

FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

Timber ◇ Wildlife ◇ Water Quality ◇ Soil Conservation ◇ Best Management Practices ◇ Recreation ◇ Aesthetics

HEALTHY FORESTS LEGISLATION

from USDA Fact Sheet, entitled "The Healthy Forests Initiative" dated August 2003

For more information:

- <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c108:3:./temp/~c108ivf1Aa::>
- <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/hfi/2003/august/documents/hfi-fact-sheet.pdf>
- <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/healthyforests>
- <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/hfi/>

The U. S. House of Representatives passed **HR 1904**, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act that is based on legislation proposed by the Bush Administration. This bill would provide critical new tools called for under the Healthy Forests Initiative to more effectively reduce wildfire risks and improve forest health.

The bill had strong bipartisan support in the House. The Senate Agriculture Committee unanimously passed the bill out of committee. The bill is in the Senate for further action.

The **Healthy Forests Restoration Act** establishes procedures to expedite forest and rangeland restoration projects on Forest Service and BLM lands. It focuses on lands (1) near communities in the wildland urban interface, (2) in high risk municipal watersheds, (3) that provide important habitat for threatened and endangered species where catastrophic wildfire threatens the survival of the species, and (4) where insects or disease are destroying the forest and increasing the threat of catastrophic wildfire. It also provides more timely judicial review of forest health projects and ensures that courts consider both short and long-term effects of such projects before issuing injunctions to stop them. Additionally, the bill would:

1. Help communities more effectively use wood, brush and other plant materials removed in forest health projects as a fuel supply for biomass energy;
2. Authorize a program to support community-based watershed forestry part-

nerships that address critical forest stewardship, watershed protection and restoration needs at the state and local level;

3. Direct additional research focused on the early detection and containment of insect and disease infestations; and
4. Establish a private forestland easement program focused on recovering forest ecosystem types and protecting valuable wildlife habitat.

Since taking office, the Bush Administration has implemented major reforms to the wildland fire program while continuing to ensure compliance with environmental laws. In May of 2002, it reached agreement with the Western Governors' Association, state and local officials, and tribes on a 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy and Implementation Plan for reducing wildland fire risks to people, communities and the environment. This plan established a framework for protecting communities and the environment through collaboration on thinning, planned burns and restoration projects. Under the 10-Year Plan, Federal land management agencies are working with states and communities in an unprecedented effort to ensure that both communities and the forest and rangelands surrounding them are better protected from destructive wildfires.

There has also been an increase in the resources available for fire fighting and fire preventive fuels treatment work. Federal dollars available in 2003 to fight fires have increased 55% since 2000, and 99% of wildfires were controlled on initial attack in 2002 and 2003.

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SPB PREVENTION COST-SHARE PROGRAM

by Dr. Ronald F. Billings,
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For more information:

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- <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/shared/article.asp?DocumentID=900>
- Local Texas Forest Service office

The Texas Forest Service is offering federal cost-share incentives to encourage forest landowners to initiate preventive measures against future infestations of the southern pine beetle (SPB). Forest management practices eligible for cost shares are pre-commercial thinning of 6-12 year old pine stands and first thinning of overcrowded pulpwood-sized stands within specified areas of East Texas.

Eligibility

- * Minimum of 10 acres of loblolly or shortleaf pine in need of thinning
- * Must be in TFS grid block currently rated as moderate, high or extreme hazard for SPB (primarily located in Angelina, Nacogdoches, Cherokee, Trinity, Houston, Shelby, San Augustine, Sabine, Polk, Tyler, Jasper, Newton, Hardin, Liberty, San Jacinto, Walker, and Montgomery counties)
- * Pulpwood stands must be at least 70% pine and rate as moderate or high hazard to SPB
- * For pre-commercial thinning, pine

stand must be 6-12 years of age and have at least 700 stems/acre

Cost-Shares

Pre-commercial thinning (no trees harvested and sold)

- * Cost shares: 50% of costs, up to \$50/acre for thinning + up to \$10/acre for consultant fees (total not to exceed \$60/acre or \$5,000/fiscal year)
- * Cost-share match: Documented by receipts for thinning costs and consultant fees

First thinning of stands with merchantable timber

- * Cost-shares: \$35/acre for thinning + up to \$10/acre for consultant fees (total not to exceed \$45/acre or \$5,000/fiscal year)
- * Cost-share match: Landowner provides record of quantity of pulpwood removed in thinning operation (tons or cords) to Texas Forest Service. TFS will use harvest data to estimate cut-and-haul costs based on standardized rates to cover cost-share match

SOUTHERN PINE BEETLE PREVENTION

The southern pine beetle (SPB) is a bark beetle native to the southern United States and a major threat to pine forests. Unmanaged and overcrowded stands of loblolly or shortleaf pines are particularly susceptible. Periodic outbreaks of this bark beetle occur every 6-10 years in Texas.

Prevention through good forest management is the best approach for protecting your pine forests from bark beetle attacks. Recognizing tree, stand, and landscape factors that predispose pines to beetle infestations is the first step in a prevention program. A professional forester can advise you about recommended practices to maintain healthy forests and reduce the susceptibility to bark beetles.

Certain pine forests are more likely to suffer from SPB infestations than others.

The SPB most commonly infests stands that consist of:

- Loblolly or shortleaf pine older than 10 years of age.
- Unmanaged natural stands or overcrowded, slow-growing plantations.
- Overmature stands with declining radial growth.
- Dense pine stands on poorly-drained, bottomland or flatwood sites.

Forest management is the preferred method for preventing losses to SPB. Thinning of overly dense, slow-growing pine stands will stimulate growth and vigor in young stands and reduce the SPB hazard. Private forest landowners are encouraged to work with a forester to develop a management plan or Forest Stewardship Plan for their property.

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- Allen Smith, SPB Prevention Forester, Texas Forest Service; (936) 639-8170; lasmith@tfs.tamu.edu
- <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/pdf/forest/pest/preventionbrochurefinal.pdf>

FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

A new source of funding will give state and local governments, land trusts and non-profits a new method for protecting forestland in Texas. In a letter to the USDA Forest Service, Governor Rick Perry designated the Texas Forest Service as the lead agency for the Forest Legacy Program, a national conservation program that provides federal assistance to protect forestland threatened by conversion to non-forest uses.

The purpose of the Forest Legacy Program is to maintain forestland intact to provide traditional forest benefits including timber harvesting, wildlife habitat, watershed protection and open space conservation. Forest Legacy Program allows landowners to protect conservation values while also maintaining economic uses including timber production. Conservation easements can be used to protect "working forests," where forestland is managed for the production of forest products.

"Both the landowner and the community will benefit by the continued economic returns and the conservation benefits that are associated with such dynamic forest

management planning," said Jim Hull, State Forester and Director of the Texas Forest Service.

This is a major opportunity for landowners who have significant property values due to potential development prospects, but wish to keep the land in the family as a working forest. Yet, they can still realize some of the financial gain from the development value in the land. Landowners that sell the development rights, continue to own the land, sell timber, pay taxes, do reforestation, and have hunting rights. It is a win-win situation in that the public continues to have open space lands without the annual cost of paying to manage the forest, and local governments continue to receive the property tax revenue to support schools and county government. The land continues to help support the local forest-based economy by providing a sustainable flow of forest products.

The Texas Forest Service will work with the state's Forest Stewardship Committee to develop an Assessment of Need that will determine eligibility requirements, set state goals and identify areas of focus for Forest Legacy Program in Texas.

from Jan Davis, Texas Forest Service, College Station, TX

For more information:

- Jan Davis, Texas Forest Service, (979) 458-6600
- <http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/flp.shtml>

HILL COUNTRY HAPPENINGS

The Cibolo Nature Center, a 100-acre green space located in Boerne, Texas, is the only preserved natural area in Kendall County open to the public. Nature trails wind through oak and juniper woodland, along cypress-lined Cibolo Creek, and through a native tall grass prairie.

Upcoming events at the Nature Center:

◆ **Trees & Understory = Food & Cover for Wildlife!**

Date: Saturday, November 8
 Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
 Presenters: Mark Peterson, TFS
 Rufus Stephens, TPWD

◆ **Land Stewardship Resource Group (LSRG) Meeting--Potluck Dinner and Program**

Program: Cost-share Programs for Landowners
 Date: Monday, November 17
 Time: 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
 Presenters: TFS, NRCS, Environmental Defense Fund
 Contact: Jan Wrede, (210) 710-8154

For more information on the Cibolo Nature Center:
 Phone: (830) 249-4616
 Email: nature@cibolo.org
 Internet: www.cibolo.org

Continuing Education for Logging Professionals

2003 BMP Workshops
 7:30 am - 3:30 pm

Nov. 14 Lufkin

2003 Aesthetics & Communications Workshops
 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Nov. 15 Diboll

- Fee (per workshop): \$10 for TFA/TLC members; \$35 for non-members

- For registration, call TFA at (936) 632-8733

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REMEMBER BMPs IN PLANTING

Landowners and contractors should also keep water and soils in mind when planting and preparing to plant. There are Best Management Practices (BMPs) to follow during these operations.

- Mark boundaries of all streamside management zones (SMZ) clearly before site preparation activities.
- Plan ahead to minimize disturbance by equipment in SMZs.
- Site preparation activities should skirt SMZs and stream channels. Any debris should be placed above the ordinary high water mark of any stream or body of open water.
- Any site preparation practices and planting should be done following the contour of the land.
- Avoid intensive site preparation on steep slopes and on slopes with thin or highly erodible soils.
- Hand plant excessively steep slopes and wet sites.
- Firebreaks should have water control structures (water bars, wing ditches, etc.) in order to minimize erosion.
- Burning in an SMZ reduces the filtering capacity of the ground covering, so plan burns to minimize impacts there.
- Avoid, when possible, site prep burns on steep slopes or highly erodible soils.



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