



TXSER News Brief

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Spotlight: Texas Society for Ecological Restoration

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In the last year, writing this column has given us the opportunity to really dive into the heart and soul of some of our member organizations. These members have ranged from a pollinator organization to a local land trust, to private landowners, but they all have played an integral part in conserving Texas' natural heritage. The organization we have chosen to highlight this quarter, the [Texas Society for Ecological Restoration](#) (TXSER), is no different.

Founded in 1995, TXSER is one of 13 worldwide chapters of the [Society for Ecological Restoration](#) (SER) which consists of more than 2,400 members in over 70 countries. There are nine regional chapters within the United States, but due to Texas' vast size and wide range in ecosystems, it warranted its own chapter. TXSER is the professional society for restoration in Texas with a mission to "connect scientists, practitioners, and policy-makers to restore Texas ecosystems and the vital services they provide."

Decades of growth and development have impacted the aquatic and terrestrial environments that underpin the Texas economy and culture and that give rise to a diversity of plants and wildlife. TXSER is dedicated to reversing this trend by connecting individuals engaged in ecologically-sensitive repair and management of the Texas landscape.

TXSER's approach to achieving connectivity is three-fold:

Facilitating Communication & Networking: TXSER provides a number of opportunities throughout the year for members to learn and network with each other. From work days such as a spring visit to The Nature Conservancy's Davis Mountain Preserve and presentations at meetings around the State, to their annual fall conference, these events foster opportunities for dialogue, local learning, networking, and most importantly, greater restoration success and impact.

One area of connectivity that TXSER is particularly interested in fostering, is with students. “We love that there are students across the State studying, and conducting research on, everything from native seed propagation and dragonfly diversity, to pronghorn antelope and quail reintroduction,” exclaims Gwen Thomas, TXSER’s Executive Director. Along with an active SER Student Association at Texas A&M University in College Station, their annual conference provides opportunities for the next generation of restorationists to gain experience and network among professionals in the field.

Information & Knowledge Sharing: Monthly newsletters, [Ecological Restoration Briefs](#), and social media channels allow for broad based engagement with the restoration community on a variety of pertinent issues. TXSER also works closely with their parent organization in DC to disseminate up-to-date information on global trends in the restoration field and to facilitate national and global gatherings of scientists and practitioners.

Informing Policy: This is the newest area of focus for TXSER. According to Thomas, “we felt strongly that there was a gap in accessible information on legislative issues that affect restoration efforts across the State. We felt that TXSER had an important role to play in identifying, monitoring, and disseminating information on critical policy issues. Our goal is to be more proactive in the policy arena, getting in front of legislators, and educating them about the importance of supporting policy critical to the restoration of Texas land and waterways.”

With such lofty goals, it should come as no surprise that there have been some challenges along the way. The top-most challenges for TXSER are growth and sustainable funding. Though the field of restoration ecology is not new, in the past few years TXSER has seen their membership double and has experienced an exponential increase in the level of discussion and concern about restoration issues. “This is obviously a bittersweet challenge,” says Thomas, “bitter because the need for restoration of terrestrial and aquatic environments in Texas is at an all-time high and sweet because people are recognizing and rallying around the need to protect and restore Texas land and waterways.

This growth also comes at a time of decreased funding availability for conservation efforts in Texas and beyond. “This makes it all the more important to think in terms of the three ‘Cs,’ says Thomas, - connectivity, creativity, and collaboration. We need to be *connected* to, and share information with, people working on similar issues and projects so we are all making decisions using up-to-date science-based information and so we can avoid duplication of efforts. We also need to think *creatively* about solutions to restoration constraints and ways to capitalize on scarce resources. Lastly, we need to *collaborate* with people across disciplines, and across political, ethnic, social and community lines. This brings a diversity of experience and ideas to finding and implementing solutions to our pressing environmental problems which, these days, are more likely to be locally driven. I believe that TXSER fills an important niche, connecting scientists, practitioners, and policy makers and fostering opportunities for creativity and collaboration. The three ‘C’s,’ it’s my new mantra, laughs Thomas.”

In pursuit of these goals, TXSER’s biggest focus right now is on their annual conference. The event, which will be held November 10-12 at the University of North Texas in Denton, focuses on

[“Resilience and Connectivity at Our Roots.”](#) Dr. Ken Steigman, Director of the Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area (LLELA) and one of the founding members of TXSER, will be the keynote speaker, and a variety of field trips, dinners, and special events are already planned. For more details on the conference, please visit [TXSER’s conference website](#) or [Facebook page](#) .

The Texas Society for Ecological Restoration, connects scientists, practitioners, and policy-makers to restore Texas ecosystems and the vital services they provide.

For more information on TXSER visit: www.txser.org