

Society for Ecological Restoration

Texas Chapter



Restoration Update

January, 2016

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TXSER Newsflash

Happy New Year to all our friends and colleagues. This new year has started off with some fabulous weather and we hope that you all have been able to get outside and soak up some sunshine and fresh air while working on the many wonderful projects that you all have on deck.

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More About SER

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And...speaking of those projects, we look forward to learning more about what you are doing to restore the land and waterways of this amazing state that we call home. If you have ideas for projects that you would like to see highlighted in our newsletter and/or photos we would love to hear from you. Additionally, we would love for you to share with us restoration talks, discussions, workdays... happening in your part of the state and help you get the word out to our membership and beyond. Send us dates, times, and contact info. and we will include them in upcoming newsletters. All communications should be directed to Gwen Thomas, TXSER's Chapter Coordinator, at gmthomas_eco@fastmail.fm.



Amphibious assault on boardwalk demolition (otherwise known as fishing for boards) at the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge.

**Photo credit:
Michelle Villafranca, FWNCR**

On another note, as you all may know SER (international) has been undertaking a global restructuring process to address concerns that have been raised by different chapters and members throughout the

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For up-to-date
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We also post a wide range of
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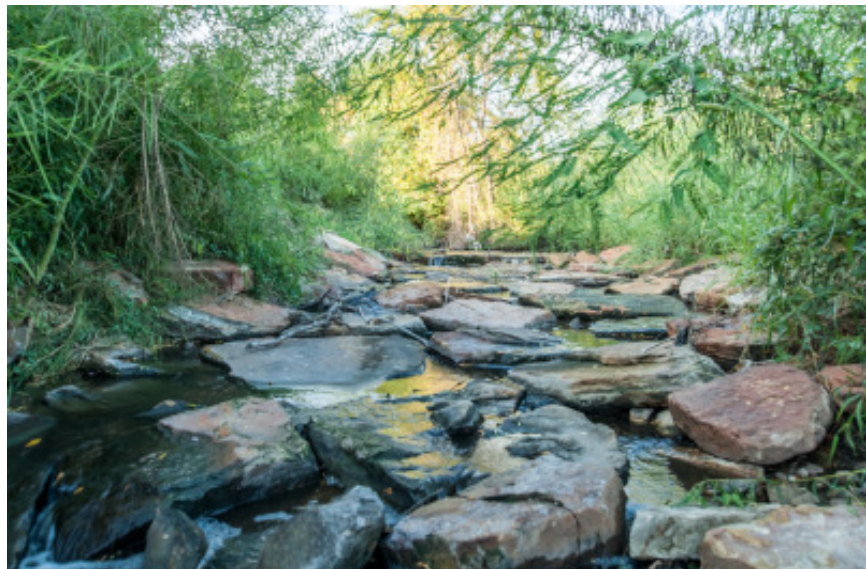
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world. This process began with an ad hoc committee of board and chapter representatives in 2013. It was followed by extensive research in 2014. All SER members were invited to participate in a survey regarding global restructuring in July 2015, and then on a first draft in August 2015 and a second draft in November of 2015. The SER Board (global board) will be voting on the final global restructuring plan at their March 2016 Board Meeting. The plan will be shared with all upon its completion. We will keep you updated on any and all changes that may effect our chapter.

We hope your 2016 is off to a great start!

TXSER Student Association News

The Texas A&M Society for Ecological Restoration Student Association had two exciting guest speakers during the fall semester.



White Creek

Photo credit: TAMU Gardens & Greenway Project

In October, Dr. Doug Welsh, Professor and Horticulturist Extension Emeritus gave a tour of the White Creek Restoration Project in the Texas A&M Gardens & Greenway Project Area. For more information on this project visit: [Gardens & Greenway](#).

In November, Lori Hazel, Staff Forester II, Water Resources and Ecosystem Services Program, Texas A&M Forest Service spoke on "Best Management Practices for Water Resources and Riparian Health Assessment." For more information on BMPs for Water resources visit: [Water Resources BMPs](#).

Member Spotlight

Name: Sohyun Park

City: Lubbock , TX

Affiliation: Assistant Professor,
Texas Tech University

Briefly describe your ongoing efforts/interest in ecological restoration.

I'm interested in restoring urban habitats to increase urban biodiversity. Prior to joining Texas Tech's Landscape Architecture faculty, I directed a private research institute that, collaborating with Korea's Ministry of Environment (equivalent to the EPA in the US), worked on an urban habitat restoration project. Combining the work of herpetologists, amphibian ecologists, and landscape architects for two consecutive years, this project focused on creating new habitat opportunities for endangered species while preserving existing habitats in an urban environment. My research team contributed to this project by developing a habitat model based on the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) and spatialization guidelines for two endangered species, the narrow-mouth frog and Reeve's Turtle. Research-wise, I'm interested in promoting environmental stewardship aimed at the development of a more sustainable society and reliant on evidence-based design and planning through the application of landscape and restoration ecology to urban, environmental, and land planning.



**Sohyun Park on a rainy day field trip to the
Lower Rio Grande Valley Wildlife Refuge.
Photo credit: Class Student**

Briefly describe if, and how, climate change has affected your work. Changing climate significantly affects those of us who study and practice ecological restoration. The urban restoration project I described above, for example, uncovered substantial evidence of climate-change-related destruction and loss of the narrow-mouth frog and Reeve's Turtle habitats, loss that resulted in these species being designated Climate-Sensitive Biological Indicator Species (CBIS) in Korea. In another example of the effect of climate change on my work, a project on which I worked revealed the size reduction a significant number of inland and coastal wetlands are undergoing as they-partially as the result of climate change-transform into drylands. The question of how to deal with issues resulting from climate change features centrally in the emerging ecological restoration research agenda.



In search of Reeves Turtles on field trip to China.
Photo credit: Sohyun Park



Reeves Turtle (*Mauremys reevesii*)

Describe your favorite outdoor activity. I love walking along natural trails surrounded by thick, dense pine forests, especially if I can see water nearby. Being outside and feeling green and living things always gives me a sense of satisfaction.

What is your favorite Texas plant and/or animal? I love aquatic plants, particularly those living in wetlands. With an expansive native range that includes both Texas and Korea, Narrowleaf Cattail (*Typha angustifolia*) has been my favorite plant since I first encountered it in Korea's western Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) during my Master's work. Another plant that fascinates me is Texas Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*). I do like ground cover plants producing thick and compact foliage, and this species is perfect in this regard if it is in full sun. Texas Frogfruit shows off its beauty in both form and function. Its nectar attracts butterflies, and its morphological arrangement and flower shapes are also attractive to me in my work as an aesthetics-minded designer. Texas Frogfruit is also resilient: it can tolerate both drought and flooding, making it ideal for areas undergoing frequent climate change events.

Gus Engeling WMA Post Oak Savannah Restoration

By: Tucker Slack, Certified Wildlife Biologist
Gus Engling WMA - TPWD, Tennessee Colony, TX

The [Gus Engeling Wildlife Management Area \(GEWMA\)](#) located 21 miles northwest of Palestine in Anderson County is operated as a state-owned wildlife research and demonstration area for the Post Oak Savannah Ecoregion of Texas. The main goals of this 11,000 acre property include developing and managing wildlife habitats and populations, conducting research of wildlife populations and habitats, demonstrating sound habitat management to landowners

and interested groups, as well as providing hunting and appreciative use of wildlife in a manner consistent with the resource.



Gus Engeling WMA in 1961. Photo credit: TPWD

According to eyewitness accounts of this area in the mid 1850's the landscape has dramatically changed. This type of conversion is well documented and is one of the leading causes for the plight of grassland dependent species nationwide. Uplands once dominated by waist high grasses have now become heavily forested woodlands with closed canopies allowing very little sunlight to reach the ground. With European settlement came many changes to the landscape which also impacted wildlife resources. Armed with this information, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) set out to restore the historic grassland component on approximately 2500 acres of oak-dominated uplands.

In 2010, after a decade of planning, a pilot scale project geared at researching woodland savannah restoration methods was undertaken. This project focused on increasing herbaceous growth by removing canopy cover and protecting riparian areas on approximately 500 acres. Three 15-acre clumps, or mottes, of trees were left undisturbed in order to provide diversity. The project also included creating a 50' mowable fireline along the boundary of the area in order to enhance existing prescribed burning efforts. Prescribed fire is one of the most important and underutilized habitat management tools of the region.



**Gus Engeling WMA Savannah Restoration project site before timber thinning.
Photo credit: TPWD**

In order to streamline project delivery TPWD partnered with the [National Wild Turkey Federation \(NWTF\)](#), who was responsible for hiring contractors and administering funding. The original plan was to remove the canopy and use the proceeds to mulch the fireline, control woody regrowth, and reseed native grasses. The site would then be maintained using prescribed fire on a 3-5 year rotation. To our surprise, once the canopy was removed the native herbaceous response made reseeding unnecessary, even in a drought. This provided both valuable seedbank viability information, as well as important additional funding for controlling woody regeneration.

The completion of the pilot scale project not only provided grassland habitat, but also allowed TPWD an opportunity to refine our goals. Based on challenges faced and lessons learned in the pilot project, canopy thinning rather than removal was chosen as a more effective strategy to provide high quality wildlife habitat. Timber thinning would allow us to retain important mast production while still providing for native herbaceous growth, thereby maintaining the area as highly functioning woodland similar to its historic condition.

We are currently partnered with the NWTF and are conducting a 2000 acre timber thinning operation on the project area. We expect a positive herbaceous response and hope that the project will allow future timber thinning operations to be performed on the Gus Engeling WMA.



**Gus Engeling WMA Savannah Restoration project site after timber thinning.
Photo credit: TPWD**

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Upcoming Events

1. Longleaf Pine Centennial Forest - Big Thicket National Preserve

Help reforest a 300 acre area of longleaf pine habitat in the Big Sandy Creek Unit by planting 100,000 seedlings in 2016.

Planting Event Dates:

Saturday, January 23, 2016

Saturday, February 6, 2016

Saturday, February 20, 2016

Saturday March 12, 2016

To volunteer please contact: Big Thicket Visitor Center at 409-951-6700 or Ken Hyde:
ken.hyde@nps.gov. Website: www.nps.gov/bith

2. Texas Pollinator PowWow

Learn about Texas plants and pollinators, the conservation challenges they are facing, and how you can help. Topics range from native plants and bees to monarchs and bats to best management practices for urban and rural landowners.

Museum of Texas Tech University
Lubbock, TX

April 22-24, 2016

For more information visit: www.texaspollinatorpovwow.org/

A Heartfelt Thanks to the Following Organizations & Individuals for their Generous Support of our 2015 20th Anniversary Conference!!



EARTH DAY
TEXAS 2016



Charlotte Reemts

Suzanne Tuttle



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