

# Society for Ecological Restoration Texas Chapter



## Restoration Field Notes

September, 2013

### In This Issue

[TXSER Newsflash](#)  
[Cool River Cabins Raffle](#)  
[Cooperative Management of  
 Riparian Vegetation...](#)

### Quick Links

[November Conference  
 Registration](#)

[Newsletter Archive](#)

[More About TXSER](#)

[More About SER](#)



## TXSER News Flash

The deadline for abstract and poster submissions for the November conference has been extended to Friday, September 27, 2013. For submission guidelines, please visit: [Call for Abstracts](#). We welcome your participation!

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## Conference Raffle Cool River Cabin, Junction

Enjoy two free nights at Cool River Cabin, privately located on the Llano River on the Native American Seed Farm outside of Junction in the Texas Hill Country.

Swimming, fishing, canoeing to the rapids are all possible in addition to a private tour of Native American Seed Farm.

The cabins are furnished with hand built mesquite wood furniture, and come with a full kitchen and central air. Offer is good for two adults + kids. Offer value is \$591.48. Raffle to be held on Saturday night. Be sure to pick up your tickets at the conference!

BTW - Cool River Cabin is available for rent on November 1-2. For more information visit: [Cool River Cabin](#).



Cool River Cabin, Native American Seed Farm, Junction

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## To Be An Intern

**By: Michelle Villafranca**  
**Natural Resource Specialist**  
**Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge**



FWNCR Intern cutting mesquite for a prairie restoration project.

Think back on how you got started in your career. Did you have an internship or a mentor? Was it easy to gain the experience you needed to become the expert you are today? Natural resource internships are not always easy to come by, especially paid ones. I remember my unpaid internship with Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. I didn't have a lot of disposable income and I had to drive thirty miles to get to my work site. Although I was not paid a wage, I still gained immense value through the experience and increased knowledge.

Passing the knowledge on to younger generations of 'ologists' is what we

enjoy doing at Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. Every summer, we hire student interns to work full time and assist in land management projects at the park. The park is a 3,621 acre natural area, managed by City of Fort Worth staff, which encompasses all the ecosystems that can be found in North Central Texas. From wetlands, riparian forests, prairie uplands and Cross Timbers savanna, interns are exposed to every aspect of managing the land for the benefit of wildlife and visitors.

Depending upon the prior knowledge and experience of the intern, we formulate a special area of emphasis. Past interns have studied the grazing patterns and forage preference of bison, feral hog detection and control, grassland avian studies, alligator territory and tracking, and native plant greenhouse management. If an intern comes to us with a more basic background in natural resources, we provide them with a broader base to build upon.



Interns and staff restrain an alligator to tag for research on tracking alligators and their territory at the FWNCR.

### Save the Date!

TXSER & TRA  
Joint Conference

### The New Ecology: Managing for Resilience in a Changing World

November 1-2, 2013  
Junction, TX

Join us along the banks of the South Llano River on the campus of Texas Tech University for the TXSER and Texas Riparian Association Joint Annual Conference.

For updates on registration, field trips, and program information, visit:

[www.txser.org](http://www.txser.org)



FWNCR Intern preparing to load soil into the skid steer bucket.

All interns assist in the daily operations of running a park. With over twenty miles of trails, maintenance becomes a top priority during the growing season. Interns receive extensive training on operation of hand tools and heavy equipment. Anything from using chainsaws to driving a tractor to operating a skid steer to pulling non-native invasive privet is fair game. Even construction projects like building bridges, building rock retaining walls, and welding!

One special experience that several of our interns have had the privilege to participate in is a summer prescribed burn. Prior to burn day, they scouted the location, helped cut the fire line, learned about the fuel load and potential fire behavior, and collected fuel moisture samples. On the day of the burn, they were on the fire line with hand tools. After the burn, we went back to the site to discuss fire behavior and its effect on the fuel. Although one burn is not enough to claim expertise, it does provide a better understanding of fire and its role in the ecosystem.

We are proud of each intern that has worked at our park. Each one has expanded their knowledge in a diverse range of subjects. Each one has helped existing staff grow; and in fact, has taught us new things about our world. New perspectives encourage new perspectives. No intern leaves the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge without increased confidence in their ability to do many of the activities that are involved in land management. We are training tomorrow's natural resource managers. And that's something of which we are proud!



Interns and staff pour concrete for an access ramp for a floating dock.

## Cooperative Management of Riparian Vegetation on the Big Bend Reach of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo

**By: Joe Sirotnak**  
**Botanist, Big Bend National Park**

In 2012 and 2013, Big Bend National Park and  
Área de Protección de Flora y Fauna Maderas del



Carmen, our sister protected area in Coahuila, Mexico, have stepped up our cooperative management of riparian vegetation on the Big Bend reach or the Rio Grande (named Rio Bravo in Mexico). We began working on small projects several years ago, working out the most effective methods. But in the past two years, together with our agency partners in the Big Bend Conservation Cooperative, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), and NGO partners Profauna, Mexico and World Wildlife Fund, we have successfully removed exotic giant cane from nearly 25 miles of the Rio above and through Boquillas Canyon.



Fire crews from the US and Mexican Diablos crews from Boquillas and San Vicente, Coahuila prepare sites for treatment using prescribed fire, 2012.



US and Mexican agency personnel and non-governmental partners (WWF & Profauna) spray cane in Boquillas Canyon on the Rio Grande, 2013.

Using a combination of 1) prescribed fire to gain access to dense stands and promote re-growth of green tissue, and 2) canoes modified to mount gas-powered high-pressure spray systems - affectionately termed "death-boats" - to apply aquatic-approved herbicide (active ingredient: Imazapyr), teams of US and Mexican firefighters and technicians have mounted nearly a dozen work trips and have reduced the once impenetrable stands of river cane to a handful of remaining patches, which we plan to tackle this fall. Monitoring plots are in place to both assess the effectiveness of treatments and track changes in channel morphology and riparian vegetation.

Other projects include monitoring the effects of the saltcedar leaf beetle (*Diorhabda spp.*), a biocontrol agent released in the area in 2009 which has now effectively reduced exotic saltcedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*) to a sub-dominant species in the reach. Unfortunately, the beetle will also sometimes damage athel (*Tamarix aphylla*), which, although exotic and potentially invasive, is an important shade tree in many riverside communities in the Big Bend. We are working with partners at Sul Ross State University and Universidad Autónoma Agraria Antonio Narro in Saltillo, Coahuila to assess these effects and protect shade trees.



Typical riparian vegetation of the Big Bend region of the Rio Grande before project initiation.



Same location two years after  
prescribed fire, herbicide treatment,  
and channel reset flood event.

These efforts are part of a larger bi-national Action Plan to cooperatively manage the Big Bend reach of the Rio. Implementation of these projects has been greatly enhanced by the recent re-opening of the Boquillas Port of Entry in Big Bend National Park, which allows park managers and crews to more effectively plan and implement bi-national projects.

In August, 2013, in Big Bend National Park, several NPS units held a Sister Park Planning Workshop with our sister parks in Mexico. At this meeting, we made plans for future collaborations on riparian management, river science, climate change planning, training and student exchanges, and forest and grassland management.

The Society for Ecological Restoration, Texas Chapter promotes ecological restoration as a means of sustaining the diversity of life on Earth and re-establishing an ecologically healthy relationship between nature and culture.

### **Become a member today!**

### **[Click Here to Join Us!](#)**

Join the Texas Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration. Chapter members receive valuable benefits including:

- the opportunity to network with restoration practitioners and enthusiasts;
- discounts to our Annual Conference, an opportunity to share and learn;
- invitations to attend volunteer workdays around the state; and,
- monthly updates and quarterly newsletters with articles and notices about regional events that allow you to connect to the local restoration community.

Chapter membership fees of \$15 support chapter administration. The TXSER Board of Directors consists of volunteers who share a passion for furthering ecological restoration in Texas.

Joining SER links you with a global restoration network. SER member benefits include:

- RESTORE bi-weekly e-bulletin;
- SERNews quarterly newsletter;
- discounts on journal publications;
- discounts to SER World Conferences;
- discounts on SER Career Center;
- access to a searchable, online member directory, and,
- promotional opportunities through the SER Calendar of Events, Restoration Project Showcase, and Restoration Marketplace.

To become a member visit: **[www.ser.org/membership](http://www.ser.org/membership)**

Be sure to click the Texas Chapter as your Chapter Affiliate. We look forward to having you join us!

# Save 10%

Become a member before the conference and receive the member conference registration discount. Between now and November 3rd save 10% on your SER membership fee.

- SER Individual Membership fee of \$50 is now \$45.
- SER Student Membership fee of \$20 is now \$18.

[Click here to take advantage of the discount.](#)

**Offer Expires: November 3, 2013**

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