



Texas Soil Profiles

2021 PSSAT Officers

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President's Message



Wow. Where has the year gone!?

Yes, It's that time of the year. My work/life has been slowly resuming to some type of normalcy. I hope yours has too. And it's that time of the year to begin planning for our annual meeting. The executive committee decided another virtual meeting would be best. The annual meeting will take place Tuesday night, February 8, 2022 via Zoom. (More details to come.) This will precede the SSLRW which is February 9-10.

We also want to celebrate PSSAT's 40th next year. The tour originally scheduled for this Fall obviously did not happen, but it is still being discussed for next year. I feel the 40th celebration will be in very capable hands.

I want to say thank you to those that have served on committees. Your time is much appreciated. And thank you to our membership. Your involvement helps the organization function and spread the passion so many of us hold - "foster the profession of soil science".

May everyone have a safe holiday season.

Happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely, Shanna Dunn



Photo Quiz

What created these little mounds?
(3-5 cm in diameter)

Located on a Delfina loamy fine sand in San Patricio Co., in clearing surrounded by brush (mesquite, huisache, spiny hackberry, etc.)

Answer is given at end of the newsletter.

2022 Annual Meeting - Preliminary Announcement

The PSSAT Executive Committee has decided to conduct the upcoming Annual Meeting of the Professional Soil Scientists Association of Texas on-line (virtually, via Zoom). There will be a change in the traditional day our meeting will be held, Tuesday evening instead of Wednesday evening, as Shanna has mentioned. The meeting time will be announced next month and posted on the PSSAT website.

The SSLRW will be conducted as a hybrid on-line/in-person meeting this year. There was some discussion about holding the PSSAT meeting in a similar fashion, but the audio/visual and IT logistics posed a challenge for a small group such as ours. We will send out the meeting time, Zoom connection link, and instructions in the next newsletter, along with the Absentee Ballot.

2022 PSSAT Scholarship Announcement

The PSSAT Scholarship Committee is soliciting applications for next year's scholarship award (2021-2022 school year). The \$1500 scholarship is intended to recognize and support an outstanding undergraduate student studying to become a soil scientist at a college or university in Texas and to promote interest in careers in soil science. Applicants must submit the following materials to the PSSAT Scholarship Committee by **December 31, 2021** -- this is an absolute deadline, and the date occurs between semesters. The application form and application instructions are found here: <http://www.pssat.org/college-scholarships/>

Soil Scientist Spotlight - Jamey Douglass

[Written by Jamey Douglass]



I was born in Modesto, California back in 1958. As a child up to the age of 8, we lived in Daly City, Concord, and Walnut Creek, CA. As a young boy, one of my favorite toys was what I called a “scoop diggy tractor.” The was a large Tonka toy that was a tracked tractor with a front-end loader, and a backhoe. Was I predestined to actually get to operate the real machine as an adult?

Dad worked for Aetna Life & Casualty, in 1966, he was transferred to Des Moines, Iowa. We lived in a suburb of Des Moines, known as Urbandale. In 1968, Des Moines had the worst snowstorm in 500 years. The snowplows got stuck going after other snowplows. The decision was made to move to Texas.

The family moved to Houston. I think we lived in a motel north of I45 and Loop 610 for a month before settling down in a subdivision located between Spring-Tomball-Klein. I graduated from Klein High

School in 1976. Most of my friends were headed to college, and several of my close friends were headed to Texas A&M University.

I started TAMU as a Biology major, but after my first semester transferred to the Agronomy Department. At the time there were four degree plans; Business, Turfgrass, Science, and Soil and Water Conservation. I think I was in each one at some point. On campus, I was a student worker for Dr. Kirk Brown, Soil Physics. I worked in the lab, and during two summers, worked in the field. Dr. Brown had the most student workers and grad students in the Department. One of his major projects had to do with Strip Mine reclamation. My senior year, TAMU offered some courses in Strip Mine Engineering, and I took two semesters.

Graduation came and went, what was I going to do? My student Advisor, Mr. Frank Mills told me about a job south of Houston. So back to Spring where my parents lived. I called about the job, but it had been filled. So I checked the Want Ads in the Houston Chronicle newspaper, there was a position for ATEC Associates for a Lab Director. I called, and the following week went to an interview. A week later I was offered the job. Goodbye College Station, hello Spring, TX!

ATEC Associates was a geotechnical engineering firm, that employed engineers, a concrete section (called the Coneheads), and drilling section, and a soils lab. My first day on the job was at a worksite with our drilling rig. The predecessor to the US Army’s M113 APC, was the frame for our drilling rig. The driller was on his last day, and safety was out the window. My wrists were sore for a week because my job was to screw the 20-foot sections of drill pipe together. Our rig used a hollow-stem auger, and would sample the soil at specified depths using a split spoon sampler with 140 pound weight, or a Shelby tube. Samples were collected, placed into a core box, and then specific engineering tests were run in the lab. When my boss found out that I could perform particle-size analysis, he was happy. We charged the client for every test we conducted, including PSA, moisture, Atteberg limits, specific gravity, etc.

Our company had all kinds of projects including dam work at a Girl Scout camp near Conroe, building sites near downtown Houston, a home expansion in River Oaks, shopping centers near Katy, etc. Near IH10 and TX Hwy 6, north side of IH10, we did preliminary work for a water tower. The soils were wet and the muddy

conditions sucked off my work boots. Nothing like muddy socks and wet boots all day. Another project was a Taco Bell site in College Station.

During my stay at ATEC, I began getting paperwork from the USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS) on work locations, need for a physical, and background checks. Pretty soon a major decision had to be made. Start work with the USDA SCS or stay at ATEC. My salary at ATEC was close to \$20K, I had my office, a company vehicle, insurance, and a relatively short commute to work. Or, I could start with the SCS, take a pay cut (GS-5 Step 1, \$12584 per yr), and the first move came from my pocket. Mom and Dad did not help with this decision. So this began my Soil Scientist career, at Mt. Pleasant, TX in 1981.

So just to summarize my duty stations; Mt. Pleasant (~2.25 yrs), LaGrange (~7.5 yrs), Mason (~2.5 yrs), Columbus (~2.5 yrs), Victoria (~7.5 yrs), State Office (~16 yrs.) Mike Risinger called me about a position on the MO9 Staff for a Technical Editor. He gave me one day to give him an answer. That decision allowed me to relocate to Temple. I worked on manuscripts for about five years. I actually worked on manuscripts while in Victoria as a GS-9, my first being Guadalupe County, New Mexico. This was one of Ken Scheffe's projects. After I worked myself out of a job, Levi Steptoe, Jr. wanted me to start as a Correlator. Welcome to NASIS and all its wonderful attributes.

During my career with SCS/NRCS, I participated in several details; Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska, Big Stone County in western Minnesota, Hockley and Terry Counties, Carson County, Jasper-Newton Counties, Colorado County, Duval County, Zapata County, Kenedy-Kleberg Counties, western Harris County during 2001, and Presidio County. I was one of the Million-Acre mappers. I developed and later edited a bunch of Official Series Descriptions. I assisted with the development of interpretations for wildlife.

In 2019, the wheels were falling off the wagon for the MO's. I had a chance to transfer to the State Soil Scientist section, so I put my name in the hat. I was selected to serve under Alan Stahnke. I ended up assisting Micki Yoder with Natural Resources Inventory (NRI).

Micki Yoder retired in January 2020. I was bummed, now I would be doing NRI by myself. We were a team, Now I was the team. In July, I was working in Llano County. It was hot, the soil was Keese cosl (coarse sandy loam), 1-5% slopes. The ecosite was Shallow Granite. I wondered why this 62 yr old man was doing the work of a 30-40 yr old employee. This is when I decided it was time to retire.

I retired in October of 2020. I was interested in becoming an Earth Team volunteer on Alan's staff. However, with the pandemic going on, this just fizzled away. I began developing interest in giving back my soils knowledge, it would seem to be a waste to let 39 years as a soil scientist to just stop. So this past year, I began my coursework to become a Certified Master Naturalist through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. I volunteer at local State Parks, USACOE parks, workdays around Temple and Belton. I still get to share my soils and interpretations knowledge and assist with Web Soil Survey.

Regarding PSSAT, I am a Charter member. I have served as Treasurer, Editor, and President-Elect, and served on several committees. I have a collection of past newsletters, photos, and other info pertaining to our organization. The people make the memories, the stories, the life experiences.

Everywhere I go, I wonder about what soil was mapped, what ecological site, what plant is there. I do not think my NRI and Soil training will ever go away. As my first Supervisor Kirthell Roberts would say, "I am sought in my ways."

Soils Instruction for Texas Master Naturalists [*written by Jon Brandt*]

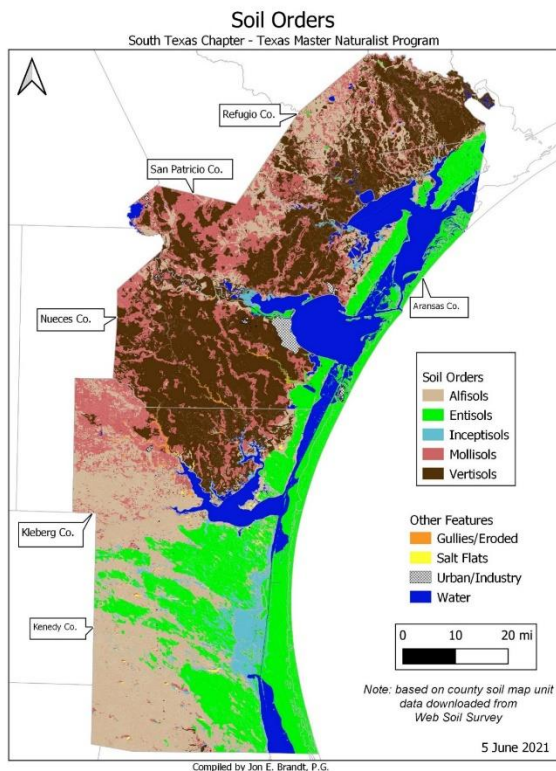
The Texas Master Naturalist™ program was founded in 1997 and has grown to 48 chapters, which cover over three quarters of Texas. The program is sponsored by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. According to their webpage, the mission of the program is: “...to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the state of Texas.”

All Texas Master Naturalist™ volunteers are required to enroll in a training program before they can become certified Master Naturalists. Maintaining this certification also requires an annual minimum of 40 hours of volunteer work and 8 hours of advanced training (like PDHs for licensed geoscientists or CEUs for CPSS/certified professional soil scientists).

In addition to certifying with the Texas Master Naturalist™ program in 1999, I helped organize/conduct geology/soils classes for over 10 years at the Austin chapter (Capital Area Chapter) and started this year with the chapter in Corpus Christi (South Texas Chapter). I know a handful of our PSSAT members have also taught soils to various chapters throughout the state. However, there are probably some members who are not aware of this program and the opportunity it provides to introduce the public to soil science.

If you feel so inclined, I strongly encourage you to contact the Texas Master Naturalist™ chapter closest to you and offer to provide a lecture about soils (for monthly chapter meetings), help with a training class, or give a more specialized lecture that could count as advanced training.

Here are links to the program: <https://txmn.org/about/> <https://txmn.tamu.edu/>



One of the things I did this year for the local Chapter was compile a map of the soil orders located in the Chapter's counties (along with three adjacent counties): Nueces, Kleberg, Kenedy, Aransas, San Patricio, and Refugio.

I used QGIS to compile the SSURGO database information and produce the map. My time spent with trainees and fellow volunteers has been rewarding and it is truly gratifying to have someone tell me they were surprised to find out so much about “dirt” and then have another student follow up by saying “It’s soil!”

Soils News

Soil Health Assessments: An alternative, quicker method to measure carbon dioxide flush (a soil health indicator) has been developed, utilizing an infrared CO₂ analyzer: <https://www.soils.org/news/science-news/measuring-soil-health-easily-and-reliably>

Root Decomposition and Soil Carbon: <https://soilsmatter.wordpress.com/2021/11/01/what-drives-roots-decomposition-and-carbon-storage-in-grassland-soils/>

Measuring Nitrogen in Green Manures: <https://www.soils.org/news/science-news/measuring-nitrogen-green-manures>

PSSAT's 40th Anniversary in 2022

Our organization will be celebrating its 40-year anniversary next year. To commemorate this milestone, several articles will be published in the newsletter and on the website. Some of the items will cover membership over the years, photos, public outreach activities that have taken place, awarded scholarships, and any other things members may want to see. Please think of ways we can take a look back at our Association and send us your suggestions.

To start off, Dennis Brezina shared this photo taken during the 10th Anniversary, which includes eight PSSAT presidents: W. Glen Chervenka, Kirthell Roberts, Gaylon Lane, Wayne Gabriel, Charles Batte, Ed Janak, C.T. Hallmark, and Charlie Thompson.



Call for Newsletter Articles

Please send articles, information, or photos that are suitable for future newsletters to: editor@pssat.org
Interesting field photos for photo quizzes will be much appreciated.

Thank you!

Answer to Photo Quiz

The small mounds are earthworm casts. They are common, especially right after a rain or within days of precipitation.