



SWCD Director Royce Herbort Re-Elected, Oct. 2007

Royce Herbort of Doss was re-elected to the Gillespie County Soil & Water Conservation District board of directors. Royce represents Zone 3, which is the area north of Highway 290 West and west of Highway 87 North. At the October 15th, 2007 monthly board meeting, Royce was elected Chairman, Patrick Kunz is Vice-Chairman and Guenther Ottmers, Jr., is Secretary-Treasurer. Directors James Wahrmund and Clayton Grona complete the board, and both are past district chairmen.

The conservation district's boundaries are the same as for Gillespie County. Its 675,000 acres are divided into five zones; each zone has one director elected once every four years. Each director is a rural landowner within their zone of Gillespie County. The District gives technical assistance to all land users in Gillespie County through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Gillespie County Extension Office, and Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI). We're involved in many activities to educate people about range and wildlife management, and preserving and protecting the county's soil and water resources.

The district is a separate legal subdivision of state government organized by local agricultural landowners with the assistance of the Texas State Soil & Water Conservation Board. Conservation programs managed by the district are voluntary to the landowners or operators or other potential users of the SWCD's programs.



Pictured left to right at the November 2007 board meeting are: Patrick Kunz, Royce Herbort, Joe Freeman (TSSWCB Field Rep.), Tom Hammer (NRCS), Melissa Grote, Guenther Ottmers, James Wahrmund, and Clayton Grona



Cedar Management and Maintenance

By Amanda Kirchner, Range Management Specialist, NRCS Fredericksburg Field Office

Many landowners have joined in the efforts to control invasive species such as ashe juniper (cedar) through numerous mechanical methods. Ashe juniper has become a disliked and intolerable plant to many local ranchers that see it as a menace to the landscape. Although ashe juniper is a native species to Texas, it has encroached upon areas outside its' historical boundaries due to the lack of management, overgrazing and non use of prescribed burning.

The drive to eradicate this species has been forthcoming and in many areas a success for landowners that wish to increase forage production for their livestock. Once cedar has been



cleared, landowners should defer grazing from livestock. Deferment is essential to the re-establishment of native plants. If livestock are allowed to graze in areas where juniper has just been removed, the native seedlings are the first to be consumed. It is important to allow time for native plants to re-establish in order to prevent overgrazing and soil loss. In most cases native grasses require a minimum deferment of ninety days during the growing season (April 1 – November 15th). Depending on the density of ashe juniper, a longer deferment may be necessary.

The first treatment is only the beginning of a sound brush management program. Once the initial battle has been fought and the time and financial commitment invested, many forget the importance of follow up treatment. Ashe juniper can be easily treated by mechanical methods such as dozing, shearing, or hand cutting. The problem with this species is not removing it from the land, but keeping it removed. Ashe juniper produces small blue berries which are a favorite food for many bird species. These species will often consume the berries and in doing so disperse the ashe juniper seed in areas around their resting sites. It is common to see a dense stand of seedling juniper under most hill country trees.

It takes true dedication to manage ashe juniper. One would need to take a pair of snippers on a regular basis to remove the multiple seedlings that have already surfaced. It is more economic to tackle the young seedlings regularly than to shear or doze adult trees occasionally. Prescribed burning is a great tool for managing ashe juniper seedlings. Not only is prescribed burning cost effective, it is also time efficient. Gillespie County has a prescribed burn association for those that want to learn how to use prescribed burning as a management tool. It is important to remember that brush management is not a one time cure all. Managing ashe juniper takes commitment and dedication, but is definitely a worthwhile venture. For more information on brush management or other conservation concerns, contact your local NRCS office at 830-997-3349 ext. 3.





Outstanding Conservationists Named for 2008

Dr. Curtis Eckhardt will be honored as Outstanding Resident Conservation Rancher at the district awards banquet in March, 2008. Like many ranchers, Dr. Eckhardt also works in town; you might know him from the Fredericksburg Veterinary Hospital on North Llano Street in Fredericksburg. Dr. Eckhardt and his family run about 80 head of cattle and 600 meat goats. He became a cooperator with the Gillespie County SWCD in 2005 and has since then cleared brush, planted seed, built cross fences, and installed a solar-powered windmill.



Liza and Jack Lewis will be honored as Outstanding Wildlife Conservationist at the March 2008 awards banquet. Theirs is a long-standing program to improve the quality of native wildlife. Working with Mike Regan of Texas Parks and Wildlife, one of their many accomplishments was to manage the deer population and raise magnificent whitetail deer. Liza gave the opening remarks at the Beef and Range Field Day in May 2007, and showed several outstanding examples of trophy bucks from their ranch.



Liza posed with Tom Hammer of NRCS at the May 2007 Field Day.
(Photo by Dee Ann Cameron)

Note: The Fall Field Day on October 1, 2009 will be held at the Lewis Ranch.



How Much Livestock Can Your Ranch Support?

by Pat Kroll, District Manager, Gillespie Co. SWCD

The number of livestock animal units per acre that a specific location can support varies substantially across the county, and will change from year to year depending on rainfall and weather conditions. Figuring ideal animal units is more involved than just keeping enough cows or goats to meet your ag exemption requirements. To determine your ideal herd size, many logical factors figure into the equation. Some of these factors are:

- ✓ Soil type and depth
- ✓ Native and introduced grass type and quantity per acre
- ✓ Browse types and quantity available (shin oak, live oak, etc.)
- ✓ Forbs available (broad-leaved herbaceous plant that is not a grass)
- ✓ Seasonal and annual rainfall totals
- ✓ Water quality and water quantity; and watering location.
- ✓ How long the pasture has rested since it was last grazed.
- ✓ Native wildlife that will share what your livestock eat and drink.

The *National Range and Pasture Handbook*, an extensive NRCS publication, explains more than can be said here, but it's available (in individual chapters) on the Internet at <http://www.glti.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/publications/nrph.html>. It was updated in June 2006. "NRCS' mission is to provide quality assistance to the owners and managers of rangeland, pastureland and other grazed lands using appropriate science and technology to manage, enhance, and, where necessary, restore these grazing land ecosystems." Availability of this handbook on the Internet for individual use goes a long way toward that mission. Use the index to see what chapters apply to you, then download what you need. If you have questions, NRCS staff can help answer them.

To determine recommended stocking rates, you need to identify your grasses and plants, learn when they're best for grazing, and figure out how many pounds per acre you have. Forage quantity and quality vary, depending on soil and plant types. Plant Identification classes and Field Days, which are sponsored by the Gillespie Co. Soil & Water Conservation District and NRCS, can help you identify your plants and grasses and which livestock like them best. We can also explain how to measure your forage production, and teach you about grazing management.

Forage yield also fluctuates according to changes in rainfall. Dry years produce less forage and cause plant cover to deteriorate. Seasonal rainfall effect varies, depending on when it falls. Spring and early summer rains are critical because that's when 60 to 70% of the total forage is produced. Rains from August through October trigger another growth period. With plentiful winter rainfall, deep more fertile soils may produce grasses and forbs in late winter and early spring.

Once you know your available forage, you can better understand the animal unit equivalents chart.



Animal Unit (AU) Equivalents for Domestic Livestock, Native Wildlife, & Exotic Wildlife

Kind of Animal	Body Weight (pounds)	Daily Average Forage Intake (pounds)	Annual Forage Intake (pounds)	Water Intake (gal./day)	Animal Unit Per Head	# Head per Animal Unit (rounded)
Domestic Livestock						
Beef Cattle (cow)	1,000	26.00	9,490	6-18	1.00	1
Horse	1,100	33.00	12,045	4-12	1.27	1
Domestic Sheep (ewe)	130	4.55	1,661	1-4	0.18	6
Dorper Sheep (ewe)	130	4.55	1,661	1-4	0.18	6
Spanish Goat (nanny)	90	4.05	1,478	1-4	0.16	6
Boer x Spanish Goat (nanny)	125	5.00	1,825	1-4	0.19	5
Angora Goat (nanny)	70	3.15	1,150	1-4	0.12	8
Native Wildlife						
White-tailed Deer	100	3.50	1,278	1-2	0.13	7
Mule Deer	135	4.72	1,725	1-2	0.18	6
Pronghorn Antelope	90	3.60	1,314	1-2	0.14	7
Exotic Wildlife						
Axis Deer	150	5.25	1,916	2-3	0.20	5
Elk	800	24.00	8,760	8-12	0.92	1
Blackbuck Antelope	75	3.00	1,095	1-3	0.12	9
Mouflon/Barbado Sheep	120	4.20	1,533	2-3	0.16	6
Audad Sheep	200	7.00	2,555	2-3	0.27	4

This chart is based on work by Steve Nelle and Stan Reinke, and on text in the *National Range and Pasture Handbook*. The standard concept on an Animal Unit is one 1,000 lb. beef cow consuming an average of 2.6% of her body weight daily throughout her yearly production cycle. Actual daily consumption will vary considerably throughout the year.

Young of the year (calves, lambs, kids, fawns) are considered as part of the mother until weaning. After weaning, they are considered a separate animal and should be added.

Stocker cattle are usually calculated as 0.1 Animal Unit per 100 pounds of body weight.

For wildlife species, the AU equivalent is based on a normal population consisting of females, males and yearling animals. If a specific herd has an unusually high proportion of females, the average weight will be lower and the AU equivalent may need to be adjusted.

Rainfall and forage yields information based on Use of Soils for Range, by Rudy J. Pederson, range conservationist, in Soil Survey for Gillespie County, Texas.



Spring Beef & Range Field Day was May 10, 2007

at the Gillespie Co. Fairgrounds, Fredericksburg, TX. Program topics were:

Opening Remarks by Liza Lewis of Lewis Ranch (Usener Ranch). Liza gave a brief history of the ranch and told about their management and feeding program for native deer and how prescribed burns were used to help control brush over the past several years.

Wildlife Management, Mike Reagan, Texas Parks and Wildlife. Mike spoke about the importance of managing the numbers and ratios of deer on your property.

Range Management and the Benefits of Prescribed Fire, presented by Charles Anderson, USDA NRCS and Allen Ersch, Gillespie Prescribed Burn Association.

Pond Management, Dr. Michael Masser, Texas Cooperative Extension.

Field Day included Exhibits on Grazing Land Management, Solar powered windmills, and Cedar Shearing with an attachment for 4-wheelers.

Gillespie Co. SWCD wants to thank all the speakers for making the program such a success. We also want to thank the following for their donations toward field day: American Bank of Texas, Arrowhead Bank, Broadway Bank, Edmund Jenschke, Inc., Gillespie Livestock Co., and Grazing lands Conservation Initiative.

We also want to thank the Gillespie County Fair and Festivals Assoc. for hosting field day at the fairgrounds. And special thanks go to nearly 40 residents and businesses who contributed the door prizes that we gave away. Their names and prizes they gave are listed on our web page at www.gillespiecountyswcd.org/EventsDoorprizes.html.

Fall Field Day was held Sept. 27, 2007

at the Gillespie County Farm Bureau in Fredericksburg, TX. The program included:

Ricky Neffendorf, Farm Service Agency, talked about County Committee Elections for Community 2 and he explained the Livestock Compensation Program.

Allen Ersch, Chairman of the Gillespie Prescribed Burn Association (GPBA), talked about considering plentiful fuel loads as part of a brush control plan. He also encouraged people to mow or shred grasses around houses, barns, haystacks, hunting blinds, and other outbuildings to help protect their property from grassfires this winter.

Dr. Rick Machen, Livestock Specialist for Texas Cooperative Extension at Uvalde, talked about Beef Cattle and How to Get the Most for Your Investment. He used examples to explain reproductive calculations, what cattle breeds bring the best prices, the worst month to sell, and how a steer's total weight affects price per pound.

David Oehler, Gillespie Central Appraisal District, explained the property appraisal system. He stressed that it's a privilege - not a right - for landowners to have an Agricultural Exemption, and he listed the legal requirements for obtaining and keeping the exemption.

Phillip Wright, with Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI), manned an informational booth about grazing management.

Gillespie Co. Soil & Water Conservation District thanks the following for their support for the Fall Field Day, held on Sept. 27, 2007:

Kiolbassa Provision Company
JEK's Pit Stop/Strocher & Olfers
HEB Food Stores
Gillespie County Farm Bureau
Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative



Cody Frantzen Attended the 2007 Youth Range Workshop

Cody Ryan Frantzen was chosen to attend the 53rd annual Youth Range Workshop at the Texas Tech University Center at Junction from June 17th to June 22nd, 2007.

Cody attends Fredericksburg High School and is active in the FFA Chapter in Gillespie County. He was sponsored to attend the workshop by the Gillespie County SWCD and the NRCS.

The workshop is sponsored by the Texas Section Society for Range Management, and it's held each June for outstanding Texas students. The workshop trains youth in range and natural resource management, stewardship, and leadership. Gillespie County SWCD traditionally sponsors one or two students to attend each year. Youth wishing to attend the workshop next year should contact their Ag Teacher at school.

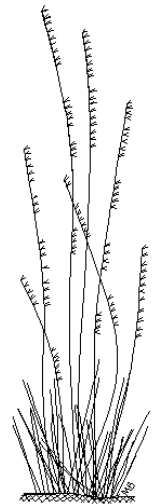


Cody Ryan Frantzen



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