
FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

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

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Foresters Praise Farm Bill

The National Association of State Foresters and the Society of American Foresters commend President Bush for signing the Farm Bill in May of 2002, establishing into law programs that will benefit the public, private forest landowners, and communities through forestry and conservation assistance. "The Forestry Title of the Farm Bill enhances and reaffirms the longstanding partnership between State Foresters and the USDA Forest Service by helping forest landowners maintain working forests that benefit the public as a whole," said NASF President Larry A. Kotchman. "This bill will also protect communities in the wildland-urban interface from wildfire," he said.

Also known as the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, the Farm Bill contains strong Forestry and Conservation Titles that will assist private forest landowners in taking greater strides in sustainable forestry. The Forest Landowner Enhancement Program and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program will help landowners protect riparian areas, enhance wildlife habitat and assist with management plan development.

"The law now recognizes that working, family-owned forestlands are vital to the health of our economy and our environment--and that recognition is long overdue," said William H. Banzhaf, SAF's executive vice-president. ✪

For more information:

 <http://pinchot.org/pic/farbill/Legislation.html> or www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farbill/2002/index.html

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Urban Tree of the Year

Betula nigra Heritage™ was selected Urban Tree of the Year for 2002 as determined by responses to an annual survey in arborist magazine *City Trees*. This magazine serves as Journal to the Society of Municipal Arborists (SMA) and readers select a new tree each year.

According to SMA, "the Heritage River Birch was selected as this year's Urban Tree of the Year. Although it was not a majority vote, the popularity of the Heritage River Birch comes from its tolerance to the urban environment, its beautiful bark in summer and winter, and its specimen-like qualities."

The three most common birch species grown in urban environments in America are paper birch, European white birch, and the heat-tolerant river birch. River birch, or *Betula nigra*, seems to be the only birch truly adapted to the hardships of urban conditions, especially the Heritage™ or "Cully" cultivar. This tree stands up to heat and a deadly birch borer which can become a real problem with other birch species planted under city conditions and subject to pruning and other intrusive forms of landscape management.

According to *City Trees* Editor Leonard Phillips, the tree was chosen "to illustrate the importance of selecting the right tree for the right spot. The Urban Tree of the Year also provides extra publicity to excellent trees that need planting more often. Our cities often contain too many of the common maples and ash that are cheap, easy to grow, and are short-lived. A quality urban tree is a better investment for the future of the city."

Many arborists and urban foresters have used the tree and are recommending it highly in and around towns and cities.

Runner-ups in the survey were Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry, Golden Rain Tree, Shawnee Brave Bald Cypress, and Allee Lacebark Elm. ✪

For more information:

<http://forestry.about.com/library/weekly/aa070902a.htm>

Fighting Odor with Trees

From 1978 to 1992, the number of cattle, dairy, and swine operations doubled. With this has been an increase in livestock odors. Livestock odor has an impact on people and their environments in surrounding communities. Associated with this are serious social ramifications, such as health concerns for humans and animals, decreased real estate values, negative effects on tourism and recreation, and stressed relationships between families, neighbors, and entire communities (Palmquist, 1997; Schiffman et al., 1998; Donham, 1998; Thu, 1998).

Shelterbelts--rows of systematically planted trees--have the potential to be effective and inexpensive odor

control devices that will intercept and disrupt odor plumes and aerosols associated with livestock. Dense, multi-row shelterbelts lower wind speeds over storage lagoons and waste areas, allowing for slower release of the odor plume, thus facilitating dilution (Bottcher et al., 1999). They reduce downwind odorous lagoon emissions by 26 to 92% (Liu et al., 1996). They reduce downwind transport of odor particulates (dust and aerosols) by 35 to 56% (Laird, 1997; Thernelius, 1997). Shelterbelts also have a positive effect on the public's perception of the livestock operation by providing a permanent visual diversion.★

For more information: Brian Scott, TFS, (806) 353-8952 or bscott@tfs.tamu.edu

Wetland Conservation Within the West Gulf Coast Plain Initiative

The West Gulf Coastal Plain Initiative (WGCP) was formed in the spring of 2001 and is a biological planning effort focused on the conservation of all bird species occupying all habitat types within the West Gulf Coast and Ouachita Mountain Physiographic Provinces of southeastern Oklahoma, southwestern Arkansas, western Louisiana, and eastern Texas. The partners will assist in the development of a landscape-level conservation plan targeted at meeting the goals and objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners In Flight, U. S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and the North American Colonial Waterbird Plan in the WGCP.

Ultimately, information developed through this initiative will be made available to assist landowners in enhancing and restoring habitats of value to populations of priority bird species. The identification of priority species, habitat requirements and relationships, and primary limiting factors will be used to develop models for characterizing habitat suitability for priority species. Habitat suitability models will enable private and public land managers to develop adaptive management strategies to conserve wetland, slope, and upland sites of value for bird species.

Red River Focus Areas

Forest Wetland Restoration Focus Areas have been completed for the Red River and immediate, adjacent tributaries of Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

This model is designed to identify conservation areas where forested wetland patches of 5,000 acres or greater with a core of 2,500 acres can either be developed or conserved. These conservation areas will be placed around or adjacent to existing patches of bottomland hardwoods and areas of public ownership. The intent of these focus areas is to encourage placement of forest restoration on public and private lands that are most beneficial to forest landbird conservation.

In the four states, 19 focus areas in the Red River area have been designated. Five of these focus areas occur in Texas: Lake Crockett (Fannin Co.), Big Pine Creek (Red River Co. and adjacent areas of Oklahoma), Red Slough (Red River and Bowie Co. and adjacent areas of Oklahoma), Little River (Bowie Co. and adjacent areas of Arkansas), and the Sulphur River (Bowie and Cass Co. and adjacent areas of Louisiana).

Other Wetland Conservation Efforts

Of the 52.7 million acres with the WGCP, approximately 3.8 million acres are forested wetlands and emergent herbaceous wetlands. Because of the significant losses to these wetland types, and the high potential for future losses, the development of locally-implemented, landscape-based conservation plans for bird species utilizing these habitats will receive a high priority.★

For more information: See "Bits and Pieces" section

BITS · AND · PIECES

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR LOGGING PROFESSIONALS:

2002 BMP WORKSHOPS

AUG. 16	LUFKIN
SEPT. 13	JEFFERSON
OCT. 11	LUFKIN
NOV. 8	LUFKIN

2002 PHASE II WORKSHOPS (Silviculture, Endangered Species, Wildlife, Wetlands)

SEPT. 14	MARSHALL
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-Fee (per workshop): \$10 for TFA/TLC members; \$35 for non-members

-For registration, call TFA at (936) 632-8733

❖ For more information concerning the West Gulf Coastal Plain Initiative, you may contact the following individuals:
James A. Neal, USFWS, Nacogdoches, TX (936) 569-6129
Jeffrey A. Reid, USFWS, Lufkin, TX (936) 639-8546
Carl Frentress, TPWD, Athens, TX (903) 675-4177
Ricky Maxey, TPWD, Nacogdoches, TX (936) 564-0234
Bill Bartush, Ducks Unlimited, 11942 FM 848, Tyler, TX 75707

❖ Here is a very informative and interesting website that covers general information about forestry and related topics: <http://forestry.about.com>. There are sections on how to ID a tree, forestry photography, and a glossary of forestry terms, and with numerous other topics.

❖ Visit www.soforext.net for these online video-streamed programs (RealPlayer 8 is needed to view streaming video):

- An Urban and Community Forestry Update for the South
- Master Tree Farmer I

Coming soon online:

- Master Tree Farmer II
- Master Wildlife Program
- Forest Certification Satellite Videoconference

WE WISH TO THANK THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS QUARTER'S NEWSLETTER:

Robert McConnell, NASF, Washington DC
Brian Scott, TFS, Amarillo, TX
James A. Neal, USFWS, Nacogdoches, TX
Ricky Maxey, TPWD, Nacogdoches, TX
Steve Lightfoot, TPWD, Austin, TX

Lone Star Land Stewards

Descendants of a pioneer ranch and farming family, Jess and Lou Womack made it a goal to restore the natural habitat on their 8,500-acre Womack Family Ranch in Victoria County. For their efforts to restore native wetlands and prairies for the benefit of a diversity of wildlife, the Womacks are being recognized as Texas Parks & Wildlife's Lone Star Land Steward of the Year for 2002.

A New Respect for the Land

"We are in the ranching business and as ranchers we feel strongly that we have to act as stewards of the land, protecting it as well as making money off it," said Jess Womack. "The part of the ranch that we bought and inherited . . . had really been run down and overgrazed and not taken care of and we found that by taking care of it we are helping wildlife as well as cattle."

Through the Womack's efforts, more than half of their diverse acreage has become fruitful wetlands, attracting more than 300 bird species including bald eagles and peregrine falcons. After being drained for four generations and converted into cropland, these wetlands have been returned to their natural state.

Return of the Natives

Large counts of ducks, geese, and other waterfowl visit the wetlands on annual migrations. The area also supports one of the largest nesting populations of colonial waterbirds in the Guadalupe River drainage, as well as healthy populations of alligators. The future of these wetland areas has also been ensured by the Womacks through a permanent easement agreement in the Wetlands Reserve Program that prohibits agricultural practices and development.

The ranch's upland acreage contains croplands and pastures, which over the years has seen its share of abuse from overgrazing of cattle. The Womacks are working with the TPWD Landowner Incentive Program and the NRCS to convert upland mesquite woodlands back to native coastal prairie. For this area, the Womacks apply prescribed burning, rotational grazing, and reduced herbicides and have been reseeding pastures in native grasses in hopes of providing potential habitat for the Attwater's prairie chicken restoration program. ★

For more information:

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/news/news/020603a.htm

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- Brian Scott, TFS, Amarillo, Texas
- Pete Smith, TFS, College Station, Texas

Communication Workshop

Would you like to hone your skills for working with the media? Do you need tips on how to promote workshops and events? Would you like to improve your skills on educating young people? Check out the “Communications Skills Workshop for Conservation Professionals.”

This one-day workshop takes place Thursday, December 5, 2002, at Pine Creek Lodge in Nacogdoches, Texas. Registration fee is \$75.

Speakers include representatives from television media, Texas Parks and Wildlife, International Paper, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas Master Naturalists, Temple-Inland, Stephen F. Austin State University, and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture. For registration information, contact Misty Compton, SFASU College of Forestry, at (936) 468-3301.★

For more information:

www.sfasu.edu/forestry/landowner/communication.htm

