



Holistic Resource Management of Texas, Inc.

Newsletter

Volume 11, Number 1

Spring 1999

Changing Climate - Adapting to an uncertain future

By Peggy Sechrist

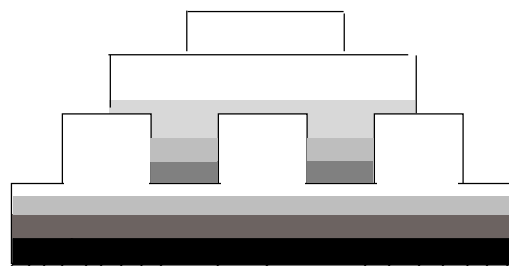
As I sit down to write this, we have just received 3" of rain – sweet rain! It is our first since mid-December. And we've been lucky! Many of you have gone 12 months and longer without any significant rainfall. Others of you have gone for five to seven years with drastically reduced amounts of rainfall. Deriving a living from agricultural enterprises is challenging enough without the dramatic climate variability we have encountered in recent years. Many regions of the state declare that the current drought cycle is worse for them than the one in the 1950's. How long is this going to last and what can we expect? As we move into spring and anticipate summer, Richard and I wonder what the remainder of the year will be like

And I assume most of you wonder the same. So, I decided to do a little research on climate predictions and trends and share with you what I learned.

I searched a few web sites including the Old Farmer's Almanac; the Climate Prediction Center/NCEP; and one for the Union of Concerned Scientists. The Old Farmer's Almanac offers their predictions broken down into regions. I focused in on Region 12: Texas & Oklahoma. They post detailed forecasts for only a few months ahead along with a graph for the whole

year summarizing temperatures and precipitation amounts as above or below normal ranges. As you might imagine, they predict below normal precipitation for every month

except May; and above normal temperatures for every month except April. They forecast 3" of rain for April (below ave. for the north and above ave. for the south) along with cooler temperatures. Then they predict a heavy rainstorm in early May after which most of the rain activity will shift northward with increasing heat across most of the region. The almanac says we can hope for some showers in early June but to expect August to be drier and hotter than normal. In fact, they predict several record highs may be shattered in August. All-in-all we probably could have made the same forecast. But I find that I feel a little more optimistic about such good chances of rain in April



and May. The Climate Prediction Center focuses primarily on La Nina—you know—the opposite of El Nino. Instead of a warming of the Pacific current, La Nina refers to a cooling of the same current. And we are currently experiencing a strong cold episode that contributes to above normal storminess and precipitation in the Hawaiian Islands and the Pacific Northwest, below-normal precipitation in the Southwest, and warmer-than-average conditions throughout much of the contiguous US. Well, data collected from the Pacific Ocean along with available statistical and coupled model predictions leads scientists to believe that this cold episode will last at least for the next six months. That means—you got it—that we can expect continued dry conditions in the Southwest for at least most of the rest of this year.

I then turned to the Union of Concerned Scientists web site to learn the latest on global warming and possible impacts. They start by listing these four striking trends:

- All 10 of the warmest years on record have occurred in the last 15 years.
- The 1990's have already been the warmest decade on record by almost 0.2 °F.
- In vast areas of the U.S., temperature

see Climate, page 7

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President's Report

by Joe Williams

Thanks go to Jane Moore, Pat Richardson, Peggy Sechrist, Pam Kelly and all of our speakers for an excellent Annual Meeting. The slate of speakers was extremely informative, experienced and thought provoking. The Annual Meeting, seminars and Field Days conducted throughout the year are effective and enjoyable ways to observe other operations, network and learn.

Coming up are Field Days at the Rosewood Ranch near Ennis in April and a Mexican hunting ranch tour (near Laredo) in May.

Finally, the drought is still with many of us, so planning, monitoring and replanning is critical for the success of our grazing operations. These are more than just words as the results of our actions will be apparent in both the near term and the long term.

Joe Williams

HRM of Texas Mission Statement

To provide encouragement and support of holistic management in Texas

THREE-PART GOAL

Quality of Life - We value a healthy ecosystem capable of supporting the people in it, strong family units, financial sustainability, a land ethic, and personal growth and development; while having fun and fellowship as a professionally proactive organization.

Forms of Production / Activities - Practicing holistic management, self-sustaining forms of revenue, facilitating training and education, creating public awareness and forming collaborative partnerships.

Future Landscape Description - High biodiversity, a healthy water cycle, a healthy mineral cycle, efficient capture of solar energy, and a harmonious interdependence between urban and rural communities through an understanding of ecological processes.

Holistic Resource Management of Texas, Inc.

Newsletter

is published quarterly by HRM of TX, Inc., a non-profit organization. News articles, area updates and photos are gratefully accepted and will be published as space allows. We welcome letters to the editor related to HRM principles or activities. Direct newsletter correspondence to:

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Events/Announcements

Field Days, etc.

- April 10 Tour the **Rosewood Ranch**, Ennis, Texas. See a large operation using multiple resources. Enjoy a roasted wild hog for lunch. Spend time learning and visiting. (see stories pages 4 & 6)
- May 15 **Mexico ranch** tour, across the Rio Grande from Laredo. The ranch is being managed for wildlife purposes. Speakers will address the HRM perspective. Co-sponsored by Webb County Extension. (see story page 6)
- May 29 PlanIt Texas Field Day at the **Bamburger Ranch**, Johnson City (see story page 6).
- **June 25 -26 Texas Wildlife Association's** Annual Convention at Hill Country Hyatt in San Antonio. For more info., please call 1-800-839-9453
- **Late June or early July DO YOUR CATTLE MAKE THE GRADE?** field day. Hear how meats are graded (i.e. yield grades, quality grades, dressing percentages, differences in grass or grain fed, differences in yield per breed). Watch as meat is being processed. Co-sponsored by the Meat Sciences Department of Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas.

HRM Course

- **May 6 - 8 HRM Beginners "How to" Course** ~ a few openings still available~~ Held at the Ford Ranch in Brady, Texas. "A unique opportunity to receive training on a working cattle ranch spread over 30,000 acres of Texas hill country. Take advantage of this chance to increase your knowledge, develop new skills, and enjoy some R&R at the same time." For more information, contact Peggy Sechrist at 830-997-2508.

Announcements

- The new Holistic Management text book that was just published in January is now available through HRM of Texas, Inc. for \$25.00 (a \$5 savings from the retail price). Please contact Peggy Sechrist at 830-997-2508 or peggy@fbg.net to order. A \$1.00 shipping charge will be added to cover postage.
- Our deepest gratitude goes to L. Jane Moore for her commitment and service to HRM as our Executive Director. Jane has decided that her work load was too great and not taking her toward her holistic goal, so she is resigning her position. We wish her the very very best and look forward to her involvement with HRM in other capacities.
- HRM OF TEXAS, INC. is looking for someone to assume the position of Executive Secretary. The position is part-time/contract (80 hours per month) and requires phone skills, organizational skills, communication skills, and writing skills along with enthusiasm, a positive attitude, and a flexible schedule. Starting pay is \$850/month. A detailed job description is available.
Please submit a letter of interest with resume by May 1 to:
Mr. Joe Williams, President
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Dallas, Texas 75225

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Holistic Resource Management is a dynamic and collaborative process. Our experience with this process precludes us from rendering comment or advice regarding a specific tool or management practice outside of a total context. Therefore the editors cannot necessarily endorse the views of any subscriber or contributor to this newsletter. We offer their comments and advertisements for your reflection and appropriate use.

Practitioner Profile: Bunker Sands Rosewood Ranches

by Bunker Sands

Rosewood Ranches operates several ranch properties in Texas. Three of them are close enough to each other that we manage them together as a team, sharing the labor as needed. We call these the Ennis, Sands, and Seagoville ranches. They are in Ellis, Navarro, Henderson, and Kaufman Counties of Texas. In our mission statement, which we came up with back in 1989 (with the assistance of a good facilitator), we addressed various quality of life issues. In fact, that is where we started. The production and landscape description that followed were to support those quality of life values which everyone on the team agreed with.

We have a cattle operation that includes cow/calf and backgrounding of stockers. One of our ranches is dedicated to the stocker operation (Seagoville). We background our own steers and heifers there if we don't like

the prices at weaning, and we also take on outside cattle when we have excess grazing.

On the Ennis and Sands ranches we have our cow/calf operations. Sometimes we will send feeders to a feedlot where we partner the lot with the feedyard. They seem to like the cattle we produce and will pay a premium for them.

Wildlife is also a value that we want to enhance and enjoy. One of the more enjoyable aspects of our three ranches for me as an owner is the wetlands that we have created over the years. What I once considered a negative (flat, poorly drained fields that sometimes flooded) has turned into perfect locations for wetlands and the wildlife that utilize them. It took a paradigm shift to realize that these sites are what make our ranches unique and more valuable and enjoyable. To date we have created over 2000 acres of seasonal wetlands.

Along with the with the desire to encourage wildlife we have provided over 250 nesting boxes for wood ducks, bluebirds, martins, owls, kestrels, and bats.

One of the interesting things is that our wildlife endeavors don't seem to conflict with our cattle operations. When it is really wet, we don't want our cattle in those soggy areas anyway. When there is a drought, the wetland areas provide the only green forages available (the wetlands being shallow tend to dry up just about every summer).

April is, of course, one of the prettiest times of year for flowers, cattle grazing green grass, and other signs of spring like migrating shorebirds and potential thunder-showers! We look forward to hosting people interested in holistic management or even just curious about it at our field day on Saturday, April 10th. We will provide the lunch for you if we know you are coming.

Assesing the tools, a wrap-up of the Annual Meeting

Tim Steffens, Range Specialist with Colorado Extension was the final speaker at our recent Annual HRM of Texas Meeting. For those of you who left early - your loss - you missed a humdinger of a synopsis of the day. His thoughts were poignant and full of slow drawled crackling humor. Here are some of the thoughts. You had to be there for the side stitching laughs.

by Tim Steffens

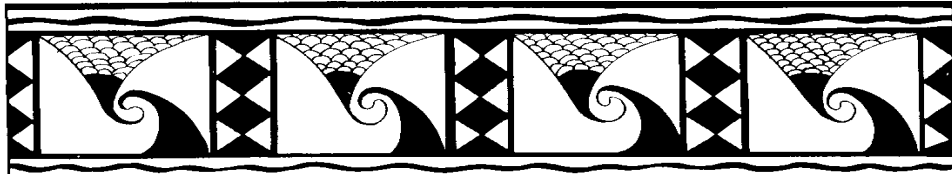
As always, it was a pleasure to spend time with members of HRM of Texas. A number of things caught my attention over the course of the meeting. Some reinforced my own beliefs, some presented a different perspective, and some challenged me.

One of the things that struck me immediately this year was the number of extension, university, and agency people present as presenters and listeners. It is to everyone's credit that we set aside prejudices and realized that perhaps we all have a lot to offer in the effort to make sustainable resource management possible and to help bring profit into the ranching business.

Many scientists have felt that good management would follow from good science. Yet, despite all the good science that has been conducted over the years, poor management decisions are still being made. Scientists do what they do very well. Their purpose is to investigate questions that often take the form of problems, determine their cause, and hopefully find a solution or a more efficient way of doing things. Scientists are normally not good at addressing how those actions affect other components of the system. It is quite revealing that Dick Richardson said that many science majors who take his class begin the course feeling that holistic thinking is a waste of

time. Good science can only test the likelihood that some effect is precipitated by some observable condition or action. Good management can use data gained from good science to make better decisions in an atmosphere of incomplete knowledge. In many cases doing the "right thing" for the wrong reasons has had many undesired and unanticipated side effects. Walt Davis used the example of wheat-fallow rotations. At first it was believed that increased yields were a result of moisture savings in the fallow year. Then scientists discovered that it was because of increased availability of soil nutrients as a result of organic matter breakdown—a short-term benefit that caused long-term damage. This knowledge has caused a new interest in development of production methods that better conserve soil.

Extension's purpose is to take science



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Wrap-up, from page 4

based information to the people. This they have done very well, though they often did little to teach people when the methods or technology they were disseminating might be appropriate. Consequently, we have one of the most productive agricultural sectors in the world, with rampant business failures, high incidence of stress related problems for individuals and families, and failing rural communities. Many professionals are beginning to see that the HRM model is one answer to help people decide when a tool or procedure is appropriate. Science has been very good at finding answers to questions. That is the easy part. The HRM model is a good way to go about determining the right questions. One approach that I have heard attributed to the New Zealanders illustrates a way to ask the right question when confronted with a problem. First, look for a no-cost solution. That failing, seek a low-cost solution. If that fails, find out if you really have a problem after all. You may find that you are dealing with an "insurmountable opportunity." Joel Ham illustrated how science and HRM can work well together when he said that science should study process. HRM can then be used to decide how to use this knowledge best toward a goal.

As Joseph Fitzsimons eloquently put it, to be successful, we need to "...have a firm grasp of the obvious and a facility for exploiting the inevitable." Many of us have fallen victim to seeing only what we believe. We are tempted to see only tools and problems.

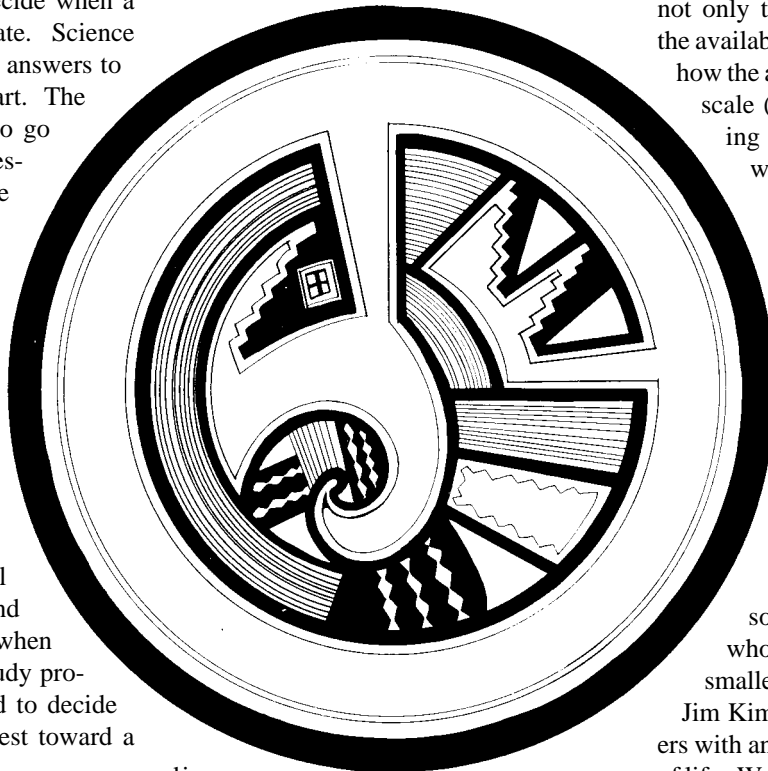
The theme of the conference had to do with supplying yourself with a better box of tools. However, having a lot of tools does no good if you don't know what you want to build. Dick Richardson expressed what is required to use tools effectively – you need the three part goal to work toward – the architectural plan, if you will. Joel Ham said that you apply tools to the process or the ecosystem that also includes the people

involved. Billy Kniffen showed how tools (grass) and process (water infiltration) are sometimes not easy to separate. This underlines the importance of a holistic perspective. As an HRM instructor at a course said, the goal determines what success is; the structure of the organization determines the chances of success.

Once we know what we want to build, have designed a structure that will facilitate the process, inventoried our resources and decided to take action, we need to select the right tool - not just the type of tool, but also the right size, and apply it on the right scale.

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McMurry



discussed the "power tool" of grazing animals in large herds while Pat Richardson discussed the "microtools" of soil organisms and insects and illustrated how scale determines not only results, but perspective.

Tools need to be kept in good condition, and collections of tools need to be kept up to date. Guy Glosson discussed how low stress handling can keep the tool of livestock in good condition. Joel talked about how many of us only have a few tools, and we use those most that we know best. When we get in a bind, our natural reaction is to keep doing the same things harder. If that is what got us in that condition, we are being counterproductive. The first law of HOLES (not wholes) is that when you find yourself

in a hole, the first thing to do is to stop digging. The important thing to remember is to manage FOR what we want by managing the process, as Joel said. Good things will then follow. Be careful not to manage AGAINST things you don't want, which often brings about other equally undesirable consequences.

This predisposition for unforeseen consequences was discussed by Dale Rollins - for every action there are several reactions. Walt Davis also talked about how we can't do ONE thing. That is why monitoring is so important. Phillip Wright showed how properly selected sites for brush removal change not only the natural community, but also the availability of water. He also mentioned how the actions of many people on a small scale (home sites) can have far reaching ramifications on a large scale when he discussed an urban area that had a 14 fold higher fecal coliform count and nitrate N levels a whopping 44 times higher than that coming off a rural, predominantly range-land watershed.

David Bamberger talked about how the tool of education can be used to create other tools in the form of motivated people who have similar objectives and different perspectives. Not only can they be a resource or tool for managing your whole, but can also affect larger and smaller wholes that are related to yours.

Jim Kimmel talked about educating others with an emphasis on heritage and a way of life. We all know that people don't value what they don't understand. This may be a way to get more in the general populous to support agriculture, regional food systems and other things that we have identified as necessary or desirable for a truly sustainable agriculture system. Wayne Hanselka discussed some of the problems faced by extension educators in having to answer questions from people who do not have a holistic approach to management. Often all we can do is plant a seed and hope that it bears fruit.

These observations don't even begin to express how much there was to learn at the meeting. They are just the ramblings of one person lucky enough to attend.

HRM Field Day April 10 at Rosewood Ranch, Ennis

Holistic Management practitioner, J.B. “Bunker” Sands, was initially attracted to the idea of creating wetlands on his cattle ranch for one reason - his passion for duck hunting. Now 16 years later, this initial interest has expanded to a deep appreciation of how wetland development increases

the environmental diversity, overall health, and prosperity of Rosewood Ranch (not to mention what it’s done for Sands’ quality of life). Come and be with us to hear and see how multiple resources (i.e. wetlands, wildlife, bird watching, and much more) are being utilized. Enjoy a roasted wild hog

lunch and, weather permitting, tour the ranch. To make your reservation for the lunch and for directions, please call John or Linda Heaton, 254-848-4207; Richard or Peggy Sechrist, 830-997-2508; Dick or Pat Richardson, 512-371-1885; Joe Williams, 214-368-5497. We need your reservations before Wednesday, April 7th.

PlanIt Texas hosts field day at Bamberger Ranch

Saturday, May 29, 1999 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, \$20 per person

PlanIt Texas is a coalition of environmental groups, producer groups, government agencies and private land owners committed to seeking solutions to conflict over natural resources that are based on trust and respect, embrace private property rights and enhance our natural resources. **PlanIt Texas Coalition will sponsor and conduct a unique field day at the Bamberger Ranch.** We invite you to experience the restored healthy habitat and land from the perspective and expertise of our diverse and collective outlook. **Coalition members will be your interpretive guides.**

Come park your car and spend the day in the hill country near Johnson City. Walk the Nature Trail and hear about wildflower beauty, habitat restoration, vegeta-

tion diversity, endangered species, cedar control, aquatic organisms indicating water purity, and how to sequester raindrops. Ride on trailers with hay bales to a variety of sites on this spectacular 5500 acre ranch to learn about watershed management, brush management, wildlife management, and grazing management.

The registration fee of \$20/person includes lunch (on the large patio at the beautiful stone conference Center), transportation at the ranch, and a PlanIt Texas Landowner’s Manual (a collection of perspectives and suggestions to help landowners develop a plan for sustainable profitable agriculture options and restore/manage for a diversity of habitats providing sustainable homes for wildlife and native plants).

This is an outdoor event rain or shine, so dress for the weather (hat, sunscreen, rain gear) and expect to do some walking on uneven (but beautiful) terrain. You will be returned to your car around 5:00 pm.

To register, send your name, address, phone number, Fax number, \$ amount enclosed, number attending and check (payable to PlanIt Texas Coalition) to:

Bamberger Ranch, RR 1, Box 102, Johnson City TX 78636 (or Fax to 830-868-4639).

A confirmation letter and map will be returned to you by mail or Fax. Please register before May 23rd.

Participation is limited to the first 200 registrants.

Field day scheduled on ranch in Northern Mexico

Mark your calendars for May 15, 1999. That’s the date for a ranch tour in Northern Tamaulipas sponsored by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and Holistic Resource Management of Texas. Participants will visit the LNB Ranch about 20 miles SW of Nuevo Laredo. This 10,000 acre ranch focuses primarily on trophy white-tailed deer management and speakers will address decision-making, habitat management, and economics as well as other topics.

A “comida campestre” or ranch meal will be served at the ranch prepared by the Cattleman’s Union of Nuevo Laredo with the Cooperation of the National Association of Diversified Cattlemen. The program will offer participants educational, cross-cultural, and fellowship opportunities.

The hospitality is always outstanding and the field day should be a great experience for all.

The tour will leave from the Howard Johnson Hotel parking area on the Rio Grande in Laredo at 7:30 a.m. on May 15, 1999. We should return to Texas by 4:00 p.m. Personal documentation papers are not required. There will be a \$20.00/person registration fee to offset costs.

It is suggested that participants stay at either the Howard Johnson Hotel (956-722-2411) or La Posada Hotel (956-722-1701) on Friday night to avoid delays on Saturday morning.

R.S.V.P.’s by May 12 are encouraged so final plans may be made. Information and R.S.V.P.’s can be obtained from Wayne Hanselka (361-265-9203) or George

Gonzales, Webb County Extension Agent (956-721-2626).

All interested persons are encouraged to attend. Hasta la Vista en Laredo.

<p>LOW STRESS LIVESTOCK HANDLING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Private Instruction at Your Facility• 10 yrs. Experience using Bill Williams Methods• Reduce Labor, Cut Death Loss, Prevent Sickness• Gentle wild cattle <p>JOEL HAM 915-884-2866</p>

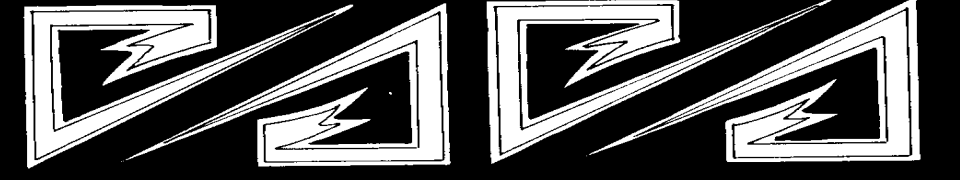
Climate, from page 1

increases in a range of 2 – 4°F have been measured during this century.

- The global average surface temp. has risen 0.5 – 1.1 °F since reliable records began in the second half of the 19th century.

Taken directly from their web page, I read the following: “Until recently, researchers were uncertain whether these developments reflected natural variations in the earth’s climate or whether in fact human activities contributed to the warming. But in fall 1995, scientists with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reached a conclusion in their Second Assessment Report. This document received contribution and peer-review from over 2,500 of the world’s leading climate scientists, economists, and risk-analysis experts. For the first time ever, the Panel concluded that the observed increase in global average temperature over the last century ‘is unlikely to be entirely natural in origin’ and that ‘the balance of evidence suggests that there is a discernible human influence on global climate.’” Specifically, they point their scientific fingers at the burning of fossil fuels, gasoline for transportation, deforestation, cattle ranching, and rice farming. They cannot predict the exact impact on earth’s climate, but many of them agree that an atmospheric doubling of carbon dioxide could occur as early as 2050. I bet our respiratory systems won’t adapt that quickly. And they anticipate dislocation of agriculture, expansion of the earth’s deserts, and more extreme weather events. Now before you commit hari-kari, these same scientists say if we begin immediately reducing human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases, we can mitigate these dire consequences.

Grazing management under these conditions is difficult, nerve-racking, depressing, and next to impossible. Desperate for



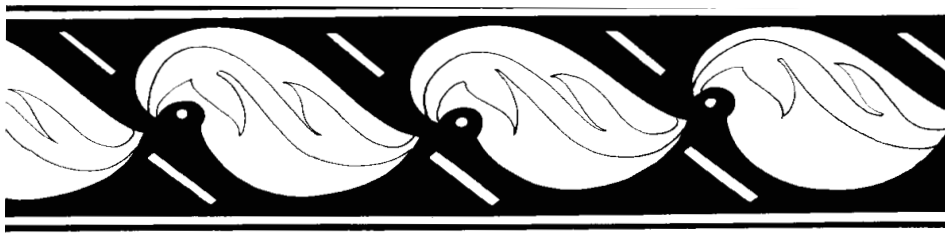
assistance, our government began cloud seeding over 20 years ago in an attempt to increase rainfall in drought stricken areas. Serendipity placed Richard and me at the Oklahoma meeting for the Oklahoma Land Stewardship Alliance (which is the merger of two groups formerly known as HRM of OK and OK SAWG) in early March. There I met a gentleman, Edwin Kessler, who is the former Director of the National Severe Storms Laboratory in Norman, OK from 1964 –1986, and a meteorologist. Edwin has been intently studying all data on cloud seeding since the treatment was first applied. He has shared several reports and papers with me most of which is written in very technical language.

Edwin has published an essay that refers to several of the cloud seeding projects undertaken in the Southwest. Following is a summary in his own words, “Cloud seeding has never been shown to produce a net increase of precipitation in the Great Plains. In one of the largest of the past controlled experiments, rainfall was less on seeded days in Missouri and Arizona. Second, the lack of rain in portions of our state (Oklahoma) is a result of recent weakness and rarity of the processes that bring moist air and rising air motion to those places. Those processes, over which we can have no influence whatsoever, are needed to produce both precipitation and the precursor clouds that are visible indicators of the precipitation process. Third, the amount of condensed water present in clouds that are not raining naturally has no value as precipitation. Unless a natural rain process is in place, most of the moisture that may be induced to descend below the base of a natural cloud is lost to evaporation before it reaches the ground.”

I especially find interesting his reference to the process that is required to create rainfall. Ecological processes is something that we try to better understand in holistic management. In another paper he refers to clouds as the symptoms of the process and that we cannot significantly alter the process by treating the symptom. Edwin’s essay reviews specifically cloud seeding projects over Big Springs and San Angelo and explains how the results of those projects were not cost effective nor ecologically effective as well. This essay was printed in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society, Vol. 79, No. 7, July 1998. One additional point Edwin makes is that cloud seeding can possibly cause suppression of rainfall in neighboring systems.

What to do? We come back to management decisions. If we’re to anticipate and plan for frequent, prolonged periods of drought, I suspect that even our holistic management drought plans will need to be amended. If we begin to need pasture recovery times of 12 months or more, how will we overcome our size limitations based on property boundaries? Looking to nature, we learn that native grazing ungulates migrated over millions of acres from north to south and east to west all influenced by seasons and climate variabilities. What can we learn from this knowledge? How do we “break out” of a grazing plan restricted by the boundary of our ranch?

Is there a possibility of working collaboratively, amalgamating herds, and herding them over larger tracks of land? I’ve already heard a few ranchers begin discussing such ideas. What ideas have you had? Would you be willing to write them down and share them through the newsletter? If so, please send them to me, Peggy Sechrist, at Rt. 2, Box 184-A, Fredericksburg, Texas 78624 – or email them to me at peggy@fbg.net. I’ll print them in the next newsletter. I believe we can adjust, at least during our lifetime, to these climate changes but it will take the creativity and collaboration of all of us to do so. I hope to hear from you soon.





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Working to provide encouragement and support of holistic management in Texas

Holistic Resource Management of Texas, Inc. is a non-profit organization made up of ranchers, farmers, public land managers, educators, conservationists, and others who are interested in finding financially and ecologically sound ways to manage land.

*Categories of membership: \$20—Individual Member; \$35—Family Membership (2 people); *\$100—Active Member; *\$250—Sustaining Member; *\$1,000—Lifetime Member. *Includes one textbook/workbook set
An annual membership fee entitles you to:*

- *Four editions of the HRM of Texas, Inc. Newsletter*
- *The privilege to vote for and serve as director of HRM of Texas, Inc.*
- *The opportunity to participate in management clubs, field days, practitioner panels and other educational opportunities to assist with the application of Holistic Resource Management.*

Please complete, detach and return the form below with a check for your dues.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ (home) _____ (work)

Occupation: _____ Membership Category: _____

*Please make check for desired membership category payable to Holistic Resource Management of Texas, Inc. and send to: **HRM of TX c/o John Heaton, 341 Compton School Road, Crawford, Texas 76638**
For more information contact: John Heaton (254-848-4207) or Joe Williams (214-368-4032).*