

Riparian Notes

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Growing Riparian Emphasis

It is heartening to observe the increasing emphasis being placed on riparian issues. Just in the last 45 days, there have been four separate events in central and west Texas to promote riparian education and understanding. A brief synopsis of these events may serve to highlight this new trend in natural resource awareness.

On October 1-3, the Texas Riparian Association held its first ever **Building Healthy Watersheds** workshop in Junction in the Llano River Catchment. Participants were given a crash course in upland water catchments, the upland-riparian connection, riparian function, channel types, channel evolution, and bio-assessment techniques. A field trip along the Llano River then allowed participants to see these things on the ground and to discuss observations.

Then, on October 26-28, the Natural Resources Conservation Service hosted a **Riparian Workshop** in San Angelo. Three members of the National Riparian Service Team presented the instruction to about 40 invited participants. The course involved a full discussion of the interaction of Soil – Water – Vegetation as it affects riparian function. The widely used Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) methodology of riparian assessment was presented. Another full day of instruction in specialized riparian grazing techniques was provided. Participants came away with the clear understanding that certain riparian grazing strategies can be as effective as exclusion in helping to restore proper riparian vegetation. A field trip to two separate reaches of West Rocky Creek provided the opportunity to practice the PFC procedure.

On November 8-11, a **Creeks and Communities** workshop for natural resource workers from Mexico and the United States was held at Big Bend Ranch State Park near Presidio. Of the 35 participants, about 20 were natural resource professionals from Mexico including the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Sonora, Durango, and Xalapa. The level of natural resource expertise and enthusiasm observed was very impressive. These Mexicans included university range management professors, wildlife biologists, fisheries biologists, forestry experts, anthropologists and others involved in sustainability issues. The riparian challenges in Mexico are formidable, but the level of commitment to bring about change is also great. Each of the participants is now expected to go back to his or her community in Mexico and help educate the local people about the vital importance of restoring adequate riparian vegetation.

On November 16, the Nueces River Authority hosted the first **Water Stewardship Conference**, held in Uvalde with about 120 people in attendance. The directors of NRA have made a commitment to hold a series of three conferences to focus attention on the role good land stewardship as an integral part of Nueces River Basin water issues. The program emphasized the relationship of the upland catchment, the riparian area, the river and the recharge of aquifers. David Langford, representing the Texas Wildlife Association, knocked the home run by emphasizing the fact that land stewardship by private landowners in the Nueces water catchment was extremely critical for base flow, which, in turn, is critical for recharge into the Edwards Aquifer. Other presentations emphasized the role of healthy riparian vegetation to create a nice big sponge to store water.

Make note of just some of the groups represented at these events. It gives a glimpse of the potentially far reaching impacts that this growing riparian awareness may have:

Landowners & Ranchers	Lower Colorado River Authority	Plateau Consulting
Texas Dept of Agriculture	Texas Wildlife Association	Full Stream Consulting
Texas Parks and Wildlife	Tx Soil & Water Conservation Board	Cow Dance Consulting
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Nueces River Authority	Bureau of Land Mgt
Instituto Nacional de Ecologia	Texas Cooperative Extension	World Wildlife Fund
Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative	Texas Nature Conservancy	U. S. Forest Service
Environmental Defense	Texas A&M University	Ridley Block Corp.
National Wildlife Federation	Texas Riparian Association	Sierra Madre Alliance
New Mexico State Lands	University of Chihuahua	Rio Grande Initiative
Solutions for Sustainability	Natural Resources Conservation Serv.	University of Texas
Texas Water Development Board	Instituto Mexico Americana de Cultura	Fuerza Ambiental