NAME CHANGE FOR GRADUATE DEGREE

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board recently approved our request to change the name of our graduate degrees to Ecosystem Science and Management. This change will be effective August 1, 2013, and will apply to our M.Ag, M.S. non-thesis, M.S. thesis, and Ph.D. degrees. The Masters of Natural Resource Development degree (MNRD) title will remain unchanged.

At present, our only graduate degree offering is in Rangeland Ecology and Management. However, that degree name does not reflect the current diversity of subject matter addressed by our graduate students and faculty. Our students and faculty are now working not only in rangelands, but also in forestlands, coastal areas, wetlands, urban ecosystems, arctic tundra, and other major ecosystem types around the world. Therefore, the degree name change was much needed to better represent the breadth of our programs, and will help send a more consistent and appealing message to potential graduate students who are considering our department for their advanced studies.

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Dr. Forrest D. Fleischman, Assistant Professor

Drs. David Baltensperger and David Briske announced that Dr. Forrest D. Fleischman has been offered, and accepted, the position of Assistant Professor of Human Dimensions in Natural Resources in the Department of Ecosystem Science and Management, beginning August 1, 2013.
Ever wonder what Aggies in forestry do? The ESSM field studies course is an excellent way to explore your options in the professional world. From our experience in Arkansas, Louisiana, and east Texas we visited with professionals and applied our academic knowledge to real life field work. When we met with Plum Creek Timber Company in Crossett, Arkansas they showed us a direct view of their business and Silvicultural practices. The United States Forest’s Crossett Experimental Forest was a great opportunity for learning more about unevenaged forest management practices, and forest ecology, using neat technology like the Eddy Covariance tower. In Louisiana, we visited with a forester managing the Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge who was focused on the wildlife side, different ecosystem functions of the wetlands, and effects of land management on species composition. Once back in Texas, our group traveled to a conference held by The Longleaf Alliance. They spoke about their mission to ensure a viable future for the ecosystem of the longleaf pine as well as the wildlife and native vegetation of east Texas. Temple- Inland gave us a tour of their factory in Diboll, Texas, where they showed us how their sawmill is run with state-of-the-art technology and very few people. We witnessed how a tree can be transformed into a material for consumption in less than sixteen minutes. After our tour, we visited the Texas Forestry Museum in Lufkin. Here we learned about the logging history of Texas; it was very humbling experience to see how forestry first began. Our tour guide explained his forestry job of dealing with the public that doesn’t understand our sustainable forest practices and is therefore against cutting trees or burning. The trip emphasized the practice of forestry, using Silviculture and Mensuration tools such as a cruising stick, clinometers, light sensors, compass, DBH tape, increment borer, and of course, adding it all up in Excel. It was a great experience to get out and learn more about what professionals in the field do and how timber companies manage their forests!

THANKS !!  Drs. Jason Vogel, Marian Eriksson, Professors and Leaders. More information on essm.tamu.edu
59th Consecutive Year

2013 YOUTH RANGE WORKSHOP  The weeklong Youth Range Workshop, sponsored by the Texas Society for Range Management, is held annually to recognize outstanding Texas youth and to provide them with an opportunity for complimentary training in range and natural resource management, stewardship and leadership. According to Dr. Barron Rector ’83 and Hoyt Seidensticker ’91, Workshop Co-Coordinators, youth participants learned about the principles of ecology, ecosystem level management, range and watershed management and gained an understanding of the plant-soil-water relationship. Dr. Robert Knight ’80 conducted hands-on activities in plant identification and collection and a session on plant-soil-water relationships. Field trips for hands-on training to Mason and Menard Country ranches, and the Kerr Wildlife Management Area where Paul Loeffler ’79 conducted a brush management demonstrations, Jenny Pluhar ’84 represented the International Society for Range management as president-elect, and Lee knox ’96 lead a reseeding project and range planning project.

This was the 59th consecutive year for this educational program conducted for Texas youth. The workshop began in 1955 and has provided training and has been a benefit to thousands of Texas youth.

Thanks also to Dr. Jake Landers, retired Extension Range Management Specialist and Joe Franklin ’87, NRCS Zone Range Management Specialist.

On the essm.tamu.edu web site.
Visiting Scholars from around the world

Yi Sun is a PhD student in the College of Pastoral Agriculture Science and Technology at Lanzhou University, in Lanzhou China. He will be working with Dr. Angerer, Dr. Conner and Mr. Hamilton for one year to gain insight into grazing and livestock management practices that may be applicable to western China. Prior to his arrival at Texas A&M, Yi Sun was managing research data collection at a research station in the Tibet where an experiment examining greenhouse gas emissions in a Tibetan sheep system was being conducted. During his stay at Texas A&M, he will be introduced to AgriLife simulation models and decision support tools for grazing management, drought early warning, and carbon management. He will also study livestock nutrition management strategies that can be used to improve livestock performance and optimize supplemental feeding.

Josidieda Galvindo is a professor in Brazil, and she is going to work with lidar remote sensing data to assess forest biophysical parameters, such as biomass and three dimensional forest structure. She will be working to become familiar with processing and analyse lidar data to for forests in Brazil. Her visit is a good opportunity for the Spatial Sciences Lab and the ESSM department to interact with scientists from Brazil and establish collaborations and student exchanges. For more information contact Dr.Sorin Popescu.

Dr. Yaron Ziv, from Israel, is a Visiting Scholar in the department from January 4 to August 30. While he has been here on sabbatical, he has worked on publications and grants with Dr. Rusty Feagin on landscape ecology and biodiversity. He has greatly enjoyed visiting the wide variety of ecosystems that we have here in Texas.

Qihua He, from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, will spend the next year (July ’13 to June ’14) in the ESSM department. While here, he will be conducting a project with Georgianne Moore investigating soil moisture dynamics in Texas forests.

Dongmei He is a visiting PhD student from Nanjing Forestry University where she studies with Dr. Honghua Ruan. "Mei" is working with Dr. Jason Vogel on research related to soil carbon cycling in managed pine forests in collaboration with Dr. William Hockaday at Baylor University. She is combining soil fractionation techniques with nuclear magnetic resonance to understand what structural and chemical constituents of soil contribute to soil organic matter stability.

NEW ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

College of Agriculture Development Council - Endowed Scholarship

Debora F. ’79 and Mack C. Skinner ’79 have established the COADC James B. Skinner Memorial Scholarship fund. The endowment will be used to provide one or more scholarships to a full-time undergraduate in the department of Ecosystem Science and Management.

http://essm.tamu.edu/media/548/givenow.jpg
WHO - WHAT - WHERE - WHEN

What did you do this summer?

Dr. Joe Schuster   I am not doing much this summer but am also not in the hospital or doctor’s office bound. So, am helping my son Stan with his new ranch in Kimble county and getting to our summer home in Cloudcroft. N.M. as often as I can. It was a cool 45 degrees last night but up to 60F this afternoon. We are so glad to hear that he’s doing well.

Jason West       I just got back from teaching at a short course at the University of Utah on spatial aspects of stable isotope ratios. (http://itce.utah.edu/spatial.html)

April Mattox and Ryan Mushinski   Ongoing research at the Chaparrosa Ranch on a project funded by the Wintergarden Groundwater Conservation District to study soil moisture and potential recharge responses to woody vegetation removal. April has completed her M.S. Thesis on this project, and is staying on for the summer working with Ryan Mushinski and our undergrads to complete our summer work.

Elizabeth Wilson and Yang Zhang   Lots new going on with the PINEMAP project, including work led by Elizabeth on plant physiological ecology of loblolly pine and Yang on elucidating controls on soil respiration. Both will be presenting their research at the Ecological Society of America at the August meeting in Minneapolis.

Dr. Georgianne Moore   Has been conducting ecohydrology research in Costa Rica. Everyone is invited to follow the REU blog and Facebook page to learn more about the activities going on now at the Soltis Center with this year’s REU program. Students will be here all summer doing research in the tropical forests. These sites are updated daily with photos, videos, etc. Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Texas-AM-REU-in-Costa-Rica/106958569380140Blog: http://georesearch.tamu.edu/blogs/constaricareu/

Drs. Robert Knight and Barron Rector   Conducting a weeklong Youth Range Workshop, sponsored by the Texas Section Society for Range Management, is held annually to recognize outstanding Texas youth. This was the 59th consecutive year. The Workshop began in 1955 and has provided training and been a benefit to more than thousands of Texas youth.

Drs. Diana Doan-Crider and Ed Rhodes   “Our team is mapping for burn severity in the Davis Mountains, Texas. These maps will provide a practical baseline for monitoring the recovery of key wildlife foods and livestock forage after the fires and drought of 2011.” See full story at essm.tamu.edu
Momentum continues in the faculty recruitment process. We are actively searching for a spatial scientist in ESSM and are currently arranging for interviews with our top candidates. We will be conducting a second interview with our top candidate for the Extension range position. This position is joint with West Texas A&M and we are recruiting for a Program Specialist in Stephenville.

The SCSC department is in the final stages of negotiation on the soils position for Overton and we are still recruiting for an Extension Agronomist at Amarillo. Searches have been initiated for a weed scientist and a spatial soil and water scientist at College Station, and we will begin the interview process soon.

It's an exciting time for the ESSM department as we introduce our recent hires. Dr. Forrest Fleischman and Dr. Claudia Solarzano-Rodriguez will both be joining our department on August 1 in the social science area. They will focus on human dimensions in ecosystem management. Dr. Fleishman will be joining us as an assistant professor and Dr. Solarzano-Rodriguez will be joining us as a visiting scientist. Upon completion of her degree in January, Dr. Morgan Russell will be joining ESSM as an assistant professor and Extension range specialist in San Angelo.

In SCSC, Dr. Xuejun Dong has enthusiastically accepted the position of assistant professor in crop physiology at Uvalde. Dr. Casey Reynolds has joined us as Extension turf specialist at College Station.

We wish Dr. Chandler and Dr. McAfee the best in their retirement as they have phased out their weed science and turf grass science programs respectively. We also wish Dr. Scott Senseman the best in his new role as department head at the University of Tennessee.

All of these searches take a large commitment from the faculty and staff and it is all appreciated. It represents a big portion of the future of the departments.

We are in the process of initiating the search for a new department head of Ecosystem Science and Management. I will be chairing the search process and we expect the position description to be available for advertising next week. Please take time to think of outstanding potential candidates that should be encouraged to apply for this exciting leadership opportunity.

Summer graduation is coming soon and we congratulate all of our August graduates! We continue to have strong job opportunities for our graduates, especially in Forestry and Agronomy.

I want to thank all of the faculty and staff for the many and varied roles in, curriculum development, workshops, field days, conferences, interviews, visitors, and meeting the reporting and planning guidelines that we operate under. The dedication of the two departments in all of the things it takes to be successful as a unit is amazing. At the risk of mentioning just one of the many examples, both departments have vested energy and time in the creation of a new honors program and we are ready to begin implementation in ESSM this fall. These all take a large commitment from faculty and staff and the effort is greatly appreciated.

Congratulations to Raghavan Srinivasan on his recent honorary degree. More information is included in this newsletter.

I have had several travel opportunities with my role in CSSA, such as planning our fall meeting in Tampa, the annual budgeting process, representing the case for science in Washington DC, and representing the society at other events. We had an administrative retreat to vision future focus in AgriLife and to prioritize, and leadership will continue to focus on potential for the departments through endowed giving.

Budgeting is currently in full swing and we will have information soon on salary adjustments. Thanks for the patience in the final budget process as both departments are going through it with new financial officers this year.