



2011 TSSRM President Matt Wagner and Outstanding Young Range Professional Forrest Smith

Texas Section Society for Range Management
Outstanding Young Range Professional
Forrest S. Smith

The Outstanding Young Range Professional Award is presented by the Society to an individual member who has demonstrated extraordinary potential and promise as a range management professional.

This year's award winner has been a member of the Texas Section since 1999. He has a degree in range and wildlife management and a minor in biology.

While in college, this individual completed several internships at ranches and research facilities. Most notably, he began working as a student technician with South Texas Natives in 2001. South Texas Natives is administered through the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute (CKWRI). Many concerned landowners within the South Texas region had approached CKWRI about the lack of availability of plant material adapted to the region. In addition, questions about exotic grass management, conversion, and range restoration related to oilfield activities were flooding CKWRI. Through the grass root efforts of landowners and managers partnering with CKWRI, South Texas Natives was born. When he began working for South Texas Natives, his exceptional leadership qualities caught the attention of industry veterans. Now, 10 years later, he has worked in every job South Texas Natives had to offer; from the bottom to the top. He attained the top position of South Texas Natives Director in 2009.

As South Texas Natives Director, he not only oversees seed collection, increase, release to growers, and demonstration plantings in South Texas, but is also leading an expansion of the project to Central and West Texas. He has received grants from the Texas Department of Transportation, Texas

Parks and Wildlife, and other funding sources exceeding \$2 million to fund South Texas Natives. He was invited and now serves on the Board of Directors of a new 501C3 called "Taking Care of Texas," an initiative by First Lady Laura Bush. He has greatly excelled in every step along the way.

This year's award winner has been very productive since entering the range management profession. He has obtained and inventoried nearly 1,800 native seed collections, authored 13 plant release documents, and served as an editor of the Restoration Manual for Native Habitats of South Texas. In the last couple years, he has become a frequently requested speaker throughout Texas on the topics of range seeding and range restoration. He has authored or coauthored 30 publications, including articles in Native Plants Journal and Ecological Restoration. He has presented several papers at state and national SRM meetings and has served as a peer reviewer for manuscripts in Native Plants Journal and Rangeland Ecology and Management.

He has also excelled as a partner and team member. He is a member of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Landowner Incentive Program Review Committee, the Texas Invasive Plant and Pest Control Board, the Society for Ecological Restoration, the Native Plant Society of Texas, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, and the Texas Wildlife Association. He also serves the Texas Section Society for Range Management as an Activities and Education committee member.

He is also now recognized statewide as an expert botanist. Landowners, managers, students, and other range professionals regularly consult with him for assistance identifying unknown plants. He is always willing to make time to provide this sort of help.

He is also recognized as an aspiring photographer, especially when it comes to plants and landscapes. His photos regularly grace the covers of Texas A&M Kingsville and Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute publications. He served as the principle photographer for the Restoration Manual for Native Plants of South Texas. His pictures have won best of show twice at annual TSSRM meetings. He has also had the honor of having one of his photos on the cover of Rangelands magazine (December 2008).

Our award winner's accomplishments speak volumes for his success to date. A strong work ethic, attention to detail, and a positive attitude have helped him become a valued resource for all those who work with him. He has displayed excellent ability to cultivate productive relationships with both landowners and conservation groups. His practical knowledge of ranching, wildlife management, and range ecology have allowed him to excel as an educator to people of all walks of life. He is regularly consulted by both landowners and conservation groups to share his knowledge of plant ecology and native ecosystems in various areas of the state. It is undeniable that he will continue his success working with the range resource and people who use it.

His professional interests center on the restoration and management of native South Texas plants. Current projects include a variety of experiments to develop effective restoration methodology for the variety of habitats in Texas, and the development of additional native seed releases in order to provide high quality, diverse native seed mixes for consumers.

Aside from work, Forrest Smith and his wife Patricia have three young children, Mary Anna, Grant, and Lila. When possible, he makes every effort to enjoy the rangeland resource as an outdoorsman. Forrest enjoys wing shooting, traditional bow hunting, and is regularly found wade fishing the windswept shores of Baffin Bay.