

Trinity Neches Forest Landowner Association Newsletter

Quarter I 2016

Next Meeting

Date: April 16, 2016

Time: 8:30 am

Place: SFA College of Forestry (see attachments)

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Don't forget to inspect your firelines before the beginning of the spring prescribed burning season!!



Six Reasons Thinning is Good for the Forest

Forest2Market

www.forest2market.com

Thinning is an important silvicultural practice that increases the growth potential of the forest as well as the return on investment with higher-vigor and higher-value trees.

Thinning is also a practice that improves the overall health of the forest by mitigating disease and insect susceptibility while minimizing catastrophic fire risk. An unmanaged forest is an unhealthy forest, as well as a potentially dangerous tinderbox of wildfire fuel.



Increased Growth

Private landowners have demonstrated repeatedly that properly managed, working forests have both economic and ecological benefits. Regular thinnings provide an improved environment for maximizing a site's growth potential, which results in larger, healthier trees and more valuable timber. As a silvicultural practice, thinning allows for the continued growth of the healthiest preferred species within a timber stand while removing the suppressed, diseased and low-vigor trees that will impede the growth of the entire stand. Many of the low-vigor trees in such stands continue to grow at a reduced rate until competition claims them or they are removed via thinning. An integral piece of properly managing the forest is the removal of these trees, which can also serve as unnecessary fuel load during a fire event.

Improved Utilization

While the economic benefits of regularly removing suppressed and dying trees are minimal, intermediate thinnings do pay for themselves and provide the economic advantage of improving the health of the entire timber stand. Arranged thinnings during growth cycles will yield wood that can be utilized for pulp, chip or pellet operations. Again, while the economic gain may be minimal in this case, the health of the overall stand is improved and thus, the value of the overall stand increases.

Reduced Vulnerability to Disease and Insects

Maintaining proper stand density is essential to reducing tree damage from both disease and insects. As a rule, healthy trees are less susceptible to insect infestation than unhealthy ones. For example, the Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) is the most harmful insect to forests in the US South—an area with a high proportion of pines. The University of Georgia Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health notes that, "Uninfested trees are generally larger, have thicker bark, greater crown/bole ratios, larger crowns, and faster growth rates, and occur in less dense stands. The infested trees were usually located in heavily stocked stands that were under stress."

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Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

***Shane Harrington, Texas A&M Forest Service
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As the owner of forested property, you may qualify for assistance under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) which is a conservation assistance program administered by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). If you are interested or your management plans include conserving soil and water resources through reforestation and/or implementing a variety of forest management practices, EQIP can assist you in accomplishing your management needs. The EQIP program provides financial and technical assistance for applying conservation activities such as reforestation (pines and hardwoods), site preparation, herbicide application, prescribed burning, forest stand improvement and firebreak establishment on your forestland.

There are certain requirements that must be met by a landowner in order to qualify, but most landowners easily meet these requirements. One requirement that all landowners must meet is that the forestland that is to be enrolled must have a written forest management plan. Having a written forest management plan demonstrates the landowner is committed to long term conservation and the sustainability of their forestland. Texas A&M Forest Service can assist landowners in developing a written management plan or Forest Stewardship Plan for your property and help determine which conservation practices should be applied for. The plan incorporates short and long-term goals set by the landowner and sets a path for achieving those goals.

Landowners can file for assistance through their local NRCS office in the county in which the forested property is located. Applications can be submitted year round but landowners should apply early so that the proper paperwork can be signed off on not delaying their management activities such as reforestation.

Program Description:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- Program administered by NRCS; sign up at local NRCS office
- Purpose of program is to install and maintain conservation practices that sustain fiber production while enhancing soil, water and related natural resources, and energy conservation
- Eligible lands include non-industrial private forestland
- Contract length is for a minimum of one year and up to a maximum of ten years
- Continuous sign-up throughout the year
- Provides up to 50% cost share assistance for implementing conservation practices and 90% cost share for limited resource or socially disadvantaged landowners
- Program payment cap of \$450,000 per landowner

More information on eligibility and available conservation practices can be found by visiting your local NRCS or TFS office or <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/tx/programs/financial/eqip/>

Websites of Interest



Texas A&M Forest Service Information Portal

<http://www.texasforestinfo.com>

National Timber Tax Website

<http://www.timbertax.org/>

Become a TFA Member Today!!!

<http://texasforestry.org>

The Importance of Forests to Water Resources – Part 1 of 4

Hughes Simpson, Texas A&M Forest Service

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Over 50 percent of the nation's freshwater resources originate from forests that cover about one-third of the United States. Forests provide a number of essential economic, social, and environmental functions in addition to supplying the cleanest water of any land use. These lands absorb rainfall, refill groundwater aquifers, slow and filter stormwater runoff, reduce floods, and maintain watershed stability and resilience. A 2013 report by Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) estimates watershed services provided by Texas forests are valued at \$13.2 billion annually.

In an effort to identify and highlight the most important lands to surface drinking water across the nation, the United States Forest Service (USFS) developed the *Forests to Faucets* project. This interactive, web-based Geographic Information System tool maps critical forestlands, documents the role they play in protecting water supplies, and models the extent to which these lands are threatened. TFS is currently refining this national analysis to provide higher resolution for priority areas throughout the state.

While the benefits of forests are numerous, these lands are constantly at risk. Population growth throughout the state is expected to explode over the next 50 years, leading to significant changes in land use throughout the state. The *Southern Forest Futures Project*, conducted by the USFS, forecasts that over 1 million acres of forestland will be lost to development and urban sprawl in Texas.

Not only will this forecasted population growth result in increased water demands, it will also lead to increases in impervious cover in areas where forestlands occurred, resulting in impacts to water quality and supply. This growth will not be spread evenly throughout the region, being concentrated near population centers and major travel corridors.

Several municipalities and water management organizations have already recognized the important role forests play in supplying fresh drinking water, and as such, have taken action to conserve these critical landscapes. The most prominent example of this is the *New York City Watershed Project*, in which city leaders decided in the early 1990s to begin conserving the forestlands in Upstate New York where their source water originated rather than building a new water filtration facility, as would have been required by the *Safe Drinking Water Act*. This facility would have cost an estimated \$6 billion upfront to construct and \$250 million annually for maintenance. By spending approximately \$167 million annually to purchase forestland, conservation easements, and encourage landowners to implement sustainable management practices, New York City has been able to comply with the legislation at a fraction of the cost. Water quality monitoring over the last 20 years has demonstrated the success of this project. Approaches such as this are currently being explored for application in the South.

In addition to threats from urbanization, forests also may become more susceptible to insect, disease, invasive species, wildfire, and natural disasters in the future that will affect watershed function. The Southern Pine Beetle, Emerald Ash Borer, and other pests have the potential to cause widespread mortality and changes to species composition. To counteract this, sustainable forest management can improve health and vigor, improving forest resilience, and enabling these lands to continue providing watershed services.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are the principle means by which the forest sector protects water resources through sustainable land management. These non-regulatory conservation practices are designed to provide an economical way of protecting soil and water resources, two key elements necessary for growing a healthy, sustainable, and productive forest. Examples include leaving buffer zones of trees next

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Texas Longleaf Conservation Assistance Program
Texas A&M Forest Service
www.tfsweb.tamu.edu/longleaf

Private landowners in Hardin, Jasper, Newton, Polk and Tyler counties may now apply for funding to help sustain, enhance and restore longleaf pine on their property. Funding is available through the Forestland Stewards Initiative to assist landowners with costs associated with site preparation, tree planting, prescribed burning and forest stand improvement activities (e.g. mid rotation herbicide application, mulching, etc.). As part of this initiative, the Texas Longleaf Pine Implementation Team plans to restore 1,000 acres of longleaf while enhancing almost 5,000 acres of existing longleaf in the Big Thicket area of Southeast Texas. Landowners interested in restoring and/or enhancing longleaf pine on their property can apply for financial assistance at www.tfsweb.tamu.edu/longleaf or by contacting their local Texas A&M Forest Service office or by calling (979) 458-6650. The Forestland Stewards Initiative is a partnership between the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, International Paper and United States Department of Agriculture.

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to streams, properly sizing and installing culverts or temporary bridges to cross waterways, establishing grass on forest roads to prevent erosion, and many other practices that have been tested and proven effective over the years. TFS, working cooperatively with numerous organizations, manages the forestry BMP program in Texas.

Given the challenges that water providers, watershed managers, and forest landowners will face in the future, it will be essential that their interdependence be better understood and the fundamental importance of forests for each of these acknowledged. The vast majority (almost 95%) of Texas forests are privately owned, so their future lies in the hands of individuals and corporations. Motivating them to take actions beneficial for water resources will require creative thought and investment.

Market Report, Sept./Oct., 2015



Product	Statewide Ave. Price		Previous Ave. Price		Price/Ton Difference
	Weight	Volume	Weight	Volume	
Pine-Sawlogs	\$30.14/ton	\$241.16/mbf	\$29.80/ton	\$231.66/mbf	+1%
Pine-Pulpwood	\$8.92/ton	\$24.04/cord	\$8.94/ton	\$24.07/cord	-0%
Pine-Chip'n'Saw	\$12.68/ton	\$34.24/cord	\$14.16/ton	\$38.22/cord	-10%
Mixed Hardwood-Sawlogs	\$40.20/ton	\$372.43/mbf	\$40.16/ton	\$371.76/mbf	+0%
Hardwood-Pulpwood	\$15.05/ton	\$42.15/cord	\$17.78/ton	\$49.78/cord	-15%

Texas Timber Price Trends is a bimonthly publication reporting average prices paid for standing timber in Texas. *This report is intended only as a guide to general price levels.* It should not be used to judge the fair market value of a specific timber sale, which may vary considerably due to many factors. It is recommended that you use the services of a professional consulting forester in managing any timber sale. Important factors affecting timber prices include the type, quality and volume of timber for sale, accessibility, distance to mills/markets, weather conditions, economy/market conditions, who is handling the sale or is buying the timber, and contract requirements by the landowner. Hard copies of this publication can be purchased by contacting Dawn Spencer at (979)458-6630. The complete Texas Timber Price Trends can be viewed at <http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=145>.

Cont. Thinning...

While other factors can also impact the health of a stand, “high stand density was the most important factor predisposing stands to SPB attack.”

Such pests are not only limited to pine trees in the US South; the US West and British Columbia (BC) are still reeling from a Mountain Pine Beetle outbreak that began in the early 1990s. This insect has since killed roughly 50% of the total volume of commercial pine in the province of BC.

Loblolly and slash pine in the US South are particularly susceptible to certain diseases that flourish in unmanaged forests. Annosum root rot is the most common of these diseases and once a tree in the stand becomes infected, the disease spreads to adjacent trees through root contact. In a dense forest, the root systems of the trees are intertwined providing an easy pathway for this disease to spread. As these systems deteriorate, the trees die and gradually fall over due to lack of support.

Genetic Enhancement

Genetic enhancement can also be achieved through proper and regular thinning. Trees removed in thinnings are usually inferior, diseased or have objectionable shape, which is sometimes due to genetics. By removing such trees early and prior to forest regeneration, the landowner or land manager can minimize the number of trees with undesirable traits in a stand.

Environmental Benefits

Thinnings will alter the environment of the forest, which is a good thing. Thinnings allow the penetration of light, which increases the temperature of soil as well as the availability of moisture and nutrients within the soil. With these changes, forest vegetation flourishes and produces a more favorable habitat for wildlife. Thinnings will invariably reduce the canopy of the forest, which allows a greater amount of rainwater to reach the forest floor as well.

Fire Prevention

Despite the benefits of thinning listed above, opponents typically rely on the same, haggard argument that is not rooted in environmental science or best forest management practices. These same opponents typically believe that “letting nature take its course” is the preferred method of managing our forests, and they generally eschew any economic gain that might result from forest management and the sale of timber. While Mother Nature has indeed used fire to control forest growth for eons, managing the damage and mitigating the risk that extreme wildfires pose to communities is a challenge that must be addressed. The best available science (and experience) tells us that proper thinnings and controlled burns are the most effective ways to minimize fire exposure.

As the American Forest Foundation (AFF) recently noted, “The good news comes in research showing that managing western forests through thinning and prescribed burns can reduce the impact of these fires. A recent study by The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service showed that a 12,000-acre ‘doughnut hole’ within the Carlton Complex fire zone remained untouched by the inferno. The area survived, the researchers believe, because it had been previously thinned and burned. They say that 9.5 million acres of Washington and Oregon forests would benefit from the same management that protected the doughnut hole.”

The AFF continues, “In Arizona, thinned forests and prescribed burns helped stop the huge 2011 Wallow Fire before it reached homes, according to ecologist Morris Johnson of the Pacific Wildland Fire Science Laboratory. ‘As it hit the thinning treatment there’s a transition in the fire type. It went from an active crown fire down to a passive crown fire,’ Johnson says.”

Calendar of Events

April 2, 2016 – Texas Wildlife and Woodland Expo, Lone Star College (Montgomery Campus), Conroe, TX 10:00 A.M. till 4:00 P.M.

April 16, 2016 – Trinity Neches Forest Landowner Association Spring Meeting, Arthur Temple College of Forestry, Stephen F. Austin State University (see attachments)

October 26-28, 2016 – Texas Forestry Association Annual Meeting, LaTorretta Resort on Lake Conroe.

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