

FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

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

LANDMARK WILDLIFE LEGISLATION

from an article by Richard Heilbrun, Certified Wildlife Biologist, TPWD, San Antonio, TX

For more information:

- <http://fishwildlife.org/?section=blueribbonpanel>
- <http://tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/land/tcap>

In July 2016, Congressman Don Young introduced HR 5650, entitled “Recovering America’s Wildlife Act of 2016.” The bill, which is the result of a three-year process by wildlife and industry representatives (the “Blue Ribbon Panel”), says that diverse fish and wildlife populations are vital to our nation’s infrastructure and economy. It is in the interest of our country “to retain for present and future generations... a wide variety of fish and wildlife, to recover species of fish and wildlife... and to prevent fish and wildlife species from declining to the point of requiring Federal protection.”

The Blue Ribbon Panel represents the outdoor recreation retail and manufacturing sector, the energy and automotive industries, private landowners, educational institutions, conservation organizations, sportsmen’s groups, and state fish and wildlife agencies. The panel recommend funding solutions and Congressional policy options for delivering sustained conservation funding to help maintain a balance between natural resource diversity and natural resource-based enterprise.

HR 5650 was introduced as a “marker bill” designed to start conversations, begin planning, assemble partners in the Congress and in the nation, and create a placeholder for similar legislation to be introduced in the next session of Congress. When the new session of Congress reconvenes, Mr. Young will reintroduce this legislation, and a member of the U.S. Senate will do the same. After the reintroduction, expected in the spring of 2017, the legislature will have about 20-22 months to consider and vote on the bill.

What does the bill say? There is a current fee that is paid by energy corporations that explore or produce energy (fossil fuels and renewables) on offshore and federally- owned land. That fund generates about \$12 billion annually, which goes into the general treasury. HR 5650, if passed, would dedicate \$1.3 billion from that revenue source towards sustaining our most imperiled species. The money would be required to be spent on Species of Greatest Conservation Need and mandates that state fish and wildlife agencies are the appropriate stewards of those funds. These agencies would work with the conservation community in their states to implement the Wildlife Action Plan. In Texas, that plan is called the Texas Conservation Action Plan (TCAP), and was developed by Texas Parks and Wildlife.

But what can it be used for? These funds can only be used to implement the Texas Conservation Action Plan, which provides a roadmap to recover more than 1,300 imperiled species in Texas. It includes both imperiled species and sensitive habitats, and lists the major threats to each of these. These funds, if passed, could also be used for education, outreach, technical guidance, land management, land acquisition, conservation easements, research, and wildlife-based recreation, as long as these activities benefit Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Organizations that would like to bring this message to their members can request newsletter articles and in-person presentations from the True to Texas Wildlife Coalition. Contact Karly Robinson at K.Robinson@teamingtxwildlife.com.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Timber Tax Tips for 2016

There’s an App for That - Forestry BMPs

New Conservation Opportunities

Volunteers Wanted for Tree Planting

Timber Tax Workshop

TIMBER TAX TIPS FOR 2016

from article by Dr. Linda Wang, National Timber Tax Specialist, U.S. Forest Service

For more information:

- <http://www.fs.fed.us/cooperativeforestry/library/taxtips2016.pdf>
- <http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/ForestTaxation/>

This summary assists woodland owners, logging professionals, foresters, and their tax accountants in filing the 2016 tax returns. The information presented here is for educational purpose only and is not intended for legal or accounting advice. It is current as of September 30, 2016.

TYPES OF TIMBER PROPERTY - Income and expenses associated with timber property that is held for different purposes are subject to different tax rules. Timber property held mainly for personal use (personal enjoyment vs. income generation) may have little or no tax deductions. Property held as an investment (profit from growing timber or future profit from asset appreciation) is eligible for tax deductions. Property held as business is where your commercial timber activities are regular, active, and continuous.

TIMBER EXPENSES - Expenses paid for timber management for profit-making purpose are deductible. Examples of such expenses are: firebreak maintenance; overnight travel cost; property taxes; fees to a consulting forester or accountant; cost for vegetation competition control or for insects, disease and fire control; expense for precommercial thinning; and depreciation from equipment used.

TIMBER SALES - Sales of standing timber held as an investment for more than 1 year qualify for long-term capital gain, which is taxed at lower tax rates than ordinary income. Sale of products cut from timber: If you cut your own timber or have it cut by a contractor working at your direction, either for sale or for use in your business, the gains are ordinary income unless you elect to use sec. 631(a) on Form T, Part II.

REFORESTATION COSTS - Reforestation costs are direct costs incurred to establish commercial timber stands. Taxpayers may deduct up to \$10,000 (\$5,000 for married couples filing separately) per year of reforestation costs per qualified timber property (QTP). Any amount over \$10,000 per year per QTP may be deducted over 84 months (amortized). Trusts are eligible for amortization deduction only.

CONSERVATION EASEMENT - Donors of a qualified conservation easement can take a tax deduction. The deduction is up to 50 percent (or 100 percent for qualified farmers and ranchers, including forest landowners) of the taxpayer's adjusted gross income (AGI) in a year. Any excess donation over the 50- or 100- percent limit may be carried forward to 15 years.

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT - FORESTRY BMPs

from Texas A&M Forest Service website

For more information:

- <http://texasforestinfo.tamu.edu/MobileApps/Index.html>

Foresters, landowners, and contractors in Texas can now access Best Management Practices (BMP) guidelines on their mobile devices.

The *Texas Forestry Best Management Practices Handbook* is now available as a smartphone application, enabling quick and easy access to conservation practices designed to protect soil and water resources when conducting forest operations.

Texas Forestry BMPs is a native app available at both the App Store (iOS) and Google Play (Android). It is a convenient, quick reference tool for reviewing the forestry BMP guidelines, as well as recom-

mended specifications and schematics to ensure their proper implementation while in the field.

Texas Forestry BMPs includes a searchable glossary of forestry terms and built-in tools for measuring slope and tree heights. Using your smartphone's GPS, the soil identifier tool is able to display a map and key properties of the soils in your specific area.

Landowners and forestry professionals are increasingly using technology to manage their land. This free mobile app provides information to help them keep their land healthy, productive, and sustainable.

NEW CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the USDA will offer farmers and ranchers more opportunities to participate in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The announcement includes new CRP practices to protect water quality and adds an additional 1.1 million acres targeted to benefit wildlife, pollinators, and wetlands.

“The Conservation Reserve Program is an extremely popular voluntary program that offers producers and landowners a wide variety of opportunities to prevent erosion, protect wildlife habitat, and reduce nutrient runoff,” said Vilsack. “With the program close to the legal enrollment limit of 24 million acres, USDA has been working to use all of the tools at our disposal to maximize benefits by combining multiple soil, water, and wildlife objectives in the areas where it is needed most.”

Vilsack unveiled a new conservation initiative known as Clean Lakes, Estuaries, and Rivers (CLEAR), which will add new tools to CRP that can help to improve water quality. CLEAR will assist landowners with the cost of building bioreactors and saturated buffers that filter nitrates and

other nutrients from tile-drained cropland. Early estimates indicate that CLEAR could help to reduce nitrate runoff by as much as 40 percent over traditional conservation methods. CLEAR may cover up to 90 percent of the cost to install these new practices through incentives and cost-share.

USDA will also add an additional 1.1 million acres to a number of key CRP practices that are critically important to wildlife and conservation. These include 700,000 acres for State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) efforts, which restore high-priority wildlife habitat tailored to a specific state’s needs. In addition to SAFE, 300,000 acres will be added to target restoration of “nature’s water filters” - wetlands - and 100,000 acres for pollinator habitat that supports 30 percent of agricultural production.

Seventy-percent of the nation’s land is owned and tended to by private farmers, ranchers, and other landowners. With USDA’s support, they are working to implement voluntary practices that improve air and water quality, prevent soil erosion, and create and protect wildlife habitat.

*from MorningAgClips.com
article dated December 12,
2016*

For more information:

- goo.gl/uWyKIz
- www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation

VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR TREE PLANTING

TreeFolks in partnership with Hays County welcomes volunteers to plant seedlings along the Blanco River near Wimberley. These community tree planting events are part of TreeFolks’ Blanco Reforestation Program which accelerates recovery of the riparian zones - the river bank ecosystem - by providing comprehensive reforestation services to landowners affected by the 2015 Memorial Day floods.

TreeFolks will plant over 55,000 seedlings this winter to provide important environmental benefits to the Hays County community and to help restore the beautiful Blanco River ecosystem.

Volunteers are wanted; no previous experience is required. For details, please visit

TreeFolks’ webpage (see sidebar); scroll down to ‘Blanco Reforestation’ and click to register to volunteer on any or all of the remaining planting dates:

- Saturday, Jan. 21, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
- Friday, Jan. 27, 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM
- Thursday, Feb. 9, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

“Trees provide ecosystems services such as stabilizing the soil to prevent erosion, cooling the atmosphere, and building the banks of rivers and streams,” said Thais Perkins, TreeFolks’ Executive Director. “By doing your part to restore the environment, you also have the opportunity to connect with neighbors and build a resilient community together.”

*from MorningAgClips.com
article dated December 12,
2016*

For more information:

- www.treefolks.org/volunteer

Distribution of this newsletter is provided free of charge to professional foresters, state and federal agency professionals, county judges and commissioners, state senators and representatives, various forestry-related associations, and others. **PLEASE ADVISE US IF YOU WISH YOUR NAME REMOVED FROM OUR MAILING LIST.** This newsletter is also available on the web at tfsweb.tamu.edu/StewardshipPublications. If you would rather receive this newsletter electronically (by e-mail), contact us at the address, phone number, or e-mail address above.

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Editorial Board

- Rusty Wood, TPWD, Nacogdoches, Texas
- Joe Pase, TFS-Retired, Lufkin, Texas

TIMBER TAX WORKSHOP

Texas Timber Income and Property Tax Workshop

Tuesday, February 7, 2017

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Lottie and Arthur Temple Civic Center
601 Dennis St., Diboll, TX

The daylong workshop will provide basic information about timber taxation and the latest changes to tax laws and rules for 2016 tax return preparations. Topics will focus on federal timber income tax issues for private forest owners with a refresher on local timberland property tax incentives. Participants will gain a clear understanding of commonly misunderstood timber tax issues.

This tax workshop will help you:

- Learn special timber tax laws and rules that are not well understood by many tax professionals
- Apply the rules through examples that apply basic concepts
- Find answers to your top questions

Who should attend? The workshop is designed for forest landowners, consulting foresters, accountants, attorneys, and others who work with forest landowners in matters pertaining to timber taxes.

Registration is \$75 and includes a workbook, catered lunch, and refreshments; additional family member is \$30 (no workbook).

Register online at texasforests.tamu.edu/taxworkshop or contact Marion Broughton at 979-458-6630.



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