December 2025

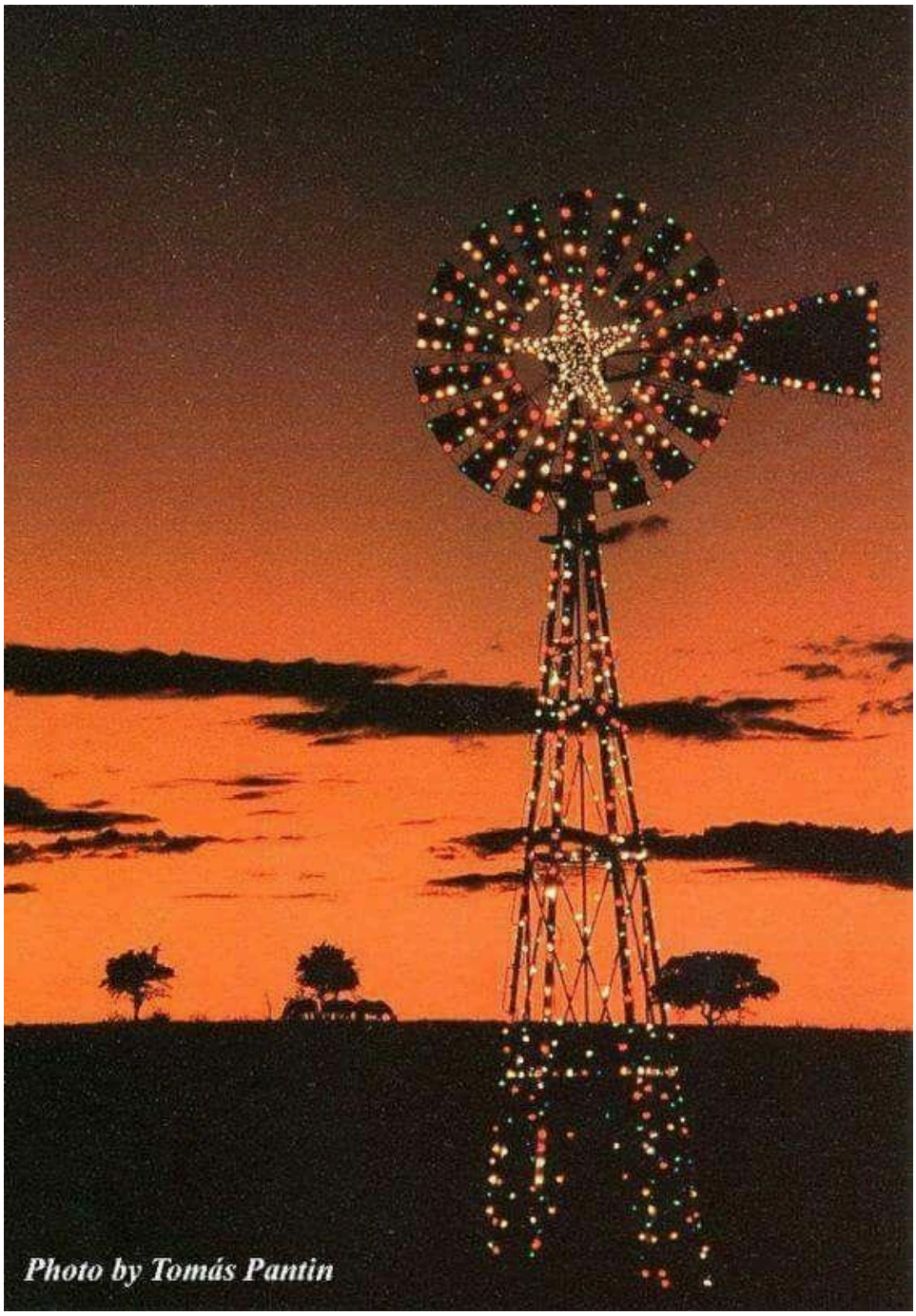
A note from Jenny

Jenny Pluhar, Executive Director, TXGLC

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, Grazers! Best wishes for whatever holiday you celebrate!

The year has been full for TXGLC. Full of workshops, full of meaningful discussions, full of new programs, full of technical assistance delivered, full of outreach. We head into 2026 ready to navigate uncertain and ever-changing financial waters, but with determination to continue our good work. It has been encouraging and downright heart warming to see the industry support for the most basic of our programming, designed to get to landowners we had not reached before now.

Stay safe, enjoy family and friends, and give thanks we live in the best country on this rock we call Earth!



Principles B4 Practices wraps up

The first grant, covering two years of “Principles Before Practices” has wrapped up. Before we look to the PB4P 2.0 grant that is underway and

soon to be coming to a pasture near you, let's look back at the initial efforts. Was it worth it? Did we connect? What can we do differently/better moving forward?

First of all, our partnership with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Research and TAMU Center for Grazinglands and Ranch Management worked as smoothly as a hot knife through butter. TXGLC staff and the Aggie teams pulled together to produce some of the best workshops I have seen in my ten years with TXGLC. Turns out, focusing on the basics and showing people, in the field, the principles of soil health and grazing management resonates with landowners. At the close of our first workshop in Bruni, TX, Benito Juarez, a local landowner, told me "Young lady, I have been ranching all my life and I realize after today, I need to do some things different." For reference, I am in my mid 60's, so the "young lady" was a huge compliment!

We reached some people we do not traditionally connect with successfully. That was the biggest win of all with this grant for me. We held three workshops directly associated with the grant as well as some follow ups the second year. By the time we had the first three under our belts, we were getting requests from other organizations, SWCD's etc all of whom had heard of "Principles Before Practices" and wanted to have the same format. We have given the workshop to groups of service members/veterans beginning in agriculture. Their military background is to always ask questions, and they certainly did. Whereas more traditional, life long producers sometimes hesitate to ask what they fear is a "dumb" question, the military folks asked ALL the questions. We have talked to cattlewomen's groups, Beefmaster Breeders United, Texas Wildlife Association, and what seems like dozens of other groups gathered by our regional coalitions in conjunction with county SWCD's.

We had a carrot on a stick: EQIP preference points for attending. But to my surprise, that was really not needed. Ranchers in South Texas and the Edwards Plateau gravitated toward the basic, relevant information the workshops provided. We focused on the WHY and then helped select the HOW that best fit each situation. We printed out maps and laminated them to create a hands-on planning document. Ranchers value plain old technical assistance. Evaluating the status of the principles then talking through the options of the practices to best use their investment, both in dollars and hours.

We did create an on-line option for the curriculum. Although it has had limited use, it does provide a lasting reference. Ranchers find it much more relevant to be in their neighbor's pasture digging holes and sharing what works and what doesn't. If you want more of those kinds of experiences, check out our regional coalitions and join us at workshops and keep up with where this traveling PB4P gypsy show is headed next. The grant we are working from now has three more years and is statewide.

We are coming to a pasture near you!

We've taken PB4P online!

Are you looking to enhance your understanding of rangeland management and sustainable practices? Make sure to check out our online course, **"Principles B4 Practices"**!

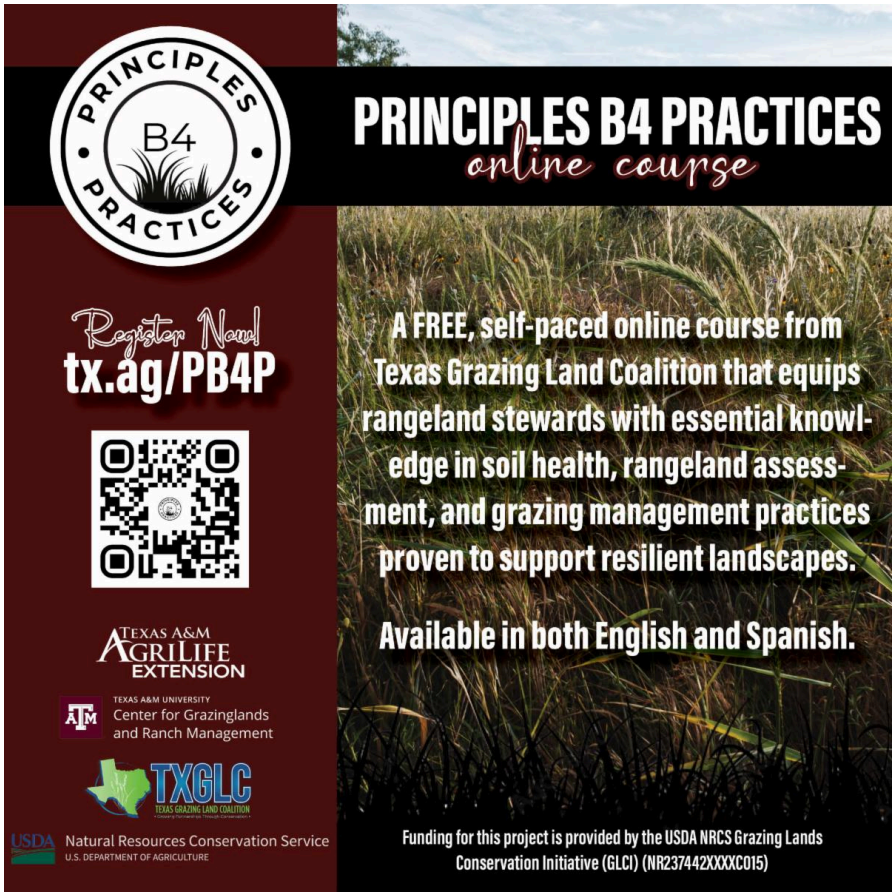
This self-paced course, developed by Texas Grazing Land Coalition, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, and the Center for Grazinglands and Ranch Management is designed to equip you with the foundational knowledge and practical tools needed to effectively assess and care for your rangeland. Among the presenters are ranchers who employ the techniques you will learn and share their experiences with them.

What you'll gain from "Principles B4 Practices":

- **Master the Six Soil Health Principles:** Gain a deep understanding of the core principles that drive healthy soil rangeland ecosystems.
- **Effective Rangeland Assessment:** Learn how to evaluate and monitor your rangeland to make informed decisions and plan appropriate actions.
- **Grazing Management Expertise:** Discover and apply key grazing management practices that align with soil health principles.
- **Self-Paced Learning:** Complete the course at your own convenience, in approximately 1.5 hours.

Whether you're a seasoned rangeland manager or just starting your journey, "Principles B4 Practices" will provide you with invaluable insights to foster healthier, more productive rangeland.

This course is also available with Spanish captions. Ready to transform your approach to rangeland stewardship?



Interested in NRCS cost share?

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) has announced a batching deadline for the first funding round of key conservation programs. This national batching date ensures producers have a clear, consistent timeline for participating in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). This includes NRCS' new Regenerative Pilot Program, which provides targeted Farmer First assistance through EQIP and CSP.

NRCS programs are continuous sign-up programs, but due to the government shutdown, the agency is implementing an initial national batching period to ensure producers have access to funding and support.

Let's break this down and explain it! You must sign up by January 15 if you MIGHT be interested in one of the programs listed. You do not need a plan established or have worked with someone to choose practices that might benefit your operation. This sign up just signals your intention to possibly complete an application. You can cancel or decide not to proceed at any time. There is no obligation. However, you must sign up by January 15 to get in on the first round of funding. But, again, that does not obligate you to developing and completing a contract.

We encourage you all to consider this opportunity!

Soil health and the National Finals Rodeo

Two things you never thought might be mentioned in the same sentence. Soil Health and the NFR. Stick with me here.

The National Finals Rodeo, the Super Bowl of the sport, just concluded in Vegas. Held in the Thomas and Mack Center, which is comfortable as the home court of the University of Nevada- Las Vegas collegiate basketball team, it is an interesting venue for rodeo. Amidst the bright lights of Vegas, country is king for the first full week of December. The rodeo is held in what is likely the smallest arena of any venue anywhere in the PRCA rodeo world. The arena floor is covered in “dirt.” Soil. That is stored somewhere off site all year until it is needed again to cover the concrete floor when the basketball court is taken up.

So, how does Soil Health come into play here? The footing this year came under immense criticism from not only the barrel racers, who had several horses slip and fall going around barrels, but the bareback and saddle bronc horses as well. These horses are highly trained, carefully coddled, and worth a bunch of money. Each run, for ten nights in a row, has the ability to be a ‘make or break’ moment for the rider, both barrel racers and roughstock riders.

The ground this year was slick, didn’t stick together and was downright dangerous for animal and rider alike.

Why? Let’s put this in the context of Soil Health. Healthy soils have active bacterial and fungal populations. Literally billions of microbes in a small spoonful of soil. Living organisms that exude the substances that cause our healthy grazing land soils to have structure, aggregate stability and LIFE. They are sticky, to put it simply. From those exudates. The soil used in the arena (same with other arenas nationwide), stored in some quonset style barn all year is dead. No life whatsoever. No plants growing to encourage more biology. No shade to protect from heat (especially in Vegas). Nothing to make it stick together and act like healthy soil.

Who would have thought soil health might make a difference at the World Series of Rodeo? Be a contributing factor to the safety of both horses and riders? That dead soil cannot be “fixed” by any fancy drags with intricate water spreading systems. Maybe some soil amendments could be added, but those would not completely replace a healthy thriving plant community, especially one fueled by grazing animals.

Maybe it is worth an Animal Science research project somewhere……how often should “arena dirt” be replaced with healthy living soil? Probably different answers or outdoor arenas than dirt stored in some overheated quonset all summer in the desert. But useful info nonetheless.
The answer truly is always “SOIL HEALTH.”

Beef Sustainability Summit

Texas GLC was excited to be a part of Texas A&M AgriLife’s second annual Beef Sustainability Summit earlier this month in Dallas. Dr.

Jacquelyn Prestegaard and her team did an amazing job organizing the summit to include industry leaders, ranchers, and others. For TXGLC, a lead off activity was a workshop with some of our Resilient Ranch Network ranchers and industry counterparts. Our team, TXGLC, Texas A&M AgriLife and Texas A&M Center for Grazinglands and Ranch Management (CGRM), acted as notetakers while Katrina Turner, Jacquelyn's graduate student was the primary leader of the discussions. Ranchers and industry reps had the opportunity to review what had come out of the first round of workshops that were conducted separately. This workshop had them seated at the tables together, hashing out topics. I will distill the information in the next edition of the newsletter. Not surprisingly, ranchers and industry agree on substantially more when they meet face to face and have a chance to explain their rationale to one another than one might believe if they confined their information gathering to Instagram and facebook!

At the overall workshop, 150 ranchers and industry folks gathered for many presentations and panel discussions. A full day and a half to say the least. Our own Steve Collins, Northern Prairies GLC addressed the group on the ever important topic of Succession Planning. Morgan Treadwell of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension summarized our Principles Before Practices grant efforts. Texas A&M AgriLife and CGRM were our partners in the grant.

Steve Collins (above), rancher in the Northern Prairies GLC, speaks about succession planning. Dr. Morgan Treadwell (below) presents Principles B4 Practices at the Beef Sustainability Summit.

Six months - six grazing management principles

Sometimes you may ask, why do we focus so much on soil health and grazing management principles? Because it is the foundation for healthy rangelands, that's why! For the next six months, we will feature one grazing management principle.

Monitor.

FIVE | Monitor

Monitoring the effects of management is critical for future decision making. Ensuring our grazing management strategies are supporting the soil health principles should be the basis of monitoring.

Some key elements to monitor include soil cover, bare ground, plant diversity, and plant utilization. An effective grazing strategy will increase cover, decrease bare ground, increase diversity, and promote healthy plants.

Monitoring can be as simple as notes of pasture conditions before and after grazing. Photo points are a good way to visually observe changes over time. Grazing exclosures allow visual estimation of plant utilization. Step transects can be done to de-termine percent cover, percent bare ground, plant diversity and plant utilization.

Are you in need of technical assistance?

Ryan Walser (Albany area) and Kason Haby (Hondo area) are now joined by a new specialist, Shiner Webb (Abilene area, Resilient Ranch Project), and are our Technical Assistance Specialists here at the Texas Grazing Land Coalition. They have had full careers in rangeland and grazing management and we are incredibly fortunate to have them on our team.

You will likely see them at some of our outreach events and they are available to assist with conservation planning on your property. Their contact information is listed here and at the bottom of the newsletter. If you need technical assistance and do not live near them, please call us. We also collaborate with Wildlife Habitat Federation in matching technical assistance specialists to meet your unique needs. We can make arrangements to help you make the most out of the land you love!

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The answer is KNOW!

In order to speak the language, one must know the words. Similarly, on rangelands knowing which plants are growing in your pastures and how to manipulate them to meet your forage goals is crucial. Every month we will explore a new plant in our newsletter.

Mistletoe

Phoradendron sp.

Mistletoe, *Phoradendron sp.* receives a fair amount of attention at this time of year. The genus name “Phoradendron” literally means “thief of the tree,” attributed to the fact that the plant is parasitic. It sinks it roots into the tree and while technically a “hemiparasite,” meaning that it steals some resources from the tree and can also make some of it’s own food. The plant may live 100 years or longer, though the aerial, visible portion usually breaks off in wind storms, etc causing the plant to regenerate from the roots.

It can harm trees, but does not usually kill them. It can kill branches. It spreads by birds but the sticky seeds must be deposited on a small branch with thin bark to get started. In fact, the common name, “mistletoe” derives from Anglo-Saxon terminology literally meaning “dung on a twig.” So we are stealing kisses beneath “dung on a twig.”

Trimming is the most effective control. But before you worry too much about control, keep in mind that mistletoe berries are used by dozens of species of birds and pollinators. They are an early source of nectar for pollinators. Three species of butterflies: great purple hairstreak, thicket hairstreak and Johnson’s hairstreak rely upon mistletoe exclusively for a nectar source.

My most entertaining mistletoe story involves spaghetti. Yes, spaghetti. My co-author on *Texas Range Plants*, Stephan Hatch, was a plant expert

extraordinaire, curator of the S. M. Tracy Herbarium at Texas A&M. He found himself in a televised courtroom identifying grass in a very high profile case, which led to other detectives looking over evidence they had collected in cases and one particularly strange case. He received a special shipment of a frozen block of spaghetti sauce, about the size of a brick. The detective was attempting to prove the victim was killed by eating poisoned spaghetti sauce. Steve had to dig through the thawed sauce and managed to isolate mistletoe berries. The victim's wife had indeed poisoned him with mistletoe, disguised in spaghetti. Steve had no appetite for spaghetti for a good while afterward!

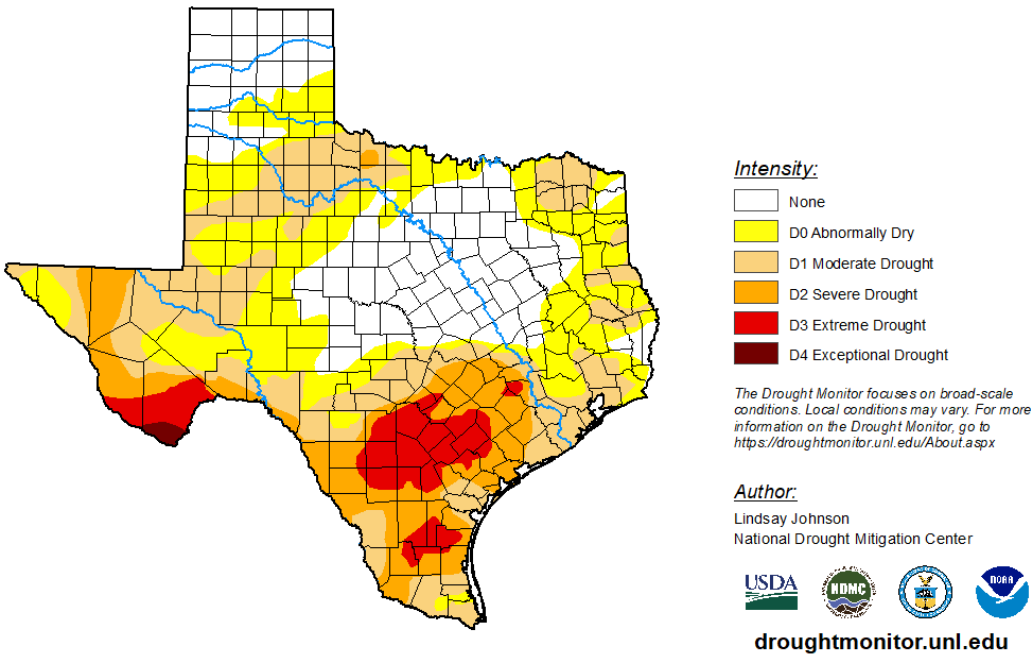
Mistletoe has a conflicted and strange resume, indeed!

What we've been up to!

The Resilient Ranch Network held a meeting in early December. This meeting brought together ranchers and those in industry to work to find common ground. (above two photos)

Texas GLC board members and regional chairs played a role at the Regenerating Rangeland to Enhance Biodiversity Workshop hosted by the Small Producers Initiative at Texas State University. The workshop was held at the Hershey Ranch in Stonewall, TX, the property our Vice-Chair, Garrett Kunz, ranches, and he gave a tour demonstrating the regenerative razing practices he uses which have yielded positive results. Christine Martin, Chair of the Post Oak Savannah GLC, gave her presentation on Holistic Management as a Management Tool. Those in leadership positions with Texas GLC regularly work with different organizations in leadership positions and assist with putting on workshops, highlighting the importance of partnerships and networking in the grazing world. (above three photos)

U.S. Drought Monitor



Summary - Southern U.S.

Drought conditions across the South generally worsened this week, as limited precipitation did little to improve the growing moisture deficits. Louisiana and some areas of Mississippi saw some improvements due to precipitation, including the removal of severe drought (D2) in west-central Louisiana. In Texas and Oklahoma, ongoing precipitation deficits led to further expansion of abnormally dry (D0) and moderate drought (D1) conditions. In south-central Texas, longer-term hydrologic stress continued and intensified with the expansion of severe (D2) and extreme drought (D3). Across Arkansas and Tennessee, despite cooler than normal temperatures, dry conditions continued to worsen with growing precipitation deficits, drying soils, and decreasing streamflows leading to the expansion of abnormal dryness (D0) and moderate drought (D1).

Click here to visit and view the U.S. Drought Monitor site.

Upcoming events and opportunities

Texas GLC events can be found in red.

Coastal Prairie GLC: Coffee on the Prairie
La Grange, TX | January 8, 2026
More information here.

TSGRA Winter Meeting

San Angelo, TX | January 15, 2026
More information here.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Private Applicator Training
Bandera, TX | January 21, 2026
More information here.

TALT Run for the Range: Trail Run
Granbury, TX | January 31, 2026
More information here.

NCBA CattleCon
Nashville, TN | February 3 - 5, 2026
More information here.

TSCRA Cattle Raisers Convention & Expo
Fort Worth, TX | March 27 - 29, 2026
More information here.

TWA WildLife Convention
San Antonio, TX | July 9 - 11, 2026
More information here.

TSGRA Annual Convention
Fredericksburg, TX | July 16 - 17, 2026
More information here.

National Grazing Land Coalition Bus Tour: Grazing the Heartland
Sioux Falls, SD | September 23 - 24, 2026
More information here.

Love the Land - A Texas GLC Podcast

Did you know Texas GLC has a podcast? It's called Love the Land, and you can find it wherever you get your podcasts.

If you have never listened to or subscribed to a podcast, they're like an on-demand radio show. Here's a "how to" tutorial:

1. Download a podcast app on your phone. If you have an iPhone, there is already one downloaded on your phone.
2. Open app. Use the search tool to find specific podcasts like "Love the Land" or categories like "agriculture."
3. Listen to a single podcast or subscribe and get new episodes added to your library any time they are released.
4. Love the Land podcasts are 30-45 minutes.

Regional Coalitions

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