

# FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

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

## NATIONAL WATER QUALITY INITIATIVE

*from NRCS article and webpage*

*For more information:*

- <http://bit.ly/WaterQualityInitiative>
- <http://bit.ly/2Jk01w3>

The National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) is a partnership among Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), state water quality agencies, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to identify and address impaired water bodies through voluntary conservation. NRCS provides targeted funding for financial and technical assistance in small watersheds most in need and where landowners can use conservation practices to make a difference.

Conservation systems include practices that promote soil health, reduce erosion, and lessen nutrient runoff, such as filter strips/streamside management zones, cover crops, reduced tillage, and manure management. These practices not only benefit natural resources but enhance agricultural productivity and profitability by improving soil health and optimizing the use of agricultural inputs.

State water quality agencies and other partners contribute additional resources for watershed planning, implementation, and outreach. They also provide resources for monitoring efforts that help track water quality improvements over time.

The NWQI provides a way to accelerate voluntary, on-site conservation investments and focused water quality monitoring and assessment resources where they can deliver the greatest benefits for clean water.

NWQI has been extended through Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, with some updates to strengthen program delivery. Updates include a focus on watershed assessment and planning and use of multi-year bud-

gets to demonstrate long-term commitment in assisting water quality efforts.

NRCS invested approximately \$30 million in targeted assistance to help farmers and ranchers improve water quality in high-priority streams and rivers across the country in 2018. In FY19, NRCS had 201 watersheds receiving financial assistance, and 27 priority areas (62 watersheds total) that will be developing watershed assessments and outreach strategies. Fourteen of those watersheds are in Texas.

In 2012, MillerCoors began partnering with the NRCS in Texas, local soil and water conservation districts, and other state and local stakeholders to establish the “Restore Project.” Through this program, they were able to provide \$8.3 million in collective funding assistance to landowners who implemented conservation practices such as cover crops, forage and biomass planting, brush management, residue and tillage management, and other practices that benefit the water, soil, plant, and wildlife resources on their land and areas downstream. Their efforts focused on Chambers Creek, a sub-watershed of the Trinity River. This river is a vital ecosystem that provides water to businesses like MillerCoors, as well as millions of residents and thousands of wildlife species.

Since 2012, NRCS has worked with more than 3,650 producers to adopt conservation practices on more than 825,000 acres in priority watersheds in the United States through NWQI. To date, at least 11 impaired water bodies have been improved and subsequently scheduled for de-listing or otherwise removed from NWQI due to successful water quality improvements.

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## CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE RULES

Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) is reminding Texas landowners of exotic chronic wasting disease (CWD) susceptible species rules for the 2019-20 hunting season.

Exotic susceptible species include North American elk or wapiti, black tailed deer, red deer, reindeer, sika deer, moose and/or any associated subspecies and hybrids. All mule deer, white-tailed deer, and other native species are under the jurisdiction of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Hunters and landowners should follow these requirements:

### Premises where Exotic CWD Susceptible Species are Hunter-Harvested

- Owners of properties where exotic CWD susceptible species older than 16 months of age are hunter-harvested are required to submit a mortality record to the TAHC, due on or before April 1 of each year.
- Every calendar year, landowners must have eligible mortalities tested for CWD until three animals are tested. An eligible mortality is a death from any cause of an exotic CWD susceptible species that is 16 months of age or older. This includes hunter-harvested mortalities or herd culling, natural mortalities, or animals moved directly to slaughter. Once valid CWD test results are obtained, they are to be

submitted to TAHC, accompanied by a test submission form.

### Owners Moving or Transporting Live Exotic CWD Susceptible Species

- Any person engaged in the business of buying or selling exotic CWD susceptible species in commerce must maintain records for all exotics transported within the state or where there is a transfer of ownership.
- All live exotic CWD susceptible species moved or transported within the state must have official identification. Contact TAHC ADT department for more information on official ID.
- An owner of a property where exotic CWD susceptible species are located within a high fence must keep an estimated annual inventory for all exotic CWD susceptible species. Annual inventories are due to TAHC on or before April 1 of each year.

Hunters should also be aware of the CWD zones in Texas. The CWD Containment and Surveillance Zones include the Trans-Pecos zone, Panhandle zone, and South-Central Texas zone. Mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, red deer, or other CWD susceptible species hunter harvested within the zones are **REQUIRED** to bring their animals to a TPWD check station within 48 hours of harvest.

*from Texas Animal Health Commission news release dated October 17, 2019*

*For more information:*

- [www.tahc.texas.gov/news/2019/2019-10-17\\_Hunters-CWD.pdf](http://www.tahc.texas.gov/news/2019/2019-10-17_Hunters-CWD.pdf)
- <https://tpwd.texas.gov/regulations/outdoor-annual/hunting/cwd/cwd-zones>
- <https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/diseases/cwd>
- [www.tahc.texas.gov/animal\\_health/elk-deer/#cwdexotic](http://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/elk-deer/#cwdexotic)

## THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT - SOILWEB 2.0

Have you ever wondered about the soil you are standing on, at any given spot in the United States? Curious about what soil type it is? How about if the soil is easy to dig? If the soil is ideal for supporting the weight of a house or a barn? Or simply, if it will help you grow better tomatoes?

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the University of California at Davis recently announced

that the SoilWeb app, version 2.0, is available as a free download from Google Play (Android) and the Apple app store (iOS).

Users can simply click "Get Soil Data" on the app's home screen and get detailed soil survey data for that spot. Furthermore, they can get information on soil taxonomy, soil series descriptions, soil property depth profiles, land classification ratings, hydraulic and erosion ratings, forest productivity, and soil suitability ratings.

*from NRCS media blog*

*For more information:*

- <http://bit.ly/33Z6t3P>

## VEGETATIVE FUEL BREAK ASSISTANCE

Landowners in the high plains region of Texas may be eligible for funding that would assist in the creation of vegetative fuel breaks on private lands.

Through December 20, 2019, Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) will be accepting grant applications. The agency will reimburse each grant recipient up to \$2,500 for the costs associated with trees, weed barriers, planting contractors, drip irrigation systems, among other things to create vegetative fuel breaks.

“This grant is intended to help protect communities in the high plains by reducing the risks of catastrophic wildfire events on both public and private lands,” said Logan Scherschel, TFS Wildland Urban Interface Specialist. “Our hope is that landowners will apply for this grant and then construct vegetative fuel breaks on their property ahead of fire season.”

Vegetative fuel breaks are trees and shrubs that are systematically planted adjacent to fields, homesteads, or feedlots to reduce or redirect the wind. As a result, the fuel breaks can impact wind-driven fire behavior in a way that will allow time for resi-

dents to evacuate before the fire impacts nearby homes or structures.

Fuel breaks eligible for the grant funds will consist of a minimum of 3 rows of trees at least 400 feet in length. The selection process for recipients will begin immediately after the December 20 deadline. “As always, Texas A&M Forest Service will be happy to answer any questions landowners have regarding the application process or how a vegetative fuel break can mitigate the risk of property damage caused by wildfires,” said Scherschel.

All landowners who apply for the \$2,500 grant will be notified of a decision no later than January 31, 2020. TFS does not conduct the actual planting and installation of the vegetative fuel break, but will provide technical assistance to applicants.

If an application is approved, Texas A&M Forest Service will then further discuss the project details with the recipient prior to planting, and will conduct a follow-up inspection once the project is complete.

Applications can be found at <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/CommunitiesinAction>.

*from Texas A&M Forest Service News Release dated October 10, 2019*

*For more information:*

- <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/content/article.aspx?id=30487>
- <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/CommunitiesinAction>
- Logan Scherschel, Wildland Urban Interface Specialist, TFS; 210-556-9374; [lscherschel@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:lscherschel@tfs.tamu.edu)
- Jonathan Motsinger, Program Leader, TFS; 806-892-3572.; [jmotsinger@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:jmotsinger@tfs.tamu.edu)

## WEST TEXAS NURSERY

Texas A&M Forest Service’s West Texas Nursery has been producing high-quality, affordable tree and shrub seedlings for over 40 years.

Opened in 1978, West Texas Nursery is the only Texas A&M Forest Service-operated seedling nursery in the state. Around 20 different tree species are produced for sale annually, ranging from pines and evergreens for windbreaks, to hardwoods like oak and pecan for wildlife and conservation plantings.

Situated on 53 acres northeast of Lubbock in Idalou in the Texas panhandle, West Texas Nursery’s greenhouses produce up to 140,000 container seedlings each year, while the outdoor planting fields accom-

modate an additional 200,000 bareroot seedlings.

West Texas Nursery also has a large-scale, custom tree growing program. With this program, you can:

- Use native tree and shrub seedlings for your conservation and restoration projects;
- Maintain desired genetics by using source-specific plant material;
- Ensure the plants you need are ready when you need them.

Previous contract seedling production has been done for City of Austin, San Antonio River Authority, Arbor Day Foundation, Nueces Electric Cooperative, and others.

*from Texas A&M Forest Service website*

*For more information:*

- <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/WestTexasNursery>
- <https://tfsapps.tamu.edu/wtn/StoreFront>
- call (806) 892-3572

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**Editorial Advisor:**

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

## WOOD INNOVATIONS

Wood is a versatile, durable, abundant, and cost-effective renewable resource that provides numerous environmental benefits, including storing carbon when used in construction and offsetting the release of fossil carbon when used for energy production.

The USDA Forest Service and its partners are creating new opportunities for innovative wood products which contribute to diversified rural economies and support sustainable forest management. The Wood Innovations Funding Opportunity supports traditional wood utilization projects, expands wood energy markets, and promotes using wood as a construction material in commercial buildings. The Forest Service supports proposals that significantly stimulate or expand wood energy and wood products markets that support the long-term management of National Forest System and other forest lands.

The 2020 Request for Proposals focuses on:

- Reducing hazardous fuels and improve forest health on National Forest System and other forest lands
- Reducing costs of forest management on all land types
- Promoting economic and environmental health of communities.

Go to <http://bit.ly/woodinnovations> for more information.



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