PRAIRIE RANGELANDS IN SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA: PROGRESS AND FUTURE POTENTIAL

**Christopher Reid,
Louisiana Department of Wildlife
and Fisheries**

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has several ongoing research and stewardship projects that are enhancing coastal prairie remnants on private lands. Progress made to this point will be described, and anticipated actions for the near future will be presented. The impact of this work will be far-reaching, with many beneficiaries.

MONARCH 101

Anne Stine, Xerces Society

This presentation is an introduction to monarch biology and conservation.

YOU CAN HANDLE THE TRUTH... THAT BISON ARE A KEYSTONE SPECIES IN PRAIRIE CONSERVATION? (Assuming that you have the necessary infrastructure.)

Rob Denkhaus,
Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge

Bison are almost universally considered to be keystone species in North American prairies and are often the subject of dreams for prairie enthusiasts..."If only I could add bison to my prairie." Most prairie conservationists/restorationists realize the importance of the bison in the evolution and natural maintenance of our prairies and lament their decline and absence from our prairie sites. Can you add bison to your fauna list and prairie management toolbox? This presentation will explore the reasons and requirements for adding bison to your list and toolbox for prairie management.

PRAIRIE ECONOMICS: Are There Sufficient Political, Economic, and Ecological Efforts to Preserve And Restore The Natural Ecosystems Of The Coastal Prairie and Its Multiple Ecosystem Services?

Fred E. Smeins, Texas A&M University

Much of the Coastal Prairie Ecoregion has been destroyed or greatly altered. What are the ecological and economic potentials for saving and restoring some of the varied ecosystems of this region? Many excellent organizations (CPP, NPAT, KPC, State and Federal Agencies, etc.) and individuals expend significant financial and human resources on this effort; is this enough? Is it feasible to

create a common, coordinated approach amongst all entities to focus on the political, economic and ecological fronts to provide the resources necessary to save and restore the ecosystems and ecosystem services of this Ecoregion?

WHY SAVE PRAIRIES: A Cajun Scientist Reflects

Larry Allain,
USGS—National Wetlands Research Center

Prairies are an acquired taste. Yet to those who have taken the time to know them they are an example of the very best of our natural world. This presentation will explore why prairies are special and some of the cultural and scientific factors that lead to the speaker's passion for prairie.

THE ROLE OF REMNANT NATIVE VEGETATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE RECLAMATION OF LITTLE BLUESTEM PRAIRIES

Heather Bass,
Botanical Research Institute of Texas

In order to restore diminishing Texas prairie ecosystems and their ecosystem services, the native prairie plant communities on which they are based must be reclaimed. Focusing on the Little Bluestem dominated ecosystems of the Fort Worth Prairie region, plant community compositions and seed dispersal rates were examined in remnant and reclaimed native prairie fragments in a city-owned recreational nature center in North Texas. Prairies

previously disturbed by agriculture and surface mining were compared to remnant native prairies to better understand reclamation succession and formulate recommendations for successful native prairie reclamation. Although use of management strategies may allow for the reclamation of native prairie plant communities in general, or simply speed up and steer the natural reclamation process, reclamation to Little Bluestem dominant native prairie communities may be more complex.

AUDUBON'S CONSERVATION RANCHING PROGRAM—SAVING GRASSLANDS AND KEEPING RANCHERS ON THE LAND

Brian Trusty, Texas Audubon

Across the Central Flyway, Audubon field staff work to protect grassland birds in the face of an unfolding crisis. Enticed by record-high prices for crops and a cornucopia of damaging federal subsidies, growers have moved rapidly over the last five years to plant corn, soy, and other row crops across vast swaths of previously uncultivated land. The trend has devastated critically important habitat for vast numbers of grassland birds and other species and left sensitive areas exposed to the ravages of an increasingly unstable climate. Over the past four years, Audubon staff have incubated a market-based Conservation Ranching working lands strategy that engage private landowners and other crucial stakeholders in grassland conservation. This presentation provides an overview of the issues, the challenges and the opportunities for sustainable production standards in the North American grasslands.

HABITAT FRAGMENTATION AND THE NORTHERN BOBWHITE POPULATION DECLINE: What Do We Know versus What We Really Know

Leonard A. Brennan,
Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute

Habitat loss and fragmentation are most likely a major cause behind the widespread declines in northern bobwhite populations during the past century. However, metrics that link bobwhite population trends with landscape features are extremely limited, if they are available at all. To date, most of the linkages between bobwhite populations and landscape features are qualitative rather than quantitative. In this presentation I will sort out what we do and do not know about the relationships between bobwhite populations and habitat fragmentation, and offer recommendations about how to move research and conservation forward for this iconic species of our Southern Plains and Prairies.

IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING NATIVE PLANT SPECIES FOR RESTORATION SUCCESS

Aaron Tjelmeland,
The Nature Conservancy of Texas

Native warm-season bunchgrasses are often considered the pinnacle of success in many grassland restoration projects because of their relative rarity, benefits to wildlife, and forage quality. Traditional prairie restoration practices have focused on planting these

species because of their desirability and availability. More recently, practitioners have begun to realize the possible benefits of incorporating a more diverse suite of native species to establish a pathway toward ultimate goals. This presentation highlights current projects that have begun to implement these theories, challenges faced, and budding partnerships to increase success in the upper Texas coast region.

MAKING THE PRAIRIE PAY: Generating Revenue on the Katy Prairie While Maintaining It's Ecological Integrity

**Mary Anne Piacentini,
Katy Prairie Conservancy**

The Katy Prairie Preserve is a 20,000+ acre protected area on Houston's northwest side. Katy Prairie Conservancy (KPC) generates income on the prairie in many ways by enhancing ecological function or working with the local community members - all without destroying the prairies aesthetics, wildlife refuge status, or recreational value.

WINTERING GRASSLAND BIRDS USE RESTORED PRAIRIES IN EASTERN TEXAS

Cliff Shackelford, TPWD

This presentation is led by Clifford, alongside Dr. Craig Rudolph, Dave Plair, Dan Jones, J. Howard Williamson, Richard R. Schaefer, and Joshua B. Pierce. They are affiliates of CES:

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Nacogdoches; DCR, JHW, RRS, and JBP: USDA, Forest Service, Southern Research Station, Nacogdoches; DEP: USDA, Forest Service, Sam Houston National Forest, New Waverly; DJ: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Huntsville. Beginning in 2008, they conducted winter bird surveys on restored prairies in the Sam Houston National Forest with the objective of quantifying avian use, especially by grassland sparrows in the genus *Ammodramus*. With the prairie conditions improved at these sites, winter use of these sites by two species of *Ammodramus* was quickly established, typically following the first post-restoration growing season. These results demonstrate that aggressive restoration of prairie remnants can rapidly re-establish prairie habitat and facilitate re-colonization by some avian species that rely on prairie cover.

MANUFACTURING MEADOWS: A Springwoods Village Case Study

Beth Clark, Clark Condon

This presentation discusses the process behind building a truly native, Texas meadow. Everything from plant selection and sourcing, soil amendments and implementing prairie-like conditions in an urban environment. A general outline for the presentation topics include: a Springwoods Village overview, introducing a new theory around meadows to developers, site analysis, planting scheme, plant sourcing and contract growing, installation and timeline, influence on the master-planned development and lessons learned.

OPPORTUNITIES AND KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL NATURE TOURISM OPERATIONS

**Miles Phillips,
Texas Agrilife Extension Service**

Presentation will present examples of nature tourism operations, pricing, liability, key terms and concepts for landowners and land managers, and also provide information on how to get assistance and how to find self directed resources. <http://naturetourism.tamu.edu>

PASTURES FOR UPLAND BIRDS: BUILDING HABITAT AND CON- SERVATION PRINCIPLES IN A FRAGMENTED LANDSCAPE

Tim Seigmund, TPWD

This presentation will illustrate the recent history with the Pastures for Upland Birds Program, and using it to build relationships with landowners. These relationships then have turned into larger projects, built a greater ecological understanding, and provided a point of conversation/ field trip location for other interested landowners. Will also discuss program and project process, development, and results.

PRAIRIE RESTORATION EXPERIENCES IN TEXAS

Jason Hohlt, NRCS

Each year, USDA-NRCS supports a significant amount of native grass planting across the state of Texas. From those experiences, five key challenges are apparent. Realistic expectations, seed availability, introduced grass species, precipitation, and maintenance are the most common issues NRCS assisted landowners tend to face when attempting prairie restoration projects.

USING FARM BILL PROGRAMS FOR NATIVE GRASSLAND RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT

Chuck Kowaleski, TPWD

The 2014 Farm Bill represents the largest source of conservation funding available in the U.S. today. While most folks think of the farm bill as being focused on encouraging commercial agricultural production, it can also be used to restore and manage native grasslands. This presentation will provide information on native grass friendly programs and examples of how they are being used in Texas.

TEXAS COASTAL PRAIRIE: Geomorphology and Restoration

Andy Sipocz

Texas' coastal plain is built from a series of coalescing fluvial deltaic deposits largely created during many rising and high stand sea level intervals. Relict geologic features including river channels and levees, meander belts, crevasse channel and splays and interfluvial sumps have created a geologic legacy of wetlands, prairies and forests. The close juxtaposition of differing soil textures, pH, and wetness has created a diverse, species rich arc of coastal prairie from southwest Louisiana to south Texas. Understanding the geology of the region is key to restoration of prairies and wetlands converted to agricultural uses. A restoration method employing this knowledge is described.

THE PRAIRIE LIBERATION ARMY OF ARMAND BAYOU NATURE CENTER (WANTS YOU!)

**Mark Kramer,
Armand Bayou Nature Center**

The Armand Bayou Nature Center (ABNC) is a 2500 acre wildlife refuge and environmental education center located near the western shore of Galveston Bay. With a limited staff, the ABNC relies on a dedicated volunteer team to implement every aspect of prairie management. This case study will include discussion of the assortment of ABNC volunteer types and teams as well as discussion of creating healthy soil for volunteers to grow.

BRINGING BACK THE "B'S"— RESTORING QUAIL HABITAT ON THE COASTAL PRAIRIE

Jim Willis, Wildlife Habitat Federation

Testimony provides how Wildlife Habitat Federation, a wildlife management cooperative, is effectively bringing back quail and other upland species by restoring native grasses/forbs. This requires the use of 3-man teams that are fully equipped to reclaim areas that have been abused for years.

GRASSHOPPERS IN COASTAL TALLGRASS PRAIRIES: What Factors Affect Grasshopper Communities, and Do They Matter to How Prairies Function?

Chelsea Prather, PhD, Radford University

Although grasshoppers are likely important in affecting plants and other animals in coastal tallgrass prairies, little is known about them. I will describe what we currently know about grasshopper communities in coastal prairie ecosystems through research that we have been conducting for the past few years. We have found that certain nutrients (calcium, potassium, and sodium) may be more important than previously thought to these communities, and that grasshopper diversity may be very important in affecting plant communities. I will also describe some new experiments that we have started to further investigate these findings.

MICROBES: A PRAIRIE UNDERGROUND

Kelly Shields, University of St. Thomas

Prairie restoration efforts currently focus on successional plantings aboveground while ignoring the microbial ecosystem underneath. Several agricultural studies have shown the importance of microbial communities in the success of commercial crops. However, the prairie microbial communities are a vastly unknown ecosystem that may be intertwined with our unique soil composition and plant biodiversity. Our research will examine the microbes, soil conditions and plant diversity of tall grass prairies in order to aid in the understanding of prairie establishment.

BIODIVERSITY OF URBAN POCKET PRAIRIES

**Cassidy Johnson and Rice Undergraduates,
Rice University Conservation Biology Lab**

Students will be presenting their data collected on native and invasive plants and pollinators from three, local urban prairie sites. The sites include the Harris Gully Natural area on Rice campus, the MD Anderson prairie in the medical center, and the Whistlestop Prairie at Hermann Park.

POLLINATORS AND NATIVES: An Ancient Marriage

Randy Johnson, Randy Johnson Organics

Pollinators and native plants co-evolved, they are intimately bound together. Flowering plants dominate terrestrial ecosystems and their associated pollinators serve a critical role in their existence; most species of flowering plants are insect pollinated. This presentation exposes problems facing native ecosystems and the pollinators that support them, it offers common-sense solutions that can be employed to help alleviate this important issue.

CREATING AN ECOSYSTEM SERVICES MARKET FOR PRAIRIES

**Jim Blackburn, SSPEED Center,
Rice University**

Creating an ecosystems credit market for southeast Texas can help save large acres of wild and farm habitats while providing landowners with much needed income.

THANK YOU

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