

# 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society Meeting



*Achieving Landscape-level Management in a Private  
Land State*

**February 22-24, 2023**

Houston, Texas

## **Discussion Panel on Equitable Access to the Outdoors**

**Post Oak Ballroom, 6:00 pm, Wednesday February 22, 2023**

**Jaime Gonzalez**



Jaime González, M.Ed. Healthy Communities Director, The Nature Conservancy in Texas Jaime González is an award-winning conservationist, educator, communicator, and network who works with community partners to co-create healthier, more climate ready, more equitable, and wildlife-rich places using nature-based solutions.

Mr. González earned a M.Ed. in Curriculum & Instruction-Science Education and a B.S. in Biology from the University of Houston.

**Immanuel Salas**



While completing a Masters in Recreation Administration at Texas State University, Immanuel worked for TPWD's Texas Outdoor Family Program; outfitting and teaching families and community partner organizations to camp and recreate in parks. Immanuel became the North Texas Community Archery Specialist, spending two years training and certifying community, school and parks & recreation leaders as USA Archery and National Archery in Schools Program

instructors before becoming TPWD's first R3 Coordinator for Hunting and Shooting Sports. In this role he supports and expands the efforts to recruit, retain and reactivate participants in these activities. Regardless of the position, Immanuel's purpose is to help connect all people to their community, natural resources, and themselves through meaningful pursuits in the outdoors.

### **Sarah Coles**



Sarah Coles is the Executive Director of the Texas Children in Nature Network. Sarah has been working within the informal education and nature fields for the last seventeen years. Sarah's career has taken her from being in the classroom to moving to informal education and working at various institutions across the country. While working at an institution focusing on EcoHistory (the study of how humans have adapted and influenced their environment), she found her passion for seeing students, children and families spend time in nature. She has worked in Texas in both the museum and nature center environments, starting her work with TCiNN as a regional leader in the Coastal Bend area and has been the Executive Director of the organization since 2019.

Sarah also serves on the board of the Informal Science Education Association of Texas.

### **Neal Wilkins**



Neal Wilkins is President and CEO of the East Foundation, where he is responsible for leading its mission of promoting land stewardship through ranching, science, and education.

Headquartered in San Antonio, the East Foundation owns and operates about 217,000 acres of

South Texas ranchland where scientists and managers work together for integrating rangeland management, wildlife conservation, and livestock production systems.

Neal has over 30 years of experience in research and conservation across the private lands of Texas, Tennessee, Florida, Washington, New Zealand, and Oregon. His primary focus has been habitat management and conservation of land, water, and wildlife resources on native rangelands and commercial forestland. His work integrates science, management, policy, and economics.

Before joining the East Foundation in 2012, Neal was a Professor and Director of the Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources and Texas Water Resources Institute. In these roles he led more than 45 scientists and professional staff. Prior to 2006, Neal was statewide Program Leader for Wildlife and Fisheries at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Before becoming Texas A&M faculty in 1998, he directed wildlife and fisheries programs for Port Blakely, a 150,000-acre family-owned forestry company headquartered in the U.S. Pacific Northwest.

Neal has a Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology from University of Florida, M.S. in Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences from Texas A&M University, and B.S. in Forestry from Stephen F. Austin State University. He is a director and former Vice-President of Texas Wildlife Association. He is on the Board of Texan-by-Nature, South Texas Property Rights Association, and the Management Council for the King Ranch® Institute for Ranch Management. He is also a Professional Member of the Boone & Crockett Club. He and his wife Sandra have two grown children, Ashley and Matt.

### **Joseph B.C. Fitzsimons**



Joseph B.C. Fitzsimons is a rancher, conservationist, and natural resource lawyer. His interest in conservation began as a young man working on his family's San Pedro Ranch. At the age of seventeen he joined Texas Parks and Wildlife as a wildlife intern at Black Gap Wildlife Management Area. Mr. Fitzsimons attended college in Oregon at Lewis and Clark, where he continued his outdoor interests. After working on ranches in the American West and South

America, he returned to Texas for law school at the University of Texas graduating in 1985. Joseph and his wife Blair have dedicated their professional and private lives to land and wildlife conservation. Blair and Joseph raised their three children on the family's San Pedro Ranch. Blair was the founding CEO of the Texas Agricultural Land Trust, now the largest land trust by acreage in Texas. Her work has conserved hundreds of thousands of acres of open space working lands that will be perpetually protected for agriculture and wildlife. In 2009 the Fitzsimons and Howard family families dedicated a perpetual conservation easement on the San Pedro Ranch to the Texas Agricultural Land Trust.

Joseph continued his wildlife conservation work as a Texas Parks and Wildlife Commissioner and later Chairman of the Commission. He is the co-founder of the Texas Coalition for State Parks which lobbied successfully for the constitutional dedication of sporting goods tax revenue to the support of the Texas State Parks. Fitzsimons is the co-founder of the law firm Uhl Fitzsimons, where he represents land and mineral owners in the areas of energy, water and conservation law.

Blair and Joseph and their family ranch have received several conservation awards for their work over the past 25 years. Blair currently serves on the nationwide Land Trust Alliance board of directors. Joseph currently serves on the Partnership of Rangeland Trusts board of directors and as chairman of the Texas Agricultural Land Trust Foundation. Blair and Joseph live on the San Pedro Ranch in Dimmit and Maverick Counties Texas. They have three grown children all involved in conservation, and three grandchildren (soon to be four!) who will be the fifth generation on the San Pedro.