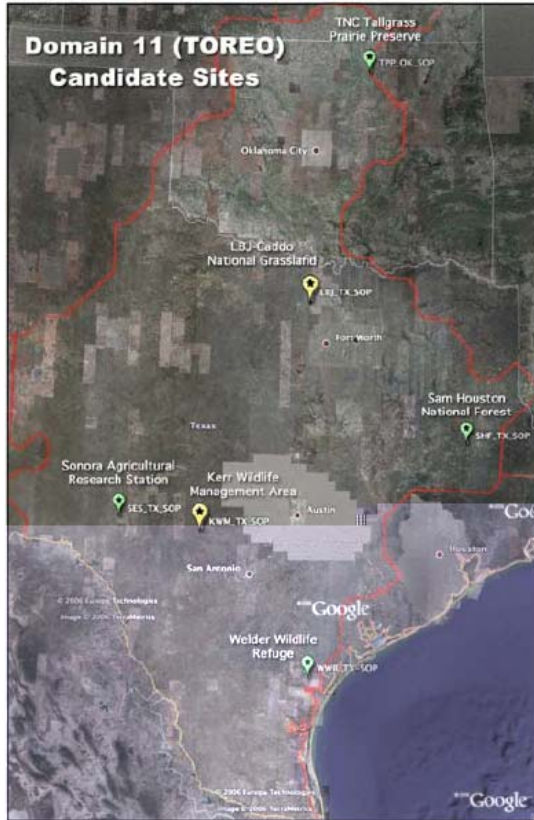


Welder Wildlife Refuge (WWR): Southern Plains Domain

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Web page: <http://www.welderwildlife.org/>

Location within Domain:



History: The Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation, established in 1954, supports operation of the refuge. The WWR headquarters and offices are located on a 3545 ha section of wildland 55 km northwest of Corpus Christi, Texas, in the Coastal Bend region. The Foundation's research and educational priorities are in the field of wildlife management and conservation and closely related disciplines. The majority of research is accomplished through a generously supported graduate student research program. WWR has a long history of research cooperation with Texas, as well as other, universities.

Key Characteristics: This region comprises the southernmost portion of the tallgrass prairie region (gulf or coastal prairie). It is bordered to the south by gulf coast marshes, to the north by oak savanna, and to the west by southern Texas plains (diverse shrubland ecosystem). The climate borders on being subtropical with a frost free period of 335 days/yr. The region is classified as semiarid even though long-term mean precipitation is 775 mm/yr because

constant high temperature promotes evapotranspiration. In the absence of frequent fire, the region has been encroached by mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) and blackbrush (*Acacia rigidula*) and associated shrub species.

Existing Structure: The WWR represents one of the few high quality natural areas within a domain that is dominated by private land ownership. The site provides documented land use patterns, well characterized ecological characteristics (flora, fauna, and climatic records, including extensive specimen collections). WWR has an extensive educational program including, school and college programs, conservation workshops, scientific education programs, symposia, and field days. This site provides an effective southern location for the north-south temperature gradients that characterizes the domain climate. WWR is located in a sparsely populated region, but it is readily accessible from Corpus Christi. The site is secured by foundation ownership and public access is carefully regulated.

Facilities: The WWR has a well developed infrastructure including an administrative headquarters, visitor/educational center, all weather road system, modern utilities, dormitory, laboratories, shop facilities, and extensive specimen collections.