

A FLORIDA STATE GRASS?

The Florida Section of the Society for Range Management, co-chaired by grasses expert Lew Yarlett, passed the following resolution at their recent meeting at Tall Timbers,

requesting that it be published in **The Palmetto**, since range management is a science of managing native vegetation, particularly native grasses.

Whereas it appears that a majority of the states of the United States of America having significant rangeland area have by legislative enactment chosen a particular grass to be known as a state grass; and

Whereas the State of Florida has significant land area classified as rangeland; and

Whereas Florida's rangelands play a vital part in the quality of life and welfare of all Floridians; and

Whereas rangelands enhance water quality, and provide wildlife habitat, forage resources, and natural landscape beauty; and

Whereas the State of Florida has yet to define a native grass as Florida's state grass; therefore

Be it resolved that the Society for Range Management, Florida Section, submit Lopsided Indiangrass, "wildoats," *Sorghastrum secundum*, as a worthy candidate, and urge the Florida legislature to act on said grass such that it may be known as Florida's State Grass.

Identification

Lopsided Indiangrass, *Sorghastrum secundum*, is known as "wildoats" by many ranchers. A warm season perennial bunchgrass, readily recognized in September and October by the golden brown panicle with seed appearing on one side. Seed stalks 3-6 feet tall. Base of culms felty-pubescent. *Ligule a membrane 1/4" to 1/2" long, pointed.* Blades flat 1/4" to 1/2" wide, 12" to 24" long. Sheaths rounded. Another species, *Sorghastrum nutans*, with long rhizomes, occurs very infrequently.

Distribution and Site Adaptation

Lopsided Indiangrass is distributed throughout Florida, Southern Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. It is part of the total plant community in North and South Florida flatwoods, cabbage palm flatwoods, longleaf pine-turkey oak hills, mixed hardwood and pine hammocks, and upland hardwood hammocks.

