

# FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

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

## TEXAS RANCH WILDFIRE PROGRAM

*from TFS website*

*For more information:*

- <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/trwp/>
- <https://texasforestinfo.tamu.edu/mapmyproperty/>
- Texas Ranch Wildfire Program Point of Contact: Jim Cooper, Texas A&M Forest Service; Merkel, TX [jcooper@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:jcooper@tfs.tamu.edu) (346) 213-3849

Between 2005 and 2018, 85,661 wildfires in the Panhandle and North Texas areas resulted in 1,915 homes lost, 30 fatalities, and 6.3 million acres burned. To combat such losses, Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) began development of a grassroots approach to community protection that involves ranchers, fire departments, state agencies, local governments, and the private sector.

Much of the range lands in Texas are owned and actively managed by private ranchers and agricultural producers. TFS staff, through the **Texas Ranch Wildfire Program (TRWP)**, will work with these landowners to identify and map priority areas, water sources, sensitive areas, fences, gates, and other zones within the ranch. A written plan will be composed for their particular property, containing land management “prescriptions” for practices that can help mitigate the effects of possible wildfires. The user-friendly online app “Map My Property” can be used by the landowner to make a map of their property, labeling areas of priority and importance, and exporting the map to a PDF file.

Having maps and other information available will allow firefighters to make tactical decisions that reflect the landowner’s priorities should a wildfire occur on or near the property. Additionally, this information will provide a foundation for possible post-fire recovery services.

Some of the land management practices that can help mitigate the effects of wildfire include:

- Prescribed Grazing - strategic rotation of livestock on pastures.

- Prescribed Burning - reduces fuels and improves rangeland.
- Green Firebreak - establishing winter cover crops to create green buffers between rangeland and communities.
- Mechanical Fire Breaks - permanent barriers to limit fire spread into communities or onto rangeland.
- Blacklining - linear prescribed burning to create a buffer.
- Tree Windbreaks - help to moderate fire behavior by lowering wind speeds and increasing soil moisture.

The TRWP allows TFS personnel and equipment to be used on private property to create zones of protection around our most threatened towns and cities. To aid in the cost of these practices, grants are possible from other cooperating agencies such as Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Besides these agencies, other cooperators working with and supporting the TRWP are U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association®.

Currently, this mitigation work is being conducted in the Texas towns of Miami, Electra, Sterling City, and Christoval.

Not only does this program aid landowners by giving them management prescriptions that enhance and protect their property, its ultimate goal is to protect cities and towns from devastating wildfire. These zones of protection are the number one priority in the preparation of fighting the ever-worsening fire activity while protecting the citizens of Texas.

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## FERAL SWINE CONTROL PROGRAM

*from TSSWCB Press Release dated 11/29/2019*

*For more information:*

- <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/feral-swine-texas>
- <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/news>
- Liza Parker: (254) 773-2250 ext. 247 or [lparker@tsswcb.texas.gov](mailto:lparker@tsswcb.texas.gov)

*Want to know more about feral swine? Visit:*

- [http://bit.ly/Feral\\_Hog\\_Manual](http://bit.ly/Feral_Hog_Manual)
- <https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/solutions/feral-hogs>
- <https://feralhogs.tamu.edu>

*from National Hog Farmer website article dated Nov. 29, 2018; NRI blog post by Josh Helcel and Jim Cathey, dated June 3, 2019*

*For more information:*

- <http://bit.ly/ReportHogs>
- <http://bit.ly/WildPigReporting>
- <https://wildpigs.nri.tamu.edu/>

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced it is awarding more than \$1.4 million to the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) to fund three pilot projects to control feral swine in Texas.

These projects are a part of the Feral Swine Control Pilot Program (FSCPP), which is a joint effort between USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to help address the issues that feral swine pose to agriculture, ecosystems, and human and animal health.

Feral swine cause a high level of economic, biologic, and natural resource damage. The species are also a threat to Texas waterways and ecosystems as their numbers rapidly increase. Texas is a private-land state, with 83% of its land mass in family-owned farms, ranches and forests. Consequently, providing learning opportunities to landowners about effective management strategies remains crucial to the success of abating damages associated with feral swine.

TSSWCB will work in partnership with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), NRCS, APHIS, Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute (NRI) and the Texas Wildlife Damage Management Association to administer the Feral Swine Control Pilot Program.

Three main components of the project:

**Smart Trap Loan Program** - TSSWCB will work with nine local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to establish a smart trap loan program for farmers, ranchers, and landowners.

**Education and Outreach** - TSSWCB will work with NRI to provide outreach and education events and activities within the three project areas.

**Technical Assistance** - TSSWCB will partner with TWDMA to support 6 Wildlife Damage Management Specialists who will coordinate SWCD trap loan program to assist with restoration efforts.

Landowners in the following counties may be eligible for assistance from technicians to trap feral swine on their property:

The Canadian River Watershed Project area encompasses Hartley, Oldham, and Potter counties, which are under the direction of the Hartley, Oldham County, and Canadian River Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

The Upper Leon River project area encompasses Eastland, Comanche, and Erath counties, which are under the direction of the Cross Timbers and Upper Leon Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

The Red River Project area encompasses Hardeman, Wilbarger, Wichita, and Clay counties which are under the direction of the Wilbarger, Wichita, Little Wichita, and Lower Pease River Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

## ONLINE TOOL - REPORTING FERAL HOGS

Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute (NRI) has an online tool to help in the growing effort to control the feral hog population in the state. The wild pig website offers Texas landowners and homeowners an easy-to-use tool to report sightings of feral hogs and the damage that may have occurred from them.

The site captures data such as the location, number of feral hogs sited, estimations on

age and the type of damage being caused. There is also an entry for photo submissions.

The submitted reports will be used to support outreach efforts and help locate areas of high activity to guide both management and educational efforts across the state. Additionally, the reporting system is already providing some surprising insights on wild pig behavior.

## FACEBOOK AND LONGLEAF

Historically, longleaf pine ecosystems were the dominant forest type across the southeastern United States. Changes in land use catalyzed by economic and population growth, an increase in demand for rural land, and the subsequent incentive to subdivide or sell created this process for fragmentation and land conversion leaving the U.S. with less than 5 percent of the once sprawling legacy of longleaf stands.

Through a partnership between the Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute and the Texas Longleaf Taskforce, the “Landowner Longleaf Challenge” launched in March of 2019.

This campaign was rooted in modern outreach by digitally sowing seeds and pruning back the many opportunities that come with social media as a means to identify the critical factor in this race against time to reverse the longleaf ecosystem decline—private forest landowners.

The campaign appeared in the Facebook feeds of 96,000 targeted landowners and residents in eastern Texas who showed indications of interest in land management assistance and longleaf restoration. The landowners who were curious about the opportunity to connect with teams of natural resource specialists for cost-share and technical information, after a series of

brief questions, voluntarily submitted their contact and land information through a form the taskforce created, alerting the team with each submission.

Launching this campaign, even with limited resources, yielded an awareness momentum over the course of 5 months that cannot be rivaled through traditional practices. The taskforce was empowered to assess the efficacy of new digital outreach methods, and to compare the real return on investment, developing a model of resources to restoration. By the end of the campaign, the taskforce garnered over 80 previously unengaged leads from landowners specifically stating which resources would be most beneficial to them.

As the data was analyzed during the campaign, it was acknowledged that not all connections will lead to more acres restored, but there was realization of the potential of the 625 interactions between the team, specialists, and landowners.

Building and strengthening relationships with a network of well-informed landowners is the foundation to a more resilient outreach program and longleaf restoration efforts. Furthermore, this initiative cultivated a community of forest landowners looking to preserve heritage, working land forests, wildlife habitat, and biodiversity.

*from NRI blog post by Brittany Wegner, dated Nov. 8, 2019*

*For more information:*

- <http://bit.ly/LongleafLifeline>
- <https://txlongleaf.org/>

## TEXAS FOREST ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The 2008 Farm Bill required each state to analyze its forest conditions and trends and delineate priority rural and urban forest landscapes. From Texas’ state assessment, a statewide forest resource strategy was developed that served as the basis for formulating competitive proposals for USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry funds. Together, these two documents make up the Texas Forest Action Plan.

In developing this initial Plan, with input from stakeholders across the state, five primary issues were identified for the rural

and urban forests of the state: Urban Forest Sustainability, Central Texas Woodlands Conservation, Sustainability of Forest Resources in East Texas, Water Resources, and Wildfire and Public Safety.

Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) is in the process of updating the Forest Action Plan for the state. TFS is soliciting input from stakeholders and the interested public on the challenges and opportunities to conserve, protect, and enhance the forest resources of Texas. Please take a moment to respond to the survey by going to the second link in the sidebar.

*from TFS website*

*For more information:*

- <https://texasforestinfo.tamu.edu/ForestActionPlan/index.html>
- <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ForestAction>

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](https://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 Advisor:**

**Joe Pase, TFS-Retired; Lufkin, Texas**

## TEXAS TIMBER TAX WORKSHOP

**2020 Texas Timber Income and Property Tax Workshop**

**February 10, 2020**

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

This daylong workshop will provide working knowledge of timber tax, including basics about timber taxation and the latest changes to tax laws and rules for 2019 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.

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

More information: <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/taxworkshop>. \$75/person, includes workbook, lunch, and refreshments. \$30 for each additional family member; no workbook.

*Join the conversation about timber tax on Twitter as we live tweet the 2020 workshop! Follow us @TXForestService and use our event hashtag #TxTimberTax to reach out, share updates, and ask questions about timber tax. Selected questions tweeted with #TxTimberTax will be answered by our experts!*



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