Dr. Amir Ibrahim discusses the use of unmanned aerial systems in wheat research with visiting members of the College of Agriculture Development Council. See more about visitors to our department on page 15.
A Big **Whoop!** to all of our graduates!

For the thirty-five students earning their Bachelor of Science degree from the department, this month brings both closure and new beginnings. We look forward to hearing of their successes and contributions to our sciences. We are also proud to see fifteen graduates who will receive minors from our department to complement their degrees. (See photos on pages 12-13 of some recent awards).

Advanced degrees will be conferred on a dozen of our graduate students this month. Many of these are already embracing the next phase of their lives, as they have joined the workforce or begun working on their next degree (See photos pages 7-10).

Extension field day season kicks into high gear with turf grass field day next week at College Station and many more to follow. Planting has concluded in the southern portion of the state, as producers in the Panhandle struggle with the decision of whether or not to plant under current drought conditions.

We had the opportunity to recognize our staff for all they do through an ice cream social. As we were developing the description of our department for Vice-Chancellor Stover it was brought out by many how much we benefit across our teaching, research and extension efforts from the talented and dedicated staff.

The 5th Annual Bennett Trust Land Stewardship Conference was recently held in Kerrville with a record attendance. The department manages the Bennett Endowment and the proceeds provide funding for land stewardship educational opportunities in the Edwards Plateau in perpetuity due to the generosity of Mr. Eskel Bennett. (See story page 3)

There have been many visitors to the department in the past few weeks. The College of Agriculture Development Council travelled to the research farm for a demonstration of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and Automated Phenotyping vehicles. The horticulture class from Elsik High School toured the Scotts Turf Facility and learned a little about the opportunities in turfgrass, and Dr. Humberto Reyes-Valdes, a graduate from the department, brought a contingent of his graduate students from Universidad Autonoma Agraria Antonio Narro in Saltillo, Mexico, to visit Texas A&M and Dr. David Stelly (see page 15). Thanks to Dr. Ed Runge for representing us at the Global Rust meeting in Morocco.

We continue to work to facilitate major activities with companies. Recent planning efforts include Scott’s, Indigo, Monsanto and Advanta. Many are working on federal proposals at the current time or waiting to see if their projects were approved following budget delays.

Workshops, conferences and field days have been occurring throughout the state, including the 6th Annual Bennett Trust Land Stewardship Conference in Kerrville, the Geronimo-Alligator Creeks Watershed Cleanup, and numerous small grains field days.

Spring faculty reviews continue and have given me the opportunity to visit the AgriLife Research and Extension centers statewide. It is always good to visit with the faculty during the review process. I have also had the opportunity to travel to Washington DC for both the CAST board meeting where we announced the CAST Borlaug communication award, and the Council Of Scientific Society Presidents where I serve as Vice-Chair. As I write this I am on the third rebooking due to a combination of mechanical and weather issues.

We continue to recruit for key Extension Specialist Positions at Dallas, San Angelo and Lubbock. We appreciate the efforts of the search committees to identify great candidates to provide a bright future.

We wish the students a pleasant summer as they intern, study abroad, work in our research labs or other engaged learning activities. Again, Congratulations to our graduates!

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You can support Soil and Crop Sciences research, teaching and extension outreach with your tax-deductible donations. More Information can be found at [http://soilcrop.tamu.edu/giving/](http://soilcrop.tamu.edu/giving/)
The 5th annual conference was held at the YO Ranch Hotel and Conference Center in Kerrville April 26-27 with more than 70 landowners and prospective landowners in attendance.

This was the largest attendance at the conference since its inception, and many of those in attendance had attended at least previous conference. “We have a people from different parts of the state, some with small land holdings and some with large acreages,” said program founder Dr. Larry Redmon, Associate Department Head - Texas A&M University Department of Soil and Crop Sciences and the Bennett Trust Extension Specialist. “Everybody wants to be a good steward of their piece of Texas, so that is what these programs are designed to do.”

The conference is the result of an endowment Eskel and Ruth Bennett made to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to support stewardship education efforts in the Edwards Plateau region. Conference organizers bring in new speakers and present new information each year, touching on a wide range of stewardship topics.

Matt Brown, Extension Program Specialist in College Station, presented a rainwater runoff demonstration during the conference explaining that with excessive runoff, you not only lose water, but soil and nutrients as well. This year those topics included prescribed burning, herbicide control options, fence laws, and leasing land for hunting. The group also got to see a rainwater runoff demonstration, prescribed burn equipment and brush management equipment.

“We have a great group of speakers, and folks come from all over, with different uses for their land and different goals,” said Extension Program Specialist Matt Brown, who has been assisting with the conference for several years. “The practices discussed here, although we are focused on the Edward’s Plateau, can be implemented across the state so it is something they can take back home, no matter where that might be, and use on their property.”

Participants attend the conference for a variety of reasons, but all truly care about their land and want to preserve it for future generations.

“We had a ranch in eastern Colorado, and recently moved down to Harper (Texas),” said Randy Rester, a participant in the recent conference. “We knew how to farm and ranch in Colorado, but Texas is totally different in what you can plant and when, the type of things we may need to control, and how to be good stewards of the land. That is why we are at the program. We are hoping to get an education on how we should be taking care of the land down here.”
The Texas High Plains is under extreme drought and if current conditions continue, producers need to make important decisions for summer crops, said Dr. Jourdan Bell, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agronomist in Amarillo.

“The current U.S. Drought Monitor is reporting we are in a Stage 4 drought,” Bell said. “With that, many producers are having to make critical management considerations as they are approaching summer planting season.”

Fortunately, the region’s extended precipitation forecast is improving, she said. The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center is now predicting the region will have equal changes of above or below average precipitation.

“What does that mean for a producer? Well hopefully it will not be as dry as previously predicted, but we still do not have a positive forecast,” Bell said. “Unfortunately, temperatures are still projected to be above average, and because temperatures are a key driver in crop water use, we are still at risk for crop stress under dryland and limited irrigation.”

Dr. Jourdan Bell, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension economist, said the lack of moisture over the winter may have High Plains producers tweaking their planting decisions. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo by Kay Ledbetter)

“On the bright side, we are very fortunate because we had very good early fall precipitation, so in many areas we still have good subsoil moisture,” Bell said.

She estimated under no-till and especially under good residue, soil moisture may be 4-6 inches deep; under cultivated or tilled ground, subsoil moisture may be 8-10 inches.

“It is important for producers to evaluate the depth to moisture before they begin to pre-irrigate,” Bell said. “Soil moisture sensors are an invaluable tool not only for scheduling in-season irrigation, but also determining how much pre-irrigation is needed.”

That subsoil moisture also allows dryland producers to gauge precipitation in the forecast to determine if it will give them enough moisture to plant on, she said.

Subsoil moisture is only about 4-6 inches below the surface in fields where residue was left standing (left) but 8 - 10 inches in cultivated ground.

“Even if we receive up to a half inch, that’s probably not going to be enough, because roots will not grow through dry soil to reach the wetter subsoil.”

As producers evaluate the forecast and probability of precipitation, many are opting to split irrigated acreage between corn and cotton so they will have sufficient water to meet critical crop water demands throughout the summer.

“For crop insurance purposes, corn needs to be planted on or before June 5 for counties in the Texas High Plains, but planting later in June shifts the critical water demand period of tasseling out of some of the hotter periods of summer,” Bell said.

“Often we will see greater kernel set and sometimes benefits by planting that crop even later in the summer. So, producers have to evaluate how they manage their insurance programs with regards to their planting times.”

For grain sorghum under both irrigated and dryland production systems, producers do have flexibility with planting dates, she said.

“We do find producers are able to make a very good sorghum crop, even planting into late June. That does provide a little bit a flexibility as they watch the weather,” she said. “They can wait and plant the crop if we receive timely rains. Also, planting later will move that critical growth stage of growing-point differentiation and flowering later into the season when we are not as hot. Sorghum does have a little more flexibility than cotton.”

When it comes to cotton across the High Plains, it is important for producers to get the crop planted in May because “we are trying to grow a perennial crop in a very short annual environment,” Bell said. “In order to accumulate sufficient growing degree days or heat units to mature that crop and optimize production – not just yield but also quality – we really need to get that crop off and running in May and preferably early to mid-May if conditions are favorable.”

Traditionally the best rains in this region fall in May and June, and that offers hope for the coming crop season, in spite of the current drought, Bell said.
Oilseed crops like sunflowers and canola are experiencing lower prices, but it appears overall interest in alternative crops remains steady, said a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service expert.

Dr. Calvin Trostle, AgriLife Extension agronomist, Lubbock, said alternative crop options such as sunflowers, sesame, canola and guar remain minor crops, but their viability due to drought and heat tolerance may increase their popularity as market demands rise.

Trostle said there is a large oversupply of confectionary sunflower seeds, which are the edible snack seeds, due to high and even record-breaking national yields per acre the past few years. Oversupply has hurt prices and demand for planted acres this year.

“One commodity broker in Lubbock typically contracts up to 40,000 acres in the Texas High Plains, but they contracted none this year,” Trostle said. “Regional prices are lower, so this means acres will go elsewhere. Growers don’t plant sunflowers unless they’re under contract, because otherwise there are no assurances there will be anyone to buy their crop.”

Prices are fair at best for oilseed sunflower, and the Texas oilseed acreage is expected to be down to about 35,000 acres from 50,000 acres or more. Planted acres include up to 9,000 acres in the Lower Rio Grande Valley for export to Mexico and about 20,000 acres for bird seed production.

With sesame, current contract acreage is limited to one company, Trostle said. He is uncertain about sesame acreage, but said it appears Texas production could be in the range of 50,000 acres to as much as 100,000 acres. Trostle said there could be some increased export demand from Japan, which recently reduced import regulations on the crop.

A second company is conducting test plantings with new non-shattering varieties to evaluate possible expansion of sesame in West Texas in the near future, he said.

The northern Texas Rolling Plains has some winter canola production. But one canola limitation in the region is the planting window, which closes early in October when some producers have not harvested summer crops like cotton.

Canola offers a rotational crop option to wheat in fields with grassy weeds that would be a potential problem, Trostle said. But canola also requires more management than wheat.

There is current interest in re-examining the spring canola potential on the lower Texas Gulf Coast, Trostle said. This area was a production region for spring canola through the 1980s.

Prices have fallen for another minor oilseed, guar, since the market ballooned in 2013, said Trostle.

Texas guar producers are expected to increase acreage by as much as 30 percent this season, he said. Guar prices continue to be low, but there is great interest in the heat and drought tolerant crop. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is providing $1.2 million across four research grants focused on the crop or in conjunction with other minor crops.

“Guar prices tend to follow petroleum production because it is used in the drilling process,” he said. “There is a huge market for it when drilling is active, and there is interest in it as a food-grade emulsifier. Guar is drought and heat tolerant, so there’s plenty of areas in Texas where it could be a successful crop.”
The impacts of potential trade tariffs on crops such crops would send ripple effects through other agricultural commodities, according to a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service economist.

Dr. Mark Welch, grains marketing economist in College Station, told farmers at the Central Texas Small Grain Field Day at the McGregor Research Center that a Purdue University recently projected a 25 percent import tariff by China on soybeans would result in a 37 percent decline in U.S. exports.

Consequently, a decline in U.S. soybean exports would lead to fewer soybean acres.

“Where are those acres going to go? They will go to corn,” Welch said. “Given where our corn prices are, we don’t really want any more corn acres.”

From decreased land values to lessening farm net worth, the potential repercussions of tariffs on exports to China could have big impacts, Welch said.

He said to mitigate potential price risks, producers can integrate cash marketing with other marketing tools and crop insurance.

Soil and crop sciences professor Dr. Scott Nolte, AgriLife Extension state weed specialist in College Station, advised farmers on using Dicamba and proper spray tank sanitation.

Nolte said farmers pay a considerable amount for herbicides and its important they hit their targets and are used efficiently.

“Staying on target with herbicide applications is important for several reasons. First, it is good product stewardship and an EPA and label requirement,” Nolte said. “It also provides more consistent weed control and reduces risk for injury to neighboring crops.”

Off target movement most commonly comes from physical drift, but may also occur due to volatility or sprayer contamination. Nolte stressed that understanding each of these sources and how they cause off-target movement can help the applicator know which methods and practices will help keep them on target.

Common practices such as using correct nozzles, spraying during appropriate weather conditions and thorough spray system cleanout are just some of the methods described on nearly all herbicide labels.

“Regardless of what product you are using, most product labels will tell you to triple rinse,” he said. “Use a tank cleaner and remove end caps. Clean the tops and screens to make sure everything has been thoroughly rinsed and removed. Things accumulate over time, so it’s important to thoroughly clean these pieces of equipment.”

Nolte said even the smallest amounts of Dicamba can affect sensitive crops. “From vineyards to gardens, physical drift can severely harm these crops,” he said. “It’s important that we make sure our sprayers are performing efficiently and we are being good stewards.”

Earlier in the day, Dr. Clark Neely, AgriLife Extension small grains specialist in College Station, discussed a number of wheat varieties under testing. Overall, he said the Central Texas wheat crop yields should be close to average this year.

“We are anticipating 45 bushels to 50 bushels per acre in the Central Texas region,” he said. “I wouldn’t be surprised to see some 60 bushel yields in some areas. I would say 45-50 bushels per acre is fairly typical for this region of the Blacklands.”

The field day also featured a UAV demonstration by John Otwell, UAV product specialist with RDO Equipment in Pflugerville. Experts discussed a range of emerging UAV field uses.

“UAVs are an excellent tool to scout fields and monitor crop conditions,” Neely said. “You can tell when a crop is stressed, but we are not quite there yet in the ability to always determine what the cause actually is.”
Congratulations  

To all our candidates for advanced degrees!

**Agronomy**

**Sarah Olanrewaju**

Sarah is receiving her Ph.D. in Agronomy under the supervision of Dr. Amir Ibrahim. Her research focus was the development and evaluation of remote sensing techniques for assessing the growth and yield of winter wheat.

Originally from Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria, Sarah came to A&M after earning her Master of Science in Plant Science from West Texas A&M University.

She has begun interviewing for a position.

**Food Sciences & Technology**

**Audrey Girard**

Audrey is receiving her Ph.D. in Food Science and Technology under the supervision of Dr. Joseph Awika. Her dissertation was focused on condensed tannins interaction with and modification of wheat gluten proteins.

Originally from Hays, Kansas, Audrey earned her Bachelor of Science in Bakery Science and Management from Kansas State University in 2013.

Audrey plans to continue in her role as a Research Associate in the Cereal Quality Lab here at TAMU and would eventually like to become a professor.

**Molecular and Environmental Plant Science**

**Julien Charles Claude Besnard**

Julien is receiving his Ph.D. in MEPS under the supervision of Dr. Sakiko Okumoto. His research focus was on the identification and characterization of amino acid exporters in Arabidopsis thaliana.

Originally from Caen, France, he earned his Master of Science in Plant Physiology from the University of CAEN in France.

Julien has accepted a Postdoc position at the University of California - Davis.

**Brandon James Gerrish**

Brandon is receiving his Ph.D. in MEPS under the supervision of Dr. Amir Ibrahim and Dr. Clark Neely.

He grew up in Lebanon, Maine, and then came to Texas A&M where he earned his Bachelor of Science in Plant & Environmental Soil Science in 2014 and his Master of Science in Plant Breeding in 2015.

He will continue working for AgriLife Extension and is currently interviewing for positions.
**Plant Breeding**

**Nicholas Andrew Boerman**
Nicholas is receiving his Masters in Plant Breeding under the supervision of Dr. Bill Rooney focused on male gametocide in field grown sorghum. A native of Marcellus, Michigan, Nicholas earned his Bachelor of Science in Crop & Soil Science from Michigan State University in 2015. He is now working toward his Ph.D. in Plant Breeding at Iowa State University.

**Evan Baird Esau**
Evan is graduating from the SCSC Distance Education program with a Master of Science in Plant Breeding, earned under the supervision of Dr. Patricia Klein, Department of Horticulture. He will continue working at Driscoll's in California.

**Fabian Echeverria**
Fabian has earned his Ph.D. in Plant Breeding under the supervision of Dr. Seth Murray, focused on the effects of biotic stress on the quality of coffee. A native of Cartago, Costa Rica, he had received his Master of Science in Agriculture Sciences and Natural Resources. Fabian will be returning to Costa Rica where he will be a professor and researcher at the Instituto Tecnologico de Costa Rica.

**Wardah Khurshida Mustahsan**
Wardah is receiving her Master of Science in Plant Breeding under the supervision of Dr. Michael Thomson. Originally from Metairie, Louisiana, Wardah earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Xavier University in 2013. Wardah will now be pursuing her Ph.D. in Agronomy.
Soil Science

**Julieta Collazo**
Julieta is receiving her Master of Science in Soil Science under the supervision of Dr. Cristine Morgan.
She was raised in Dallas, Texas, and received her Bachelor of Science in Plant and Environmental Soil Science here at Texas A&M University.

**Chun-Chun Hsu**
Chun-Chun is receiving her Ph.D. in Soil Science under the supervision of Dr. Youjun Deng. Her dissertation was titled “Selecting and Modifying Smectites and Layered Double Hydroxides to bind Fumonisins B1, Ochratoxin A, Zearalenone and Deoxynivalenol”.
Originally from Yunlin, Taiwan, she received her Master of Science in Soil Science from the National Taiwan University in 2010.

**Candice Renee Medina**
Candice earned her Master of Science in Soil Science under the supervision of Dr. Haly Neely.
A native of San Antonio, Texas, she received her Bachelor of Science in Bioenvironmental Science here at Texas A&M.
She is looking for employment and looking for a Ph.D. position.

**Onder Ozal**
Onder is receiving his Master of Science in Soil Science under the supervision of Dr. Terry Gentry and Dr. Anil Somenahally.
Originally from Turkey, he earned his Bachelor of Science in Soil and Plant Nutrients from Suleyman Demirel University in 2011.
Onder will be returning to Turkey to work for the Republic of Turkey.
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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Carson Bohler</td>
<td>Turfgrass Science</td>
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<td>Kirstin Burnett</td>
<td>Double major ANSC and Turfgrass Science</td>
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<td>Alexandra Cleghorn</td>
<td>PSSC - Crops emphasis</td>
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<td>Lauren Cloud</td>
<td>Double major - PSSC and Agriculture Science</td>
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<td>Clarissa Conrad</td>
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<td>Charles Crandal</td>
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<td>Nathan Wleczyk</td>
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<td>Kade Womac</td>
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*PSSC - Plant and Environmental Soil Science
Students earning a Minor from the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences
May 11, 2018

Victoria Ayala
B.S. Bioenvironmental Science
Minor - Agronomy

Graham Borden
B.S. Agriculture Science
Minors-Agronomy & Horticulture

Hannah Kulak
B.S. Agriculture Science
Minors-Agronomy & Horticulture

Marvin Benitez
B.S. Bioenvironmental Science
Minor - Agronomy

Kindra Hlavinka
B.S. Agriculture Science
Minors-Agronomy & Horticulture

Lyric Lawrence
B.S. University Studies Ag Leadership
Minors-Agronomy & Sports Mgmt

Megan Mills
B.S. Animal Science
Minor - Agronomy

Caralie Brewer
Double major Bioenvironmental Science/ Wildlife & Fisheries Sci.
Minor-Environmental Soil Science

Brannick Sweetser
B.S. Agriculture Economics
Minors-Agronomy & Economics

Kasey Heath
B.S. Ag Comm & Journalism
Minor - Agronomy

Andrew Lee
B.S. Bioenvironmental Science
Minor-Environmental Soil Science

Victoria Riback
B.S. Agriculture Science
Minor - Agronomy

Colleen Weynand
B.S. Horticulture
Minor - Plant Breeding

Andrew Stanton
B.S. University Studies-Architecture
Minors-Environmental Soil Science, Sustainable Architecture & Planning

32nd Dr. O.D. Butler Forage Field Day scheduled for May 18

Mechanical and chemical yaupon control and a discussion of agricultural leases will highlight topics at the 32nd Dr. O.D. Butler Forage Field Day May 18 at the Camp Cooley Division of Circle X Land & Cattle Company.

The annual field day is named in memory of Dr. O.D. Butler, formerly an Associate Vice Chancellor for Agriculture and Renewable resources at Texas A&M University. (Photo by Beth Ann Luedeker)

The ranch is located at 4297 Camp Cooley Ranch Road near Franklin. The event is hosted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Brazos Area Hay Producers Association with support from Brazos, Burleson, Falls, Grimes, Leon, Limestone, Madison, Milam, Robertson and Washington counties.

Cost is $25. Registration begins at 8 a.m. and includes all handouts, lunch and refreshments. The program will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude at 4 p.m. Topics on the morning demonstration tour include: mechanical and chemical control of yaupon; discussion and demonstration of safely loading and hauling farm equipment; moving farm pesticides and equipment; safety concerns when attaching, detaching and operating farm equipment and safely using pesticide equipment; pasture, crop and hunting leases as well as oil and gas and water leases.

Afternoon topics include Department of Public Safety laws and regulations affecting farmers and ranchers, movement of pesticides and pesticide equipment.

Three continuing education units in the general category will be offered for Texas Department of Agriculture pesticide license holders.

Agriculture industry booths at the event will showcase their latest products and initiatives.

For more information, call the AgriLife Extension office in Robertson County at 979-828-4270 or the AgriLife Extension office in Brazos County at 979-823-0129.
Congratulations to Mahendra Bhandari who recently tied for second place in the poster competition at the McFadden Symposium in Brookings, South Dakota. His poster highlighted his research into assessing foliar disease in wheat through the use of ground and aerial remote sensing systems. Mahendra is a doctoral student under the supervision of Dr. Amir Ibrahim and Dr. Qingwu Xue.

Pictured are: Dr. David Wright, South Dakota State University Department of Agronomy, Horticulture and Crop Science Department Head (center) with the poster competition winners (l to r) Stacy Dreis, Bhandari, Wright, Navdeep Shingh and Jagdeep Singh Sidhu.

Aniruddha Maity has been selected to be a member of the Operation Student Connection team at the inaugural Policy & Leadership Development Conference of the American Seed Trade Association. He will also present a poster on his research on the diversity in seed and plant morphology of ryegrass (Lolium spp.) accessions in Texas.

The conference, which will be held June 8-13 in Washington D.C. during the ASTA annual convention, will bring together all sectors of the seed industry for an opportunity to meet with lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

Maity is a doctoral plant breeding student under the supervision of Dr. Muthu Bagavathiannan.

Our extended soil and crop sciences family is growing!

At 11:45 a.m. on April 27, Soil and Crop Sciences Business Administrator Jim Lukeman and his wife, Robbie (Animal Science Business Administrator) welcomed their fifth grandchild, Abigail Pisk. She is the first child for the Lukeman’s daughter, Jamie, and her husband, Aaron.

Abigail weighed 8 lb 13 oz and was 21 inches tall.

Congratulations to Dr. William “Bill” Rooney who was recognized for his outstanding service to the sorghum industry during the Sorghum Improvement Conference of North America in St. Louis, MO, earlier this year. He was recognized for his contributions through research.

Dr. Rooney has specialized in sorghum breeding and genetics since joining the soil and crop sciences faculty at TAMU in 1995.

With his primary focus on the productivity and profitability of sorghum as a grain, forage and bioenergy crop, Rooney’s research has had a direct impact on the sorghum industry. In addition, he has mentored and taught many young sorghum breeders who have also made a positive impact on the sorghum industry.
Three soil and crop sciences students, Savanna Shelnutt, Caitlyn Lakey and Nicole Shigley, have been named as Golden Opportunity Scholars for 2018-19 by the American Society of Agronomy.

All are working toward a Bachelor of Science degree in Plant and Environmental Soil Science.

Savanna, a junior, is originally from Montgomery, AL, but her family moved to Garland, TX, when she was in high school. After completing her Bachelor of Science degree she plans to seek a higher degree focused on sustainable agriculture, and find a career in international agriculture.

A native of Porter, TX, Caitlin is also finishing her junior year. After completing her Bachelor of Science next spring, she plans to continue on with graduate school seeking an advanced degree in plant breeding.

The Golden Opportunities Scholars program is sponsored by the ASA, Crop Science Society of America and Soil Science Society of America. According to the ASA website, the program is designed to develop the next generation of leaders in agronomy, crops, soils and environmental science professionals. Scholars are mentored by a society professional with similar interests and career goals, supported financially in their studies and for travel to the annual meetings. They will also receive financial support to attend Congressional Visits Day in Washington D.C.

Students from across the world are considered for this program.

A Texas Watershed Steward workshop on water quality related to Big Elm Creek will be held from 8 a.m.-noon May 15 at the Yards of Cameron, 301 Adams Ave. in Cameron.

“This training is designed to help watershed residents improve and protect their water resources by becoming involved in local watershed protection and management activities,” said Michael Kuitu, AgriLife Extension program specialist and coordinator for the Texas Watershed Steward program, College Station.

Kuitu said the workshop will include an overview of water quality and watershed management in Texas, but will primarily focus on area water quality issues, including current efforts to help improve Big Elm Creek.

For more information on the Texas Watershed Steward program and to preregister, go to the website or contact Kuitu at 979-862-4457, mkuitu@tamu.edu.
In spite of a cold front that blew in, volunteers came out in force for the recent annual Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Clean Up, coordinated by the Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Partnership, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority.

The cleanup is part of implementation efforts for the area’s watershed protection plan, coordinators said. Geronimo Creek and its tributary Alligator Creek flow through Comal and Guadalupe counties. Both creeks were identified for watershed protection plan development due to elevated levels of bacteria and concerns about high levels of nitrogen, as reported in the Texas Water Quality Inventory published by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

“This was our sixth annual cleanup and it was a huge success despite the cold weather,” said Ward Ling, AgriLife Extension coordinator for Geronimo and Alligator creeks watersheds. “We had 114 volunteers at this event who worked to remove more than 1,800 pounds of trash and debris from the creeks and surrounding areas.”

“Workers were on hand to provide information to volunteers about water quality issues in the creeks and to offer safety information such as helping volunteers identify areas where poison ivy might be growing,” he said. “Miles of roadway and creek banks were made litter-free by adults, teenagers and children who donated their time to make a difference in the way the area looks, as well as how they feel about it.”

Ling said many teams from area businesses, industry and churches returned for this year’s cleanup and new teams were added.

“Waste Connections and the city of New Braunfels donated disposal and recycling services for trash collected during the event,” he noted. “Over the years, we have learned new ways to streamline the event and make it better, and we’re still learning.”

Ling said this year volunteers focused on 10 locations amounting to 11 miles of roadway and creek banks around Geronimo and Alligator creeks.

“Volunteers removed 89 bags of trash, four tires, several wooden pallets, automotive batteries, mattresses and debris,” he said. “Some even found money, mostly dollar bills hidden among the litter. But one group found a $100 bill, which was a good payoff for coming out to work in the chilly morning wind.”

Event sponsors included Alamo Group, Becker’s Feed & Fertilizer, the city of New Braunfels, Continental Corporation, Crossroads Veterinary Hospital, Ehlers’ Tree Farm, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, Guadalupe County Groundwater Conservation District, KWED, Niagara LLC, Progressive Waste Solutions, Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church, the Irma Lewis Seguin Outdoor Learning Center and Thrivent Financial.

For more information, contact Ling at 979-845-6980 or wling@tamu.edu or go to http://www.geronimocreek.org/.

Funding for the effort was provided through a federal Clean Water Act nonpoint source grant administered by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
We had visitors!

Former student Dr. Humberto Reyes-Valdes, who is now a professor at Universidad Autonoma Agraria Antonio narro in Saltillo, Mexico, brought a contingent of his graduate students for a two day visit to TAMU.

Reyes-Valdes, who worked in Dr. David Stelly’s lab while working on his Ph.D. in genetics, was invited to speak to the Plant Breeding Circle during his visit.

Dr. Stelly’s current Post Doc, Robert Vaughn, took the students on a tour of the greenhouses where he visited with them about cotton cytogenetic stocks and genotyping.

Johnny Hackett, AgScience instructor at Elsik High School in the Alief Independent School District, brought students in his Horticulture and Landscape Design class to visit Texas A&M University’s Department of Soil and Crop Science and Department of Horticulture.

Approximately twenty students visited Scotts Facility for Turfgrass and Landscape Research to discuss college and job opportunities in those fields.

Dr. Ben Wherley and graduate students Garrett Flores and Baoxin “Bob” Chang showed the students ongoing research and some of the specialized equipment used, and discussed job possibilities in the turfgrass industry.

Members of the TAMU College of Agriculture Development Council took a field trip out to the research fields in the Brazos bottom for presentations on the use of unmanned air and ground vehicles in corn and wheat research.

Dr. Seth Murray explained the use of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), more commonly referred to as drones, and unmanned ground vehicles in corn research.

Dr. Amir Ibrahim, seen on the cover, explained that data can be collected much more quickly with the technology than by hand.
May
11 - College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Graduation - 9:00 a.m.
16 - Midterm P&T committee meeting, 1:30
16-17 - Dow Future of Turf Conference - Scotts Turfgrass Facility
18 - O.D. Butler Forage Field Day - Camp Cooley Ranch, Franklin, TX
22 - R. C. Potts Room Naming Event - Scotts Turfgrass Facility
24 - Lone Star Healthy Streams Workshop - Seguin  contact: Ward Ling

June
8-13 - American Seed Trade Association Annual Meeting - Washington D.C.
15 - The Gardens Grand Opening
19 - Stiles Farm Field Day
26 - Eagle Lake Rice Field Day

July
12 - Beaumont Rice Field Day
19 - USDA SCRI Turf Group summer meeting - Scotts facility, College Station

Save the Date
August 1-2 - Small Grain Workers Meeting - College Station
August 13 - Fall semester begins
August 17 - Retirement Celebration - Dr. Richard White
August 20 - Fall P&T packets due
Sept. 4 - P&T Committee meeting