

## Texas Agricultural Extension Service

*People Helping People*

# TEXAS GRAZING LANDS IMPORTANT TO EVERYONE

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Slightly more than 70 percent of Texas' non-federal lands are grazing lands found in the various vegetational areas of Texas (figure 1). These include range, pasture and forest. Range consists of grasslands, shrublands, marsh areas, deserts and woodlands which do not support commercial timber production. Forest lands support tree cover used for commercial timber production but may be grazed at times. Pastures support improved forage plants and receive periodic cultural treatments such as fertilization, shredding, etc.

### Uses and Values

Grazing lands produce forage for livestock and many species of wildlife. Texas is a leading producer of natural fibers (wool and mohair) and red meat (beef, lamb, venison and cabrito).

The state's grazing lands support the nation's largest white-tailed deer herd and significant numbers of other big game animals, both native and exotic. In addition, habitat is provided for large and diverse populations of non-game wildlife species.

Grazing lands are a watershed for that most important and valuable commodity, water, which is necessary for sustaining life and the well-being of both people and animals. The future of Texas depends on this one commodity. The state's rapidly increasing population is creating a need for more water, and reservoirs, both above and below ground, are being depleted.

The open space of grazing lands provides for much outdoor recreation. It is of particular importance to those who enjoy the sport of hunting.

Although there are fewer ranching operations, another rapidly increasing use of grazing lands, especially rangeland, is for consumptive purposes. People want to own land as a hedge against inflation or as a place to retire or recreate.

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Well-managed, productive grazing lands also have great visual appeal. Wildflowers in the spring, autumn colors, songs of the birds, glimpses of wildlife and the sight of grazing livestock on pastures, grasslands and hills bring pleasure.

### Cultural Heritage of Grazing Lands

Texas has a rich heritage in the land. Both the land and its flora developed under the influence of the buffalo and other grazing animals. One of the first uses of Texas' lands was for ranching. Beyond its borders far-reaching effects are felt in "western" movies, country-western music, clothes (jeans, big hats and boots) and even athletic activities when there are team names such as Spurs, Cowboys, Mavericks and Gunslingers.

### Proper Management

An ever increasing population (Texas should be the second most populous state by the year 2000) must be fed and clothed. Conversion of grazing lands to other uses (homesites, highways, intensive crop production and industrial development) is accelerating. Conflicts of use, lower production from misuse, accelerated soil erosion and loss and inefficient use of rainfall all indicate the need for proper use and management of grazing lands.

Grazing lands are a natural renewable resource. Properly applied management practices can result in improvement of these lands. When accomplished, the products, goods and services from grazing lands are increased and improved.

### Stewardship Responsibilities

Without doubt there is a great need for using Texas' grazing lands wisely so future Texans can enjoy the goods, services and heritage now available. Stewardship starts with the man on the land, but it goes much further than this. The general public must understand the need for stewardship, personally support it and encourage

government to support it. The challenge is for research to provide the technology and educational groups to transfer the technology to every citizen by creating an awareness of the need for stewardship.

Texas has a vast and vital natural renewable resource

in its grazing lands. These lands have social and economic value to all of the state's citizens. For future generations to enjoy the benefits of these grazing lands, everyone must be aware of the need for and support of proper management and stewardship of these lands.

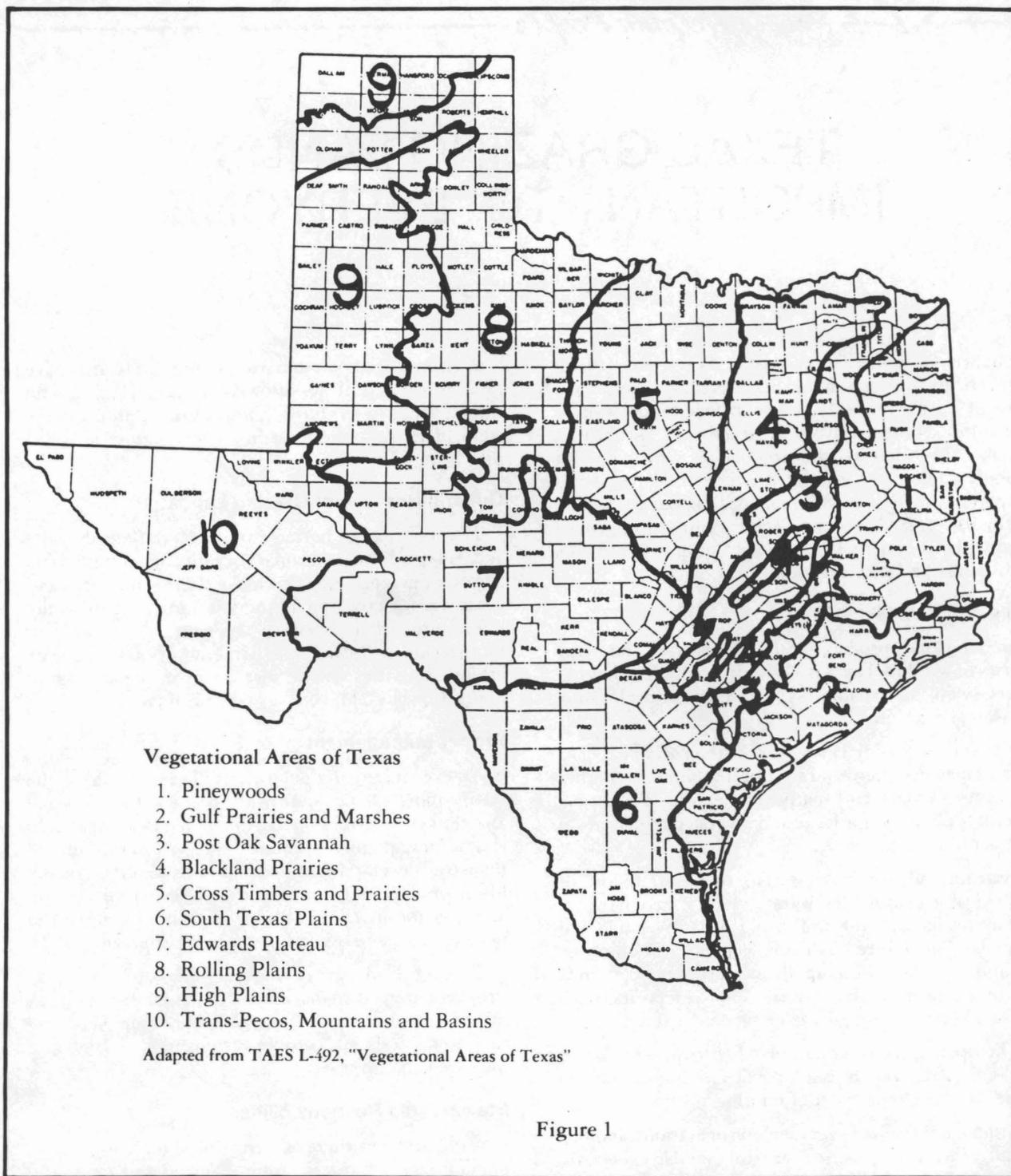


Figure 1

*Educational programs conducted by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, handicap or national origin.*

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Zerle L. Carpenter, Director, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System.