



## **PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS**

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### **2025 PSSAT Officers**

*President:* Alan Stahnke, USDA-NRCS

*President-Elect:* Dr. Lindsay Slaughter,

*Vice President:* Jo Parsley, USDA-NRCS

*Past-President:* Dr. Richard Griffin, Prairie View A&M University

*Treasurer:* Adryn Velasquez, USDA-NRCS

*Editor:* Amanda Bragg, USDA-NRCS

### **In this issue:**

- President's Address
- Request for Nominations
- 2025 Annual PSSAT Business Meeting Minutes
- Thank you letters from 2025 Scholarship Winners
- Texas A&M Soil Judging Update
- Dr. David Weindorf Update

### **2026 Annual PSSAT Meeting Information**

**Date:** **February 3, 2026**, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

**Location:** **C&J BBQ** at 2112 W. Briargate Rd. in Bryan, Texas

Individuals are responsible for paying for their own meals. Tell the cashier you're with PSSAT.

### **Charlie Thompson Memorial Scholarship:** Due January 22, 2026

- [Click here for More Information including Scholarship Forms](#)

### **2026 Dues Payment Options:**

1) Members can use PayPal - [Click for PayPal link from PSSAT Website](#)

2) Checks mailed to Treasurer:

Adryn Velasquez

21725 Holly Leaf Ct.

Porter, TX 77365

3) Dues paid on February 3, 2026 at annual meeting in College Station



## PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS



### President's Address

by Alan Stahnke

Dear PSSAT Members,

The role of PSSAT President is one of the few roles in this organization that I'd never served. For those of you who do not know my background, I am the son of a soils professor. My father, the late Dr. Clyde Stahnke, taught soils at Tarleton University for decades and was one of the founding members of our organization. After some time in the United States Marine Corps, I majored in soil science at Tarleton University. After graduation, I started as a field soil scientist, mapping soils for the NRCS. I've

worked across Texas from Beaumont, Corpus Christi to Abilene, before moving to Temple. I also spent a significant amount of time detailed to West Texas, assisting with the initial soil surveys. In my current role with the NRCS as State Soil Scientist, I bridge the space between natural resource conservation and soil science. I've had the pleasure of working with soil science professionals from across the nation, both government, private, and academic.

Professionally, the past year has been wrought with unforeseen challenges, rumors, and uncertainty. No, the State Office in Temple is not closing or relocating. The fate and location of offices above the state office level is still unknown. Government funded research and outreach projects were disrupted and modified. We faced a staffing crisis, with thousands of experienced federal employees voluntarily resigning through an effort to reduce the government workforce. Although understaffed, remaining NRCS employees have worked hard to complete soil survey and conservation projects and meet producer demand.

As we look ahead to 2026, I want share inspiration for those of us committed to soil science and conservation. Across the USDA, our universities, and private partners, we've seen incredible efforts moving soil science and conservation forward despite hurdles.

While we couldn't travel, more NRCS soil scientists were able to participate in the National Cooperative Soil Survey Conference. This conference, often attended by professors and government soil scientists, is the driving force for adapting and improving soil science. In addition, PSSAT Member and NRCS Soil Scientist Wayne Gabriel, now retired, was recognized with the lifetime achievement award. As someone who has known Wayne my entire career, I can't think of a more deserving awardee.

Interest in Soils Judging amongst college and high school students is rising. In the regional collegiate soils contest in the fall, teams from 5 Texas universities competed, with some universities having enough students to build two or three teams. Hundreds of Texas high school students participate in



## PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

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soil judging through FFA and 4H – with some of the contests reporting record numbers across the state.

Conversations about soil health have continued, and it's not just NRCS or universities leading the talk. From farmers, ranchers, gardeners, and homesteaders, the mention and education about soil health on social media is fostering a new interest and collaboration for the stewardship of our nation's soils.

I wouldn't be the State Soil Scientist if I didn't mention the soil survey and the Annual Soils Refresh. Over 41 million acres of new soil data were added, along with thousands of new map units and interpretations. These updates strengthen tools like Web Soil Survey and SSURGO, ensuring that planners, engineers, partners, and landowners have the best possible information at their fingertips.

Metrics shared by our national soils database manager show that soils data and information is in high demand, and that demand is growing. Web Soil Survey was opened about 12,000 times a day. Soil Data Access processes queries for soil data and the numbers represent the number of queries received. The FY25 query volume increased 67%, about 6 queries received each second of FY25. SSURGO data sets, the digital version of soil survey manual for a county, were downloaded 730,432 times in FY25.

These numbers prove that the soil science profession is relevant and needed.

As we look ahead in our organization, I encourage each of you to stay engaged. Share your stories, volunteer for committees, and help us keep the conversation about soils alive. Whether it's contributing to the newsletter, mentoring a new member, or simply promoting the value of soil science in your community, your involvement matters.

Thank you for your commitment and perseverance. Here's to a productive and collaborative 2026 and I look forward to seeing everyone at this year's meeting in February.

### 2026 Nominations

We are searching for nominees.

Please click on the following link to nominate yourself or someone else for an officer or committee position.

[PSSAT Nominations Form – Professional Soil Scientists Association of Texas](#)

Should no names become apparent, then nominations will come from the floor at the 2026 PSSAT Annual Business meeting in February.



# PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

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## Annual PSSAT Meeting Minutes

February 4, 2025

Report submitted by Amanda Bragg

Meeting Called to Order by President Dr. Richard Griffin at 7:11 PM.

Introductions were made. 40 people were in attendance.

Old Business – Jamey Douglass mentioned his report on involvement with the Master Naturalist in the Newsletter. They are in the process of updating the soils and geology section of their training.

### Committee Reports –

Financial Report - (submitted by Travis Waiser, not in attendance) – Dr. Griffin discussed.

Constitution and Bylaws – Jamey Douglass mentioned that he had a new computer and hard drive. The Ethics committee has been dissolved and the Bylaws updated, but Jamey is not certain where the updated copy is.

Membership Committee – would like email roster for the membership.

Nominations Committee –

Public Relations and Education Committee – Dennis Brezina is looking for a replacement.

Scholarship Committee Report by Amanda Bragg –

This year 5 applications were received. The committee petitioned the executive council to award two scholarships, based on the number of applicants.

Jackson Parker Galvan, a senior at Texas Tech, was selected for a \$1,500 scholarship. Jackson is a double major in Civil Engineering and Soil and Water Science. He has participated on the Texas Tech Soils Judging Team and currently served as captain of the “Dirty Techsans”. He has had a long interest in soils, even doing his 3<sup>rd</sup> grade science project on “Super Soil”. He also is a Learning Assistant for the Principles of Soil Science course.

Jolene Manlapaz, a senior at Stephen F Austin University, was selected for a \$1,000 scholarship. Jolene is an Environmental Science Major with an emphasis on Land, Air, and Water Resources. She interned with TCEQ, assisting with environmental investigations and compliance. She serves as the President of the SFA chapter of the National Environmental Professionals. She is interested in land restoration and sustainable agriculture.

### New Business

Nominations –



## **PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS**

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### **Executive Committee**

- President – Alan Stahnke
- Vice President – Jo Parsley
- President-Elect – Lindsey Slaughter
- Editor – Amanda Bragg

### **Committees –**

- Finance - Sidney Paulson, chair and Ashley Anderson.
- Constitution and Bylaws –
- Membership –
- Nominations – Shanna Dunn
- Public Relations – Amanda Bragg
- Scholarship Chair – Ed Janak

No nominations from the floor. Motion made and carried to accept the vote for positions as officers and committees.

New Business – None Presented.

Passing of the gavel to Alan Stahnke.

Alan thanked Dr. Griffin for his service as president and mentioned that if anyone is interested in serving on a committee to please let him know.

Motion to Adjourn by Ed Janak and Seconded by Julie Howe.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.



## PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

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### Highlights of 2024 PSSAT financial report.

#### Submitted by Travis Waiser, Treasurer

Overall the treasures account had an **increase of \$4,044.45**. We started the year with \$9,972.50 made deposits totaling \$7,043.50 and disbursements of **\$2,999.05**. This brings our current total at the end of the year in the Bank of America account to \$14,016.95.

#### General Fund –

**Increase of \$383.45.**

Current General Fund is at \$5,596.66. Main expense is website charges. Meeting room deposit is reimbursed based on how many meals are bought. \$400 is the room deposit. Last year we got \$343.15 back after the meeting.

#### Charles Thompson Scholarship Fund –

**Increase of \$3,661.00.**

Current Scholarship fund is at \$8,420.29. Increase is because of the donation from the Charles Thompson family. Executive Committee decided to award a second scholarship last year because of the large donation for a total of \$2,500.00.

#### PayPal –

PayPal continues to be a very popular choice to make payments. In 2024 members used PayPal for \$976.00 of payments which cost us \$47.85 which PayPal kept. We offset the \$47.85 as the convenience fee on your invoice.

**IRS** - I have also already filed the 990-N e-postcard with the IRS for 2024. I have the verification with me if you want to see it.

## Summary of Financial Information

### BANK OF AMERICA CREDITS

General	\$882.50
Scholarship	\$6,161.00
	Total Credits \$7,043.50

### BANK OF AMERICA DISBURSEMENTS

General	\$499.05
Scholarship	\$2,500.00
	Total Disbursements \$2,999.05

**Difference \$4,044.45**

<b>Bank Balance 1/1/2024</b>	<b>\$9,972.50</b>
<b>Bank Balance 12/31/2024</b>	<b><u>\$14,016.95</u></b>

**Difference \$4,044.45**

<b>PAYPAL CREDITS</b>	<b>\$976.00</b>
<b>PAYPAL DISBURSEMENTS</b>	<b>\$47.85</b>

**Difference \$928.15**

<b>PayPal Balance 1/1/2023</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>PayPal Balance 12/31/2023</b>	<b><u>\$0.00</u></b>

**Difference \$0.00**

<b>CASH ON HAND AND IN BANK -- 1/1/2024</b>	<b>\$9,972.50</b>
<b>CASH ON HAND AND IN BANK -- 12/31/2024</b>	<b>\$14,016.95</b>

**Difference \$4,044.45**

<b>General Fund at Beginning of Year</b>	<b>\$5,213.21</b>	<b>Scholarship Fund Beginning of Year</b>	<b>\$4,759.29</b>
<b>General Fund End of Year</b>	<b>\$5,596.66</b>	<b>Scholarship Fund End of Year</b>	<b>\$8,420.29</b>



## PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

### Thank you letter from Charlie Thompson Memorial Scholarship Recipient – Parker Galvan

Hello PSSAT Scholarship Committee,

I would like to express my appreciation for being chosen for the Charlie Thompson Memorial Scholarship. I've had a few scholarships while in college, but this one is different in the sense that it correlates exactly to my interest: soil conservation in Texas.

I did some research about Mr. Thompson and found that we shared some commonalities. He also lived in Hidalgo County for a number of years and came to Texas Tech for agricultural studies. He was even a contributor to my home county's soil survey.

I plan in the future to commit a portion of my life to soil science and conservation. Whether it'd be in civil engineering or in plant and soil science, I will be pushing for research and conservation.

Attached is a headshot that you had requested.

Once again, thank you for this scholarship.

Sincerely,

**Parker Galvan**





## PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

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### Thank you letter from Charlie Thompson Memorial Scholarship Recipient – Jolene Manlapaz

Dear Ms. Bragg and the PSSAT Committee,

I am truly honored to be selected as a secondary recipient of the 2024-2025 Charlie Thompson Memorial Scholarship. I sincerely appreciate your generosity and the Professional Soil Scientists Association of Texas' commitment to supporting students in the soil science field.

This scholarship is especially meaningful knowing that it carries the legacy of Charlie Thompson, whose dedication to the profession and advocacy for soil science has had a lasting impact. As I continue my studies at Stephen F. Austin State University, this support will help me further develop my expertise in soil health, land restoration, and sustainable land-use practices—areas that I am deeply passionate about.

I have attached a photo for the newsletter, and I would be grateful if you could include the following thank-you message:

"I am incredibly honored to receive the Charlie Thompson Memorial Scholarship from PSSAT. This support will help me continue my studies in environmental science with a focus on soil health, land restoration, and sustainable land-use practices. I deeply appreciate PSSAT's investment in students like myself and look forward to contributing to the field of soil science. Thank you for this opportunity!"

Thank you again for your generosity and for investing in the next generation of soil scientists. I look forward to staying connected with PSSAT and the broader soil science community.

Best regards,

**Jolene Manlapaz**





## PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

### Updates from the Texas A&M Soils Judging Team

Submitted by Dr. Felipe Aburto

The Texas A&M University team represented the region during the last National Soil Judging Contest in Wisconsin. This was a great contest; the team members had their first encounter with glacial geomorphology, beautiful spodosols, and a cold and rainy spring in Portage County. The competition was flawlessly organized by the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. The TAMU team members for this contest were Thomas Valdes, Jarred Torres, Emilie Roecker, Daniel Kwong, Lauren Cross, Emily de la Fuente, and Noel Loepre, and coaches Alejandro Atenas and Dr. Felipe Aburto. Thomas placed first among students in the region (#30 out of 109). The team from the University of Idaho placed first, and the individual's first place went to West Virginia.

Last October, the TAMU team participated in the regional contest organized by the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. The team had an excellent time enjoying a beautiful fall and the region's Alfisols and Ultisols. The team members were Jared Torres, Lauren Cross, Daniel Kwong, Zoey Lasch, Coulson Plouff, Elle Spearman, and Eleanor Helstad. Dr. Aburto led the team with assistance from graduate students A. Atenas, E. Roecker, and T. Valdes. The team placed 2nd overall, with Jared Torres first and Zoey Lasch 5th in the individual standings. With this, the team was classified to represent the region in the upcoming national contest in Raleigh, North Carolina.





## PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS





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### Updates from PSSAT Member - Dr. David Weindorf

--- as summarized by Amanda Bragg, Editor

For those of you who have not had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Weindorf, he has an impressive and long resume, including serving as a professor for Tarleton, Louisiana State, Texas Tech, and Michigan State universities. Dr. Weindorf is currently the Vice President of Research and Economic Development at Southern Georgia University.

PSSAT would like to congratulate Dr. Weindorf on his recent achievements:

Dr. Weindorf and former graduate student Somsubhra "Som" Chakraborty have collaborated on over 100 scholarly publications over the last 16 years. Since 2008, they have pioneered innovations in soil sensing, analysis using AI, and sustainable land use. From yearly research retreats across the world to a number of patents, now commercially available, and powering a new generation of soil sensors with increased capabilities.

- Read the full article published on November 24, 2025 in CSA News (<https://www.sciencesocieties.org/publications/csa-news/2025/december/>)  
[Click here to read the full article](#)

Dr. Weindorf and Som have most recently edited a book "Unlocking the Secrets of the Soil – Applying AI and Sensor Technologies for Sustainable Land Use".

Dr. David Weindorf is listed by the National Academy of Inventors as one of its 2025 Class of Fellows. Awarded solely to inventors, the NAI Fellowship is a major professional distinction. This fellowship includes Nobel Prize recipients and the 2025 class collectively have more than 5300 US Patents. How cool is that research and patents in Soil Science are included among quantum computing and regenerative medicine!

- Click here for the full announcement: [NAI Welcomes 2025 Class of Fellows - NAI](#)

Congratulations again, Dr. Weindorf! We love hearing stories about our members thriving and their involvement in developing the next frontier for Soil Science.



## PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS



Dr. David Weindorf (second from right) and Dr. Somsuhbra Chakraborty (rightmost) evaluating Cerrado soils of Brazil with Dr. Nilton Curi (Federal University of Lavras) and Dr. Autumn Acree. SOURCE: [CSA News - Weindorf and Chakraborty collaborate on 100 publications together.](#)



Drs. Weindorf and Chakraborty conducting research on catenas of the Transylvanian Plain, Romania with colleagues from University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca. SOURCE: [CSA News - Weindorf and Chakraborty collaborate on 100 publications together.](#)