

Restoring Native Pollinator Habitat at Goldsmith Solar Farm

Samuel R. Lutfy, Veronica G. Rapp, Rhett K. Kerby, and Forrest S. Smith

In the Permian Basin and Panhandle regions of Texas, there has been a rapid increase in the development of large-scale solar energy facilities for both industrial and public consumers. In 2019, we were approached by a large energy company who had recently developed a 200-acre solar farm in Goldsmith. Their goal was to restore the site to suitable habitat for pollinators and wildlife, while also reducing soil erosion to benefit the functionality of the solar farm.

We advised the energy company on the use of a nurse crop of winter wheat, seeded in the late fall 2019, to be followed with planting a diverse mix of native grasses and forbs in spring 2020. Soil remediation, such as caliche removal and disking where heavy compaction was present, were also completed. In addition, erosion-prone areas were hydroseeded with a cotton byproduct and a nutrient amendment to facilitate optimum plant establishment. Results this spring were positive, with a healthy stand of winter wheat and a diverse and robust native forb response. Over the coming years, we will document performance of this restoration effort and report the results.

It is our hope that this project will serve as an example of the benefits of restoration projects in the region in conjunction with solar energy development. We hope these efforts will encourage other solar farm operators to undertake similar efforts throughout Texas.

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