

Tall Cohort XVIII Session Three Recap

Tillery Timmons - Sims, 18

January 16 - 21, 2023

State Government: Issues and Policies “Leadership, Legislation, Laws”

The XVIII Cohort of The Governor Dolph Briscoe Jr. Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership Program, Session Three is timed to coincide with the 88th Session of the Texas Legislature and the Inauguration of Governor Greg Abbot and Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick.

Along with education on government agencies and offices, commodities, and the Texas Hill Country Region, the Cohort enjoyed participating in the TALL Alumni Reception. Sponsors of the TALL program were recognized, and Dr. Charles W. “Doc” Graham was awarded the Texas Agricultural Lifetime Achievement Award. The highlight of the evening was hearing from Texas Speaker of the House, Dade Phelan.

The Texas Poultry Federation, the Independent Cattle Raisers Association, and Senator Charles Schwertner hosted a reception for the Cohort in the Lt. Governor’s Reception Room at the Capital. Toby Baker, Deputy Chief of Staff for Governor Abbott, gave an update on the legislative session, the budget, and his work for the Governor.

While at the Capital, the Cohort was privileged to have open conversations with several legislators, including Representative Mary Gonzales, Ph.D. (TALL XVII), Texas Senator Lois Kolkhorst, and Cody Harris, whose TALL trip to California incentivized his run for office. It was an honor to ask hard questions and be given frank answers by all the speakers.

With 87% of Texans living east of I35, it is easy for legislators to be unaware of the needs in rural Texas. I had the pleasure of meeting Rep. John Bryant while eating lunch at the Capital. He seemed genuinely concerned about our area and asked thoughtful questions. Speaking with Rep. Bryant, I was reminded that those on the other side of the state, the aisle, and issues care deeply about Texans. This was evident in hearing from Rep Mary Gonzales as well. Mr. Opiela (Attorney, Fifth Generation Texas Rancher, TALL XII Alumnus) reminded us that the best leaders remember the Golden Rule. Specifically, Mr. Opiela instructed the Cohort to:

- Educate urban and suburban legislators on rural issues.
- Form alliances with urban and suburban neighbors.
- Participate in landowner groups - amplify your voice.
- Personal relationships--many urban and suburban legislators have land-educating them on how policies like taxes and freedom to farm impact them personally.
- Emphasize the political strength of Rural Texas-we are small in numbers, but the critical offset that allows current Republican leadership to govern Texas.

Southwest of the Capital, the community of Sonora and TALL alumni crafted opportunities for the Cohort to tour historical research, fed us around the chuckwagon, and at a luxury resort. Every moment was filled with education, including an introduction and update from Texas Department of Transportation Commissioner Alvin New hosted by JL Bar Ranch.

We met with ranchers and community leaders in Sonora, like Bob Malone, President and CEO of Sonora Bank. The leadership skills of this small town East Texas boy have been valued by the largest energy corporations in the world and folks in Sonora. He came to Sonora to retire until his neighbors asked him to help at the bank. As part of a strong set of core values, Mr. Malone's mother instilled in him a deep respect for diversity. She could not have known how well this would serve him as he spent his career working with cultures across the globe. He discussed topics from climate change (he recommended the book "[Unsettled](#)") to his leadership style. He allowed us to ask him questions and trusted us with his honest answers.

We learned about efforts to diversify with cattle, sheep, goats, and grapes from Dr. Ericka Campbell. Dr. Campbell is a scientist, co-owner of High Cross Vineyards, and married into one of the pioneering ranch families. The community and ranching industry has relied on the research at the Sonora Station for over 100 years. With limited funding, Dr. Doug Tolleson continues the research that is vital for the ranching industry.

Energy Attorney David Wallace gave an overview of the Texas wine-producing regions and why grape production is expanding around Sonora. In addition, Mr. Wallace shared his expansive knowledge of the emerging alternative energy industries. His overview helped clarify why alternatives are being pursued and where they are best located.

Like other parts of the state, around Sonora, ranches are breaking up and being sold to out-of-town owners that may need to gain the experience to manage their land. Along with other issues, this has led to an increase in predator pressure.

These ranches are isolated but close enough to the border that they are dealing with another type of predator - the Mexican cartel. The ranchers shared stories of the movements of the cartel across their land. They are locking their doors now - for the first time. Historically ranchers have encountered families and have tried to help meet their needs, but these are not families. These are mainly young men. They are sophisticated and well-outfitted and have been caught staking out ranches to track who is living there and their schedules. While law enforcement is occupied with the humanitarian crisis at the border, the cartel smuggles in members who are dispersing to cities across the state.

We live in troubling times. But we always have. We are resourceful and gritty. When we come together to solve a problem, we find solutions. TALL serves as an opportunity to build bridges across the miles and help bear the burdens of our neighbors. I hope that the information we share will help bring attention to valuable resources and encourage Texans to collaborate across the state.

“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.” Jesus Christ, Matthew 7:12

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STATE AGENCIES and ASSOCIATIONS: Texas State Capital, Room courtesy of Representative John Raney

[State Comptroller](#) Lisa Craven, Deputy Comptroller/Chief of Staff Comptroller of Public Accounts

As the CFO of the state, the Comptroller is committed to transparency. Ms. Craven is a reflection of that commitment. An engaging and open speaker, the Cohort enjoyed learning details of the State Gold Depository and the agency's efforts to compete with the likes of Google to maintain their employees.

The agency website provides multiple tools for Texans to access financial data and information on their programs. Time on their website is worthwhile. For further information, links are provided in blue. Click to be taken to the webpage.

Responsibilities:

- Tax Collection - over \$250 billion annually from over 60 different taxes, fees, and assessments
 - See where it comes from and where it goes at the [Dashboard](#)
 - [Downloadable Field Guide to the Taxes of Texas](#)
 - [Monthly State Revenue Watch](#)

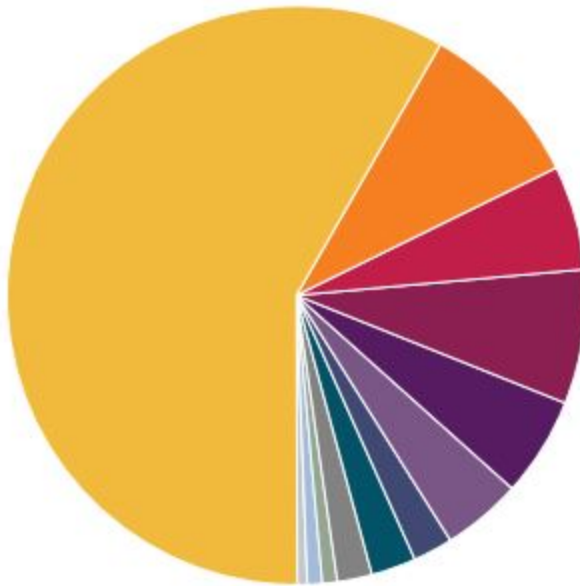
- [Budget](#) - the Comptroller certifies the budget
- [Accountant](#) for all state agencies - they even pick up and deliver the mail
- Unclaimed Property - [Online Auction Site](#)
- [Texas Gold Depository](#)
- [Investments from settlements](#) - Tobacco Buyout and Opioid
- [State Purchasing Manager](#)
- [State Energy Conservation Office](#)
- [The Texas Broadband Plan](#)
- [Texas College Savings Plans](#)
- [Tobacco Enforcement Program](#)
- [Criminal Investigation](#) - tax crimes
- [Natural Resources](#) - provide data that inform Endangered Species Acts decisions

State Tax Revenue By Source

FISCAL 2021

All Funds, Excluding Trusts

TOTAL = \$61,473,483,316



% OF TAXES	SALES AND USE TAXES
58.6%	\$36,019,605,414
9.3%	\$5,730,933,538
5.9%	\$3,596,891,570
7.4%	\$4,529,829,616
5.6%	\$3,449,131,602
4.4%	\$2,699,643,241
2.3%	\$1,397,304,315
2.6%	\$1,568,541,762
2.0%	\$1,257,444,097
0.8%	\$487,815,057
0.9%	\$538,814,591
0.3%	\$197,528,512

Source: Annual Cash Report 2021, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

Texas' total tax revenue rose by 7.1 percent in fiscal 2021, to \$61.5 billion. Most taxes saw growth over the previous year as the economy began to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Texas General Land Office](#), Texas Land Commissioner, Dawn Buckingham

“The Republic of Texas created the General Land Office in 1936. The oldest state agency in Texas, the GLO, was formed to determine who owned what and where after the Texans and Tejanos won independence. Today the General Land Office manages state lands, operates the Alamo, helps Texans recovering from natural disasters, helps fund Texas public education through the Permanent School Fund, provides benefits to Texas Veterans, and manages the vast Texas coast.”

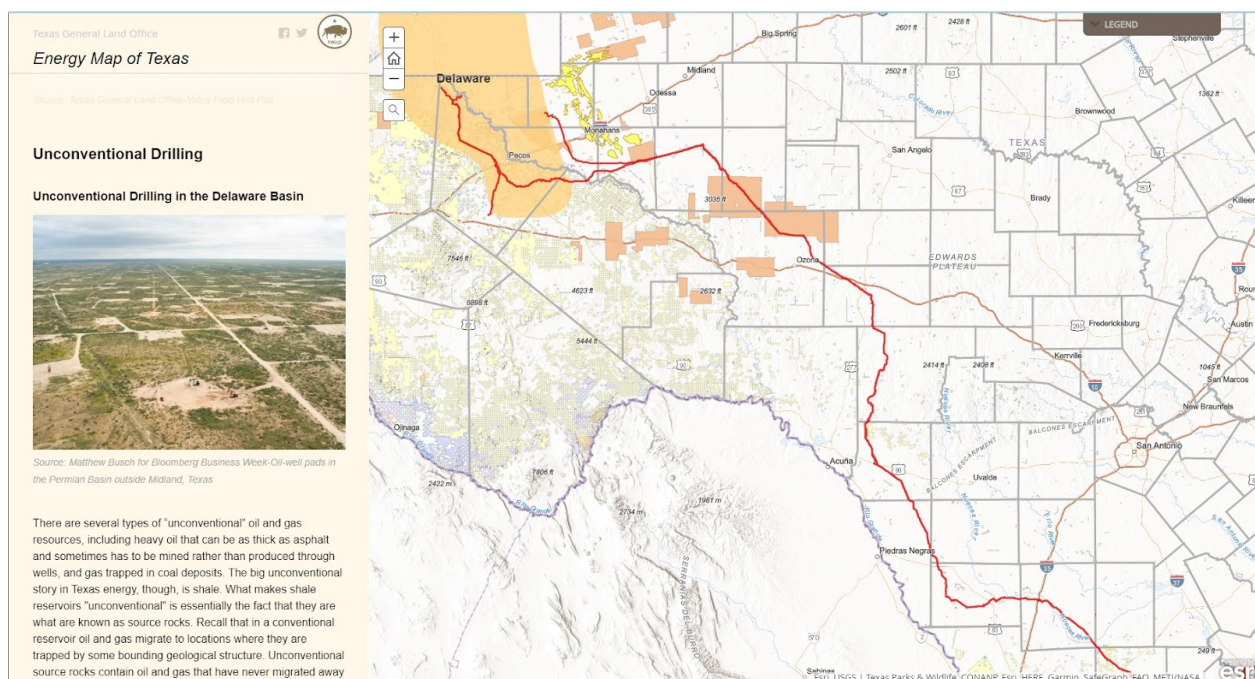
Fiery and energetic, Commissioner Buckingham runs the GLO with a deep commitment to Texas. The management of state lands and the vast Texas coast are the responsibility of the GLO. Unlike many other states, our 13 million acres of state land have not become federal. Oil and gas leases from these properties are managed by the GLO and have supplied close to \$17 million to the state [Public School Fund](#).

[The Texas Veterans Land Board](#), created in the Republic's early days, supports Texas veterans with land, home, and home improvement loans. In addition to the management of the VLB, [nursing homes](#), [veteran cemeteries](#), and the [Veterans Oral History](#) program are all under the care of the GLO. [The Texas Veterans Portal](#) "connects veterans, their families, and caregivers to the benefits and services earned through their military service."

Following natural disasters, the GLO's [Community Development and Revitalization](#) division is tasked to "rebuild Texas communities by putting Texans back in their homes, restoring critical infrastructure, and mitigating future damage through resilient community planning." According to Commissioner Buckingham, the GLO is building a dyke to run the length of the entire Texas coast. In addition, the GLO built the first section of the border wall and is currently buying and leasing all available land to continue the project.

Persevering Texas history through the management of the [Alamo](#) is not just a responsibility but a passion of the Commissioner. In need of much repair, updating and restoring the monument will be costly and time-consuming. But, the walls are no longer stable, and public safety is becoming an issue. The blocks around the church should be recaptured to reflect better the sacredness of the events that took place there.

A wonderful collection of historical maps are available for purchase on their website. Several are interactive, like this [George P. Bush Energy Map of Texas](#).



[Texas Attorney General](#) Aaron Reitz, Deputy Attorney General of Legal Strategy

The Office of the Texas Attorney General is the “*authorized representative of the state, prosecuting and defending all actions in which the state is interested before the supreme court and court of appeals.*” This statute allows the AG to be more “offensive rather than defensive.” That is how Mr. Reitz describes his job for Ken Paxton, the Attorney General, saying he is the “offensive coordinator.” One of over 700 lawyers and a staff of over 4,000, Mr. Reitz spends his day searching for threats to Texas. The office has sued the Biden administration 37 times over issues such as abortion, immigration, and the legitimacy of the Presidential election. Since we met with Mr. Reitz, the AG has filed three more suits, including the Biden Administration’s rule definition of the “waters of the United States” (“WOTUS”), which would expand federal control of Texas lands.

In addition, the AG has won settlements to recover funds from opioid manufacturers, oversees the most successful Child Support Division in the US, collecting over \$4.8 billion, and manages the Human Trafficking and Transnational Organized Crime units, among many other programs.

[Railroad Commission of Texas](#) Christi Craddick, Chairman

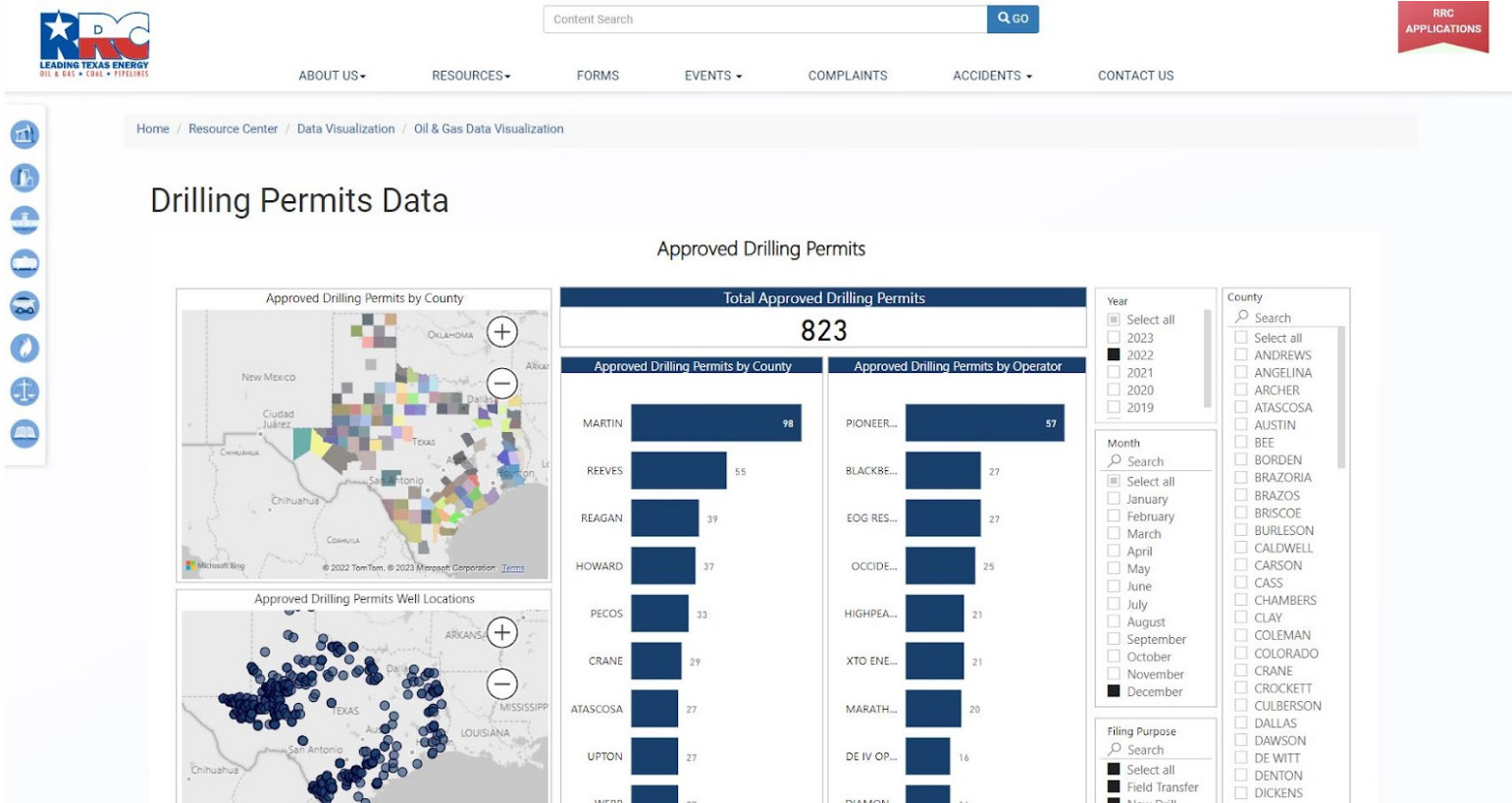
Established in 1891, the RRC is the oldest regulatory agency in the state. Initially created to prevent discrimination in railroad charges and tariffs, the Commission now regulates the oil and gas industry, pipeline transporters, natural gas utilities, the LP-gas industry, and surface mining operations. In addition, the Office is also responsible for enforcing several federal Acts, such as the Clean Water Act and the Pipeline Safety Act. The Texas Department of Transportation now oversees the railroad. Though the agency title needs to be clarified, a name change would not be worth the expense.

The RRC is led by [3 Commissioners](#) who rotate chairmanship and are elected to six-year staggered terms. With over a million and a half historic wells and 280,000 currently active wells, leading the regulation of Texas oil and gas is no small job. \$40 - \$47 million a day flow from oil and gas into the state, accounting for one-third of the economy and creating the largest state Economic Stabilization Fund (“Rainy Day Fund”) in the nation.

The capture and storage of carbon are expanding opportunities for the industry to meet the marketplace demand for carbon neutrality and creating additional market opportunities. The RRC’s [recent application to EPA for primacy](#) (sole jurisdiction) over injection wells would expedite the Texas market if approved.

When discussing the increase in population, Commissioner Craddick stated, “ Texas will need energy in every form.” She is not an opponent of alternative energy but a realist regarding how dependent we are on petroleum. So much more than energy, 96% of our everyday essentials are made from petroleum.

The RRC continues to upgrade its website making [data available and accessible](#) to the public.



Click on the picture for the Drilling Permits Data Page

[The Texas Oil and Gas Association](#) Neal Carlton, President of TXOGA Insurance Agency, Inc.

TXOGA represents “80% of Texas refining capacity, crude oil production, and the vast majority of pipeline miles.” Advocating for sound, science-based, free market principles and educating the public are high priorities for the Association.

TXOGA has released [yearly economic impact reports](#) since 2007. These reports reveal the economic impact of the energy industry. Still, they don’t begin to address the global importance of Texas oil, especially in the Permian Basin region. As technology advances to reach untapped oil reserves in the area, the Basin is expected to fuel the U.S. and global economies for at least the next two decades.

**THE TEXAS OIL & NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY
BY THE NUMBERS**

CLEANER ★ STRONGER ★ BETTER

\$15.8 billion
paid in state and local taxes
and state royalties in FY2021

\$43 million
a day

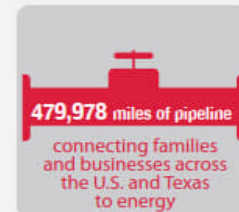
\$178.7 billion
paid from FY07-FY21



\$344.1 billion
impact on the state
economy in 2020

10.1%
of direct GSP

21.9%
of direct and indirect GSP



OIL



4.91 million
barrels of oil
per day

43%
of US crude oil
production



NATURAL GAS



29.9 billion
cubic feet of
natural gas per day

26%
of US natural gas
production



COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Energy-related CO₂ emissions
are at **generational lows**



Texas producers are
capturing more than
99.8% of natural
gas produced in Texas
for beneficial use

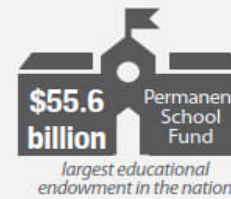
Methane emissions
intensity in the
Permian Basin
has declined

almost
70%
since 2011

More than
40 companies
and **7 trade organizations**
are a part of the
Texas Methane and
Flaring Coalition



FUNDING EDUCATION



\$1.84 billion paid to
Texas school districts in
property taxes from mineral
properties producing
oil and natural gas,
pipelines, and gas utilities

\$39.6 billion
Permanent
University Fund



Published January 2022

Working towards carbon neutrality “ methane emissions intensity in the Permian Basin declined nearly 70% since 2011 while oil and natural gas production increased by over 320% over the same period. The flaring rate in the Permian Basin in Texas is also at a record low. The U.S. has seen a 46% reduction in flaring intensity over the last decade”
Todd Staples, President TXOGA.

Since 1893, THAC has protected the state's domestic animals "from all contagious or infectious diseases of a malignant character." Historically the agency has battled multiple threats to livestock and poultry, eradicating or dramatically reducing threats such as Bovine Tuberculosis, FMD, screwworms, Swine Fever, Equine Infectious Anemia, Pseudorabies, Brucellosis in domestic swine, and currently addressing the latest outbreak of Avian Influenza.

Preventing disease is the first line of defense. A current issue of concern is the practice of *exporting and then importing back* the same meat products. For example, sausage casings are often shipped to China for cleaning and brought back to the U.S. for filling; diseases can easily be carried back on food packaging.

TAHC is tasked as the lead agency for coordinating with local, state, and federal responders on animal issues during natural disasters. [Valuable](#) disease information can be found on their website in English and Spanish.

TAHC is available by phone 24/7 (1-800-550-8242) or at one of the six regional offices.

TAHC REGION OFFICES Updated: 12-2022

- AM AMARILLO REGION**
3822 Business Park Drive
Amarillo, TX 79110
806-354-9335
- BV BEEVILLE REGION**
1824 South Washington Street
Beeville, TX 78102
361-358-3234
- GS GIDDINGS REGION**
152 Industrial Park Road
Giddings, Texas 78942
512-446-2507
- LR LAREDO REGION**
500 E. Mann Road, Suite B7
Laredo, TX 78041
956-568-5741
- SV STEPHENVILLE REGION**
942 Bluebonnet Street
Stephenville, Texas 76401
512-556-6277
- SS SULPHUR SPRINGS REGION**
1400 College Street, Suite 133
Sulphur Springs, TX 75482
903-919-3748

★ Central Office
★ Region Office
★ Willacy County Fever Tick Response Office & Vat

For a complete list of TAHC offices and contact information, please visit www.tahc.texas.gov/agency/contact.html

[Texas Parks and Wildlife Department](#) Craig Bonds, Inland Fisheries Division
Director

Today's TPWD developed from the merger between the 1895 Fish and Oyster Commission, the 1907 Game Department, and the 1923 State Parks Board. In 1983 the Wildlife Conservation Act authorized TPWD to manage fish and wildlife resources across the state, removing control from the county commissioners' courts. For an in-depth history of TPWD, the Texas State Library and Archives has provided a web exhibit, "To Love the Beautiful: The Story of Texas State Parks."

The agency's website provides a wealth of information and knowledge for Texans and tourists. Along with an [app](#) and a sizable collection of [interactive web maps](#), the website provides land owners and the public with "natural and cultural resources." In addition, you can [sign up for](#) topic-specific newsletters, and the [Education](#) page links topics from hunting and boating to information specific to women and children.



Archery in Schools



Educators nationwide are reporting that the National Archery in Schools Program "engages the unengaged" and inspires students to greater achievement in school.

[Archery in Schools Program](#)

Texas Junior Naturalists



Each spring a competition is held in Texas to determine which team can identify and count the most birds in a weeklong event. Birding teams from all over the country flock to several birding hot spots all over Texas to participate in the [Great Texas Birding Classic](#).

[Texas Junior Naturalists Progra](#)

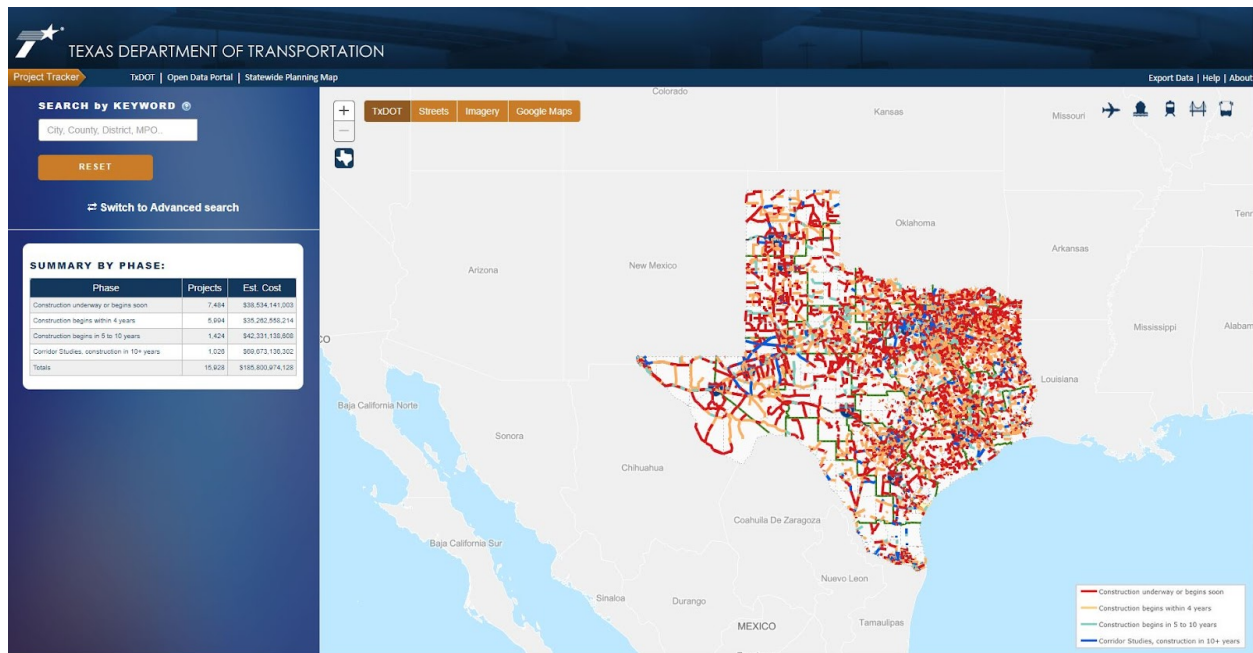
[The Budget Process](#) Mr. Mike Morrissey, Budget Director for the Texas Senate
Office of the President

For over 35 years, Mr. Morrissey has served the state by writing our budget. The state has one single budget (compared to 13 federal budgets), and it is the only work required by the legislature to complete each session. Serving state senators on the Finance Committee, he is the most trusted advisor on these matters at the Capital.

- The budgeting process is neverending. The work done during the "off-season" expedites the budget's passage during the session. Because of this, Mr. Morrissey recommended that any needed state funds be sought between sessions. By the time the session comes around, the budget is mainly set.
- Most of the money spent is constitutionally required. Legislative spending is limited by the budget (pay as you go) and the rate of growth limit. Money that exceeds the rate of growth of the Texas economy cannot be spent. Currently, this rate is measured by the formula of population x inflation.
- In discussing the budget surplus, Mr. Morrissey reminded the Cohort that tax relief is a form of spending. Without a state income tax, how would the state know how much to refund? The only way to give property tax relief would be to give back to the school district and then require them to meet a tax limit.
- Texas is a donor state, meaning we give more to the federal government than we get back. Federal laws tend to punish states that don't run in a deficit, according to Mr. Morrissey.
- Historic federal funds poured into the state due to Covid. Those funds were "plugged into the general fund and spent in lieu of state funds."
- Mr. Morrissey estimated a budget of 130 billion, assuming a spending slowdown due to Covid (55%-60% of the budget revenue is from sales tax). Revenues coming in are closer to 188 billion.
- Throughout the week, there was much discussion regarding this surplus. All the legislatures we heard from know that we are in a historic moment, and they should proceed with caution. This is not the time to spend a surplus created partially through inflation. The legislature will tackle the questions, are we over-taxing, and how much reserve should the state keep?

“The Texas Department of Transportation is governed by the five-member Texas Transportation Commission and an executive director selected by the commission. Commission members serve overlapping six-year terms and are appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Texas Senate.”

Ever wonder when and if they will repair the road you drive on every day? TxDOT provides the answers on its interactive [Statewide Planning Map](#)



TxDOT Facts:

- 556.9 Million vehicle miles are traveled in Texas - daily
- 2,862 Public transit vehicles are operated
- 6,500 Traffic signals maintained
- 264 General aviation airports
- 78 Million tons of cargo move through Texas ports
 - In 2020, Texas ports handled 27% of all cargo in the US, more than any other state
- While only 25% of roadway miles in Texas are state-owned, 74% of all vehicle miles traveled occurs on state-owned highways.
- State-owned centerline miles:
 - Interstate highways: 3,466
 - U.S. highways: 11,852
 - State highways: 16,443
 - Farm or Ranch to Market roads: 40,865
 - Frontage roads: 7,927
 - PASS routes, Park roads, and Recreation roads: 351

[Texas Department of Agriculture](#) Sid Miller, Texas Ag Commissioner

Most Texans need to be aware of TDA's enormous role in their day-to-day lives. The Commissioner's job is so much more than agriculture; it ranges from managing rural healthcare to inspecting ping pong balls for the state lottery.

TDA consists of four divisions:

- The Administration Division
 - Acts as the executive assistant for all programs in addition to providing legal support, and financial services
- [Agriculture](#) and [Consumer Protection](#) Programs - 13 in total
 - [Monitors the accuracy of weights and measures](#)
 - [Oversees Plant Pest and Disease Detection and Surveillance Program](#)
 - [Licenses and trains pesticide applicators \(ag and structural\)](#)
 - [Registers pesticides for sale in Texas](#)
 - [Oversees worker protection](#)
 - [Manages the industrial hemp program](#)
 - [Food Safety Programs](#)
 - [Organic Certifications](#)
- [Food and Nutrition](#):
 - Manages federally funded food and nutrition programs with a budget of \$1.28 billion. See a list of the programs and who qualifies [HERE](#).
- Trade and Business Development
 - [Expands trade opportunities providing grants to small businesses](#)
 - [Manages the State Office of Rural Health](#)
 - [Administers the federal Community Development Block Grant Program](#)
 - [Manages the Texas Office of Produce Safety](#)
 - [Oversees livestock export facilities](#)
 - [Administers rural economic development programs](#)
 - [Administers the Texas Agriculture Finance Authority](#)
 - [Markets Texas products through the GO TEXAN program](#)
 - [Administers the new Farmer Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Program](#)



Howdy Neighbors!

You may not know it, but the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) touches your life almost every day. From the grocery store you visited today to the salsa you're eating at dinner, TDA was there to help. From the healthy lunches at your child's school to the scales used to weigh your luggage at the airport, TDA was there, too. From our role as the state consumer protection agency to administering school lunches and marketing Texas products, the TDA is a diverse and busy place. We work hard every day to serve you.

Since I was sworn into office in 2015, I've also worked diligently to make this agency better. Please take some time to browse our website and learn about the many ways we're working better, faster and more efficiently for you. As always, it is my honor to serve as your Texas Agriculture Commissioner and remind you that *Texas Agriculture Matters!*

Your Servant,

Sid Miller
Texas Agriculture Commissioner

Commissioner Miller provides a [Daily Market Roundup](#), a [monthly newsletter](#), and brags on Texas agriculture on his weekly [RFDTV program](#).



[Texas Ag Council TAC](#)

Developed in the 1970s out of a need to share information and cooperate on common issues; TAC members represent the majority of Texas ag interests. Meeting weekly during sessions, the members collaborate to bring Texas agriculture issues to the attention of the legislature and their staff.

“The Texas Agriculture Council serves as a forum of organizations whose members depend upon agriculture for their livelihood. TAC’s purpose is to promote discussion of political, legislative and regulatory issues of importance to the future of Texas agriculture. While the Council does not take positions on legislative or political issues, its member organizations are actively involved in the resolution of these issues for the betterment of Texas agriculture.”

[Texas Poultry Federation](#) JC Essler, Executive Vice President

TPF is made up of 5 affiliate organizations that work together to represent the Texas poultry industry. The total estimated economic impact of the industry is more than \$43 billion in the state. The cost of eggs and concerns over avian influenza was the topic of interest when Mr. Essler addressed the Cohort. The issues in the state are found in backyard flocks, as these birds are likely to come in contact with migrating birds carrying the disease.

[Independent Cattle Raisers Association of Texas](#) Cooper Little, Executive Director

Formed in 1974 by T.A. Cunningham of Goliad, TX, ICA is committed to representing cattle producers and fighting for the rights of cattlemen across Texas. Monopolies in the meatpacking industry and price transparency has long been a concern for the member of ICA. Since its inception, the Packers and Stockyards Act has created confusion in the courts and needs revision. Although the USDA found more than 1,800 violations of the Act in 2020, there is little agreement on how best to protect small producers and consumers. The [industry is divided on the issue](#), but for the members of ICA, it is deeply personal as many see the real-life damage to their livelihoods. As a result, members are looking to develop medium size processing to expand their markets.

[Texas Association of Dairymen](#) Darren Turley, Executive Director

Despite assumptions to the contrary, all agricultural industries are involved in conservation to some degree, and the dairy association has been leading the effort for decades.

“The U.S. dairy was the first in the food agricultural sector to conduct a full life cycle assessment at a national level which showed it contributes just 2% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. As of 2007, producing a gallon of milk uses 90% less land and 65% less water, with a 63% smaller carbon footprint than in 1944. Then, thanks to increasingly modern and innovative dairy farming practices, that impact in 2017 shrunk significantly, requiring 30% less water, 21% less land and a 19% smaller carbon footprint than it did in 2007.”

The size of individual dairies is continuing to grow and move indoors. Climate-controlled barns are utilized to ensure the comfort and health of the cows.

In Texas, an estimated 625,00 cows supply milk to 335 Grade A dairies.

[Texas Pecan Growers Association](#) Blair Krebs, Executive Director and Travis Britt, Pecan Grove Farms, Chief Horticulturist and Nursery Manager

Fossilized evidence suggest that our state tree, the pecan, has been in Texas since prehistoric times. Long a staple in the southern diet, this nut plays an important role in our holiday traditions. On average, Texas produces around 50 million pounds of pecans and ranks third in the nation behind Georgia and New Mexico.

Pecan farm management is a long and short game. Decisions like tree crowding removal or hedging take forethought and planning, while other decisions will change along with the seasons based on the orchard's needs and scientific recommendations.

Not the most drought-tolerant crop, pecans require irrigation of up to 2 inches a week. The hot and dry weather of 2022 impacted yields in Central Texas, where the more picture-perfect Pawnee pecans are grown.

[Pecan Grove Farms' unique](#) nursery grows tree stock in small-sized, soilless media. This method allows the plant to retain 100% of its root system vs. 10/15% of the bare-root tree, allowing it to produce at least a year ahead. Every year Pecan Grove grows 92,000 pots individually watered and fertilized to the tree's needs.

Not only are pecans delicious, they are part of a healthy diet.

- 90% of the fats in pecans are unsaturated (about 60% monounsaturated/30% polyunsaturated)
- A serving of pecans (30g) provides about 25 percent more oleic acid than a serving of olive oil (one tablespoon)
- Pecans are cholesterol free
- Pecans are sodium free
- Pecans are fiber-rich
- Pecans are a valuable plant protein source
- Pecans have more than 19 vitamins & minerals
- They are an excellent source of gamma tocopherol, an important type of vitamin E
- They contain concentrated amounts of natural plant sterols, touted for their cholesterol-lowering ability
- Pecans contain a variety of phytochemicals
- Nuts are recommended by the American Heart Association and U.S. Dietary Guidelines as a desirable source of heart-healthy unsaturated fat.

[Texas Farm Bureau](#) Mr. Si Cook, Executive Director and COO

With close to half a million members in Texas, TFB is the state's most prominent representative organization for farmers. Formed in 1933, when close to 40% of the population was involved in agriculture, by 1960, that number had fallen to 9%. According to Mr. Cook, today, that number is 1% - 2%, meaning "98% of the US doesn't understand ag."

TFB Boards are organized in 206 Texas counties divided into 13 districts. One Board member from each district is elected to serve on the State Board. This Board oversees TFB, which is a non-profit 501c5. This IRS designation allows them to lobby and influence policies that have originated at the county level. In addition, the Board manages its 17 affiliate companies, including its most widely known, Farm Bureau Insurance.

Mr. Cook encouraged the Cohort to be involved and represent ag. Breaking down where advocacy is needed into "houses."

- The State House - Austin and DC
 - Know what is going on and the policies that will impact you. FB is always alert to bills that could adversely affect its members and ag producers.
- The Courthouse
 - 50% of member dues go to legal aid to fight legislation and defend the right to farm
- School House - Education
 - We must tell the story of ag and build confidence in our industry. With Zoom, TFB now reaches 200-300 thousand kids in classrooms across the state.
- Our Houses
 - Make sure those closest to us are learning from our experiences.

"Cities want to use public nuisance ordinances to prohibit agricultural activity. In one city, grass grown for hay is not allowed to grow taller than 12 inches without the city coming in and mowing the property and sending the bill to the farmer. Hay bales in some cases must be removed from properties within a short period of time, usually 24-48 hours, to avoid penalties all in order to comply with city health ordinances. Some cities are arbitrarily requiring buffer zones of up to 250 feet around the property to be mowed short. That takes significant acreage out of production. Texas Farm Bureau is taking the lead on strengthening Texas' Freedom to Farm Law." Mr. Eric Opiela

URBAN OUTREACH



Doorways to Agriculture was displayed at the State Fair of Texas, Heart O' Texas Fair & Rodeo, San Antonio Livestock Show & Rodeo, Brazos Valley Fair & Rodeo, West Texas Fair & Rodeo, Ft. Worth Stock Show & Rodeo, Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show, BorderFest, Windfest, Buck Days, Spring Ho and Grapevine Heritage Foundation & Nash Farms

Held **167** Ag Days 



Showed Mobile Learning Barn to **41,397** school children in 121 days and **32,743** people in mixed groups of adults/children in 134 days

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

38 teachers with a direct impact of 2,192 students attended the three Summer Ag Academies

3,718 teachers participated in TFB's Farm From School program and reached 216,202 students

42 teachers with a direct impact of 3,319 students attended the Summer Ag Institute in Waco

39 garden grants totaling \$19,500 were awarded through the Learning from the Ground Up program

Communicated quarterly about TFB resources and opportunities to over 6,230 teachers through an educational outreach newsletter 

Hosted two additional workshops on agriculture and science with 29 teachers

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

748 students in 8th through 12th grade from 121 counties completed the Student Success Series

3 Collegiate Farm Bureau clubs hosted programming and activities through the pilot program

SCHOLARSHIPS

Between the state and county Farm Bureaus, more than **\$854,500** in scholarships were awarded to high school seniors, enrolled college students and technical college students



GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

- ✓ **Hosted** 45 Congressional recess meetings and farm tours with Texas' U.S. Congressional delegation with over 1,000 county Farm Bureau members participating
- ✓ **Protected** Texas farmers and ranchers from being taxed out of business by preserving stepped-up-basis and preventing an increase in capital gains taxes in the reconciliation package passed by Congress
- ✓ **Served** on AFBF working groups for livestock markets and the farm bill
- ✓ **Collaborated** with USDA and TSSWCB on feral hog pilot projects
- ✓ **Sponsored** the Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course
- ✓ **Held** 13 policy development meetings with 604 members from 157 counties in attendance
- ✓ **Conducted** National Affairs Awards trip with 235 participants



AGFUND

Total AGFUND contributions:

\$850,650

722 members joined the AGFUND CABINET



AGFUND had a **96%** success rate in General Election

TFB Legal Defense Fund filed briefs in two United States Supreme Court cases protecting agricultural practices and fighting against federal overreach

TEXAS HILL COUNTRY WINE, TOURISM, AND POPULATION EXPLOSION:

Compared to the 5 million acres and the \$24 billion economic impact of cotton, the 3,000 acres of grapes could seem of little consequence. But a trip to the Hill Country makes this growing industry's economic impact of \$20 billion believable.



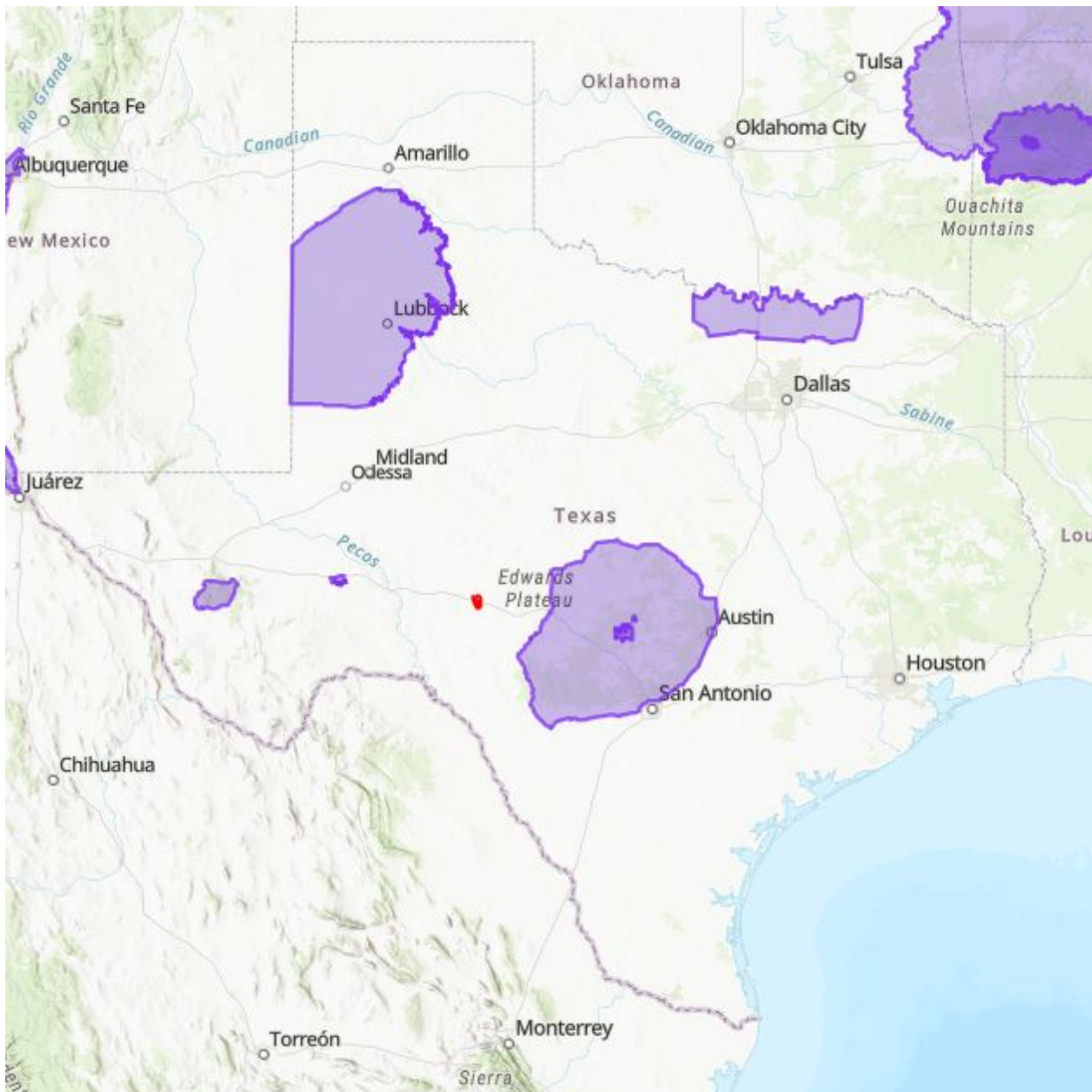
<https://wineamerica.org/economic-impact-study/texas-wine-industry/#:~:text=The%20study%20shows%20that%20the,detailed%20data%20for%20each%20state.>

[Duchman Family Winery](#) provided the Cohort with an education and a taste of Texas wine. Partnering with Texas High Plains grape farmers, the Duchman family produces award-winning wines from 100% Texas fruit. Listed as one of the 20 most picturesque wineries in the country, the pairing of talents in this industry is an example of what can be accomplished when rural and urban Texans work together.

The over 500 wineries are concentrated on the east side of the state. Texas is chasing California in tourism. “ Texas has become one of the fastest growing wine tourism destinations in the United States – second only to Napa Valley. This boom means that the industry is expanding at a rapid rate where winemakers from around the world are lured here due to the wide range of grape varieties available. Texas’ expansive selection of varietals lends itself to a wide range of winemaking styles and complex blends.” <https://www.origins.wine/texas>



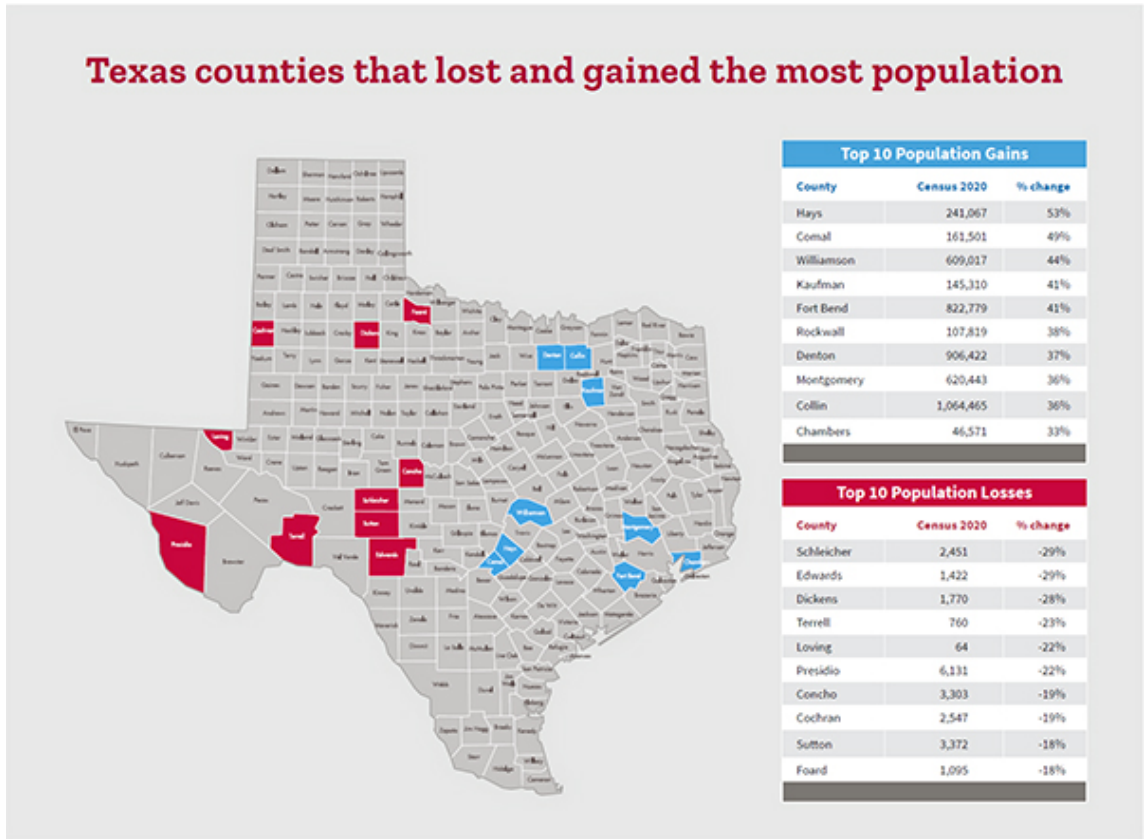
Though the vast majority of wineries are located on the state's east side, West Texas is more suited for the production of grapes. Over the last three decades, the High Plains has been the heart of grape farming. However, though market demand continues to grow, [damage from chemical volatilization](#) has discouraged the needed increase in acres. Vineyards located between the Hill Country and Escondido Valley AVAs have many of the favorable growing conditions of the High Plains. Without the threat of chemical damage along with the added advantages of its proximity to Austin and its established hunting industry, this southwest Texas region could become another tourist attraction for wine enthusiasts. It is easy to understand why Texas's top luxury resort, [The JL Bar Ranch](#) had the foresight to locate in the area.





In 1967, on family land settled in 1870, Scott Roberts' parents created a Texas treasure, [Salt Lick BBQ](#). That Hill Country homestead has expanded beyond the original Salt Lick location to include Salt Lick Cellars tasting room and Salt Lick vineyards. The Roberts family is truly a [Texas success story](#).

Over lunch at the Driftwood location, we heard from Hayes County Commissioner Walt Smith. Mr. Smith manages the fastest-growing precinct in the fastest-growing county in the US. Having grown 54% in the last decade, the area feels the full impact of the 1,000+ people moving into Texas daily. It is a top priority to teach these new neighbors about water conservation and how to care for their land. But, the sprawl is changing forever the advantages of living in this once rural area.



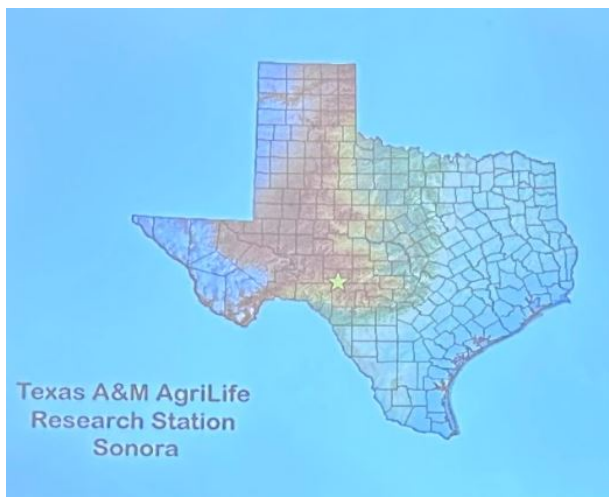
SOUTHWEST TEXAS - SONORA, SUTTON COUNTY, TEXAS



[Historic Sonora/Rocksprings Experiment Station or “Sub-Station 14”](#)

This region feels like a hidden treasure of Texas history. Sparsely populated by families generations deep, it could feel closed off to outsiders. But instead, the people are warm and welcoming, not just to the temporary guests. The pride in their heritage and the cooperative efforts they make to preserve their way of life are admirable. Their genuinely open nature is so magnetic you can't help but be drawn in and want to stay.

Collectively the community has created a safe space to house and share their history. [The Ice House Ranch Museum](#) is full of artifacts and memorabilia donated by local families. The restored Depot serves as a meeting and events center.



SONORA STATION

To help address drought and a mysterious disease killing livestock, ranchers and members of the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association solicited help from Texas A&M in 1915 to establish a research station. By 1916 ranchers had raised among themselves half of the funds needed to begin research, with the Legislature contributing the other half. In the 100-plus years of its existence, Sonora Station has provided “priceless” solutions for ranchers. This middle-of-nowhere living

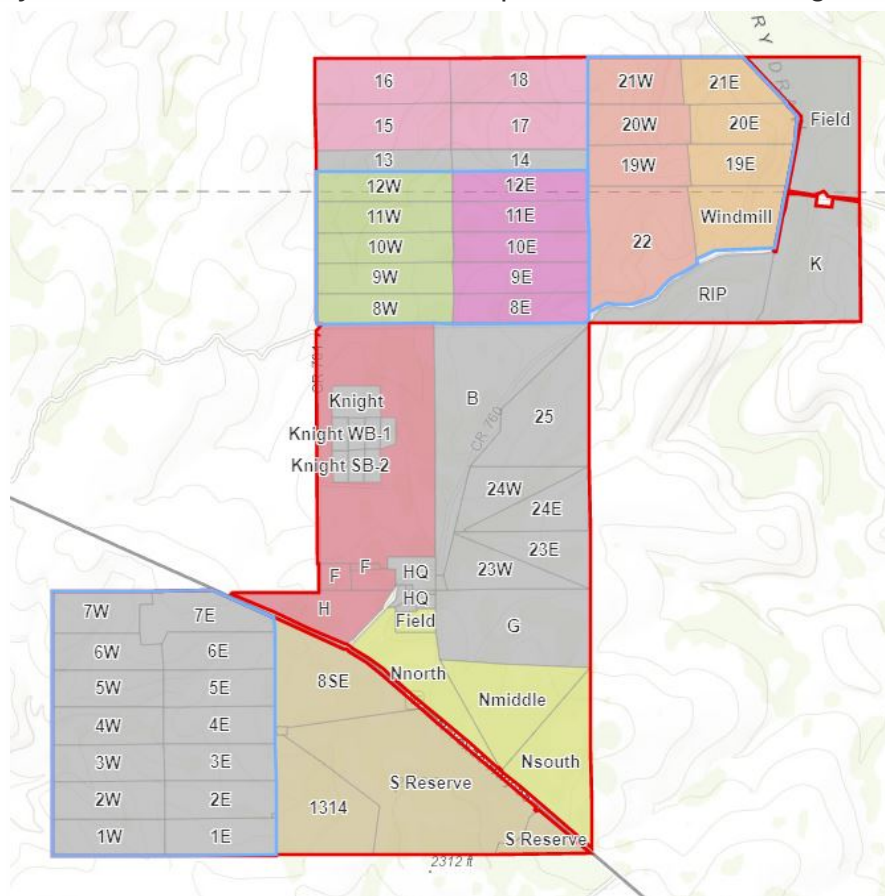
laboratory is an indispensable source of research and discovery for Texas ranchers.

The current vaccine for “sore mouth” was developed by early researchers at the Station. As the years have passed, funding has become more difficult to acquire. Area families are struggling to keep supporting the ongoing research so vital for their livelihoods.

Current Research:

- [Drought-Induced Woody Plant Mortality](#)
- [Fire - The Prescribed Burn](#)
- [The Rising Great Plains Fire Campaign: Citizens’ Response to Woody Plant Encroachment](#)
- [Fire and Goats: A Potent Mix for Restoring West Texas Rangelands](#)
- [Creating a “Super Juniper Eating Goat”](#)

The map below shows the research capacity of the station. Dr. Doug Tolleson led a tour of the property so we could see firsthand the impact of different management styles.





Dr. Doug Tolleson explained the impacts of controlled burns

REAL - EDWARDS WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Four Aquifers under Real and Edwards counties provide limited groundwater to the district.

Major: Edwards-Trinity Plateau Aquifer - 13,199 af/yr
Trinity Aquifer - 52 af/yr

Minor: Frio River Alluvium Aquifer - 2,145 af/yr
Nueces River Alluvium Aquifer - 3,574 af/yr

Rules and strategies have been established in anticipation of a shortfall by 2070.

- Municipal
 - Camp Wood - 172 AF shortfall
 - Rocksprings - 121 AF shortfall
 - Leahey - 91 AF shortfall
 - Barksdale - 54 AF shortfall

- Livestock
 - Edwards County - 40 AF shortfall
 - Real County - 20 AF shortfall

- Mining
 - Edwards County - 30 AF shortfall

*AF=acre feet

Texas Wildlife Services is a cooperative program between USDA-APHIS, AgriLife Extension, and private/public funding partners of the program.

“The mission of the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (WS) is to provide Federal leadership in managing conflicts with wildlife. WS recognizes that wildlife is an important public resource greatly valued by the American people. By its very nature, however, wildlife is a highly dynamic and mobile resource that can cause damage to agriculture and property, pose risks to human health and safety, and affect natural resources. WS conducts programs of research, technical assistance, and applied management to resolve problems that occur when human activity and wildlife conflict with one another.”

Increased predator pressure is another consequence of urban sprawl. Many new landowners lack the experience to understand the balance in nature. They often reject practices that prevent species overpopulation, increasing disease and attracting predatory animals. Seasoned landowners know that these practices have often come from lessons learned the hard way. As caretakers, both new and old, we need to base our decisions for the land on experience and not ideology.

Predator Impact on Sheep:

- US 1.79% of adult inventory lost (61,712)
- Texas 3.4% of adult inventory lost (18,906 head)

- US 3.88% of lamb crop lost (132,683 head)
- Texas 8.1% of lamb crop lost (38,880 head)

- US \$30 million in predator loss
- Texas \$7.7 million in predator loss

Texas Predators: [Species information](#) is available on the TWS website including,

- Coyote
- Bobcat
- Mountain Lion
- Fox
- Black Vultures
- Other Raptors
- Feral Hogs

Kodie Sageser #16

TALL XVIII

Session #3 Austin and Sonora, Tx

January 16-21st 2023

Pecan Grove Farms and Nursery

We began our third session right outside Austin at Pecan Grove Farms and Nursery with Travis Britt, his staff, and Blair Krebs of Texas Pecan Growers Association. Travis and Blair are both TALL Alumni, its really neat to see previous cohorts staying active in the program.

Travis began our time by teaching us a little about the operations of the nursery and orchard. Pecan Grove plants Elliot See stocks but graft the preferred variety when the seed stock gets big enough. They are set apart from other nursery's because most sell bare root trees, but they grow their trees in containers. This requires a lot of water while in the containers but is less stressful on the trees when transplanting them. There is some increased production cost with this so typically they are coming in a little higher than other nurseries who sell bare root trees. We learned so much about pecan trees in our short time at Pecan Grove. It was a great first stop to kick off our week in Austin.

Inauguration

We kicked off our morning by attending the Oath of Office Ceremony of Governor Greg Abbott and Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick. It was an incredible experience. We heard about the administrations plans for the coming years like "parental rights" in schools, stability of the Texas power grid, public safety, border security, among other issues. It was a great honor to be able to attend and made us all proud to be Texans. Today Texas has over 30 million people and is estimated to reach 50 million by 2050. Texas GDP is 2.1 trillion which is the 9th largest economy in the world. We are blessed to be a part of the agriculture industry in the great state of Texas.

After the inauguration we were able to take a quick trip over to the "Taste of Texas" lunch where we were able to sample food from al over the state. Although it felt rather warm for a January morning, it was a great experience overall.

"Responsibilities of State Comptroller and the State's Revenue Projections" Lisa Craven, Deputy Comptroller/Chief of Staff Comptroller of Public Accounts

The purpose of the State Comptroller is to collect and administer taxes for the state of Texas and essentially tell legislature how much money they have and control what they spend. They also do things such as accounting for state agencies and cash flow forecasting. They are in charge of unclaimed money and things like safety deposit boxes. Ms. Craven had some interesting stories about things they had found in recent months.

The comptroller's office has a police force, one of their many focuses is on credit card skimming. Texas is also the only state who has their own gold depository. One thing I found interesting was that the comptrollers office investigates and evaluates endangered species and the economic outlook on what the impact declaring something endangered would have on the Texas Economy. The comptroller's office is in charge of so much more than one would think, definitely not an office to take for granted.

"Responsibilities and History of the Texas Land Office" Dawn Buckingham, Texas Land Commissioner

Dawn Buckingham comes from a long line of Texans dedicated to keeping Texas great. She is a licensed physician but not currently practicing medicine. She talked to us about how the Texas Land Office is older than the governorship. Texas is the only state that has "state lands" all other states only have federal lands. Texas is the largest land and mineral owner in the state, and we use the revenue from these lands to fund public education and run veteran programs. Texas is said to be the best state to be a veteran in. The Texas Land offices also assist in disaster recovery and issues surrounding Waterways of The US(WOTUS). This legislative session they are wanting 380 million to repair and preserve the Alamo. The roof is making the walls sink and needs major repair. They work hard to make sure that the history and heritage of Texas is maintained and preserved.

“How to get your voice heard and how to move the bubble forward” Mr. Bill Peacock, Policy Director Huffines Liberty Foundation & the Energy Reserve Alliance

A TALL V alumnus, Mr. Peacock is passionate about leadership and education. Mr. Peacock has spent the last 30+ years working in and around Texas legislature fighting for Liberty. He is the policy director for Huffines Libby foundation and the Energy Alliance. They are actively fighting against subsidies for renewable energies. Mr. Peacock was passionate about “Walking in obedience, commitment to truth, reliance on others and resting in Jesus Christ.” His passion and devotion was evident and inspiring.

“Responsibilities and duties of the Texas Attorney General and the issues facing Texas” Aaron Reitz, Deputy Attorney General for Legal Strategy

The Texas Attorney General’s office has approximately 4000 employees, six to seven hundred of those are lawyers the remaining are support staff. Attorney General Ken Paxton presides over everyone. The AG’s office is equipped with a lot of investigative tools but their strongest power comes in the form of lawsuits. They can also be asked for an AG opinion; it is their legal opinion but is not binding just very persuasive. The AG’s office brings lawsuits on behalf of the state. The AG does not have to have approval from any agency because he is an elected official, not appointed. Most of the AG offices work is “Playing defense,” state agencies or client agencies are constantly being sued.

Plaintiff side work has been more prominent in the last two years, this occurs when state and federal government do not see eye to eye. They have sued the Biden Administration 37 times for various reasons including but not limited to, the federal government trying to inject “spent nuclear fuel” out by midland, which would restrict oil and water explorations and drilling. They have sued over the clean water act as well as various endangered species. When things like new endangered species get listed, it can cause ripple affects in other industries due to the restrictions that can then be put in place. This can cause major economic impacts for many areas of Texas. So much of what the AG’s office does we may never hear about but it is having major impacts on our state. The AG’s office like so many others are fighting to keep Texas, Texas.

“The Challenges and Opportunities facing Texas Agriculture” The Honorable Mary Gonzalez, Texas House of Representatives, District 75, TALL XVII Alumnus

The Honorable Mary Gonzalez, a proud advocate for agriculture and TALL XVII alumnae spoke with us about funding rural Texas. The state just redid the districts so rural Texas lost seats. She would like to see more focus on rural Texas and agriculture. She discussed her want and vision for the state to implement a system set up for crop disease and pest prevention. Animal health is a fully funded system but there isn’t anything currently in place for crops. She would also like to see changes in education. The diversity of school districts across Texas is vast but the guidelines are a blanket for all. The cost of scale to have teachers and resources in the smaller schools is more difficult and we need to see some changes come to education.

“Committee memberships, responsibilities as a State Senator and Issues facing Texas” The honorable Lois Kolkhorst, Texas State Senator, District 18

Senator Kolkhorst served in the Texas House for 7 terms. The House and Senate vary in many ways. In the house you can only serve on 2 committees and there are essentially no rules in the senate. When serving on a committee in the senate most of the work is done before the bill ever gets to the senate floor. The house will have a lot of amendments on the floor but the senate tries to get the work done before it gets there. When comparing the senate and the house she says the senate organizes much more quickly than the house and that the hardest place to pass a bill is the house.

Senator Kolkhorst also talked to us about the large influx of Californians and how Texas and California differ. More people are moving to Texas than anywhere else. California has lost its sheen, how does Texas not do that? With the budget surplus this session, she thinks we should sure up Texas and make the correct investments to incentivize the right choices to make sure Texas is good.

She recently put forward a bill to restrict foreign countries from purchasing land in Texas due to National Security issues. Although this impedes landowners right to sell, it is critical to not inflict the risk on our security. Her knowledge and passion for Texas and rural Texans was incredible and inspiring.

Texas Ag Council

We were welcomed by David Gibson and the Texas Ag Council and made all of our introductions. Following introductions, the TALL XVII cohort gave a brief presentation on their international trip to Australia. It was awesome to see photos and learn about some of the things they were able to see and learn about. Following the TALL XVII presentation we were able to join in on the Ag Councils general meeting. We learned they are a 70+ member organization, they have members from across the state from many different aspects of the industry and help advocate for all of agriculture with their diverse backgrounds.

TALL ALUMNI MEETING

We were able to join in on the TALL Alumni meeting although we are not technically TALL Alumni, it was great to hear about the program from the alumnus standpoint and hear about some of the great things happening.

The guest speaker for the meeting was Mr. Eric Opiela, a Texas Attorney and TALL IX Alumnus. He spoke with us about the excitement of the 2023 political environment and how advocating for Rural Texas is a hot topic. Mr. Opiela discussed the decrease in confidence of state government among both republicans and democrats. Although they may agree on that, there is a big divide between the two groups. Top issue for republicans is border security, while democrats are focused on political corruption/ leadership. Mr. Opiela talked about several other political stats and concerns. Some of the Texas Rural Issues focus is on “The Freedom to Farm,” issues facing foreign ownership of Agricultural lands, water, rural broadband among other issues. The issues facing Texas are not getting easier so as a whole we need to do better at advocating and educating.

A Tribute to Texas Leadership- TALL Alumni Reception

On Wednesday evening we walked to the historic Austin Club for the alumni reception. It was a great event; we were able to meet several alumni from all over the state as well as key TALL supporters that ensure this program thrives. It was an honor to also hear from the Honorable Dade Phelan, Texas Speaker of the House as well as see distinguished members of our community recognized for their achievements.

“The Responsibilities of the Natural Resources committee and the importance of water to Texas moving forward” The Honorable Cody Harris, Texas House of Representatives, District 8, TALL XV Alumni

Mr. Harris spoke to us about how being a part of the Texas House of Representatives is a job of service. This is his 3rd term; he is the vice chair of the Natural Resources Committee. A lot of what is done in the house is based on seniority. All members meet with the speaker and pitch their wants on committee choices. This legislative session Mr. Harris is most looking forward to the landowner bill, its to prevent foreign owned land. He wants to solidify the language of the public nuisance law so that it can not be used in ways it wasn't meant, like limiting the firearm industry and other industries people don't agree with. Property tax will however probably be the number 1 issue addressed. Mr. Harris also gave insight on some of the challenges going forward like water. Texas has an abundance of brackish water; we just need to figure out how to use it. Texas is lucky to have an advocate like Mr. Harris in the House of Representatives to fight for Texas.

“The Responsibilities and duties of the Railroad Commission in Texas” Chairman Christi Craddick, Railroad Commission of Texas

The Railroad Commission is one of the oldest state agency in Texas. Although Railroad is in the name, they quit regulating rail in the 1980's. It is an elected office, elections are staggered. There are 3 commissioners. Their biggest job is oil and gas, pipeline and safety inspections and regulating gas utilities as well as others. They are a fee-based agency so if drilling goes up their budget goes up, if it goes down so does the budget. They have about 1000 employees with 10 field offices. Nearly half of the employees are inspectors, and they bring in about a million dollars a month in fines. About a third of the state's economy is coming from oil and gas. 40-45 billion is coming into the state daily from oil and gas. About 2 billion has gone to water, 6 billion to roads and billions to schools. Oil and gas affect us all, every day.

“The Responsibilities and Duties of the Lt. Governor, the issues facing our great state and the budget process” Mr. Mike Morrissey, Budget Director

Mr Morrissey discussed the appropriation bill, and how it is managed. Texas only has one versus the federal government having 13. Over 7000 bills get presented on the floor maybe 1500 pass. The finance committee is considered an honor to be on. The budget process doesn't really have much down time. Texas's Rate of spending can not exceed rate of growth. He believes the reason we ended up with a surplus was because the revenue estimate was too low during covid. Covid didn't have as long of an impact on the economy as the revenue estimate. Texas is run better than any other state, but we are in uncharted territory with the budget surplus.

“Farm Bureau 101” Mr. Si Cook, Executive Director & COO TFB

Mr. Cook has been with Farm Bureau for 35 years. Production agriculture is his background. In the year 1900, 40% of the population was involved in production agriculture, in the year 1960 it fell to 9%. Today with a population of 332 million people, only 1-2% are involved in production agriculture. Founded in 1933 as an Agriculture Organization, Farm Bureau's mission is to be the voice of agriculture. Every state and Puerto Rico have a Farm Bureau as well as there being a national organization. They have 4 employees stationed in Austin; they evaluate all bills that have anything to do with agriculture. One big thing they are dealing with this year is the “right to farm” bill. It's saying you can't farm in city limits and puts unrealistic restrictions on farmers and crops. Farm Bureau is involved in the “State” house, “school” house, “court” house and “your” house. Farm bureau wants to educate and advocate for agriculture wherever it's needed from the political level down to making sure you have the resources available in your home.

“The Texas Animal Health Commission and Potential Threats to Texas Animal Agriculture” Dr. Andy Schwartz, DVM, Executive Director, TAHC

Texas Animal Health commission was one of the first state agencies. Dr. Schwartz has been with the agency 32 years, 7 of those as the state vet. The agency was formed in 1893 to deal with the tick issue. Texas is split into 6 regions. They have helped with anything from foot and mouth disease and brucellosis to the bird flu. The Texas Animal Health Commission also helps with emergency response during natural disasters. They would like to see more funding for brucellosis testing and the ability to create an online website to get an entry permit for livestock to come into the state. The Texas Animal Health Commission is a valuable asset to the state and livestock industry.

“The Texas Oil & Gas Industry, mission/responsibilities of Texas Oil & Gas Association and The Future of Energy in Texas” Neal Carlton, TXOGA

The Texas Oil and Gas industries paid 15.8 billion in taxes and royalties in 2021. Over 28 billion in the rainy-day fund is from the oil and gas industry. 422 thousand Texans work in oil and gas, but 1.4 million jobs ultimately derive from the industry. They invest more than any other organization in reducing greenhouse gases. TXOGA is based out of Austin with a 15 person staff. Their priorities are economic development policy with transparency on job development, framework for carbon capture and sequester. Electricity and market redesign with a focus on reliability and competitive rate. They advocate against policies that are against oil and gas. They are a membership-based organization.

“Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Duties & Responsibilities” Craig Bond, Inland Fisheries Division Director, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

They have a stewardship & recreational environment. There stewardship assets are as diverse as the people in Texas. Commissioners are appointed by the governor. They are in charge of the Agency. It has about 3200 employees and about 75% of these are dispersed across the state. They have a very diverse portfolio from an infrastructure standpoint. They get most of their revenue from fees like licensing, permits, hunting stamps, etc. the Texas parks & wildlife field-based division is facing some challenging times. The land fragmentation and changing landscape are intense. 85% of land in Texas is operated by farmers and ranchers but that is only 1% of the population. During covid the TPWD saw a rapid expansion in hunting participation but the 2022-23 is seeing a decline. The TPWD has a vast array of responsibilities and is a unique agency, very important to Texas.

Reception at The State Capital

We were welcomed to the Lt. Governor's reception room, courtesy of the Honorable Charles Schwertner, Texas State Senator, District 5. We had refreshments and hors d' Oeuvres sponsored by the Texas Poultry Federation and The Independent Cattleman's Association. We heard from Toby Baker, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Governor Abbott, as well as got industry updates for poultry and cattle. The reception room was beautiful, and we thoroughly enjoyed hearing from everyone.

Texas Association of Dairymen, Darren Turkey, Executive Director

We began our morning at The Texas Department of Agriculture offices with breakfast sponsored by the Texas Association of Dairymen. Texas is ranked 4th in production, nearly 3rd. The technology in the Dairy industry is mind boggling. Technology has allowed so much of the dairy industry to be automated. The records and data they have because of this is incredible. 82% of the milk production in Texas comes from the Texas panhandle, the remaining comes from areas around central and northeastern Texas.

The Honorable Sid Miller, Texas Ag Commissioner

Commissioner Miller was gracious enough to join us and give us insight into the TDA's role. They oversee much more than one would think. The largest division under the TDA is food and nutrition. They are responsible for 5 million meals for kids each day! TDA also oversees healthcare for 191 rural healthcare systems. During natural disasters, such as hurricanes, they help with setting up animal shelters and managing the care and safety of animals during the recovery period.

During covid they helped make sure rural areas had PPE available. The span of reach under the TDA is impressive. They also manage the GoTexan initiative that has over 2000 members.

One thing I found very interesting was the Agristress hotline. Farmers and Ranchers face the 2nd highest suicide rate. The agristress hotline was developed to ensure that the agriculture community has trained professionals available to them who can appropriately navigate the situations they are dealt.

The TDA covers such a vast array of things, I think it isn't fully understood exactly what all they do by the general public. They have so many great programs and initiatives they are working on currently.

Duchman Family Winery and Salt Lick

We travelled to the Duchman Family Winery where we were greeted by Dave and Linda Reilly. Linda is a TALL Alumnae and Dave works for the winery, creating the fabulous wine. They explained the process of the winery and showed us around the facilities before we went over to Salt Lick BBQ, had a great meal, and heard a little about their vineyard and issues facing their community being so close to Austin.

Sonora

We traveled to Sonora, TX, freshened up and met our host Curry and Bonnie Lou Campbell at the Old Sonora Icehouse Ranch Museum. They helped arrange our entire stay in Sonora and we are very thankful for that. We were able to tour the museum, learn about the history of the area and see photos and items from years and years of Sonora history. We then traveled to the Historic Train Depot for dinner and heard from Bob Malone, Chairman, President and CEO of Sonora Bank, Mr. Malone told us about his life experiences and what led him to the bank. His past was filled with work in the oil industry. He started as an engineer in the mining industry before he woke up one day and was in the oil and gas industry. He worked for British Petroleum for 20+ years, upon retiring, he and his wife relocated to their ranch in Sonora. He was later asked to join the board of directors, which in turn led to his other roles at the bank. Mr. Malone is a great leader and business man and it was great hearing about his life and how he got to where he is now.

Texas A&M Agri life Research Station

We began our morning with a fantastic chuck wagon breakfast before Dr. Doug Tolleson gave us a history of the station. The research station was started in 1916 when the sheep and goat raisers requested it. They have done cutting edge research for land management, sheep, goats, cattle, and water. They have over 100 years of daily weather data from the station. They receive about 22" of rain a year.

Ecological management techniques of woody plants, fire and grazing are the biggest tools to maintain the ecological balance. Pyric herbivore is the use of animals and fire. Prescribed fire started about 30 years ago at the research station. Fire is what sustained the landscape and kept them healthy and prominent during the years prior to major settlement in the area.

The research station also works on vaccines and breeding strategies. They have many duties but a large focus is on adaptive resource management.

Ground Water Rights and Ground Water Conservation-

The Sonora area is in the Real-Edwards Conservation and reclamation district. Ground water supplies 60% of water used in Texas. Around 80% of that is used for irrigation. 35% of water used by municipalities is from groundwater. Like many areas of Texas, water is a large concern for the area.

Predation in Edwards Plateau and Hill Country, Michael Bodenchuk, State Director, Wildlife Services

Mr. Bodenchuk gave us some statistics about the predation impacts in Texas. 9.3% of cattle producers have predation issues. 1.79% of adult sheep are lost to predation and 3.88% of lambs. Goat also see a 2.1% loss to predation with 5% loss in kids.

The best way to keep predation down is killing breeding aged coyotes in January and February, keeping your calving/kidding season short can also help a little. Coyotes are not the only predators Texas faces but they are certainly the most universal. We also face issues with bobcats, mountain lions, buzzards, and many others.

Diversity in Agriculture, Erika Campbell

A cattle, sheep, goat and grape grower, Dr. Campbell was keen on diversity. She states that the one constant in the agriculture industry is variability. We have to be aware and adapt to the changing environment of our consumers.

Oil and Gas, David Wallace, Owner, Rancho Bronco Vineyard

Mr. Wallace gave us a lot of insight on the future of oil and gas in Texas. He works hard to help landowners ensure they receive good deals when making decisions on oil and gas leases. The Texas Triangle is the fastest growing area for oil and gas. Natural gas is an expensive product because of the complex way in which it is essentially "harvested," oil is much more valuable.

On top of being very well versed in the oil and gas industry, Mr. Wallace has a vineyard. He talked about how the west was better for grapes because they required less inputs and the weather is typically more favorable for the vines as long as you have adequate irrigation. The story of most producers in any area of agriculture.

Discussion and tour of Prescribed Burn sites, grazing management research project Dr. Tolleson and Dr. Campbell

We took a bus tour through the research center, we saw land that has been through prescribed burn ranging from every year to 30 years. Viewing the areas it seemed burning on an every 8 year schedule was the most efficient. It was really neat to see the differences in burn sites though. The vegetation and thickness varied quite a bit. It was also very interesting to see the differences where large herds of wildlife had moved in and grazed on the areas versus where they had not had issues.

JL Bar Ranch Resort

We wrapped our day and week at the JL Bar Ranch and Resort. We were able to tour the airport and some of the facilities. The ranch and resort were beautiful. The wildlife, the facilities, and environment were wonderful. We were invited to shoot clay pigeons before dinner, not everyone participated, me included, but it was great fun watching everyone and seeing how much we have all bonded and gotten to know one another over our time together. Once the sun began to go down, we all met up inside the resort to have dinner, meet some local producers and hear from Mr. Alvin New of BNB Ventures and Transportation Commissioner.

Commissioner New began by telling us a little about himself and then jumped right into the transportation commission. There are 4 members of the transportation commission. Of the four, one must be from a county of less than 150,000 people to adhere to the rural community. Rural Texas has the most energy and water. The transportation commission covers ports, highways, and everything in between.

I found it interesting that since covid, we have had more fatalities on Texas Roads. 50% of which happen in Rural Texas, many can be traced back to the Permian basin, which sees a lot of oil and gas traffic and two-lane roads.

The Lubbock District has the most lane miles of any in Texas! For “rural” Texas I thought that was neat. 174 of our 254 counties are considered rural. There are 26 legislators from Harris County alone and only 20 from west of I 35 making it harder for Rural Texas to have a voice. 87% of Texans live east of the I 35 corridors, but most of our acres are west. Texas also has 865 miles. Of border and 65% of Mexican freight comes into Texas. So many things fall in with transportation because of the nature of the industry. Transportation is facing a lot of push back on many issues, including right of way issues and public transportation. Commissioner New left us with this acronym PLAN. Prepare, Launch, Adjust and Network. These are his keys to getting things done and a great way to “plan” in the future.

Conclusion

Session 3 was incredible. It was a long week full of so much great information. I really enjoyed this session and all the content. Among all the great speakers it was a great week getting to know everyone in the cohort even better. I am so grateful to be apart of this program and am already looking forward to the next session!

Mauricio Garcia #8
TALL XVIII 2022
Session 3 - Austin / Sonora, TX
January 16-20, 2023

TEXAS TALL SESSION # 3

“Leadership, Legislation, Laws”

We started our third session at Pecan Grove Farms & Nursery, where we were graciously welcomed and hosted by TALL alumni Travis Britt and Blair Krebs. It was a pleasure to reunite with everyone from our previous session, as well as see familiar and new faces from previous classes who joined us. During the session, we had the opportunity to learn about the Pecan industry in Texas and the different qualities of various varieties, growing conditions, and markets. For instance, the pecans grown in West Texas are primarily used for ingredient purposes and are of a lower quality compared to those grown in Central Texas, which are more prized for their high oil content and are used as centerpieces in the confectionery goods market. We were introduced to various pecan varieties, including Elliot, Pawnee, Hopi, and Wichita, named after the indigenous tribes who inhabited the land and grew pecans before the arrival of settlers and pioneers. Pecans hold a special place in my heart, as I have fond memories of my grandfather having a tree in his backyard, where my cousins and I would gather nuts and crack open the shells with rocks to enjoy the delicious pecans. Our session ended with a delightful dinner and a presentation by Travis, where he shared how their business has grown and evolved to become larger and more vertically integrated, in order to stay competitive. After a well-deserved night's rest, we were eager to attend the Texas Governor's Inauguration the following day.

The following day, we had the privilege of attending the inauguration ceremony, which was a new and exciting experience for me. The Lieutenant Governor and the Governor emphasized their commitment to safeguarding our borders and improving funding. They also noted the substantial increase in revenue they had received due to inflation over the past year. After the ceremony, there was a festive fair and picnic at the opposite side of the Capitol building. Restaurants from all over the state provided food samples, university mascots were available for photos, and a band with a fiddle player entertained the crowd with classic country music. Later, we went to the Capitol Annex, where we were privileged to listen to presentations by Lisa Craven, the Deputy Comptroller, Dawn Buckingham, the Texas Land Commissioner, and Bill Peacock. These individuals shared their roles and visions for this current legislative session. In summary, the Comptroller's Office is responsible for estimating revenue, collecting taxes, and managing the books, payroll, and payments for all state agencies. Additionally, the office also oversees gold deposits for the state. Bill Peacock, as a policy analyst, provided a clear perspective on the main focus of this legislative session for both parties. I was particularly impressed by Dawn Buckingham, who made history as the first woman in the Senate in 2016 and the first woman to serve as Land Commissioner. Her approach to self-governance and the state's role in people's lives was enlightening and encouraging. Her agency places an emphasis

on customer service and requires its employees to be present and customer-focused. They are also responsible for the restoration of the Alamo. Ms. Buckingham's leadership skills and passion for serving has inspired me and assured me that the people of Texas are in good hands with this caliber of political leaders at the helm.

The very next day we were at it again with talks from Aaron Reitz the deputy attorney general for legal strategy, the honorable Mary Gonzalez Ph.D. Texas House of reps, District 75, Lois Kolkhorst Texas State Senator District 18, Texas Ag Council, Mr. Eric Turpen, and had the TALL Alumni Reception in the evening. The AG has around 4000 employees 700 of whom are lawyers and 3300 support staff most of which deal with child support. They are currently in a target rich environment in which they can contest and more than likely win cases that are unconstitutional. They have sued this administration for a grand total of 37 times (so far) with the second highest state only at 11 times. One third of which has to do with the border security issue and the current administration's open border policies. They deal with a lot of pro life lawsuits, energy issues, environmental issues, such as car emissions standards, renewables, wotus, and the lesser prairie chicken. Mary Gonzalez gave an insightful talk about how her district is tackling water issues, and things such as school choice. Lois Kolkhorst told us more about the windfall and how they were going to use it to lower property taxes through the homestead exemption. At the Ag Council we saw how the different associations pool resources and have a meeting of the minds in order to tackle important issues as a unified group, which I thought was really cool to see, and even saw a familiar face in Tara Artho which was neat and reminded me of the small world network ag has. The previous cohort's Blair Krebs and Joe Patranella gave a great presentation showcasing their trip to Australia and all the sights and activities they were blessed enough to experience over there. It got me really excited and looking forward to the Poland / possibly Ukraine trip. Afterwards we had a meeting where we saw some polling in which we saw what were the prescient issues at hand for this upcoming session. And saw the results of the raffle and other TALL housekeeping issues. We got ready for the reception which was at a very nice and posh oprah house intricately designed with antique furniture. We went upstairs to have some drinks and had a lovely night celebrating TALL and the ag leaders in attendance. It was a night to remember a very lovely evening. The next day we continued with our session speakers giving us the opportunity to peel back the curtain and get an inside look at the machinations of the people that run the state government, we had more talks and more leaders come through and go over water, energy, animal health at a state level, crop insurance, parks & wildlife recreation, and the budget process for the state. We ended the day with a stunning reception at the Lt. Governor's Reception Room and had more talks and insights from industry experts representing poultry and beef.

Very interesting day on Friday we capped our Austin part of the session with a visit to the Texas Department of Agriculture office which was awesome and something I won't soon forget. It was cool seeing the commissioner and all the other Directors and Counsel give talks about their roles and what they work with and have oversight over. The nutrition aspect was insightful especially how they had to pivot and address the issue of meals during the covid lockdowns, again glad to see that we are in capable hands and are being well taken care of. All the while a good chunk of the people working there have been or in the case of Addie are currently in the

TALL program, which just goes to show how effective and critical this program is to develop ag leaders. We then went to see more TALL Alumni in the hill country near driftwood to go see their winery operation at Duchman Family Winery, with a very nice meal at Salt Lick as well. We then departed to Sonora where we went to an old western museum that had some very interesting history regarding one of the wild bunch that died in a shootout in Sonora. Later that evening we had a nice dinner where we were honored with none other than Bob Malone who gave us fascinating insights into the current political atmosphere and the economy in general.

The next day, we had a cowboy chuck wagon breakfast, which I thoroughly enjoyed, and visited the A&M Extension facility to learn about the analysis of feed intake, predation, and brush and rangeland management with prescriptive burns in order to combat and manage invasive species and restore the land. The education was insightful as the region, characterized by rocky and dry landscapes, appeared barren and desolate to the naked eye. However, upon further inspection, it became apparent that the area offered vast opportunities for grazing and foraging animals such as sheep, goats, and cattle. After touring the facility, we returned to prepare for the final event of the session at the JL Bar Ranch & Resort. We were given a tour of their private airfield, shot a few clay pigeons and had a delightful dinner with our hosts, during which we had the opportunity to speak with the Commissioner of Transportation about current infrastructure projects. We are grateful for the time, energy, money, love, and dedication of all the speakers, sponsors, hosts, TALL alumni, and our esteemed / fearless leaders and organizers, Jim & Jennifer. With each session, I feel more connected to and informed about the Agricultural community and industry in Texas.