



**PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS**

# Texas Soil Profiles

## 2024 PSSAT Officers

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

**President-Elect:** Alan Stahnke, USDA-NRCS

**Vice President:** Dr. Lindsay Slaughter, Texas Tech University

**Past-President:** Cole Patton, USDA-NRCS

**Treasurer:** Travis Waiser, USDA-NRCS

**Editor:** Jamey Douglass, USDA-NRCS (retired)

## 2025 PSSAT Annual Meeting Information

Date: Tuesday, February 4, 2025  
Time: Social - 6:00 PM and Meeting - 7:00 PM.  
Location: C & J BBQ, Reville Rooms A&B  
2112 W. Briargate  
Bryan, TX  
Please mention PSSAT when paying for your meal.

### In this issue:

- 2025 Annual PSSAT Meeting
- 2024 Annual PSSAT Business Meeting Minutes
- Charlie Thompson Memorial Scholarship
- PSSAT and Texas Master Naturalists
- Absentee Ballots for 2025

### 2025 Dues – Payment Options

- 1) Members can use PayPal prior to meeting or in absence.
- 2) Checks mailed to current Treasurer; Travis Waiser. 146 Deer Park, Kerrville, TX 78028
- 3) Dues paid on February 4, 2025 meeting in Bryan

## Annual PSSAT Meeting

February 6, 2024

### Report submitted by Amanda Bragg

Present: 31

Ed Janak, Wayne Gabriel, Laurie Kiniry, Dr. Richard Griffin, James Gordon, Lindsey Lang + guest, Paul Reynolds + guest, Tom Feuerbacher, Shanna Dunn, Jon Weidenfeld, Ashley Anderson, Amanda Bragg, Travis Waiser, Cole Patton, Kelly Attebury, Alan Stahnke, Felipe Aburto, + 4 Texas A&M Graduate students, Daniel Hirmas, Lindsey Slaughter, Matt Siebecker, + 3 Texas Tech Graduate Students, Scholarship winner: Jasmine Maximovich + guest

**Cole Patton, *President*** -- called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM  
Cole thanked everyone for coming.

**Jamey Douglass, *Editor*** was not in attendance for the Editor's report, but two Newsletters were sent.

**Amanda Bragg, *Scholarship Committee*** Chair -- At the Annual PSSAT Meeting in 2023, the motion was made and approved to rename the PSSAT Scholarship as the Charlie Thompson Memorial Scholarship. Alan Stahnke, the current Texas NRCS State Soil Scientist, spoke about Charlie and his importance for soil scientists in Texas. The family of Charlie Thompson would be at the Soil Survey Workshop where PSSAT was presenting them with a plaque.

Amanda stated there were four scholarship applicants. The scholarship winner was Jasmine Maximovich. Jasmine is a Junior Plant and Environmental Science Major with a minor in Horticulture and Bioenvironmental Science at Texas A&M. She currently has a 4.0 GPA and with the USDA Pecan Breeding Program. Jasmine stood up and thanked everyone for the scholarship.

**Amanda Bragg, *Webmaster*** -- She recently took over Webmaster duties from Jon Brandt and is still learning and willing to accept any help. Webmaster fees were paid. See attached Webmaster report.

**Travis Waiser, *Treasurer*** -- He asked for everyone to check to make sure that their emails were current. He has been following the same format as Richard Reid. While he has inquired about changing from Bank of America to a local bank, it's too much documentation. Wayne Gabriel asked about the IRS Ceiling for Not-for-Profit Status. See attached Treasurer's report. Motion to accept Treasurer's report by Lindsey Lang and seconded by Ed Janak.

**Wayne Gabriel, *Constitution and Bylaws Committee*** -- Nothing to report.

Dennis Brezina was not in attendance for the Public Relations committee report and was happy for any new volunteers to help. If anyone is interested let the President know.

**Shanna Dunn, *Past President, Nominations Committee*** --

- Alan Stahnke for President-Elect

- Kelly Spencer and Lindsay Slaughter for Vice President

There were no nominations from the floor. Amanda Bragg motioned to accept Alan Stahnke as president with a second by Laurie Kiniry. Motion passed.

The membership voted for the Vice President Position and Lindsey Slaughter was elected.

The gavel was passed to Dr. Richard Griffin.

Dr. Griffin said that they wanted to be more digitally connected next year and looks forward to working with everyone.

Dr. Felipe Aburto from Texas A&M mentioned the Tom and Melinda Hallmark Endowment to support the soils judging team and presented everyone with a QAR code if they were interested in donating. The goal is to ensure that the Soils Judging program is funded, even if there are university budget cuts.

Dr. Hirmas gave a recap of hosting the Collegiate Regional Soils Judging competition in the Fall. Texas A&M is hosting the Regional Contest in 2024. He also mentioned that the Soil Science Society of America meeting is in San Antonio this year and for the field tour they plan to go from Corpus Christi to Lake Amistad to look at changes in Soil Moisture Regimes.

Meeting adjourned at 7:21 PM

### **The Charlie Thompson Memorial Scholarship**

At the Annual Professional Soil Scientists Association of Texas (PSSAT) Meeting in February of 2023, the motion was made and unanimously passed to rename the annual scholarship after Charlie Thompson who passed away in 2022. Charlie worked for the Soil Conservation Service (now Natural Resource Conservation Service) from 1953 to 1986. He served as State Soil Scientist from 1975 until his retirement.

During his time as Texas State Soil Scientist, Charlie identified a lack of promotional opportunities for soil scientists within the agency. At the time, field soil scientists were supervised by GS-11 District Conservationists and moved every four to five years as surveys were completed. The frequent relocations and lack of career ladder resulted in a high turnover. He restructured the Texas soil survey program, creating GS-11 and eventually GS-12 positions for soil scientists.

Charlie envisioned the future of soil survey: the need for MLRA offices to update after the initial mapping was completed. He established the first MLRA office in the nation and hired the first GS-11 MLRA Project Leader at Lubbock, Texas. This is the basic framework for the soil survey program today.

He was an advocate for professional development and opportunities to grow. Even after his retirement, Charlie was asked to speak at trainings for new employees on professionalism, education, and networking – reaching hundreds of employees.

Charlie was one of the founding members of PSSAT. He encouraged soil scientists to participate in the PSSAT organization and in the Texas Soil Survey and Land Resource Workshop (SSLRW). He is one of the reasons why the PSSAT scholarship exists. He remained an active PSSAT member and attended the SSLRW for decades after his retirement.

While not all PSSAT members worked with or met Charlie, we all benefited from his efforts in forming the organization and promoting soil science in Texas.

### **PSSAT Scholarship Committee Post-Meeting Update**

On February 7<sup>th</sup> at the Texas Soil Survey and Land Resource Workshop, Dr. Richard Griffin presented the family of Charlie Thompson with a plaque and decree renaming the PSSAT Scholarship in honor of Charlie. Alan Stahnke, current NRCS State Soil Scientist, spoke about Charlie and the impact he had on soil scientists and the soil survey program in Texas.

Charlie's son Paul thanked the organization on behalf of the Thompson family and spoke about how important soils and professional development was to their father. Paul presented PSSAT with a \$5,000 donation for the scholarship fund from his family.

Since the scholarship committee had multiple well-qualified candidates in 2024, and none last year, it was suggested by a member of the Executive Council to consider awarding a second scholarship this year. The Scholarship Committee petitioned the Executive Council for an additional scholarship winner at an amount of \$1,000. The members of the Executive Council agreed.

Our scholarship winners for 2024 were:

\$1,500 – Jasmine Maximovich. Jasmine was a Junior at Texas A&M University majoring in Plant and Environmental Soil Science with a minor in Horticulture and Bioenvironmental Science with a 4.0 GPA. Jasmine grew up in California. As a volunteer for Soil Born Farms Urban Agriculture and Education Project, Everyday Ecology, and the Sacramento Tree foundation, she developed an interest in soil and water quality which led her to Texas A&M.

\$1,000 – Amy Crook. Amy was a senior at Texas A&M University majoring in Environmental Geosciences with a minor in Geographic Information Science and Technology. She worked as a student research assistant for the Soil and Crop Sciences department, helping graduate students with soil testing procedures and with a carbon sequestration study in ant mounds and as a lab intern for a Terracom Consultants, conducting soil tests. She was member of the Soils Judging Team and planned to pursue her Professional Geoscientist license in Soil Science.

## 2025 Scholarship Reminder

The Annual PSSAT Scholarship deadline is January 23, 2025. Please share with any soils students who might be interested in applying.

Application information can be found on the PSSAT Website [pssat.org](https://pssat.org) under the College Scholarships Tab ([College Scholarships – Professional Soil Scientists Association of Texas \(pssat.org\)](https://pssat.org)).

Any questions can be sent to [scholarship@pssat.org](mailto:scholarship@pssat.org).

## PSSAT and Texas Master Naturalists

By

Jamey Douglass

PSSAT and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff have for many years, assisted the Texas Master Naturalist and the Texas Master Gardener programs. For those who are not aware, Texas Master Gardeners are affiliated with Texas AgriLife Extension; while the Texas Master Naturalists are associated with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Due to the pandemic, when I retired I was not able to join the Earth Team, so I became a Certified Texas Master Naturalist. I did not want my 39 years of soil science knowledge to flush down the tubes.

Several NRCS Staff teach the Soils Class, Ecoregions of Texas, and Geology sections to trainees wishing to become Master Naturalists. John Sackett III teaches the Soils class to my chapter (Central Texas), and Alan Stahnke previously taught Ecoregions of Texas. Since retirement, I replaced Alan for the Ecoregions of Texas.

In June 2024, I along with several PSSAT members were asked to assist Jon Brandt, in the re-writing of the Soils Section for the TMN textbook.

Jon's email --

I've had six confirmations from people who will work on a Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) curriculum update (in one or many capacities). I've included names below so y'all are aware of the others:

Amanda Bragg  
Jamey Douglass  
Jacob Eickstead  
John Jacob  
Cristine Morgan  
Clay Robinson

I had a virtual meeting with Mary Pearl Meuth and Michelle Haggerty last Friday - they are the two who coordinate the Texas Master Naturalist Program in College Station. They are on board with a serious overhaul of Unit 7, which is the Geology and Soils chapter of the state curriculum. They let me know that there's also a geologist who's a member of the Balcones Canyonlands MN chapter, Keith Winfree, who has volunteered to help revise the Geology and Soils unit. He's proposed a restructuring of the curriculum, which looks very promising (see attached PDF). I like the way he's organized the chapters and also states the purpose of the first 9 units/chapters of the curriculum. He has some good examples for geology revisions. I believe we can easily provide many examples of revisions that would improve the soils information.

I've also attached a summary of the Geology and Soils unit that a student worker compiled for Mary Pearl (TMN-7-Geology and Soils.pdf). It does a good job itemizing the kind of information that is currently in the curriculum. It is woefully deficient when it comes to soil. It has no information about soil microbiology nor information relevant to MN volunteers who may need to tackle soil issues as part of their volunteer work. A couple of other things that should be added, at a minimum: introductory info about Web Soil Survey; an updated MRLA map; possibly a General Soils map of Texas and/or a predominant soil order map for the state.

Please look through the Geology and Soils summary and let me know if there are other must-have items that should be added. I've taught at least 15 classes to Master Naturalist trainees over the years. I've seen what clicks and what kind of questions are asked. I'm sure those of you who have also taught basic soils courses have a good feel for what holds people's attention and what kind of information is retained. I'd like to see Soils as a separate unit (my strong preference), but it could also work as a Geology and Soils unit if the coordinators prefer to keep the two disciplines together in the curriculum. The unit isn't intended to be a college-level course and shouldn't include too many in-depth details. It would be nice to brainstorm and select a framework of information that is absolutely necessary, then add some unique facts that would engage most adults who know little about soils (for example, some soil-fauna and soil-flora correlations/relationships that can be found in Texas).

There isn't a timeline yet for this project -- we're at the very beginning of the process. However, it would be good to produce a detailed outline that we can present to the coordinators in mid-August. Then we can start filling in necessary details and assembling a collection of supporting figures and maps.

Thanks for being willing to participate in this effort. I wanted to thank Jacob Eickstead for bringing the curriculum update to our attention. I think it's a great opportunity for soil scientists to have direct input in what is included in the curriculum, which wasn't the case in the past.

## 2025 Absentee Ballots

This year, all Officer positions are up for election. Alan Stahnke, President-Elect, is searching for qualified nominees. At the time of this newsletter, no names have been nominated.

In the upcoming weeks, some names may be nominated.

Should no names be nominated, then nominations will come from the floor at the 2025 PSSAT Annual Business meeting in February.

Reach out to Past President, Cole Patton, ([jcpatton8@yahoo.com](mailto:jcpatton8@yahoo.com)) or President-Elect, Alan Stahnke, ([alan.stahnke@usda.gov](mailto:alan.stahnke@usda.gov)) to nominate a member or volunteer yourself.

**PHOTO GALLERY from 2024 PSSAT ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING**



Figure 1 – President Cole Patton, Amanda Bragg Scholarship Chair, and scholarship winner Jasmine Maximovich.





Figure 2 – Travis Waiser, Treasurer, presenting his report.



Figure 3 – Cozy setting at 2024 PSSAT Annual Business meeting at C&J's BBQ.



Figure 4 – Dr. Felipe Aburto showing TAMU Soil Judging Team t-shirt.



Figure 5 – Alan Stahnke presenting the family of Charlie Thompson with the official decree for the Charlie Thompson Memorial Scholarship, during the 2024 Soil Survey and Land Resource Workshop.