

Internal and External User Guidelines

La Copita Demonstration Ranch and Research Area

Department of Rangeland, Wildlife and Fisheries Management

Contact Bethany Boggan (bethany.boggan@ag.tamu.edu) with questions.

The La Copita Demonstration Ranch and Research Area is a 2,726 acre tract of native rangeland located in western Jim Wells County, about 40 miles west of Corpus Christi, Texas, and approximately 15 miles south and west of Alice. La Copita is managed by the Department of Rangeland, Wildlife, and Fisheries Management (RWF). The mission of La Copita is to integrate ranching with wildlife and rangeland management to enhance the property and provide opportunities for applied research and outreach that promotes and demonstrates implementation of responsible use land management practices.

- The primary area of La Copita is available for use upon request for teaching, research and outreach. The secondary area is available on a case-by-case basis. If a specific purpose presents itself for this area, please contact the property manager to discuss.

To ensure all have adequate access to the property, please follow the below rules. Contact La Copita property manager (bethany.boggan@ag.tamu.edu) with questions.

1. Contact the property manager at least 2 weeks in advance of necessary access the La Copita property or facility use. The appropriate forms will be provided to schedule use of property.
2. Access will be granted on a first-come, first-serve basis. Access may be denied if use conflicts with other activities. Failure to comply with these rules can result in temporary or permanent termination or access.
3. Coordinate with property manager for combination lock details if access is required.
4. Speed limit on property is 15 mph. Be mindful of other visitors and heavy equipment while traveling throughout the property.
5. Driving off road is prohibited to preserve sensitive species, habitat and research on property.
6. Take particular care when on property not to destroy or disturb teaching or research activities.
7. Disturbance of landscape, soil and vegetation should be kept to a minimum to ensure no negative impacts to La Copita. Some disturbance is necessary for teaching or research purposes (ex. sampling of soil, water, plants; removal of branches for trail camera placement) but please keep those actions to a minimum. Any large-scale alteration should be coordinated with the property manager.
8. Users are required to remove all equipment and materials on property upon completion of use. This includes but is not limited to flagging, fencing, stakes, trash, etc. The La Copita manager will provide a garbage can at the office building for trash disposal.
9. Smoking at La Copita is strictly forbidden.

TEACHING AND EXTERNAL USE

1. On-site instructors should coordinate with the property manager on areas of use and if you need special access to bring in equipment that is heavy to carry.
2. Driving off road is prohibited to ensure your activity does not negatively impact any existing activities or research on property, unless approved by property manager.

RESEARCH

1. All research requests at La Copita must include a research proposal submitted at least 2 weeks before the anticipated start date of the project. Before research may commence, the proposal must be reviewed and approved by the property manager. All student research requests, for both undergraduate and graduate students, must include a long-form research proposal (see below) that has been approved by a faculty member with principal investigator (PI) status at Texas A&M University. Research requests led by faculty may include either a long- form or short-form proposal depending on the scope of the work. Large-scale and long-term projects require a long-form research proposal, pilot projects (short-term, small-scale) only require a short- form proposal.
2. Research proposal guidelines are as follows:
 - Long-form research proposals must include:
 - 1) title, 2) summary/abstract, 3) introduction, including statements of key objectives and hypotheses to be tested, 4) methods, including the proposed project dates, 5) statement of expected impacts to La Copita, including a map of the area to be used, 6) documentation of approvals (i.e., Animal Use Protocol, Institutional Review Board) for projects involving animal or human subjects, 7) contact information for student and PI, and 8) signature of PI, attesting to their approval of the proposal.
 - Short-form research proposal (small scope, pilot projects only) should include:
 - 1) brief statement of objectives, 2) methods, 3) contact information, and 4) statement on impact to La Copita, including information on the locations to be used.
3. Once approved, researchers must provide property manager with:
 - 1) specific location of research activities, 2) list of materials placed, 3) approximate visit date/times and 4) timeline for research.
4. All researchers must sign a La Copita liability form.
5. Speed limit on the main roads is 15 mph.
6. During wet weather and soft ground, ATV/UTVs is limited to all-weather roads/trails. Coordinate with property manager prior to using non-all-weather roads/trails during wet periods.
7. Following completion of research, equipment must be removed from property.
8. Research finding must be provided to La Copita property manager to help further inform on property management.
9. Acknowledgement of La Copita and TAMU Department of Rangeland, Wildlife and Fisheries Management is required on any presentations and publications that uses data collected from La Copita.