

TXSER Board of Directors & Staff

Executive Officers



Kelly Lyons
President
Trinity University
San Antonio, TX
klyons[at]trinity.edu

Kelly is an Associate Professor of Biology at Trinity University. She is a botanist and ecologist who studies the influence of diversity on ecosystem functioning and invasive species dynamics. Her current focus is on restoration of native Texas grasslands. Kelly was a Fulbright Scholar in Mexico and her research is supported with awards from NSF, USDA, NFWF, among others. She teaches a range of science courses as well as study abroad in Latin America and China. Kelly also serves on the board of directors of the Friends of the San Antonio Natural Areas and as director of the McNair Scholars Program at Trinity University.



Kate Crosthwaite
Vice-President
HDR, Inc.
Spring Branch, TX
kate.crosthwaite[at]hdrinc.com

Kate is a Senior Ecologist and Project Manager with HDR's Conservation and Planning group. During the past 20 years, she has worked as, with, and for those who are tasked with managing federal properties to be natural, resilient landscapes. Kate specializes in natural resources management where she focuses on wildland fire management planning and risk evaluations, threatened and endangered species habitat evaluations and management, rare plant monitoring, invasive plant management and ecological restoration. Kate most enjoys having the opportunity to be in the field and particularly loves learning about new systems and landscapes from managers who are devoted to protecting our natural environment.



Colin Shackelford
Treasurer
Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, West Texas Native Seeds, TAMU-Kingsville
Alpine, TX
colin.shackelford[at]tamuk.edu

Colin Shackelford has been with the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute since 2011 as the Project Coordinator for West Texas Native Seeds. Colin was raised in Houston and is a seventh generation Texan with a long family history in central and west Texas. He received his B.A. in Psychology from Austin College in Sherman, Texas, and his M.S. in Rangeland Ecology from Texas A&M University in College Station working under Dr. Fred Smeins on perennial grass response to long term drought, herbivory, and topographic variation on the western Edward's Plateau. Colin's most recent experiences include positions as a grant projects manager for the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute as well as the Director of Stewardship for The Nature Conservancy's Davis Mountains Project in far west Texas. He has worked on grassland and wetland restoration projects on the coastal tallgrass prairie of southeast Texas as well as ponderosa pine forest and pinyon-juniper savanna restoration in the mountains and grasslands of west Texas.



Matt McCaw
Secretary
City of Austin, Water Quality Protection Lands
Austin, TX
wmmccaw[at]gmail.com

Matt is the Senior Biologist for the City of Austin Water Quality Protection Lands program. He leads grassland restoration, environmental monitoring, and research on approximately 11,000 acres of conservation land for the purpose of protecting and improving the quality and quantity of water recharging the Barton Springs Segment of the Edwards Aquifer. Areas of expertise are ecosystem services, adaptive management, integrated pest management, environmental writing, and wildland fire. Matt holds a M.S. in Land Resources from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a B.S. in Biology from Southwestern University.

Geographic Representatives



Charlotte Reemts
West Texas Representative & Past President
The Nature Conservancy
Austin, TX
creemts[at]tnc.org

Charlotte is the Research and Monitoring Ecologist for The Nature Conservancy in Texas. She works with preserve managers, partners and private landowners to design, implement and analyze research projects related to local management objectives. Her projects include grassland management and restoration, prescribed fire response of longleaf pine, wildfire response in oak-juniper and ponderosa pine woodlands, bird habitat characterization, and rare plant monitoring. She received her M.S. in Plant Biology and Ecology from Michigan State (2005) and a B.S. in Biology from Susquehanna University (2001).



William Forbes
East Texas Representative
Stephen F. Austin State University
Nacogdoches, TX
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Bill is an Associate Professor of Geography and Sustainability at Stephen F. Austin State University in East Texas, where he has taught classes since 2005. He organized monthly volunteer restoration events while completing his doctorate at the University of North Texas. Bill also incorporated restoration into his dissertation focus on the Sierra Madre Occidental of Mexico. He currently engages students in restoration at the Texas Land Conservancy's Banita Creek Preserve, a short walk from campus.



Michelle Villafranca
North Texas Representative
Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge
Fort Worth, TX
michelle.villafranca[at]fortwprthtexas.gov

Michelle works at the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge (FWNC&R) as the Natural Resource Specialist. In addition to her role on the TXSER board, Michelle serves as a chapter and state board member of Native Prairies Association of Texas. She has worked with partners and volunteers to develop the *Prairie Seekers* Prairie Assessment and Mapping Program; in addition to organizing prairie assessment training. At the FWNC&R, Michelle is responsible for oversight of the *Restoration Greenhouse & Seed Collection Program* and restoration projects using plant material from the greenhouse. She oversees many natural resource projects with the help of volunteers including, but not limited to, invasive species control, trail maintenance, and establishing biological surveys to determine baseline data to monitor habitat restoration activities. She also organizes special events and provides public education opportunities. Michelle actively contributes to collaborative projects at other City parks and stormwater sites, as well as working with other organizations on regional projects and conferences.



Forrest Smith
South Texas Representative
Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, South Texas Natives, Texas Native Seed,
TAMU Kingsville, TX
forrest.smith[at]tamuk.edu

Forrest is the Dan L. Duncan Endowed Director of the South Texas Natives (STN) and Texas Native Seeds (TNS) Projects at Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute. He is 7th generation Texas from Mullin, TX. Forrest holds a B.S. in Range and Wildlife Management from Texas A&M University – Kingsville (2003). He began work with STN in 2001 and has led programs since 2008. His primary responsibilities are in support of the commercialization of native seed selections, thereby enabling restoration of tens of thousands of acres annually. Forrest's major work also includes collaboration with TxDOT and energy producers to improve restoration efforts. Forrest's article in *Ecological Restoration* entitled "Texas Today: A Sea of the Wrong Grasses" remains a top five most-read article of the journal since publication in 2010. He has authored a wide range of publications and delivered presentations on native plant restoration. Forrest presented CKWRI's work at the 2015 World Conference on Ecological Restoration in the United Kingdom. He is a passionate advocate for native plant restoration in Texas.



Ingrid Karklins
Central Texas Representative & Student Association Liaison
Environmental Survey Consulting
Austin, TX
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Ingrid recently completed her Master of Natural Resource Development at Texas A&M University. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Ecological Restoration (Summa Cum Laude), also at Texas A&M University, in 2014. An Undergraduate Research Scholar, her thesis was titled *Post-Fire Response of Bryophytes in Association with Understory Vascular Plants in the Lost Pines Ecosystem of Central Texas*. As Ecologist with Environmental Survey Consulting in Austin Texas, Ingrid is responsible for monitoring and managing site restorations and quantifying results to inform future decision-making, practices and policy. One of her favorite projects is conducting vegetation experiments and assessments at the Spicewood Ranch and curating the ranch's herbarium. Ingrid also serves on the board of the Texas Riparian Association.



Alejandro Fierro Cabo
South Coastal Representative
University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley
Brownsville, TX
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Alejandro is an Assistant Professor at UTRGV. He was formerly Professor at the Universidad Autonoma de Tamaulipas as well as Director of the Department of the Environment for the City of Tampico. At UTRGV Alejandro focuses on assessing the ecological status of reconstructing or degrading systems, based on functional attributes including organic matter turnover, carbon and nitrogen cycling, and structural attributes. He also explores interspecific relationships with potentially significant influence on the natural or assisted recovery of native plant associations. Current aquatic projects being developed focus on estuaries linked to the lower Laguna Madre and local freshwater wetlands (resacas). Terrestrial projects involve animal dispersion, predation and protection of seeds from representative species in palm and thorn forests, and interactions between invasive grasses and native species. Habitats of higher interest include: mangrove, seagrass and other estuarine habitats, sabal palm forest, tamaulipan thorn forest, coastal prairie, and coastal dunes.

North Coastal Representative
Position Open

Staff



Gwen Thomas
Executive Director
Richardson, TX
gmthomas_eco[at]fastmail.fm

Gwen serves as TXSER's Executive Director. With expertise in bringing diverse stakeholders together to address environmental concerns, Gwen provides focus, strategic planning, and coordination of TXSER's activities as a knowledge-based, network organization seeking to improve communication and collaboration among research scientists, practitioners, and policy makers. Gwen has worked in the U.S., throughout Central America, and in Nepal on environmental policy, agro-forestry, NGO strengthening, resource management, and environmental education. She holds a M.F.S. in Forest Science from Yale University's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and a B.A. in Anthropology from William Smith College. She is a Blackland Prairie Master Naturalist involved in local prairie restoration projects.