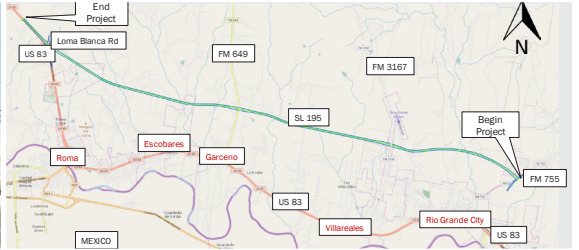


2023 TxDOT Environmental Conference

September 12–14, 2023



Embassy Suites by Hilton • 1001 E. McCarty Lane • San Marcos, Texas 78666



SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

1:30 p.m.–5:00 p.m.	Field Trip: USFWS San Marcos Aquatic Research Center (SMARC) <i>Attendance is limited. Please email becki.perkins@txdot.gov to reserve your spot. Those attending should meet in the conference hotel parking lot by 1:30 p.m. and be prepared to have your shoes sanitized prior to entry at SMARC.</i>
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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.	Registration Desk Open	
8:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Exhibit Area
8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.	Exhibits Open	Exhibit Area Veramendi Salons F–J
9:00 a.m.–10:30 a.m.	Welcome	Veramendi Salons A–E
10:30 a.m.–10:45 a.m.	Break	
10:45 a.m.–11:45 a.m.	General Session	Veramendi Salons A–E
11:45 a.m.–1:30 p.m.	Lunch	On Your Own
1:30 p.m.–3:15 p.m.	General Session Continued	Veramendi Salons A–E
3:15 p.m.–3:30 p.m.	Break	
3:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m.	TxDOT Employee Townhall	Veramendi Salons A–E
5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.	Exhibits/Reception/Poster Session	Exhibit Area

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.	Registration Desk Open		
8:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Exhibit Area	
8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.	Exhibits Open	Veramendi Salons F–J	
9:00 a.m.–10:15 a.m.	Concurrent Breakout Sessions: 1–5		
	Session 1	Veramendi Salon A	Session 4 Veramendi Salon D
	Session 2	Veramendi Salon B	Session 5 Veramendi Salon E
	Session 3	Veramendi Salon C	
10:15 a.m.–10:45 a.m.	Break		
10:45 a.m.–Noon	Concurrent Breakout Sessions: 6–10		
	Session 6	Veramendi Salon A	Session 9 Veramendi Salon D
	Session 7	Veramendi Salon B	Session 10 Veramendi Salon E
	Session 8	Veramendi Salon C	

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 (CONTINUED)

Noon–1:30 p.m.	Lunch	<i>On Your Own</i>		
1:30 p.m.–2:45 p.m.	Concurrent Breakout Sessions: 11–14			
	Session 11	Veramendi Salon A	Session 13	Veramendi Salon C
	Session 12	Veramendi Salon B	Session 14	Veramendi Salon D/E
2:45 p.m.–3:15 p.m.	Break			
3:15 p.m.–4:30 p.m.	Concurrent Breakout Sessions: 15–18			
	Session 15	Veramendi Salon A	Session 17	Veramendi Salon C
	Session 16	Veramendi Salon B	Session 18	Veramendi Salon D/E
5:00 p.m.–6:30 p.m.	Hands-On Drone Flying Opportunity—Come Fly! <i>Northside Parking Lot</i>			

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Registration Desk Open		
8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	<i>Exhibit Area</i>	
9:00 a.m.–Noon	Field Trip: Spring Lake and The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State University <i>Attendance is limited. Please email kathleen.goldsmith@txdot.gov to reserve your spot. Those attending are responsible for own transportation. Bring cash in exact amounts: \$8.50/person + \$3 for parking.</i>		
8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.	Public Involvement Training Opportunity – Public Involvement for NEPA (ENV112) <i>Veramendi Salon D/E</i>		



The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

1:30 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

Field Trip: USFWS San Marcos Aquatic Research Center (SMARC)

Join us for a tour of the USFWS operated San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center. SMARC conducts research and propagation efforts for multiple federally listed species that overlap with TxDOT projects. On this tour you'll see behind-the-scenes efforts to promote the populations of freshwater mussels, San Marcos and Texas Blind Salamanders, Houston Toads, and Texas Wild Rice.

Those attending should meet in the conference hotel parking lot by 1:30 p.m. and be prepared to have your shoes sanitized prior to entry at SMARC. (Leave the fancy shoes for the conference on Tuesday.)

There is no fee for this field trip, however attendance is limited. Please email becki.perkins@txdot.gov with your interest in attending to reserve your spot on the list.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Registration Desk Open

8:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

Veramendi Salons F–J

8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Exhibits Open

Veramendi Salons F–J

9:00 a.m.–10:30 a.m.

General Session

Veramendi Salons A–E

Welcome

Doug Booher, TxDOT ENV Division Director

Keynote

Marc Williams, TxDOT Executive Director

North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP): A Retrospective

MODERATOR: *Doug Booher*

10:30 a.m.–10:45 a.m.

BREAK

10:45 a.m.–11:45 a.m.

General Session

Veramendi Salons A–E

NHHIP Panel Discussion

SPEAKERS: *Michael D. Bryant, Jessica Gray, Kyle Madsen, and Varuna Singh, TxDOT; and Kevin Resler, FHWA*

11:45 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

LUNCH (On Your Own)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 (CONTINUED)

1:30 p.m.–3:15 p.m.

General Session Continued

Veramendi Salons A–E

Environmental Affairs Awards Video

PRESENTER: *Kat Goldsmith*

District Hot Topics

MODERATOR: *Doug Booher*

Join us for a fast-paced session where TxDOT Districts will provide a 2-minute highlight of challenges or issues they are facing, best practices they've identified, curious/interesting things happening in their area, or other interesting topics. This session is meant to be an icebreaker and encourage discussion outside of the session over the course of the conference.

3:15 p.m.–3:30 p.m.

BREAK

3:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

TxDOT Employee Town Hall (TxDOT Staff Only)

5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.

Reception and Poster Session

Veramendi Salons F–J

TxDOT will present a poster session that provides information on a variety of short research and regulatory topics. Posters will be available for viewing for an extended period during the conference. The presenters will also be available at the posters to answer questions during the poster session.



Green sea turtle (Chelonia mydas)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Registration Desk Open

8:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

Veramendi Salons F–J

8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Exhibits Open

Veramendi Salons F–J

9:00 a.m.–10:15 a.m.

CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS: 1–5

BREAKOUT 1

Veramendi Salon A

The Epic Saga – The Story of State Highway 211 in San Antonio

Clayton Ripps, TxDOT

The epic saga of SH 211 began in the 1960s as what planners hoped to be a north-south freeway on the far west side of San Antonio. As the lines were drawn on the earliest of the thoroughfare planning maps, little did they know the assortment of environmental challenges the planned new location roadway would eventually encounter over half century later. Through years of persistent coordination, mitigation efforts, and partnerships with the local government and the private sector, SH 211 is now open to traffic in the booming west side of San Antonio.

BREAKOUT 2

Veramendi Salon B

Smoothing Out Project Delivery

Mike Chavez, Michelle Lueck, and Kimberly Amy, TxDOT; and Shane Valentine, HDR

This session will concentrate on environmental project delivery by outlining major project constraints, common issues in environmental documentation, items that affect schedules, and how to get to a clean letting. The session will leave ample time for feedback and discussion.

BREAKOUT 3

Veramendi Salon C

Metals: Development of Texas-Specific Background Threshold Values

Kenneth S. Tramm, PhD, PE, PG, CHMM (Modern Geosciences)

Dr. Tramm will provide an update on his extensive work developing defensible Background Threshold Values (BTVs) for selected metals in Texas. When the Texas Risk Reduction Program (TRRP) was proposed in 1999, median values for selected metals (e.g., arsenic and lead) were presented as a “starting place.” However, these have become a default criteria that can lead to confusion and significantly affect project costs.

9:00 a.m.–10:15 a.m.

BREAKOUT 4
Veramendi Salon D

State Loop 195: An Overview of the Challenges of Section 106 Review and Coordination on a New Location Complex Project in Starr County, Texas

Chris Ringstaff, TxDOT

This presentation will discuss cultural resource issues on SL 195, a new-location 4-lane divided highway connecting FM 755 at Rio Grande City to US 83 at Roma in Starr County. The new highway encompassed 99 different parcels and landowners. The project is located in the Lower Rio Grande Plains and traverses numerous north-south arroyos that empty into the Rio Grande. This environment was once very attractive to Prehistoric peoples who used these upland settings and, as a result, much of the alignment is considered high probability for archeological sites. The presentation presents an overview of the Section 106 process from desktop GIS review, archeological survey, National Register of Historic Places testing, mitigation of adverse effect to eligible properties, the complexities of project timing, and Right of Entry (ROE) issues.

BREAKOUT 5
Veramendi Salon E

Update on TxDOT Drone Program

Drones with a Purpose: How Unmanned Aerial Systems Can Support Environmental Projects and Transportation Goals

Sergio Roman, TxDOT

Drones are not only a versatile and cost-effective tool for aerial data collection, but also a powerful ally for environmental projects and transportation goals. In this presentation, we will explore how TxDOT is using drones to help monitor and protect the environment, enhance the efficiency and safety of transportation systems, and support the implementation of sustainable solutions.

Drone Boot Camp

Eugene Robinson, Austin Community College

Come learn about the exciting opportunity to become a TxDOT drone pilot. The training opportunity will be explained, as will the time commitments required to be in the drone program. Hear about the FAA Part 107 Certification test and the adventures at the Austin Community College Public Safety Training Center, a.k.a. “Drone Camp.”

10:15 a.m.–10:45 a.m.

BREAK (*Exhibit Area*)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 (CONTINUED)

10:45 a.m.–Noon

CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS: 6–10

BREAKOUT 6

Veramendi Salon A

Hazardous Materials: Initial Site Assessment (ISA) Questions and Answers

Terry Dempsey, PG and Douglass Mack, PMP, TxDOT

Terry Dempsey and Douglass Mack will hold a questions and answers presentation related to the Initial Site Assessment (ISA) for Hazardous Materials.

BREAKOUT 7

Veramendi Salon B

Air Quality Updates

Glendora Lopez and Tim Wood, TxDOT

This session will examine the following air quality topics: updates related to ozone nonattainment redesignations, the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) reconsideration of particulate matter under 2.5 microns (PM_{2.5}), the status of federal greenhouse gas guidance, updates on air quality research, and updates to TxDOT's air quality toolkit. Additionally, this session will include timelines and forecasts to inform environmental planners on prospective upcoming changes.

BREAKOUT 8

Veramendi Salon C

Beyond the Road: Texas Freedom Colonies

Renee Benn and Jason Rivas, TxDOT

Did you know there are over 500 freedom colonies in Texas? These communities trace back to settlements founded by formerly enslaved persons, post Emancipation. TxDOT recognizes these cultural sites, partnering with the Texas Freedom Colonies Project Atlas. TxDOT historians will present information about using the Atlas for project review, and ways to recognize these communities. Freedom colonies often coincide with environmental justice communities. This session is for environmental professionals primarily working in central and east Texas.

BREAKOUT 9

Veramendi Salon D

Overview of Section 6(f)'s Protections for Certain Outdoor Recreation Lands

Patrick Lee, TxDOT

Most of us have experience with Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. However, few of us have experience with another statute that protects certain public outdoor recreation lands: Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. This session will discuss how Section 6(f) can affect a transportation project, including an overview of when it applies, what it requires, and how it differs from Section 4(f).

BREAKOUT 10

Veramendi Salon E

Issues in Endangered Species

Matt Buckingham, TxDOT; Meghan Lind, Stantec; and Karen Myers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Overview of the Listing Process Under the Endangered Species Act

Karen Myers, USFWS

The presentation will include a general overview of how the Service determines whether a species should be listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA. The overview will include a brief discussion of terms and relevant sections of the ESA, as well as related topics, including petitions to list, Species Status Assessments, and overarching processes and considerations to reach a listing determination.

The Endangered Species Act: An Overview and Considerations for TxDOT Projects

Matt Buckingham, TxDOT

In recent years many new species have been proposed for federal listing. This has had a significant impact on TxDOT projects and how we evaluate impacts to protected species and interact with regulatory agencies. This session will provide a regulatory framework for the Section 7 listing process and practical ways on how TxDOT plans for and implements projects to comply with the Endangered Species Act.

Black Rails—Creative Solutions for Cryptic Species

Meghan Lind, Stantec

Stantec has been assisting TxDOT to develop a Black Rail Guidance Document for transportation projects in Texas. Due to the cryptic nature of this species and its potential for occupancy across a wide portion of the coast, TxDOT wanted to develop a consistent approach to making habitat determinations, developing conservation measures, and preparing consultations for their projects.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 (CONTINUED)

1:30 p.m.–2:45 p.m.

CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS: 11–14

BREAKOUT 11

Veramendi Salon A

TxDOT is an MS4?

Kyle Honnerlaw, TxDOT

This session provides a high-level, introductory overview of TxDOT's Statewide MS4 Permit and the associated Stormwater Management Program (SWMP).

BREAKOUT 12

Veramendi Salon B

The Big Picture: How TxDOT Becomes Involved with Research and Conservation

Robin Ayers and Summer Chandler, TxDOT; Justin French, Borderlands Research Institute; and Suzanne Walsh, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

The Biology Team in ENV's Natural Resources Management Section and district staff are involved in a variety of research and conservation efforts. This session will highlight some of the mechanisms for becoming involved in these endeavors with examples from partner agencies and research institutions.

Implementing Interagency Contracts for Research...and World Domination

Summer Chandler, TxDOT

Conservation Through Collaboration – Funding Conservation Actions Through an Interagency Contract
Suzanne Walsh, TPWD

Evaluating Barrier Permeability and Highway Crossing Locations of Pronghorn in the Marfa Plateau Restoration Area

Justin French, Borderlands Research Institute

Federal Grants, Not Just for Construction
Robin Ayers, TxDOT

BREAKOUT 13

Veramendi Salon C

Community Impacts: Introduction to the New CIA Tool and EJ Metrics

Jason Kord and Spencer Ward, TxDOT; and Lauren Taylor, WSP

Join community impacts and GIS specialists to learn about TxDOT's updated census data tool and how this information can be used for your projects. In addition to new datasets and mapping features, this session will provide a sneak-peek into the second phase of the tool, along with discussing upcoming policy changes related to environmental justice metrics.

BREAKOUT 14

Veramendi Salon D/E

Synergies in Mussel Memory: Shared Research Opportunities in Biology and Archaeology through Ongoing Excavations and Freshwater Mussel Studies in Texas

Dave Buzan, M.S. and Aaron Petty M.S., *Freese and Nichols, Inc.; and Mason D. Miller, M.A., RPA, AmaTerra Environmental*

“I wonder if other malacologists know about this kind of data...”

This was the comment—made between the presenters while waist-deep in a creek, searching for mussels—that sparked our session. Remnants of freshwater mussels are commonly studied in archeological investigations because they offer insights into ancient environmental conditions. Biologists research living mussels in modern waterways as well, to explore their habitats and ranges, and to manage their numbers in infrastructure development projects; scientists actively considering two distinct research perspectives on the same subject. *Can mussel shells in a 3,000-year-old occupation site suggest certain species had a greater range than they do today? Could modern field efforts suggest how long it might’ve taken a pre-contact family to gather enough mussels for a meal?* In this session, archeologist Mason Miller and biologists Dave Buzan and Aaron Petty will highlight opportunities for both biologists and archeologists to look over each other’s shoulders and learn from the ongoing study of freshwater mussels.



WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 (CONTINUED)

3:15 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS: 15–18

BREAKOUT 15

Veramendi Salon A

Navigating ENV Contracts

Lauren Young, TxDOT

New to contracting opportunities at ENV? Due for a refresher on ENV contracts? This presentation will take a deeper dive into navigating the ENV contracting process, including roles, responsibilities, reminders, and resources.

BREAKOUT 16

Veramendi Salon B

Traffic Noise Barrier Constructability Assessments

Ray Umscheid and Meredith Worthen, TxDOT

Noise barriers proposed in the environmental document are often preliminary and based on schematic-level design. During detailed design and before holding noise workshops, engineering considerations (such as site constraints, utility conflicts, and additional costs) for noise abatement must be evaluated with a Constructability Assessment, which may result in modification or even removal of a barrier proposal. This assessment is important because workshop-approved noise barriers must be added to construction plans (PS&E) before projects can be approved for letting. This session will cover requirements, best practices, and timing for noise barrier constructability assessments.

BREAKOUT 17

Veramendi Salon C

Climate Change Hot Topics

Jackie Ploch, TxDOT; Andrew Cooper, Jacobs; and Rich Walter, ICF

This session will go over latest updates at the federal and state level, electric vehicle (EV) trends, and give an overview for conducting a project level analysis and tools that can be used in the analysis. Bring your questions for the Q&A.



Highlighting the revised design (extended portion) of the retaining wall on TX 360 north of IH 30. This portion of the retaining wall was extended due to a change in the foundation design to mitigate a conflict with a utility duct bank.

BREAKOUT 18

Veramendi Salon D/E

Water Rundown

Jennifer Walker, USACE; Ryan Robol, JMT; and David Wilkins, EPR

SCOTUS Sackett Decision on 404 and Beyond

Jennifer Walker, USACE Fort Worth District

Please join the USACE to learn about the recent Supreme Court Sackett decision and more and find out what it means for the definition of Waters of the U.S. and Clean Water Act Section 404 permitting moving forward.

2023 Update: A GIS Model to Predict Wetland/Waters Impacts and Mitigation Needs

Ryan Robol, JMT

TxDOT is developing a GIS-based Predictive Wetlands/Waters and Mitigation Modeling Tool (Tool) for use in future transportation projects. This Tool uses ArcGIS Pro, ArcHydro, and other geoprocessors to predict the amount and type of potentially jurisdictional wetlands and waters existing along transportation corridors and estimate the amount of compensatory mitigation required for future project impacts. Currently, the focus is on two pilot HUC8s with development done in such a way as to allow expansion statewide. This session will provide a demonstration of the functionality of the Tool and its associated outputs.

Bolivar Ferry Dredging and Beneficial Use

David Wilkins, EPR

Come see how thinking outside the box when it comes to mitigation can provide multiple benefits to environmental resources. The project is a shift from handling dredge material as a waste product and reimagines it as a valuable resource for habitat creation, with benefits including infrastructure protection and recreation.

Outside

Hands-On Drone Flying Opportunity—Come Fly!

Join us for a drone hands-on demo in the conference hotel parking lot. Whether it will be your first time flying, or you are a pro, stop by to fly one of the training drones. You will have the opportunity to fly “free” or try a short obstacle course. A mobile command unit will be on-site for you to visit and learn the benefits of a mobile unit and the type of tools they can contain.

There is no fee or registration required for this opportunity, just join us outside. Please email michele.wilkins@txdot.gov with questions.

8:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m.

Registration Desk Open

8:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

Veramendi Salons F–J

9:00 a.m.–Noon

Field Trip: Spring Lake and The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State University

Join us for a field trip to the jewel of San Marcos, Spring Lake, and The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State University. The field trip includes a guided tour of Spring Lake on a glass bottom boat, a walk through the wetland boardwalk, a visit to the Discovery Center and Aquarium, and a talk on the cultural resources and tribal connection to Spring Lake.

The cost of the field trip is \$8.50 and the cost to park is \$3 and must be paid the day of the trip. **Please bring exact cash.** The field trip will accommodate up to 60 people. Contact kathleen.goldsmith@txdot.gov to secure your place.

8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Public Involvement Training Opportunity: Public Involvement for NEPA

Veramendi Salon D/E

Join Anita Bradley and Michelle Lueck for a fun day of training as they teach Public Involvement for NEPA (ENV112).

The class will prepare you to develop an effective public involvement program and how to better conduct public involvement efforts for transportation projects.

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the benefits of active, outreaching public involvement;
2. Describe the laws, regulations, policies and procedures;
3. Plan, organize and conduct effective public involvement efforts; and
4. Prepare accurate and appropriate documentation.

Space will be limited, and the class is currently full. To get on the waitlist, contact kathleen.goldsmith@txdot.gov.



Wetlands at sunrise in South East Texas.

Kimberly Amy

Kimberly is currently an Environmental Coordinator at the Corpus Christi District and has worked there for the past ten years. She has worked as a biologist and environmental scientist for nearly 20 years, first gaining experience in fisheries and marine science before working in the world of project development and NEPA. Kim is passionate about bridging the gap between project development, design, environmental permitting, maintenance and construction activities through good communication and better understanding.

Robin Ayers

Robin is a Senior Federal Liaison for TxDOT. Her accomplishments include leading TxDOT’s implementation effort of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which provided TxDOT over \$2.5 billion in federal stimulus funds. For this effort, she was nominated for the Outstanding Women in Texas Government Award in 2010. In addition, Robin leads TxDOT’s selection and application process for Federal discretionary grants. In her three years leading this effort, TxDOT has successfully received grants totaling over \$250 million.

Renee Benn

Renee is the project team lead for history at ENV and will soon observe her 18th year with the CRM Section. Renee earned her M.S. in Historic Preservation from Eastern Michigan University. She recently moved back to Austin after a five-year stint in the Beaumont area. She enjoys exploring new restaurants, gardening, travelling (especially for work!) and relaxing with her husband and two cats.

Doug Booher

Doug serves as Director of the Environmental Affairs Division.

Anita Bradley

Anita is an Environmental Specialist and Project Delivery Manager with TxDOT ENV for the last 9 years. In addition, Anita serves as the Environmental PEL lead for TxDOT and liaison to the Public Involvement Section of TPP. She has served as Senior Policy Advisor to the U.S. House of Representatives as their Environmental Quality, Clean Air Act, and NEPA Subject Matter Expert. She received a B.S. of Chemistry from the University of South Florida.

Michael D. Bryant

After graduating from the University of Texas School of Law, Michael began working with the Department of Family and Protective Services as a procurement and contracts attorney and served as the agency's Historically Underutilized Business coordinator. While working at the Office of Governor Rick Perry, he served as counsel to the Trusteed Programs within the Office, including the Economic Development & Tourism Division, Texas Military Preparedness Commission, Texas Music Office, and the Texas Film Commission. At TxDOT, Michael worked on a variety of matters related to the Civil Rights Division, HUB and DBE issues, comprehensive development agreements, intellectual property, and the agency's information technology outsourcing with NTT Data.

Matt Buckingham

Matt is the Biology Team Lead with the NRM Section of TxDOT ENV. Prior to joining NRM, Matt worked as an environmental specialist in the Lufkin District. Before beginning his career with TxDOT, Matt worked in a variety of capacities, including as a conservation biologist for a land trust in southeast Texas and as a research biologist for state, federal, and non-profit entities. Matt has a B.S. in Wildlife Management and an M.S. in Biology with an emphasis on ecology and evolutionary biology, from Stephen F. Austin State University.

Dave Buzan

Dave is an aquatic ecologist with Freese and Nichols, Inc. He has worked in Texas' streams since 1978. He has participated in dozens of freshwater mussel surveys from the Red River to the Rio Grande. He has a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Texas A&M University and an M.S. in Biology from Southwest Texas State University.

Summer Chandler

Summer is a Contracts Administration Manager for TxDOT ENV.

Mike Chavez

Mike is Deputy Director of ENV. Mike has 25 years of experience in environmental compliance, planning, documentation, review, and project management both in the private sector and with the state. Throughout his career, Mike has served as a NEPA specialist, environmental task lead, project manager on TxDOT scientific services contracts, and a principal investigator on archeological investigations.

Andrew Cooper

Andy is an air quality specialist and senior project manager for Jacobs Engineering Inc. He has 30 years of experience in government and the private sector federal, state, and local projects. He has worked on largescale planning, and environmental projects involving high-profile and controversial issues throughout the US and extensively focused on air quality, including the original MSAT analysis and Greenhouse Gases-Climate Change Technical Reports in Texas. He graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a B.S. in Environmental Management.



Terry Dempsey

Terry is an environmental specialist for the TxDOT ENV Hazardous Materials Team. He has been assisting TxDOT districts and divisions with hazmat assessment, contamination, and waste compliance since 1996. Terry is a Professional Geoscientist with a B.S. in Geology and an M.S. in Natural Sciences from Stephen F. Austin University. He began his career in the Houston area as a pollution control investigator for Harris County, with a stint as a consultant assisting the chemical transport industry.

Justin French

Justin is a Big Game Specialist and Research Scientist at Sul Ross State University-Borderlands Research Institute. His research focuses on the spatial ecology of pronghorn, mule deer, and bighorn sheep in the Trans-Pecos in order to bolster ongoing restoration efforts for all three species. He completed his PhD in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Texas A&M University in 2019.

Kat Goldsmith

Kat has a B.S. in Geography and Planning: Natural Resources Management, and an M.A.G. from Southwest Texas State University in Applied Geography: Environmental Science Management. After taking a nearly 20-year detour, Kat returned to TxDOT ENV where she works on strategic programs including Beyond the Road and serves as Tribal Liaison. When not at work, you can often find Kat hanging out with her family, caring for her pets and garden, or making music with her friends.

Jessica Gray

Jessica is an associate general counsel in the General Counsel Division. She has practiced environmental law at TxDOT for almost 8 years, focusing largely on NEPA and Title VI compliance. Prior to joining TxDOT, Jessica

was an attorney at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Public Utility Commission, where she focused on issues related to water quality and water utilities, including the transition of the water utilities program between the two agencies. Jessica received a B.A. in Government from the University of Texas at Austin and a law degree from Texas Tech University School of Law. She lives in Leander with her husband, two rowdy kids, and a dog (who is the real boss of the family).

Kyle Honnerlaw

Kyle is an environmental specialist for the TxDOT ENV Operations Compliance Team. He received a degree in Bioenvironmental Sciences from Texas A&M University, after which he worked in consulting. Before TxDOT, he worked for a municipality where he oversaw development and implementation of the City's Stormwater Management Program (SWMP) and Small MS4 Permit compliance.

Jason Kord

Jason is a GIS specialist for TxDOT ENV. Throughout his 28 year career, he has gained extensive GIS expertise in various sectors, including private and public industries, with a focus on publishing, energy transmission, water resources, and transportation. In his role, Jason manages and processes environmental data and develops tools and applications that aid TxDOT ENV in effectively navigating the NEPA process.

Nicolle Kord

Nicolle currently serves as the Title VI Program Manager for the Civil Rights Division. Nicolle received her B.S. in Rangeland Management from Texas A&M University. After a few years with a private consulting firm, she joined the Colorado DOT as a NEPA and Environmental Justice (EJ) specialist. In 2011, she returned to Texas where she became a Community

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



An aerial shot of Lake Marble Falls Reservoir.

Impacts and EJ subject matter expert for TxDOT ENV before recently joining the Civil Rights Division.

Patrick Lee

Patrick holds a B.S. in Environmental Studies from Connecticut College and a law degree from the University of Texas at Austin. He has over 21 years of experience working on environmental issues in the private sector and state government. Patrick has been with TxDOT ENV for the past eight years.

Meghan Lind

Meghan is a Practice Lead and Principal for the Gulf Coast Region at Stantec, Inc. She began her career in Texas nearly 10 years ago as an environmental specialist with TxDOT ENV and has focused primarily on linear infrastructure-related environmental clearance and agency coordination/permitting since 2013. Meghan has an M.S. in Natural Resources and Environmental Management from the University of Hawaii and a B.S. in Biology from Old Dominion University.

Glendora Lopez

Glendora has a B.S. in Biology from the University of Texas–Pan American and an MPH from the University of North Texas Health Science Center. As an air quality specialist for TxDOT ENV, Glendora reviews documents, prepares guidance, and consults TxDOT districts on topics related to project level conformity, hot spot requirements, mobile source air toxics analysis, and carbon monoxide traffic air quality analysis.

Michelle Lueck

Michelle has been a TxDOT ENV Project Delivery Manager for 23 years. She received a degree in Anthropology from Texas A&M University.

Douglass Mack

Douglass works within the Hazardous Materials Section and has assisted TxDOT in managing contamination and other related waste materials since 1998. Doug has a B.S. in Environmental Studies from Texas State University with 30 years experience in the industry.

Kyle Madsen

Kyle serves as director of the Right of Way Division (ROW) and oversees all functions of the program. His duties include meeting construction schedules, funding agreements, management of professional services contracts, the eminent domain process, the relocation assistance program, coordination of utility adjustments, the commercial signs regulatory program and the disposition of real property no longer needed for a state highway purpose.

Kyle’s career in transportation began with the Office of the Attorney General’s Transportation Division and eventually entered TxDOT’s ROW’s Legal Branch where he is now director of statewide project delivery for the division. Kyle has a B.A. from Texas A&M and a J.D. from St. Mary’s University School of Law, where he was a member of the Phi Delta Phi international legal honor society.

Mason Miller

Mason is a senior staffer, cultural resource specialist, and scientific diver at AmaTerra Environmental, an Environmental Research Group Company. Through his 20+ years of experience as a terrestrial archeologist and a biological study diver, Mason has developed a unique professional perspective that touches on the cultural and the natural resource worlds. He received his B.A. in Archaeology from the University of Texas at Austin and his MA in Underwater Archaeology from Texas A&M University in College Station.

Karen Myers

Karen is the Field Supervisor for the Austin Ecological Services Field Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She received a biology degree from Texas State University in San Marcos, and subsequently worked for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

She later moved to the Pacific Northwest and joined the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service first in Washington State, then in the Service’s Headquarters office in Virginia before returning to Texas and her current position.

Eric Oksanen

Eric is a graduate of the University of Toronto. He has spent more than 30 years excavating, assessing, and reporting on Texas archeological resources. He has participated in research projects in Canada and South Africa and has worked for engineering firms, environmental services companies, universities, and for the last 12 years, in TxDOT ENV Archeological Studies Branch.

Aaron Petty

Aaron is an aquatic ecologist with Freese and Nichols, Inc. whose experience includes sampling for bivalves in most manners and methods across Texas streams, reservoirs, and estuaries. He received a Studies from the College of Charleston.

Jackie Ploch

Jackie is the human environment program manager for the TxDOT ENV Environmental Resources Management Section. She has over 35 years environmental management experience in the public and private sector, including 17 years with TxDOT. She has a B.A. in Biochemistry from the University of Texas at Austin and an MPA from Texas State. Jackie loves bewildering outdoor adventures.



Pronghorns

Kevin Resler

Kevin is the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) National Title VI Program Coordinator in the Headquarters Office of Civil Rights (HCR). Before joining HCR in 2015, he served as the Civil Rights Program Manager for FHWA's Utah and Nevada Divisions, a position he held since joining FHWA in September 2010. Prior to joining FHWA, Kevin was the Contract Compliance Manager for the Indiana DOT, where he managed a variety of civil rights programs, including the DBE, Title VI, and Contractor Compliance Programs. Kevin earned his B.A. from Indiana University, and his Juris Doctor from Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law.

Chris Ringstaff

Chris earned his B.A. in Anthropology and MA in Geography from Southwest Texas State University. His thesis work focused on landform evolution and archeological preservation at San Marcos Springs. He has worked on projects in the Southern and Northern High Plains, the American Southwest, and across Texas. His passion and research interest in Paleoindian archeology led him to participate in excavations at notable Paleoindian sites including Lubbock Lake, Ryan Site, Wilson Leonard, Spring Lake, Gault, Bobcat Wolf (ND), Jim Pitts (SD), Eagle Cave, Bonfire Shelter, and Mockingbird Gap (NM). Over the past 15 years, Mr. Ringstaff's work for the ENV challenges his multi-disciplinary skills in both Archeology and Geography working to uphold TxDOT's Section 106 obligations on projects of varying complexity from small roadway improvements to large new-location highways.

Clayton Ripps

Clayton is the Director of Transportation Planning & Development at the San Antonio District. He has been with TxDOT for over 22 years gaining valuable experience in design, construction, advanced planning, and environmental. Clayton is a graduate of the University of Texas at San Antonio with a B.A. in Civil Engineering. He is a Licensed Professional Engineer in the State of Texas.

Jason Rivas

Jason is a historic preservation specialist for TxDOT ENV. He is a graduate of Texas State University's Public History Program. Jason previously interned at the Texas Historical Commission as a Preservation Scholar. He also served two stints in AmeriCorps, collecting oral histories in Houston and developing digital outreach and content for Lockhart State Park. When he's not playing Zelda, Jason conducts oral histories and enjoys drinking coffee at historic/cultural sites.

Eugene Robinson

Eugene is the President of Gene Robinson Consulting, Inc. a firm dedicated to the safe and effective use of drone technology. Gene is a lifelong aviator and held a full-scale pilot's license for over 40 years and currently flies a Cessna 172L for pleasure and the occasional search mission. He has been heavily involved in the drone industry since 2005 with his company RPFly Systems, Inc. and developed his own "Spectra" flying wing aircraft for commercial aerial photography. This deep experience helped develop best practices and policy that is used by many agencies in the U.S. today.

In July of 2005, a woman went missing in a rocky, cactus ridden range. The local Fire Chief and County Sheriff asked Gene to fly his "little plane" over the search area. The images

taken by the Spectra and on-board camera clearly showed the victim thereby birthing a passion in Robinson that he used as the fuel to demarcate a profound new use for UAS – Search & Rescue, resulting in over 16 years of search and rescue using UAS. His own 501(c)3 non-profit RPSearch Services has seen him visit 34 states and 6 countries and is credited with 24 drone rescues or recoveries.

Ryan Robol

Ryan has 20+ years of natural resource management and environmental consulting experience, with 14 years in Texas. He has a B.S. in Biology from the University of North Carolina and an M.S. in Environmental Studies from the College of Charleston. When he is not working to exceed all of his clients’ wildest expectations, he is watching EPL soccer on Sunday morning, jogging (slowly) around the neighborhood, cheering for his two kids on the soccer pitch, following UNC Tarheel basketball and Houston Dynamo soccer, and doing whatever his lovely wife of 13 years asks (tells) him to do.

Sergio Roman

Sergio Roman serves as TxDOT’s UAS coordinator charged with developing and managing pilot training, aircraft procurement, and the integration of UAS into TxDOT’s daily operations. He has been flying drones and managing drone programs for 13 years between the US Army, major Defense contractors, and now TxDOT. His goal is to make the benefits of UAS attainable to TxDOT and its partners through collaboration and discussions like the one we are about to have.

Varuna Singh

Varuna is the Houston District Deputy District Engineer. Varuna graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington with a B.S. in Civil Engineering in 2002. He began his career with TxDOT at the Weatherford Area Office

for the Fort Worth District designing various project types including on and off system bridge replacements, the Safety Bond Program and interstate pavement reconstruction.

Before becoming Deputy Director Engineer, Singh served as the Houston District’s Alternative Project Delivery Director, and in 2018 was the recipient of the Dr. L.I. Hewes Award by WASHTO, recognizing his contributions to national highway development programs.

Lauren Taylor

Lauren is a Vice President and leads WSP’s local planning practice based in Austin, Texas. She is a multi-disciplinary, multi-modal planner with over 10 years of experience in a variety of transportation projects from early project development through construction. She received her B.S. in Environmental Science from the University of Florida and her M.S. in Natural Resource Management from Virginia Tech.

Dr. Kenneth S. Tramm

Kenneth is a Program Manager with Modern Geosciences. He is also an author (Environmental Due Diligence: A Professional Handbook), adjunct professor at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA; Engineering and Geosciences Departments), licensed Texas Professional Engineer, licensed Texas Professional Geoscientist, and Certified Hazardous Materials Manager. He earned a B.S. in Bioenvironmental Sciences from Texas A&M and Doctorate in Environmental Science and Engineering from University of Texas at Arlington

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

Ray Umscheid

Ray is the noise specialist for TxDOT ENV. He has a B.S. from Texas State University in Geography (Community and Regional Planning, Cartography). He has 18 years of experience performing noise analyses for transportation projects and is on several National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) research panels.

Jennifer Walker

Jennifer is the Chief of the Evaluation Branch, Regulatory Division, Fort Worth District, Army Corps of Engineers. Her background is in Biology and Ecology, and she has spent the last 37 years working in the arena of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act. The first five years of her career were spent in the private sector as an environmental consultant, with the remaining years spent in the Corps Regulatory Program. Jennifer first became interested in stream mitigation at the age of 7 when she and other family members and friends worked to install habitat structures on a channelized reach of trout stream in Northeastern Pennsylvania. At age 11, with the help of friends, Jennifer constructed and planted a small experimental wetland. From that point on, her career aspirations became focused on working in the field of stream and wetland ecology.

Dr. Suzanne Walsh

Suzanne is the Transportation Liaison at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. She has statewide responsibility for reviewing transportation projects and coordinates conservation projects or opportunities to assist TxDOT in minimizing impacts to or enhancing habitat of fish and wildlife resources affected by transportation projects across Texas. She holds a PhD in Wildlife Science from Texas A&M University-Kingsville.

Rich Walter

Rich has 31 years of experience in environmental planning, environmental impact assessment, compliance strategy, environmental permitting, and mitigation development and implementation. Rich has led an ICF Climate Action Planning practice since 2006. Rich has an MA in International Relations/Energy, Environment, Science and Technology from the School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University, and a B.A. in History from Stanford. Rich loves jazz, open water swimming, and is an avid hiker.

Spencer Ward

Spencer is a community impacts specialist with the TxDOT ENV Human Environment Team for the last 5 years. Before relocating to his home state to join TxDOT, he worked with environmental nonprofits throughout the Pacific Northwest, and received a B.A. in Environmental Policy from Western Washington University.

David Wilkins

David is an Environmental Planner with Ecosystem Planning and Restoration with 25 years of experience in environmental consulting and has been working with the Bolivar Ferry project since 2009. He is a graduate of Texas State University at San Marcos with degrees in Geography-Resource and Environmental Studies.

Marc D. Williams

Marc serves as TxDOT's Executive Director and is honored to work with the women and men of TxDOT to enhance the quality of life for Texans by delivering on our mission. Marc's career experience in transportation planning and program efforts includes public- and private-sector organizations involving state, county and local jurisdictions. He has



Galveston-Port Bolivar Ferry Dredging. Source: Ecosystem Planning & Restoration

served in leadership positions with two state departments of transportation and has worked with national, private-sector transportation engineering organizations. His professional assignments have included directing statewide transportation planning and programming efforts and managing project-specific highway and multimodal transportation plans and programs.

He has worked extensively with public and agency outreach, transportation plans of various modes, regional and corridor-level plans and programs, environmental planning and approval, economics and finance, project design and development, along with work in the areas of construction management, operations and maintenance.

Tim Wood

Tim joined TxDOT ENV in November 2010 and currently serves as air quality specialist. He graduated from the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio with a B.S. in Environmental Science. He is also currently the Vice Chair for the Air Quality Climate Change

and Energy Subcommittee (AQCCES) of The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

Meredith Worthen

Meredith is an environmental specialist for TxDOT ENV since 2018. She serves as a subject matter expert in traffic noise and has over 10 years of experience with traffic noise analyses for transportation projects. Prior to TxDOT, she worked for an environmental consulting firm, for the Texas Water Development Board, and for TCEQ. She has B.S. degrees in Biology and Microbiology from the University of Texas at Austin.

Lauren Young

Lauren has a B.S. and M.S. in Biology, both from Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi. Lauren joined TxDOT ENV as an environmental specialist in June 2018. Prior to joining TxDOT, she worked as a project manager for the TCEQ TMDL Program.

2023 TxDOT ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE

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