



2011 TSSRM President Matt Wagner and Outstanding Contribution to Rangeland Management Award Winner Brad Wilcox

Texas Section Society for Rangeland Management
Outstanding Contribution to Rangeland Management
Brad Wilcox

The Outstanding Contribution to Rangeland Management Award is the most prestigious award presented by the Section. Each year the Texas Section awards the OCRM to the member that it feels has made the most significant and note-worthy contribution to the rangeland profession.

This year's recipient has had an exceptionally productive career devoting his energy and talents to the art and science of rangeland management and more specifically rangeland hydrology and watershed function. His passion for his work has earned him respect in his field from ranchers, scientists, range management professionals and the general public.

The discipline of rangeland management requires a merging of science and art. Without rigorous science, range management would consist largely of opinions, observations, prevailing paradigms and tradition. To improve our understanding of rangeland ecology and how best to manage rangelands, we depend on the development of new ideas based on rigorous science. This individual is a scientist of impeccable credentials who has contributed an immense volume of relevant, quality scientific information to the field of range management. His major scientific contributions are twofold: research and teaching and he excels in both areas.

This year's award recipient has published 165 peer reviewed papers, book chapters, proceedings and scientific abstracts many of which occur in top-tier ecology and hydrology journals. In addition, he has been invited to make scientific presentations of his research results at over 70 different meetings, conferences and seminars. As a testament to the impact of his work, his papers have been cited more than 1400 times in scientific literature.

Within the field of range management in Texas, water has emerged as the most critical issue; this individual has emerged as the preeminent authority on rangeland hydrology. He has conducted research, especially during the last 10 years, to more accurately understand the relationship between vegetation and water in rangeland ecosystems. His research has transformed our understanding of the role of vegetation in the rangeland water cycle. His goal has been simple; to utilize the best scientific methods and the highest professional standards to discover and illuminate rangeland water dynamics. His research has shown that the water cycle on rangeland is more complex than some have previously thought. The research has dispelled the simple notion that brush control necessarily increases the yield of water. He lets the facts speak for themselves and does not attempt to spin them toward any predetermined outcome. His presentation of scientific data has sometimes drawn criticism and branded him as "controversial". However, this label has not fazed him; he keeps his eye on the objective and does not allow distractions to alter his course. Academic excellence, determination, hard work and professionalism best describe his scientific contributions.

In addition to his impressive record of rangeland research, this individual has also distinguished himself as an effective teacher. He espouses a simple teaching philosophy: Great teachers have a passion for their subject as well as the ability to instill that passion into their students. He developed and teaches one undergraduate course, one graduate level course, as well as a graduate/faculty seminar. He has served as advisor to 25 master and PhD students. Many of whom are now making their own professional contributions. The two principle goals in every course he teaches are: 1) to provide a solid scientific foundation of knowledge; and 2) to foster critical thinking skills. He has a rare ability to stimulate and develop thinking skills in his students, not telling them what to think, but teaching them how to think.

Former recipients of the Texas Section OCRM award include many of the very best practitioners and scientists of the past 60 years. But only a few have made contributions of such significance that they literally alter the science, art and practice of rangeland management. This individual belongs in such a group and deserves our recognition for his outstanding contributions to our profession. A quote by Dr. Dyksterhuis defines outstanding range managers as, "The professional rangeman often must make an independent and often unpopular stand. The non-professional is content with promotion of that which is currently acceptable or popular". This year's recipient exemplifies the professional rangeman.

Please help me recognize the 2011 recipient of the Outstanding Contribution to Rangeland Management, Dr. Brad Wilcox.