

GILLESPIE COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2017

Texas Brigade



By Mark Moore

My name is Mark Moore I am 16 years old. I live just outside of Fredericksburg, Texas and I am interested in whitetail deer and other wildlife. Just this past April, I learned about an organization called the Texas Brigades.

The Texas Brigades is an organization that teaches youth about wildlife, habitat, conservation and even how to become better leaders. After hearing about their summer camps, I knew that it would very interesting and well worth my time, so I decided to apply to participate in one of the camps.

About a month later, I received an email notifying me that I had been accepted for the South Texas Buckskin Brigade which is one of their camps that is specifically focused on Whitetail deer.

Naturally, I was super excited because I had not only been accepted but I had also been chosen for my first choice camp. The camp took place in mid-June in South Texas - in other words - it was going to be hot! Upon arrival I knew that this would be a challenge.

When I arrived at camp, I was pretty stressed out because I had been sick the week before and I was afraid that being so active during the next couple days was going to make me sick again.

Almost immediately

after my arrival, I was introduced to my herd leader and his assistant who took me to the bunk house where I would be sleeping. At the bunk house, I met my fellow cadets. One of them was a home schooler like me and it was also his first time with the Texas Brigades. He and I became great friends and were able to help each other throughout camp.

When all the cadets had arrived, we were taken to the class room where we met our instructors. Next they took us outside for our first presentation which was a detailed necropsy of a whitetail doe. Although I was stressed out at first, I soon became too interested and was having too much fun to worry about it.

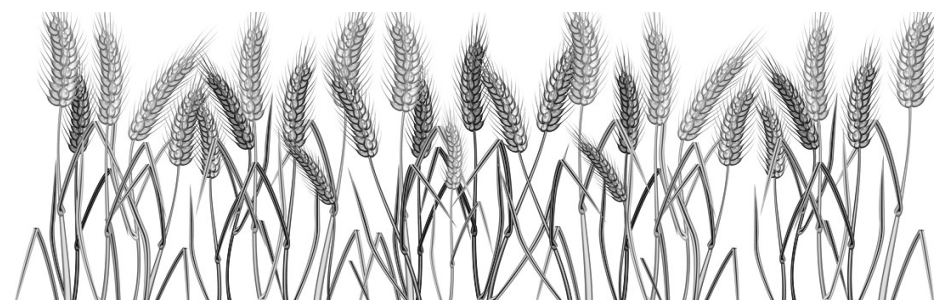
From the beginning, the instructors kept us busy with fun activities and presentations. Although the majority of activities involved deer and their habitat, there were also many that challenged us to use teamwork in order to reach a goal. Almost every morning, we started the day at 6 a.m. by marching and practicing cadences. However, one morning we got up before sunrise to observe wildlife waking up over a large wetland. After marching, we were fed a great breakfast that kept us going until lunch. When breakfast was over, we would alternate between the classroom and field activities.

I enjoyed being outside the most, but the classroom allowed us to cool off from the South Texas heat. The rest of the day would continue like this until they released us at 11:30 p.m. On the last night, we worked on a project until 2 in the morning.

Before going to bed each night, we were encouraged to make a journal entry or to study. This meant that we didn't make it to bed until 12:30 on most nights. You don't get much sleep at Texas Brigades, but is more than worth it.

I am thankful to have attended a Texas Brigades camp this summer. It has taught me much about Whitetail and other wildlife that we have been blessed with. The Texas Brigades is an amazing opportunity for youth that are interested in hunting or even just photographing wildlife, so if you are interested in wildlife in any way, I would encourage you to apply for one of the camps this next summer.

I would like to end by saying thank you to all the instructors and others who work hard to make The Texas Brigade camps possible. I would also like to thank my sponsors, including the Gillespie County Soil and Water Conservation District who made it possible for me to go.



Conservation Continues in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

No one knows more about conservation than NRCS. We can develop a conservation plan tailored to your land and your goals to help you increase the productivity and protect the value of your land.

USDA recognizes that conservation by farmers, ranchers and forest owners today means thriving and sustainable agriculture for our future.

Seventy percent of the nation's land is privately owned and conservation of our nation's private lands not only results in healthy soil, water, air, plants, animals and ecosystems, but it also provides productive and sustainable working lands.

NRCS offers the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) which provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion

and sedimentation or improved or created wildlife habitat.

Benefits: Eligible program participants receive financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices, or activities like conservation planning, that address natural resource concerns on their land. Payments are made to participants after conservation practices and activities identified in an EQIP plan of operations are implemented. Contracts can last up to ten years.

Eligibility: Agricultural producers and owners of non-industrial private forestland and tribes are eligible to apply for EQIP. Eligible land includes cropland, rangeland, pastureland, non-industrial private forestland and other farm or ranch lands. Socially disadvantaged, beginning and limited resource farmers, Indian tribes and veterans are eligible for an increased payment rate and may receive ad-

vance payment of up to 50 percent to purchase materials and services needed to implement conservation practices included in their EQIP contract.

Applicants must: Control or own eligible land; comply with adjusted gross income limitation (AGI) provisions; be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements; develop an NRCS EQIP plan of operations.

Additional restrictions and program requirements may apply.

For more information, visit with NRCS in Fredericksburg at 1906 North Llano Street, #106, call 830-997-3349 ext. 3, or consult the NRCS website.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

The Gillespie County Soil and Water Conservation District provides technical assistance to all land users in the county through the Natural Resources Conservation Service field office at 1906 North Llano Street, #106, in Fredericksburg, (830) 997-3349 ext. 3.

The Gillespie County Soil and Water Conservation District prohibits discrimination in its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply in all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotapes, etc.) should contact the SWCD office at (830) 997-3349 ext. 3. "An Equal Opportunity Employer."

LAND STEWARDSHIP: PROVIDING WATER FOR TEXANS

Saving the water and the soil must start where the first raindrop falls. Lyndon B. Johnson, 1947

Texas farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners have a long history of voluntarily conserving the natural resources entrusted to them. Living off the land provides a great incentive to conserve and make the most of available resources. Today, Texas farmers, ranchers, and foresters produce more food, fuel, and fiber than ever on a greatly reduced number of acres, using no more water than was used in the 1950s. In addition, wildlife management on working ranches has resulted in the conservation and recovery of a number of wildlife species.

Due to the prolonged drought in Texas, many of the state's agricultural producers have sought to aggressively adopt innovative technologies and on-farm conservation practices to combat the impacts of drought and improve profitability. Some of these conservation practices, such as grazing management, cover crops, and wildlife habitat enhancement, are lower-cost management practices that can have subtle impacts when implemented on thousands of acres. Other practices, like irrigation efficiency improvements and targeted brush removal and management, provide a greater benefit to Texas' water resources, but can be very costly to farmers and ranchers.

Understanding the Benefits of Land Stewardship:

Unfortunately, as more Texans move from rural to urban areas, they generally become less mindful of their reliance on the land and its natural cycles as well as the variety of benefits they derive from the voluntary stewardship provided by private landowners throughout the state. As a result, many today do not recognize that land stewardship, which provides water for Texas, is a responsibility that should be shared by all Texans. Key concepts to understanding this important link include:

- Ground and surface water supplies originate with the rain that falls on the land and is captured by complex, large-scale ecological processes involving many variables, including

plants, animals, soils, and geology. When these processes function optimally, floods are reduced, aquifers are replenished, and water is released more slowly and steadily into springs, streams, rivers, lakes and eventually our bays and estuaries.

- When the natural processes are working well across millions of acres of productive agricultural, forest, wildlife and recreational lands, the contribution to the state's water supply can be tremendous, "creating" more water for all Texans.

- The rainfall soaks into the ground as opposed to running off and carrying soil and sediment. The absorbed groundwater reappears as springs which drain into creeks, streams and rivers, which eventually feed the bays and estuaries, thus providing a base flow of water for all Texans. Land stewardship on millions of acres, combined with community conservation efforts, translates into what may be the most significant contribution to water conservation today.

- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, voluntary land stewardship allows Texans to consider water at its origins, not just at its destination.

We should encourage voluntary land stewardship – on a grand scale – as one of the cornerstone solutions for water issues in Texas because it is complementary, cost-effective, sustainable, efficient, environmentally sensitive, multi-faceted and manageable. The efforts of private landowners are vitally important because the presence of voluntary land stewardship helps maximize the effectiveness of all other water management strategies.

Look and see what you can do to make a difference on your lands and through your everyday activities to help provide more water for Texans.

THANK YOU to All Who Support the Gillespie County SWCD

Businesses and individuals support the SWCD in many ways, and we appreciate all their help! They donate door prizes, assist with Field Days, sponsor conservation awards, help with funding district activities, provide meeting or field day locations, publicize events by newspaper and radio, loan us equipment, and assist the district all year long.

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at 830-997-3349 ext. 3**

Call Gillespie SWCD For Grass & Wildflower Seeds

Gillespie County SWCD's main purpose is to provide support to landowners.

To help earn funds for our conservation district, we sell grass seed, and wildflower and wildlife seed. A few of the grass seeds offered are Kleingrass, Wilman Lovegrass, WW-B Dahl, Sideoats grama, Indiangrass, and Little Bluestem. The best time to plant this type of grass seed is February - May.

However, other seed mixes are more for fall planting, like fall deer mix, fall grazing mix, or fall clover mix. Wildflower mixes for fall planting are available, too. Bluebonnets especially need to be planted in the fall, so that they can come up in November or December.

We have several Texas grasses for seed, and you can choose from a large selection of grass, wildflower, and wildlife seeds in bulk. We can give you a list of available seeds and prices, and can help select your seed and recommend seeding rates. If we can't answer your questions, NRCS is happy to help.

We order seed for you; it's shipped to us - and we call you when it arrives. You pay for seed when you pick it up. Depending on the price per pound and quantity ordered, a small shipping charge may be added.

Why not come by or call us to see how we can help with your next seed order.

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2017 Area Conservation Awards Banquet

Each year the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board holds a poster and essay contest for students to enter. The Gillespie SWCD organizes the contest for their local students. These entries are judged at the local soil and water conservation district level. These winners are honored here in Fredericksburg with an Awards Banquet and Hamburger Supper for the winners and their families. Each winner is then entered in the TSSWCB for competition on the area level. Gillespie SWCD District Directors also attend the Banquet.

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Brush Management

Brush is a general term for woody shrubs and trees which are out of place, given the landowner's objectives. In Central Texas, landowners are most commonly referring to types of juniper (aka "cedar"), mesquite, prickly pear, and occasionally scrub oak.

Historical accounts show that issues with brush and attempts at managing this brush have occurred in Texas since European settlement in the 1800's. Prior to that, fire and buffalo herds often kept brush confined to particular areas in a landscape.

Identify Objectives and Inventory Woody Species:

The first step in managing brush is to be clear of your land objectives. Depending upon your goals and knowledge of plant uses, brush may quickly become a "visual screen" or "wildlife cover."

After gaining knowledge about your land objectives, it may be time to assess each woody species and determine where and how it should be decreased or managed. Remember that you don't have to clear it all to be successful. Any brush management is best done in phases. You will learn something nearly every time you clear or thin an area, and mistakes are hard to take back.

Methods of Control:

There are usually several ways to control brush. Using a multi-method approach will usually get the best results.

Mechanical: For mesquite and redberry juniper, grubbing with a back hoe or specialized dozer blade is the preferred way to kill the brush. Grubbing involves lifting the root crown above the

ground.

For juniper (Ashe juniper or eastern red cedar), equipment can simply remove all green limbs and the brush will die. This can be done with bobcat shears, hydro-axe grinder, or dozer blade. Keep soil disturbance to a minimum! Soil erosion can be devastating until grasses reestablish. Rocks can also be brought to the surface causing future management problems.

It is also beneficial to protect hardwoods which could benefit your management objectives.

Chemical: Generally used on smaller juniper and mesquite, follow label directions to avoid harming yourself or desirable plants when using herbicides for chemical brush control. Contact experts and review expert material such as Brush Busters <http://texnat.tamu.edu/BrushBusters> for a more extensive list of range species and how to control them.

Fire / Prescribed Burn: This is nature's brush control method, and it can improve range and forest health when used in conjunction with other conservation practices. Prescribed fire can be very effective and cost efficient on juniper under five feet tall. It is important to contact experts and develop a burn plan before considering using fire as a management tool.

Goats: It is possible to clear small juniper and other woody brush with goats, although this is not a preferred method. Goats will generally eat everything else first before consuming juniper. This method should only be used

December-February when juniper is the only green plant in the pasture.

Manage Leftover Debris: Leftover debris can be substantial. Management of this debris should reflect your land objectives. Burning brush should only be performed with knowledge and under extreme caution. Have equipment on hand to control spot fires and never leave a burning pile unattended. Some brush debris can be used as bird and reptile cover, as a deer enclosure around hardwood regeneration, or to slow down water on slopes.

Prevent Brush: Managing livestock with proper stocking levels can help prevent brush encroachment. Tall, thick, healthy grasses will often out-compete woody seeds trying to sprout. Prescribed fire can also be effective as brush prevention tool. This is especially true when grass is tall and healthy. Cool, winter burns usually do the trick. However, as you gain more experience, hotter, warm-season burns can also be helpful. Focus on clearing small re-growth brush where the benefits are the greatest and the expenses are the least.

Remember Wildlife: Brush has irreplaceable wildlife benefits when managed properly. Cover, edge-effect, and food are uses for brush. Brush benefits many kinds of birds, reptiles, and mammals. It is also important to research the endangered species in your area to see if brush management may impact their habitat.

Fall Range Tour

The Fall Range Tour was held on Oct. 5 at the Gillespie County Fairgrounds.

About 80 people attended the event which began at 5:00 p.m.

Three Continuing Education Units were offered.

The first speaker was Dwight Sexton, a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent from Gonzales County. Dwight has worked with the the Luling Foundation on a series of winter forage variety trials for the last two decades. The Luling Foundation is an Agricultural Demonstration Farm which is comprised of 1100 plus acres, located on the western edge of Luling, Texas along the San Marcos River. Dwight shared some of the highlights of working with legumes, small grains and rye grass in winter forage trials.

Our last speaker was Dr. Vanessa Olson, Associate Professor and Forage Extension Specialist from Overton, Texas. Dr. Olson talked on a variety of subjects, including weed control in permanent grass fields. She shared some insight on management practices to manage KR Bluestem and grass burs in forage fields.

Dr. Olson also covered the lifecycle and treatment options for army worms.

The event was sponsored jointly by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Gillespie County Soil & Water Conservation District. Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin. We seek to provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Utilities Inventory - Call Before You Dig

Construction of conservation practices on your property could endanger life and property involvement of utilities located in the construction area.

Because of this, NRCS is required to inform you of the state law requiring you and/or your contractor to notify:

One-Call Board of Texas at 1-800-545-6005,

no more than 14 days nor less than 48 hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays, prior to starting construction/excavation activities.

You and/or your contractor are also responsible for notifying utilities who are non-members of the Texas One-Call System.

Some local utilities, including water, waste water, slurry and overhead utilities are not required to join a notification or one-call center.

NRCS can provide the form to use for Co-operator Confirmation of the One-Call Utility Safety System; people with EQIP contracts are required to have the completed One-Call form on file.

Spring Fish Sale

The Gillespie County SWCD will hold a Fish Sale this Spring. The date will be announced in the newspaper.

Just some of the fish that will be available are: Bluegill Sunfish, Red Ear Sunfish, Crappie, Largemouth Bass, Channel Catfish, Minnows (Fathead or Golden Shiners) and Goldfish. Grass Carp will also be available, you must have a permit for these.

You can stop by our office and pick an application or they are available on the Texas Parks & Wildlife website.

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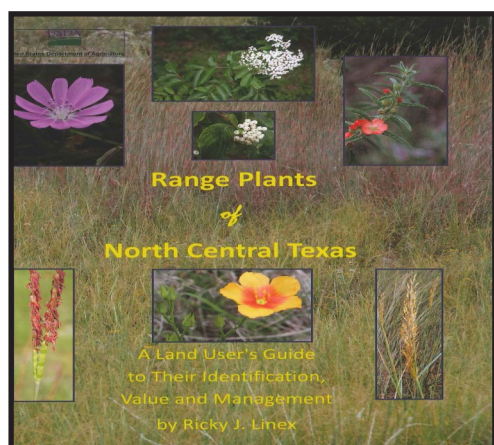
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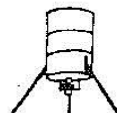
Range Plants of North Central Texas Book is available at the Gillespie County SWCD. It is a donation of \$25.00. You can pick yours up today at the office located at 1906 N. Llano Office # 106. Please call the office at (830)997-3349 ext. 3 with any questions.



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Gillespie County SWCD Equipment Rentals

The district owns rental equipment for agricultural use in the county. Weed sprayers and a seed spreader are kept at Beyer Fertilizer & Feed, 3446 Highway 16 North, in Fredericksburg.

You can make rental arrangements with Dwayne Beyer at (830) 997-9880. The sprayers each rent for \$2.50/acre with a \$50 minimum. The grass seed spreader with 700 lb. capacity rents for \$35/day.

The district's drip torch and small seeders are kept at the NRCS/SWCD office at 1906 North Llano. To rent our small equipment, call the SWCD at (830)997-3349 x3. The drip torch and cyclone hand seeder each rent for \$5/day. The seeder for a 4-wheeler rents for \$15/day.

SWCD equipment rentals are taxable unless used for agricultural purposes and an ag/timber number is provided for tax exemption.



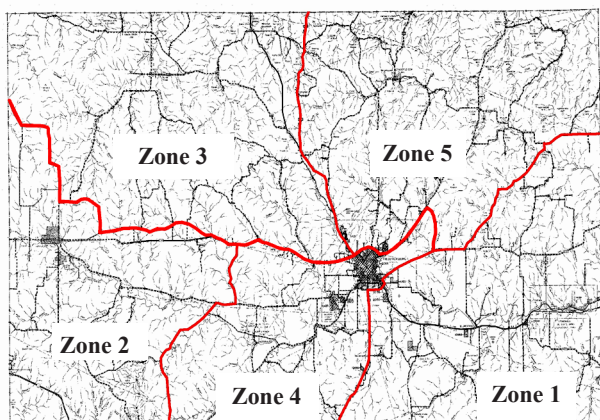
Gillespie County SWCD General Info.

www.gillespiecountyswcd.org

We are a member of the Assoc. of Texas Soil & Water Conservation Districts, National Assoc. of Conservation Districts and Texas Assoc. of Watershed Sponsors.

SWCD Directors are:

- Zone 1 Guenther Ottmers, Jr., Secretary-Treasurer
- Zone 2 Patrick Kunz, Vice-Chairman
- Zone 3 Neal Eckert, Director
- Zone 4 Cade Bonn, Director
- Zone 5 James Wahrmond, Chairman



We share office space with NRCS at 1906 N. Llano, Fredericksburg, TX 78624. Phone is 830-997-3349 x 3. SWCD office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (closed 12:00-1:00 p.m.)

NRCS hours are M-F 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (closed 12:00-1:00 p.m.), but staff may be out in the field on any given day.

Please call before driving in to meet with the SWCD or NRCS, to be sure the person you need will be there.

Please note: When you attend future educational events to earn CEUs toward renewing your private pesticide applicator license, bring your license number with you. When you register for CEUs, you will need to have your pesticide license number in order to receive a CEU certificate. Texas AgriLife can no longer accept your Texas Driver's License number in lieu of your private pesticide applicator license number when you register.

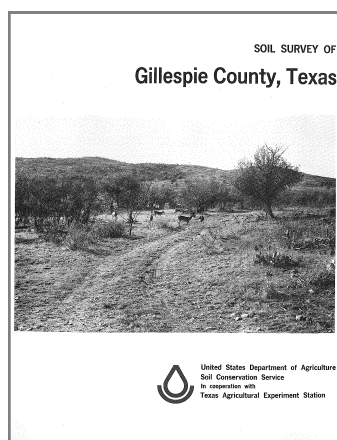
Free Soil Survey Book at NRCS Office 1906 N. Llano # 106 Fredericksburg, TX 78624

Our Fredericksburg NRCS office has extra copies of a book, *Soil Survey of Gillespie County, Texas*, published in 1975 by USDA Soil Conservation Service with Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.

While supplies last, anyone who wants a free copy may drop by the office & ask for one.

It has a color General Soil Map for Gillespie County and 77 detailed (b&w) soils maps which together cover the whole county. Soil types are described in detail and there are 40 pages about use and management of the soils.

The maps are also online at http://soils.usda.gov/survey/online_surveys/texas/. But if you'd rather read maps in a book, please come & get one.



FARM SERVICE AGENCY NEWS UPDATES

Acreage Reporting Deadlines for 2018 are as follows:

Oats is Jan. 15, 2018.

Wheat, barley and triticale is Feb. 15, 2018.

Native and Improved grasses is Nov. 15, 2017.

Note: Don't miss out on Live-stock Forage Program for 2018 if we become eligible. Report your acreage today.

Also, we are asking you to report your crop as soon as you have the crop planted. This will help eliminate the chance of missing these reporting deadlines.

Sign-up for Native and Improved grasses for 2018 NAP coverage is Dec. 1. NAP is an insurance program that covers these grasses in times of drought and other natural disasters.

Farm Record update: To participate in any USDA program, you must have a farm record established with FSA. We will need a survey plate, deed, name and address of the owner and/or operator. This information must be identified in the FSA software mapping system.

Producers can sign up for text messages by texting Txgillespie to FSANOW (372-669), on your phone now, to subscribe to text message alerts from Gillespie, Kendall and Blanco Counties. Standard text messaging rates apply. Contact your wireless carrier for details associated with your particular data plan. Participants may unsubscribe at any time.

For information about these programs or any other program or question you may have, please either stop by the FSA office at 1906 North Llano Ste 107 in Fredericksburg or call 830-997-3453 Ext 2 or 830-997-3713 Ext 2.

- Gillespie County Fair Grounds Hosted Spring Field Days 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007, 2006, 2004, 2002, 2000, 1996, 1990 and 1984
- Terry and Joan Bonn Fredericksburg, 2008
- LBJ National Historical Park Show Barn, Stonewall, 2005
- Snaffle Bit Ranch/ David Dewhurst, Fredericksburg, 2003
- Camey Stewart Willow City, 2001
- Henry Louis Welge Ranch Doss, 1999
- Ronald Stehling Fredericksburg, 1998
- Ted Masser, Harper, 1997
- Presley Arhelger, Doss, 1995
- LBJ Ranch, Stonewall, 1994
- Billy Teague, Crabapple, 1993
- Calvin Weinheimer Stonewall, 1992
- Kermit Kothe Fredericksburg, 1991
- McGinley Ranch, Harper, 1989
- LBJ Ranch, Stonewall, 1988
- Red Stone Ranch Stonewall, 1987
- Marvin Grona Fredericksburg, 1986
- Ken Sultemeier Fredericksburg, 1985
- Selma Apelt Farm/Vernon Fluitt, Fredericksburg, 1983
- Arthur Lynn Hahn, Doss, 1982
- Max Schmidt (Estate)/Rex Glover, Fredericksburg, 1981
- Kenneth Wahl, Stonewall, 1980
- Melvin Bonn Fredericksburg, 1979

Calendar of Events Beginning November 2017

Now until Feb. 1, 2018: Conservation Poster & Essay entries accepted at Gillespie SWCD office. Schools can call 997-3349 x3 and request that entries be picked up. Judging will be the first week of February. More information can be found at gillespiecountyswcd.org under Poster & Essay Contest.

Nov - May 31, 2018: Gillespie Co. Predator Contest; help control coyote, bobcat, fox and feral hogs. Sponsored by Gillespie County Agricultural Commodity Assn. Call 830-997-3452 for rules and prize info.

Nov. 18, Wild Game Dinner, Gillespie County Fair Grounds gates open at 5:30 p.m..

Nov. 24-26 : The Peddler Show, Gillespie County Fair Grounds.

Nov. 27: Gillespie County 5 - hour CEU Program at Gillespie County Extension Office.

Dec. 28: Holiday CEU Program at Gillespie County Extension Office.

Jan. 12, 2018: Gillespie County Youth Livestock Show, Gillespie County Fair Grounds.

March 21, 2018: Annual Hamburger Dinner and Conservation Awards, sponsored by the Fredericksburg Lions Club, Security State Bank and Trust, and Gillespie County SWCD.

2017 Annual TSSWCB Meeting

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board held its annual meeting on Oct. 23-25, 2017 in Galveston, TX. Gillespie County SWCD Directors Guenther Ottmers, James Wahrmond, Patrick Kunz, and Cade Bonn attended the meeting. They attended various meetings to examine issues relevant to the conservation of the state's natural resources. There were speakers from local, state, and national levels who addressed a wide variety of agricultural and conservation topics. The ATSWCD Live Auction was a record setting event raising \$8,790.

There were close to 600 conservation leaders, including district directors, district employees, and federal and state employees who attended.



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Fredericksburg field office provides technical assistance to land users in Gillespie County. NRCS Rangeland Management Specialist Jess Anderson will also be happy to help you with conservation concerns. NRCS' office hours are 8:00 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. The phone number is (830) 997-3349 x3. The NRCS Texas web site is at <http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

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Master Gardeners Will Answer Gardening Questions

Hill Country Master Gardeners are happy to answer gardening questions from residents of local and surrounding areas. Master Gardeners is a service group helping Texas AgriLife Extension to meet the community's horticulture needs.

To ask questions, please call 830-257-6568; send an email to kerr@ag.tamu.edu, or visit www.hillcountrymastergardeners.org. Contact them, they'll be happy to help you.



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