

FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

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

EXOTIC PESTS IMPACT FORESTS

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report by Debra McCown,
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Herald Courier (VA), pub-
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For more information:

- <http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/>
- <http://texasforestservice.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=1260>
- www.invasive.org/eastern/srs/

Walking through eastern U.S. forests today, it's nearly impossible to find an American chestnut, the durable hardwood that used to rule the forest. Or what about an American elm, the towering tree that used to line the streets of U.S. cities?

One of the first forest pests of the modern scientific era was introduced into the port of New York on nursery stock at the end of the 19th century – chestnut blight. It wiped out literally billions of trees around the United States, changing the forests of the eastern U.S. forever. American chestnut was a vital part of the economy. Now it's gone and it's not necessarily substituted by the species that came in after it.

The next major exotic tree killer to reach American soil began in the 1930s when a shipment of elm logs infected with Dutch elm disease arrived from Europe. The American elms were one of the most popular street trees at the time. When Dutch elm disease came, it went tree to tree, street to street, town to town and by the end of the 1970s, the disease, a fungus spread by beetles, had killed hundreds of millions of elm trees.

Another exotic pest making its way into the U.S. is the gypsy moth, which affects primarily oak trees. Gypsy moth caterpillars don't kill the trees outright; they defoliate them. If such extensive defoliation happens two or three years in succession, the tree will often die.

In a natural system, native plants and their insect and disease pests live together. From time to time, pest populations may increase to outbreak levels, but natural

controls will eventually prevail and the pest outbreak will subside. But when a disease or insect pest comes from the other side of the world, there are no natural controls to check the pest's spread.

More recently, hemlock in the forests of the eastern United States is under attack by an accidental Asian import, the hemlock woolly adelgid. The adelgid is an insect that feeds on the sap of the tree and infested trees often die within a few years. Hemlock trees are dying by the thousands.

The emerald ash borer has the potential to do to ash trees what Dutch elm disease did to the American elm. This pest has already killed over 30 million trees in Michigan and is well established in the Midwest.

The potential for emerald ash borer and gypsy moth to become established in Texas exists, but so far it has not happened. Interestingly, even though American chestnut does not occur in Texas, the chestnut blight fungus has impacted native Texas chinkapin (also called chinquapin) to the extent that this small tree seldom reaches seed bearing size. Dutch elm disease is present in eastern Texas but fortunately it hasn't been a serious problem to native elm trees.

An established exotic plant that has already impacted the forests of East Texas is the Chinese tallow tree. This invasive tree has replaced many native plant species and seems to continue to spread. Texas has also become home to Japanese climbing fern which is beginning to impact our forests by replacing native plant species.

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WHY MANAGE MY FOREST? PART I

prepared by Glenn & Evelyn Charlson for distribution by the Tree Farm System, May 2007

For more information:

- <http://www.treefarmssystem.org/index.cfm>
- <http://safnet.org/aboutforestry/index.cfm>
- <http://www.texasforestry.org/>

Forest landowners knowingly make a choice regarding management of their property. Some landowners and resource managers choose to “let nature take its course” on some forestland. In such cases, they make a conscious management decision to not actively manipulate the vegetation.

The concepts of “preservation” and “natural dynamics free of human impacts” are relative. Forests are dynamic communities that are continuously changing and adapting to external inputs and internal disturbances. Natural processes like forest succession, plant competition, wildlife, and insect activity, tree aging and decay, windstorms, fires, and climate change will cause changes in forest composition, structure, and function over time. Forests cannot be maintained in a static, unchanging condition. Also, there are no forest ecosystems undisturbed by human activities. Disturbance has occurred through impacts on climate, atmospheric composition and inputs, fire control, management of wildlife populations (intentional and unintentional), introduction of exotics, recreational use, other human uses, etc. Passively managed forests will continue to change and will be subjected to human impacts; however, these changes and impacts often will be different than in actively managed forests.

Passive management does require monitoring, and certain events may necessitate

the implementation of some short-term active practices. Examples include control of exotics, fire management, disease and insect management, wildlife management, recreation management, removal of diseased or weakened trees that pose safety hazards, and loss of attributes desired by the landowner. Passive management requires an understanding of the effects of natural processes and the impacts of other human activities (internal and external to the forest) on the development of the forest. In some situations, a blend of passive management and active silvicultural treatment may most effectively achieve landowner goals.

The results of this option are not economically predictable, but in all probability it would be less than a “managed” stand of timber. The main reason for this is that nature is controlling the return on the timber investment.

There is another reason a landowner may not want to manage their forest. They may like the forest just as it is. This line of thought fails to consider that forests are not static objects. They are living and dynamic, changing to some degree every day. As natural living creatures, trees have life spans just like people. Some species can live for thousands of years, some for hundreds of years and some for just a few decades. Some preserved areas no longer have large trees that led to the preservation. (Part II coming next month)

HEART ‘O TEXAS OAK

This live oak tree near the town of Mercury has attracted attention because it is located at the exact geographical center of the State of Texas. This location was determined by a U.S. Geodetic Survey, the results of which were published in 1922.

Known widely as the Heart O' Texas Oak, it stands at a point whose coordinates divide the second largest state in the Union

into four equal areas. The tree is 437 miles from the state's most westerly point on the Rio Grande above El Paso; 412 miles from the most northerly point in the northwest corner of the Panhandle near Texline; 401 miles from the most southerly point on the Rio Grande below Brownsville; and 341 miles from the most easterly point on the Sabine River near Burkeville.

from the Texas Forest Service website—Famous Trees of Texas

For more information:

- <http://famoustree-softexas.tamu.edu/TreeHistory.aspx?TreeName=Heart%20Texas%20Oak>

STEWARDS OF THE LAND

The Forest Stewardship Program began in 1990 under the direction of the USDA Forest Service. Under this program, the Certified Forest Steward Award is a way to recognize landowners who have multiple-use management plans and are implementing activities on the ground. In Texas, there are currently over 450 recognized "Certified Forest Stewards."

Recently, two of these Texas Certified Forest Stewards were also recognized by another program, Texas Parks and Wildlife's Lone Star Land Steward Awards.

Receiving the award for the Edwards Plateau Region of Texas were J. David and

Margaret Bamberger, owners of Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve. Rangeland improvement, spring restoration, wildlife habitat enhancement, endangered species management, and conservation education are just a few of the accomplishments on this Blanco County ranch.

For the Pineywoods Region, Jane Baxter and the G. Gibson family's Mustang Prairie Tree Farm in Trinity Co. were recipients of the award. The property is managed using key practices such as prescribed burning, pine thinning, and deer population control. Native prairie was restored on the property, improving the habitat for eastern wild turkey and other birds.

SFI® LANDOWNER WORKSHOPS

Texas Forest Service and Texas Forestry Association are celebrating the 10 year anniversary of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) sponsored landowner workshops. The SFI program is an environmental certification system that integrates the protection of our environment with the perpetual, sustainable growing and harvesting of trees. Participants not only practice sustainable forestry on their own lands, but also promote it on other forestlands through their support of outreach programs like the landowner workshops.

The first educational seminar was held on January 31, 1998 just outside of Lufkin and led to the creation of the Angelina / Nacogdoches County Forest Landowners Association. Since that date, over 40 workshops have been conducted throughout the state, reaching more than 4,000 forest landowners.

"It is truly amazing how successful this program has been. We have conducted workshops for landowners in every county in East Texas as well as the major metropolitan areas of the state, including Houston, Dallas, and Austin," said Hughes Simpson of the Texas Forest Service.

The main objective of these workshops is to educate attendees on the importance of practicing sustainable forestry. Forest landowners are able to learn about best management practices (BMPs), wildlife management, reforestation, and many other forestry related topics. With the ever changing landscape of the forestry community, these workshops are vitally important in educating new forest landowners on sustainable forestry as well as helping long-time forest landowners keep abreast of the latest information on how to best manage their lands.

Another important goal of these workshops is to encourage forest landowners to join or create local forest landowner associations so they can have a collective voice as well as the continuing educational opportunities. "Typical workshops can attract upwards of 150 people, many of whom either decide to join the association or renew memberships," said Simpson.

Invitations are mailed to family forest landowners in a multi-county area served by a respective landowner association. Attendance at these workshops is free of charge, with lunch and refreshments provided for all attendees.

For more information:

- http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/private/lone_star_land_steward/
- <http://texasforestservice.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=1180>

by Hughes Simpson, Program Coordinator, Texas Forest Service, Lufkin, TX

For more information:

- http://www.texasforestry.org/state_implementation_comm.htm
- <http://www.sfiprogram.org/>
- Texas Forest Service - (936) 639-8180

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Editorial Board

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TEXAS TIMBER PRICE TRENDS

Timber Price Trends Report is a bimonthly publication of the Texas Forest Service reporting average prices paid for standing timber, commonly called the “stumpage price.” Average stumpage prices are calculated from actual timber sales as reported by more than 60 cooperators active in the East Texas timber market.

Values are weighted by volume sold to filter out the effect that size of sale has on price paid. Thus, the average price reported is the average price paid per unit of wood, NOT per average timber sale. Price series for five or more product categories are reported for two reporting regions from eastern Texas and extending back to 1984.

Go to <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=148>. Here, a complete current issue of the *Texas Timber Price Trends* is available in PDF format. A hard copy is also available through an annual mail subscription for \$10 per year. To subscribe, please send your request and check or money order to:

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