

Forest Landowner Briefings



Forest Landowners:

You may feel overwhelmed when it comes to making decisions on what to do with your forestland, especially if you live far away from the property. Here are some quick and easy references to inform you on forest management practices and what resources are available to you.

So what do I do with my timber, and how do I plan for the future?

The answer to this question depends on your own goals and objectives for your property. Do you need to produce income from your land, provide recreational opportunities for your family and friends, or improve habitat for wildlife? All of these objectives can be achieved through proper management. Not sure when, or even if, you should harvest some or all of your timber? There are several things to consider in making this decision:

- Age of the trees
- Condition of the trees
- Species of the trees
- Current prices of timber

You don't have to make this determination on your own. Professional forestry consultants have the knowledge and experience to guide you through this process. They can inventory your stand of trees, evaluate the condition of the forest, and propose a management schedule. Of course, the final decision is yours, but a forestry consultant can help you make a more informed decision. Hiring a professional forester can help you get the most out of your property.

The best way to map out a strategy for managing your property and plan for the future is to have a written Stewardship Plan. This is more than just a timber plan; it is a multi-use plan that can cover all aspects of managing your property, keeping your own goals in mind. A plan can be written by a forestry consultant or a Texas Forest Service forester.

LINKS

<http://texasforestsservice.tamu.edu/uploadedfiles/frd/referral.pdf> - forestry consultants in Texas

<http://forestry.msu.edu/extension/extdocs/consulfor/FMD6-1.pdf> - information on hiring a consultant

<http://texasforestsservice.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=145> - Texas Timber Price Trends

<http://txforestsservice.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=5160> - Forest Management Fact Sheets



How can I practice forestry in an environmentally-friendly way?

You can protect the environment during and after forest management activities. Following guidelines known as Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) can help protect water quality and prevent soil erosion. Examples of these conservation practices include: leaving a buffer strip of trees and other vegetation (streamside management zone) along streams; using erosion control structures such as water bars and wing ditches on forest roads; and re-seeding grasses on bare roads and other areas after the forestry operation is finished.

In Texas, most of these practices are voluntary and legally you don't have to implement them. However, they are common-sense actions that benefit all of us since they protect soils, water, wildlife, aesthetics, and the integrity of the forest industry. When conducting any forest operation, choose a contractor that has been trained in these practices.

LINKS

<http://texasforests.tamu.edu/bmp> - BMPs in Texas. Click on "Publications" for the Texas Forestry BMP Handbook, BMP Fact Sheets, and other information.

<http://www.texasforestry.org/programs/logger-listing> - List of BMP Trained Contractors

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How can I protect my timberland from fire, pests, and disease?

Intensive forest management not only improves the growth of your trees, it can also help protect them from insects and disease. Thinning the stand at proper intervals helps prevent the spread of bark beetles and some diseases. Occasional visual inspections of your stands of trees can alert you to the start of possible problems, allowing you to keep them from spreading. There are some pests and diseases that can affect even the healthiest of stands. If you see a possible problem, contact a professional to help determine what course or action, if any, to take.

Though you can't be 100% protected from wildfire, there are some practices you can use to help reduce the chance of fire affecting your property. Properly installed fire breaks around your property and timber stands can help prevent fire from an adjoining property spread to yours. Keeping your timber stands thinned and reducing understory vegetation can help reduce potential fuel and the intensity of any possible wildfires. Believe it or not, fire can help protect your property from devastating fires. Occasional prescribed burns help keep the fuel load down and improve the overall health and productivity of the stand.

LINKS

<http://texasforests.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=1168> - forest insect pests and TFS entomologists

<http://texasforests.tamu.edu/uploadedFiles/Landowners/Prescribed%20Burning.pdf> - prescribed burning

<http://texasforests.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=2010> - preventing wildfire



Is there financial assistance available for me, the private landowner?

Yes - there are cost-share programs of varying types available. Each covers different types of practices and may have different qualifications and payment amounts. There are also tax credits that can benefit some landowners for certain practices.

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs that may be helpful for private forest landowners include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).
- Texas Reforestation and Conservation Act of 1999 (SB 977) gives special tax appraisals for reforestation and preservation of certain non-timber forest values.
- Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) Prevention Project provides funds for thinning stands in certain East Texas counties that are at high risk of attack by SPB.

LINKS

http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farm_bill/index.html - NRCS Farm Bill programs

http://www.texasforestry.org/docs/Cost_share_programs.pdf - brochure on cost share programs

<http://txforestservation.tamu.edu/uploadedFiles/Sustainable/tax/brochure.pdf> - tax incentives (SB 977)

<http://texasforestservation.tamu.edu/main/popup.aspx?id=1245> - SPB Prevention cost share program

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How can I become involved?

There are several forest landowner associations in East Texas and some of the metropolitan areas that meet and keep members informed of forestry issues and practices they can use on their properties. However, since you are out of state, you probably can't make many county landowner meetings. You could, though, join one of the associations for landowners in the county in which your property is located and get on their mailing list to receive newsletters and other helpful materials.

Also, the Texas Forestry Association has a wealth of information on its website and at its annual meetings. Members have access to a monthly newsletter and other educational materials.

Maybe you could find a time to come with your family and visit your property. If you have younger children or grandchildren, you could begin to instill in them a "love of the land" and good land stewardship principles. There's nothing like being in the middle of your own property, gaining an appreciation of what is there and what it can become.

LINKS

<http://www.texasforestry.org/programs/area-chapters/> - county landowners associations

<http://www.texasforestry.org/> - Texas Forestry Association



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Email: dwork@tfs.tamu.edu

TDD Line: 1-866-419-4872



Who can get me started in all this?

Texas Forest Service has offices all over East Texas (and other parts of the state). Contact the Texas Forest Service District Office serving the county where your property is located. Go to <http://txforestsERVICE.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?ctrl=13> and click on your property's county. Then, click on "Managing Your Forests" to get contact information for that area.

For more info on these and other topics, go to the Texas Forest Service website at <http://texasforestsERVICE.tamu.edu>, or contact the TFS District Office closest to your property.

TFS District Offices:

Carthage	(903) 693-6865	Linden	(903) 756-5571
Conroe	(936) 273-2261	Livingston	(936) 327-4832
Crockett	(936) 544-7798	Longview	(903) 297-3910
Gilmer	(903) 734-7007	Marshall	(903) 938-8712
Henderson	(903) 657-0511	Nacogdoches	(936) 564-9276
Hudson	(936) 875-4400	New Boston	(903) 628-2711
Huntsville	(936) 295-5688	Palestine	(903) 729-7738
Jacksonville	(903) 586-7545	Pittsburg	(903) 856-7181
Kirbyville	(409) 423-2890	San Augustine	(936) 275-3438
Kountze	(409) 246-2484	Woodville	(409) 283-3785