

FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

Timber ◇ Wildlife ◇ Water ◇ Soil ◇ Best Management Practices ◇ Forest Health ◇ Recreation ◇ Aesthetics

TEXAS STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

from Texas Forest Service website

For more information:

- <http://txforestservicetamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=6598>

The size and diversity of the great state of Texas bring many challenges in managing the forest and tree resources of the state. Many of the issues and challenges, and thus opportunities, result from these characteristics. The rapidly increasing population is placing an unprecedented demand on Texas forests, whether for wood and paper products, wildlife habitat, clean water, or 10-acre ranchettes. As urban sprawl expands into the forest and other rural areas, less area becomes available for providing the traditional benefits of these lands. These challenges are not unique to Texas. In fact, the changes that create these challenges are occurring in every state in the nation.

Significant threats to forests, such as insects and diseases, catastrophic fire, and loss of critical forested landscapes to development, coupled with pressure placed on local economies by the increasingly global nature of the forest products industry, point to the need for more progressive strategies for conserving forest resources.

In 2008, the USDA Forest Service implemented a "Redesigned" State and Private Forestry (S&PF) program. It was conceived in response to the combined impacts of increasing pressure on the nation's forests and decreasing S&PF resources and funds. The 2008 Farm Bill requires each state to analyze its forest conditions and trends and delineate priority rural and urban forest landscapes. From this state assessment, a statewide forest resource strategy, or response plan, will be developed that will be the basis for formulating competitive proposals for S&PF funds.

At a minimum, statewide assessments of forest resources will:

- Describe forest conditions on all ownerships in the state
- Identify forest-related benefits and services
- Identify threats to the forest resources
- Highlight issues and trends of concern as well as opportunities for action
- Delineate high priority forest landscapes to be addressed
- Be geospatially based

The **Texas Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources** was developed around the issues facing the state's forest and tree resources rather than being based on the forest resources themselves. With input from interested stakeholders from across the state representing the diverse interests of the forest resource, Texas Forest Service program leaders identified six primary issues for the rural and urban forests of the state:

1. Population Growth and Urbanization
2. Central TX Woodlands Conservation
3. Sustainability of Forest Resources in East Texas
4. Water Quality and Quantity
5. Wildfire and Public Safety
6. Urban Forest Sustainability

At the beginning of next year, watch for the draft of the Statewide Forest Resources Strategy based on the Texas Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources to be posted on the Texas Forest Service website for stakeholder input. The document will highlight how TFS plans to utilize the S&PF program to address the issues listed above.

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RECOVERY EFFORTS FOR HOUSTON TOAD

For more information:

- <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/species/htoad/>
- <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/releases/?req=20091009b&nrtype=all&nrspace=2009&nsearch=>
- http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd_bk_w7000_0013_houston_toad_mgmt.pdf

A five-year program to improve habitat for the federally endangered Houston toad started in the summer of 2009. This project, under the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI), will receive cost share funds from the NRCS's EQIP and WHIP programs. The geographic area covered is the Greater Alum Creek Watershed, which is a 90,000 acre landscape in the Lost Pines ecosystem of eastern Bastrop and western Lee counties.

Environmental Defense Fund applied for this funding. They are working in partnership with: Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bastrop County Lost Pines Habitat Conservation Plan, Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Forest Service, Texas State University, and the Houston Zoo.

Some of the conservation practices and activities include the following:

- Brush management to reduce high densities of understory shrubs in order to restore natural community balance and enhance habitat for the endangered Houston toad.
- Cross-fencing in order to facilitate prescribed grazing and restrict cattle from sensitive habitat areas.
- Prescribe the rest period, intensity, frequency, duration and season of grazing in order to maintain the de-

sired structure, composition and function of plant communities.

- Prescribed burning to restore and enhance desired vegetation conditions and improve habitat quality for the Houston toad.
- Cut or kill selected trees in order to enhance habitat conditions for the Houston toad.
- Plant stands of loblolly pine trees and post oak trees on upland sites in order to restore habitat for the Houston toad and store carbon.
- Modify the hydrologic condition and biological habitat components of wetlands for the purpose of establishing conditions favorable to the Houston toad and other native aquatic and terrestrial wildlife.
- Plant riparian trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants in the potential or historical riparian zone of Alum Creek to improve water quality, enhance wildlife habitat and store carbon.
- Quantify the carbon sequestration values and rates of newly restored upland and riparian forests, as well as existing, sustainably managed forests in order to establish the carbon credits for participating producers.
- Collect portions of Houston toad egg strands and grow adults, which will subsequently be released on appropriate participating producer properties with suitable habitat conditions.

CENTER OAK

In the 1870s, a land survey supposedly located the geographical center of the state at a small settlement called Hughes Store, later called Center City. A live oak, located in the center of the town, was designated the Center Oak. When the Santa Fe Railroad came to the Mills County seat at Goldthwaite, ten miles west of Center City, Goldthwaite began to grow and attracted Center City's business and townspeople. In the early 1930s, when State Highway 7 between Goldthwaite and

Gatesville was to be widened, construction called for removing the old oak. But local sentiment had its way, and the highway department relented and moved the roadway to the north.

Today, all that remains of Center City is a small combination general store and service station, a historic lodge building, a few scattered homes, and this living memorial, which marks the spot once designated as the center of Texas.

from the Texas Forest Service website—Famous Trees of Texas

For more information:

- <http://famoustreesoftexas.tamu.edu/TreeHistory.aspx?TreeName=CenterOak>

TEXAS WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

State lawmakers have allocated about \$20 million in annual, additional funding for Texas Forest Service, allowing the agency to beef up volunteer fire departments' capacity, as well as its own.

That money includes \$9 million per year for the Texas Wildfire Protection Plan, a five-part approach to disaster response that focuses on predictive services, prevention and mitigation, planning and preparedness, local capacity building and rapid response.

First launched as a pilot program a decade ago, the Texas Wildfire Protection Plan — now the national model for state wildfire protection — calls for an increase in state resources and personnel, a move designed to improve the state's capacity and reduce the need for expensive and sometimes hard-to-find outside resources.

Legislators also boosted the budget by another \$10 million per year for the rural volunteer fire department assistance grant program. The new money combined with

existing funds will allow TFS to devote about \$25 million annually to the program.

"It's going to be good for Texas in two ways," Texas Forest Service Interim Director Tom Boggus said of the legislature's action. "It's good for Texas fire protection services, period. We're also going to be able to help volunteers more than we have before and help them build their capacity, while at the same time building our own capacity."

The need to enhance the Texas Wildfire Protection Plan, a successful pilot program, was evidenced following the 2005-2006 and 2008 wildfire seasons — the two deadliest in state history. The seasons lasted 725 days, burned 3.6 million acres, destroyed 906 homes and killed 19 people.

The 2009 winter wildfire season also was destructive. During the 132-day season, fires ravaged more than 500,000 acres and destroyed more than 316 homes. Good Friday weekend alone, fires burned across two towns and killed three people.

from Texas Forest Service website

For more information:

- <http://texasforestsservice.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=8450&terms=wildfire+protection+plan>

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS

Planning for wildfires must take place long before a community is threatened. Once a wildfire starts, the only option available to firefighters is to attempt to suppress the fire before it reaches a community. Texas Forest Service has developed a user-friendly set of guides and tools — the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) — to aid communities that wish to reduce the risk wildfires pose to homes, businesses and natural resources. A CWPP is unique in that it empowers communities to share the responsibility of determining the best strategies for protecting themselves and making informed choices in decreasing hazards around them.

To assist counties and communities in the development of these plans, the Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI) team has devel-

oped the CWPP Guide, Handbook and Leaders Guide. All these publications are downloadable from the website given in the sidebar.

The Texas Forest Service CWPP Web application was created in an effort to provide communities with a tool that streamlines the development of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. This site provides access to numerous resources that will ensure that the plan reflects the communities' wildfire protection needs, as well as meeting the requirements of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act.

TFS WUI Specialists will serve as technical advisors to counties and communities wanting to develop a CWPP and will review plans to aid in development.

from Texas Forest Service website

For more information:

- <http://texasforestsservice.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=1599&terms=wildfire+protection+plan>
- <http://texasforestsservice.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=1615>

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STORMWATER MANAGEMENT & TREES

The Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources Department of Forestry is pleased to announce the release of a new website "**Stormwater Management: Using Trees and Structural Soils to Improve Water Quality**" (www.cnr.vt.edu/urbanforestry/stormwater).

The site offers a suite of technology transfer resources for implementing the stormwater management practices developed as a part of their project, *Development of a Green Infrastructure Technology that Links Trees and Engineered Soil to Minimize Runoff from Pavement*. The project was led by faculty in the Forestry and Horticulture Departments at Virginia Tech and included collaborators from Cornell University and the University of California at Davis.

This site includes:

- A 55-page downloadable how-to manual designed for stormwater engineers, urban foresters, public works departments, low-impact development practitioners, and others.
- Highlights from the construction of four demonstration sites.
- Links to stormwater management and urban forestry resources.
- Opportunities for feedback and information sharing.



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