

AUGUST 2023

**We promote the advancement
of land stewardship through
ranching, science, and education.**



FROM THE CEO

Curiosity

NEAL WILKINS

There are several core values that are important to our organization – purpose, curiosity, authenticity, optimism, teamwork, and excellence. These core values collectively guide our behavior for best accomplishing our overall mission. Among these values, it is “curiosity” that is my favorite. Our ability to test new ideas with a willingness to be wrong; to learn from experience including failure; and to ask questions with a healthy skepticism all help us discover innovative solutions to those things that challenge managers, scientists, and policymakers. The growing list of challenges to ranching and the stewardship of native rangelands requires that we find new ways to solve problems. Solutions to big problems rarely occur to a single person who can immediately put their solution to work – this might be the case for small technical problems, but not big problems. Curiosity drives us to challenge ideas and accept challenges to our own ideas.

A GUIDE TO BEHAVIOR

Wendell Swank and Jack Inglis were both on the faculty at Texas A&M when I started graduate school in 1984. Dr. Swank was an unassuming but effective leader who spent many years directing the United Nation’s Wildlife Program in Africa and was also the former Director of the Arizona Game and Fish Department. Dr. Inglis was an outspoken philosopher-scientist whose career focused on the application of research to wildlife management – he was a noted expert in white-tailed deer behavior. Swank and Inglis shared the same laboratory with desks for graduate students between their offices, all on the third floor of Nagle Hall. Built in 1909, Nagle Hall was the oldest building on campus, and was headquarters for the Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences Department.

Under the direction of Dr. Swank, my graduate research was to focus on bobwhite quail in South Texas – and that was pretty much all I knew at the time. So, after my first week

on campus, Dr. Swank told me I was to pack a bag and bedroll and go to a ranch in Jim Wells County – a five-hour drive. I was to help on projects as needed, and I was to start thinking about what my graduate research ought to focus on. I was to travel with Dr. Inglis and Dr. Charlie Scifres; and was further told that Dr. Scifres was a Professor in the Range Science Department; and that I needed to listen to both of them.

As I rode back-seat in Inglis’ sedan, I thought they must have forgotten I was there because Inglis and Scifres argued and challenged the details and validity of one-another’s work for the entire ride. Inglis’ interest was white-tailed deer ecology, and he talked a lot about the philosophy of knowledge. Scifres’ interest was brush management and rangeland improvement, and he talked a lot about systems for practical decision-making. After working at the ranch for several days on other graduate student’s projects, we headed back to College Station, and they picked up their arguments right where they



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LOCATIONS

Hebbronville

310 East Galbraith Street
Hebbronville, Texas 78361

San Antonio Viejo Ranch

474 East Ranch Road
Hebbronville, Texas 78361

El Sauz Ranch

37216 Highway 186
Port Mansfield, Texas 78598

San Antonio

200 Concord Plaza Drive, Suite 410
San Antonio, Texas 78216
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Curiosity con't.

had left off – only this time they each had figured out how to resolve some uncertainty in their work that the other had pointed to during the earlier trip. Next day I reported to Dr. Swank and briefed him on the trip – he smiled and told me I ought to ask both Scifres and Inglis to be on my graduate committee. So, I did as Swank suggested, but this worried me because those two disagreed so much.

The semester started soon after, and I was enrolled in Dr. Inglis' trademark course, "Wildlife Research Methods," which was otherwise widely known as the "Magical Mystery Hour" – and this is where Inglis confronted us all with a **Guide to Behavior for Experimenters**, which was a set of "rules" that reflected his philosophy. One of those rules still sticks out: *"The probability of learning anything from someone who only agrees with you is zero."* I've kept my original copy of Jack Inglis' rules for almost 40 years – to see a copy you can click [here](#).

Over the next several months I made another half-dozen trips with Inglis and Scifres – I vetted with them my ideas for doing a radio-telemetry study on the response of quail to different grazing systems. And they proceeded to turn their inquisitions and skepticism towards me – they cut me no slack, I lost sleep, and they forced me to reach into other disciplines to solve problems. It was great.

After two semesters on campus, I started my field research on La Copita Research Area. We didn't have well-funded project budgets, so groups of graduate students worked together for whatever labor was needed for each other's work. So, I took forage samples, trapped coyotes and bobcats, captured deer, ran a hunt camp, cut brush, worked

cattle, and built fence. All while trapping quail, radio-tracking quail, and evaluating quail habitat for my own work. Working for others gave us all the chance to exchange our labor for testing new ideas with scientists working on rangeland hydrology, plant ecology, livestock production, herbicide technology, predator ecology, and soil science.

After my time at La Copita, my wife Sandra and I moved back to College Station so I could try and make sense of all the quail data I had collected. Swank and Inglis treated the graduate students in their office as if we were colleagues – which we all knew we didn't deserve. This opened up the idea that we could challenge their ideas about our work. In some cases, this meant it took longer for us and them to get some work done – but we learned more. We all finally published theses and graduated, but for me and several others, the real benefit was learning how to challenge each other's work and welcome challenges to our own work.

Wendell Swank, Jack Inglis, and Charlie Scifres have all since passed away. I never got to ask them but have often suspected that the three of them conspired – and although each was quite different from the others, they all had the same primary motivation for training young scientists – and that was to create a culture of curiosity.



Management by Experiment, Science at Work for East Foundation

JASON SAWYER

Land stewards have a fundamental problem – **stewardship** demands improvement. From a land management perspective, improvement means increasing the capacity of the land to support livelihoods and life, and to yield these benefits now and into the future. Maintenance isn't enough – and degradation or loss are always risks. Advancing land stewardship requires us to grapple with this fundamental problem and make decisions that achieve the goal of long-term improvement.

The purpose of the Science Program at East Foundation is to enhance and enable effective decision making by stewards of working lands.

Karl Popper, the most impactful philosopher of science in the 20th century, wrote *All Life is Problem Solving*, and describes the process of developing reliable solutions that we refer to as 'science.' This is really controlled trial and error – based on the best information that we have, we imagine a possible solution, and implement it (the trial). Of course, we expect the outcome to be resolution of the problem... and often our expectations aren't met (the error).

However, these setbacks provide us with additional understanding of the problem and prompt new innovation in imagined solutions, and we try again. Continuing this process, we gain new insights, acquire more complete and reliable information, and refine our solutions.

At East Foundation, **we manage by experiment**, so that our ability to make the most effective decisions is enhanced, and we get better at solving the fundamental problem of stewardship.

Our 'science projects' are built around the idea of management by experiment. For example, we need to understand the effects of harvest management decisions on the long-term improvement of quail populations. Using the best information available, we have **developed** a harvest management framework for northern bobwhite quail and implemented that on portions of our ranches. We **document** the specific effects of this framework by comparing quail response from areas that are subject to harvest to those that are not... and based on that comparison, seek to **discover** the principles that drive the outcomes that we seek.

Using the same approach, we **develop** grazing strategies and implement them within the Coloraditas Grazing Research and Demonstration Area at the San Antonio Viejo Ranch. As we **document** the responses of these strategies compared to a 'standard' approach, we **discover** new information that we use to inform and **develop** grazing strategies for other areas of our ranches. The documentation of these outcomes is giving us insight into the effects on and benefits of diversity on our rangelands and how we can build both capacity and resilience, the keys to long-term improvement.

"Problem" has a negative connotation, but the root meaning has the context of something that causes us to wonder or gives us 'amazement.' Our desire to be the best possible stewards is fueled by our curiosity, wonder, and amazement about the complexity of the systems that we manage within. Management by experiment keeps our curiosity focused on the important problems of management and helps us to build a culture of science-minded managers engaged with management-minded scientists as we put science to work within the living laboratory of a working ranch.



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Upcoming Events

SEPTEMBER 12

Investment Committee Meeting
in San Antonio, Texas

SEPTEMBER 18-19

Board of Directors Meeting in
San Antonio, Texas

SEPTEMBER 20-22

AgriLife Extension Professional
Development at San Antonio
Viejo Ranch

OCTOBER 5

Texas Land & Mineral Owners
Association Meeting in San
Antonio, Texas

OCTOBER 5-6

20th Annual Holt Cat Symposium
on Excellence in Ranch
Management in Kingsville,
Texas

OCTOBER 7

National Ranching Heritage
Annual Meeting & Chuckwagon
Breakfast in Lubbock, Texas

OCTOBER 9-13

Behind the Gates at San Antonio
Viejo Ranch

EMPLOYEE PROFILE



VERONICA PAREDEZ

Veronica Paredez is a native Texan, born and raised in Corpus Christi. She was recently promoted to Director of Finance for the East Foundation. With a professional background in business and risk management, Veronica is responsible for the Foundation's long-term financial health and growth and oversees all financial functions and related staff. She is also responsible for the Foundation's investment portfolio, manages and oversees the employee retirement plan, and has administrative oversight for organizational policies, procedures, and insurance coverage.

Veronica serves as the Secretary of the East Foundation, maintaining the Foundation's corporate governance documents, and also serves as the Treasurer.

Prior to working with the East Foundation, Veronica worked with Vinson & Elkins, LLP in Washington, D.C., and Branscomb PC in Corpus Christi, Texas. She holds an MBA from Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi and B.A. degrees in Business Administration and Spanish from Austin College in Sherman, Texas, where she graduated with Honors.

Veronica is also an Austin College Lee Posely Leadership Institute graduate.

Family and service are very important to Veronica. She and her husband John have three active children. Veronica enjoys spending time with her family, volunteering, and traveling.



OPERATIONS REPORT

Well-informed Decision Making

TREY DYER

Efficient management is a direct result of well-informed decision making. Data, both historical and real-time, is an essential part of that decision making process. Data can help managers better understand and identify both failures and successes. Budgeting, for example, is more easily and accurately achieved when you have historical data to pull from.

As East Foundation implements a new accounting system, this information will be more readily available to managers. The ability to track operational and maintenance costs to individual assets, such as facilities or vehicles, will help to paint a picture of the value of that asset. Through review of the data, some assets could be identified as being beyond their useful lives regarding the cost of maintenance and ownership. A comprehensive data set gives managers the ability to identify issues early and make well-informed decisions that will ultimately save an organization time and money.

Having good, quality data also allows managers to identify ways to improve operational efficiency. When using historical information to plan and coordinate projects, for example, a manager can identify things such as the most effective time of year so as not to interfere with operations.

The ability to identify scheduling and frequency of purchases of consumable maintenance items or service calls can also be a direct result of having a quality data set.

When and how often should you be ordering air filters, light bulbs, cleaning supplies, etc.? Should contract services such as pest control and HVAC check-ups be scheduled monthly, quarterly, or annually? The answers to questions like these can be made with the help of information derived from data.

As we move forward with the new accounting system and software, East Foundation will be able to continue to identify ways to improve its efficiency in all aspects of operations and maintenance.

However, no matter how capable a software program is, it's the team using it that makes it effective. Teamwork is one of East Foundation's organizational values, and without the help of our outstanding accounting department, it would be impossible to gather and utilize the data needed to effectively manage our assets.



With thoughtful management across our operation, East Foundation strives to steward both the land and the infrastructure across it.

Upcoming Events

OCTOBER 12

South Property Rights Association Meeting in McAllen, Texas

OCTOBER 14

Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting & Field Day at El Sauz Ranch

OCTOBER 16-18

Southeastern Association of Fish & Wildlife Annual Conference in Corpus Christi, Texas

OCTOBER 18-20

Texas Section Society for Range Management Annual Meeting in Bastrop, Texas

OCTOBER 25

South Texas Farm & Ranch Show in Victoria, Texas

OCTOBER 30 - NOVEMBER 1

Texas Soil and Water Conservation Annual Meeting in Fort Worth, Texas

ALUMNI PROFILE



DILLAN DRABEK

Dillan Drabek was born and raised on a small ranch outside of Schulenburg, Texas. Most of his youth consisted of hunting, fishing, showing, and raising livestock. While in high school, he attended an FFA wildlife contest where he was introduced to a summer job assisting a PhD student that unknowingly was located on the East Foundation.

While attending Texas A&M – Kingsville, he pursued his B.S. in Range and Wildlife Management and consistently worked with the East Foundation throughout his undergraduate career. Many of the different graduate projects that he assisted on consisted of deer and nilgai captures, wildlife monitoring, grazing management, and prescribed burning.

He later pursued his M.S. in Range and Wildlife Management partnered with the East Foundation and Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute. His thesis was focused on grazing effects on forbs for white-tailed deer and plant species richness. During his years working with the East Foundation, he was able to learn many skills, encounter many professionals, and develop

many friendships he still has today.

Dillan is currently working for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service as a District Conservationist in Victoria, Texas. He often gives advice to landowners and ranchers to help them improve grazing management and influencing wildlife management that he learned from previous years working with the East Foundation.

In his own words:

“I developed to be more of a land steward and conservationist during the years I have worked with the East Foundation. Being involved with the numerous projects they have incorporated on their land is outstanding. While conducting research on the East Foundation, I found myself going through the thick Tamaulipan Thornscrub and crawling through pastures of Gulf Cordgrass in the Coastal Marshes. The diversity and range ecology I encountered there was phenomenal. I made many memories that I will cherish forever, and I am grateful to have worked with the East Foundation.”



FROM THE RANCH

Manage What You Measure

GARRETT STRIBLING

It seems like 100 questions are generated on ranches every single day. Typical questions range from day-to-day tactical decisions about labor deployment and efficiency to long-term strategic questions about genetic selection, female retention strategies, asset and brush management, and what is going to be the next big challenge for the operation. How you begin to prioritize and tackle these questions will determine how your operation will function in the future.

At East Foundation, we take a scientific approach to management. We are innately curious about how all our decisions will affect our operation down the road.

There's a saying, “You can't manage what you don't measure.” Data collection is at the forefront of everything we do. We utilize this data to help us make decisions on the ranches that allow us to accomplish our mission to operate an efficient, sustainable production system. The ability to work side-by-side with our science team is one of the most valuable assets we have. With individuals who specialize in wildlife, range, and beef cattle, we all have complimentary interests and skills that benefit the entire operation.

On the cattle side, we collect multiple data points every time we gather cattle. We have an extensive wildlife and range monitoring program that tracks fluctuations in wildlife populations and species as well as variety and density of grasses across the ranches. We all utilize the land, and we want to make decisions that utilize the rangeland in a way that allows for long-term improvement and

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Texas Wildlife Association

KRISTIN PARMA

Measure con't.

increased productivity. It is a cooperative effort between our ranching and science teams. We work together to set optimal stocking rates that best utilize the forage resources available and change these as weather and range conditions dictate.

We are currently working on a long-term brush management plan, utilizing remote sensing data to look at brush densities and forage communities across all ranches to identify and prioritize areas where we have seen the most change over time and begin to plan management for increasing the overall productivity of our asset.

Ranching is a dynamic business where dozens of variables change every single day. No two days are the same and tomorrow will inevitably present new challenges. Having a data-driven foundation allows us to maintain a consistent approach to management, and to make better, more informed decisions as a result.



East Foundation works closely with strong partners. One of those is the Texas Wildlife Association, with thousands of members from across the state. As a long-time partner that shares many goals and values with the Foundation, Texas Wildlife Association (TWA) strives to help Texans of all ages realize the value of our state's rich natural resources and recognize the important role that private landowners have in the health of those resources. TWA accomplishes this goal through a three-pronged approach.

The Foundation's Behind the Gates education program is closely aligned with TWA's Conservation Legacy program, and the partnership continues to this day. Working together, the partner organizations' education and land stewardship-focused efforts are making a strong impact on Texans and their understanding and appreciation for the many benefits of private lands and informed land stewardship.

Some of the many programs that TWA engages in include:

HUNTING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Hunting Heritage programs aim to recruit and retain the next generation of responsible Texas hunters. We are the nation's leading organization in providing both adults and youth with the opportunity to learn how to hunt. Our Texas Youth Hunting Program (TYHP) has successfully run over 3,300 hunts with over 50,000 youth hunters and parents. Recently, we expanded our programming to include our [Adult Learn to Hunt Program](#).

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Conservation Legacy programs cover a wide range of activities from in-school natural resource education classes for K-8 classes to landowner field days covering in-depth land management techniques. One of our favorite educational tools is our youth magazine, [Critter Connections](#).

ISSUES AND ADVOCACY

TWA was established to make sure that landowners and hunters had strong and reliable representation on the issues that affect them. We continue to take this responsibility seriously through our work at the Texas Legislature, state regulatory processes, and others on issues like ad valorem taxation, eminent domain, wildlife disease management, etc.

Recently, East Foundation successfully partnered with the Texas Wildlife Association to host the Foundation's annual Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) competition at the TWA Private Lands Summit in July. This year's competition was the 6th annual 3MT for East Foundation.

Thanks to Texas Wildlife Association and our other partners, our programs are stronger and reach more of the right people – from students to landowners to the general public – each day.

RAINFALL REPORT

A Little Rain Goes a Long Way

TODD SNELGROVE

What do June 8th and July 8th have in common? Besides being the 8th day of the month, those are the last days we received more than a few drops of rain on East Foundation ranches. Our Jim Hogg and Starr County ranches received about an inch on June 8th while our Kenedy and Willacy County ranches received one to two inches on July 8th. On top of that, we can count on one hand the number of days the high temperature has been below 100° F. This summer should come as no surprise. El Niño conditions are firmly entrenched in the equatorial Pacific Ocean. Historically this has put a damper on tropical activity from the Gulf leading to hot and dry El Niño summers.

With most of South Texas receiving only 25 to 50% of normal rainfall over the last 60 days we have slipped into a significant drought. Timely spring rains left us with good range conditions going into the summer and by all accounts the cattle and wildlife are holding up well.

Except for a small tropical system trying its best to form in the Gulf, our best chances of rain are likely later this fall and winter. The current long range weather outlooks call for continued warm, dry conditions through the end of September gradually shifting through the fall to a cool and wet El Niño dominated winter.

Editor's Note: Tropical storm Harold made landfall on Padre Island the morning of August 22nd bringing with it gusty winds and much needed rain.

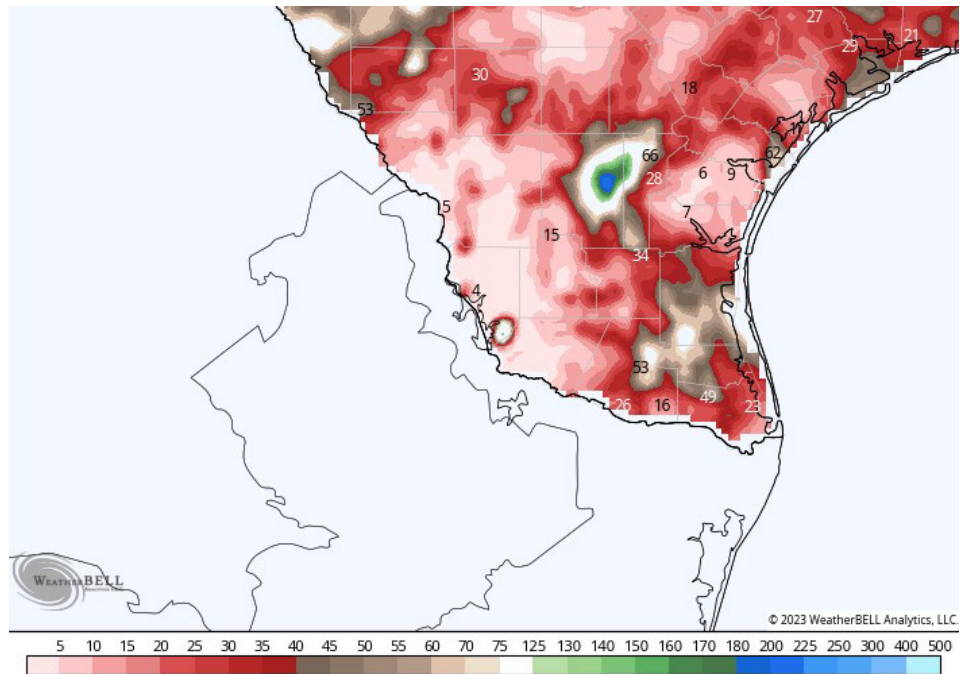


Figure 1. 60-day precipitation anomaly (Percent of Normal) for deep South Texas.

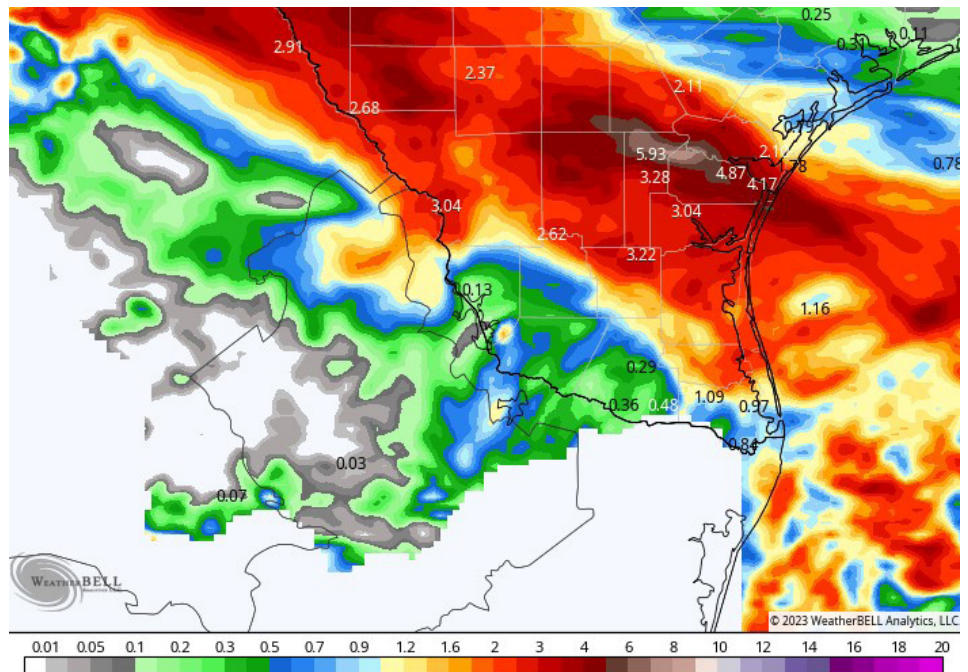


Figure 2. Rainfall totals (inches) from Tropical Storm Harold as of August 24, 2023.

Knowledge is Power

RICHARD DOUGLAS

The more knowledge we have about the threats to privately owned lands and a property's vulnerabilities, the better prepared (i.e., powerful) we can be to detect and interdict individuals illegally present on those properties.

As a Security Team, we strive to utilize data gleaned from consistent communications with neighboring landowners, law enforcement partners in the region, and East Foundation team members who are routinely working the ranches. Scrutinizing the myriad of data points and past experiences, we can leverage this information to see the common tendencies of trespassers.

Due to the vastness of the Foundation properties (approximately two hundred miles of perimeter fences alone), trespassers have numerous options to avoid detection. Consequently, security personnel must maintain an inquisitive mindset, be reactive in nature, and resist complacency to discover illegal activities. Those unfamiliar with such character traits will sometimes mistakenly think of security personnel as overly cautious and a bit paranoid. However, we prefer to think of ourselves as inquisitive with just a hint of "professional paranoia."

Certainly, there are times when our inquisitiveness leads us to pursue frivolous ideas with no fruitful results. However, it is through these "failures" where we typically learn the most valuable lessons.

Security teams across South Texas use various technology assets to assist in monitoring ranch activities, detect those transiting the properties, and essentially

become a force multiplier for local, state, and federal law enforcement personnel. The East Foundation Security Team constantly researches emerging technology and techniques to increase our monitoring and detection capabilities. As the tendencies and patterns of our security threats evolve, our strategies for implementing new technology and methods must also evolve.

Ultimately, maintaining an inquisitive mindset and continuing a robust open dialogue with our neighbors, law enforcement personnel, and other ranch employees elicits most of the information we use in developing security strategies. In essence, the most significant source of the Security Team's "data" or information comes from solid relationships with our neighbors, law enforcement, and within our own ranks.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the importance of simply being out on the land. Not mindlessly cruising around with the hopes of finding footprints in the dirt but rather putting the information gathered via technology and conversations to use in the field. Gathering data simply to gather data doesn't produce results in the field. Gathering data and implementing strategies based on the data enables us to make meaningful strides toward mitigating our ranches' vulnerabilities from illegal activity.

