

Restoration of Native Grassland on the South Texas Sandsheet

Anthony D. Falk, Keith A. Pawelek, Bart Dupont, Jimmy Rutledge, and Forrest S. Smith

Native grass restoration of the iconic Wild Horse Desert of the South Texas Sand Sheet has proven to be difficult in the past due to the soils, climate, and lack of commercially available, locally adapted native species. *South Texas Natives Project* (STNP) staff, in collaboration with the El Coyote Ranch, are attempting to restore 120 acres of native grassland habitat impacted by the installation of an electrical transmission line.

We tested two different seed drills specifically designed for native plant seed with differing seed placement mechanisms to plant a commercially available mix of locally-adapted species developed by STN. The first technique uses a Truax flex II native seed drill, and the second uses a Trillion drop seeder. Both planters have seed boxes that are specifically designed to handle chaffy native plant seed. The flex II drill has planting units that place the seed into the soil, while the Trillion drops the seed on the ground and uses cultipackers to press the seed into the soil.

Preliminary results indicate that there are no differences between the two planting methods used. Two years after seeding, plant density reached 0.5 seeded plants per ft², and we measured increases in the percent basal cover of seeded vegetation to nearly 30%.

We plan to continue collecting data for another year. Additional restoration research dealing with former oil and gas pads and invasive grass control is also underway as part of our collaboration with the El Coyote Ranch. Results from our study will help inform those interested in restoration projects on the South Texas Sand Sheet.

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