TFS Website Content Management
User Manual

tfsweb.tamu.edu

Version 1.1, April 4, 2021

IR Mission: We strive to make our systems reliable, available, and secure for the facilitation and support of the Texas A&M Forest Service's mission in public service.

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1.0 Introduction

With the redesign of the primary TFS website, comes new opportunities and challenges. Opportunities include reaching more and more citizens of Texas with a well-organized, concise, clean, and mobile friendly website. The challenge comes with keeping that website up to date, relevant, and maintained.

Keeping the website maintained is the responsibility of the agency's selected content managers. This manual is the go-to guide for content managers to find step-by-step instructions on editing content, how to write for the web, contact info and more.

1.1 What Is Content Management?

Content management is defined as the administration of digital content throughout its lifecycle, from creation to permanent storage or deletion. The content involved may be images, video, audio and multimedia as well as text.

Content management as it relates to TFS is the use of subject matter experts to edit, approve, add, and maintain subject matter on the main TFS website.

1.2 What Is Ektron?

Ektron is a website content management system.

A CMS is defined as a computer application that allows publishing, editing and modifying, organizing, deleting as well as maintenance of content from a central interface. Such systems of content management provide procedures to manage workflow in a collaborative environment.

The primary goal in the use of Ektron is to have all content edited and managed from a central place while promoting collaboration, review, and standardization among websites. Ektron is the standardized CMS for TFS and is the approved platform for editing the main TFS websites and many other TFS websites.

1.3 What Is the Workflow?

Most content editing should start within the departments. Content managers are strategically selected so that there is an even distribution between the divisions. When a change is needed, the content manager for that area is contacted, the change is implemented or added, the content is submitted for review and finally published to the website.

The following workflow diagram shows the ideal flow from request to publish:

Starts at Department Level

Edit / Add Content (Content Managers)

Seek Input from IR / Communications (If needed)

Submit Content for Review (Communications)

Content Published to Website
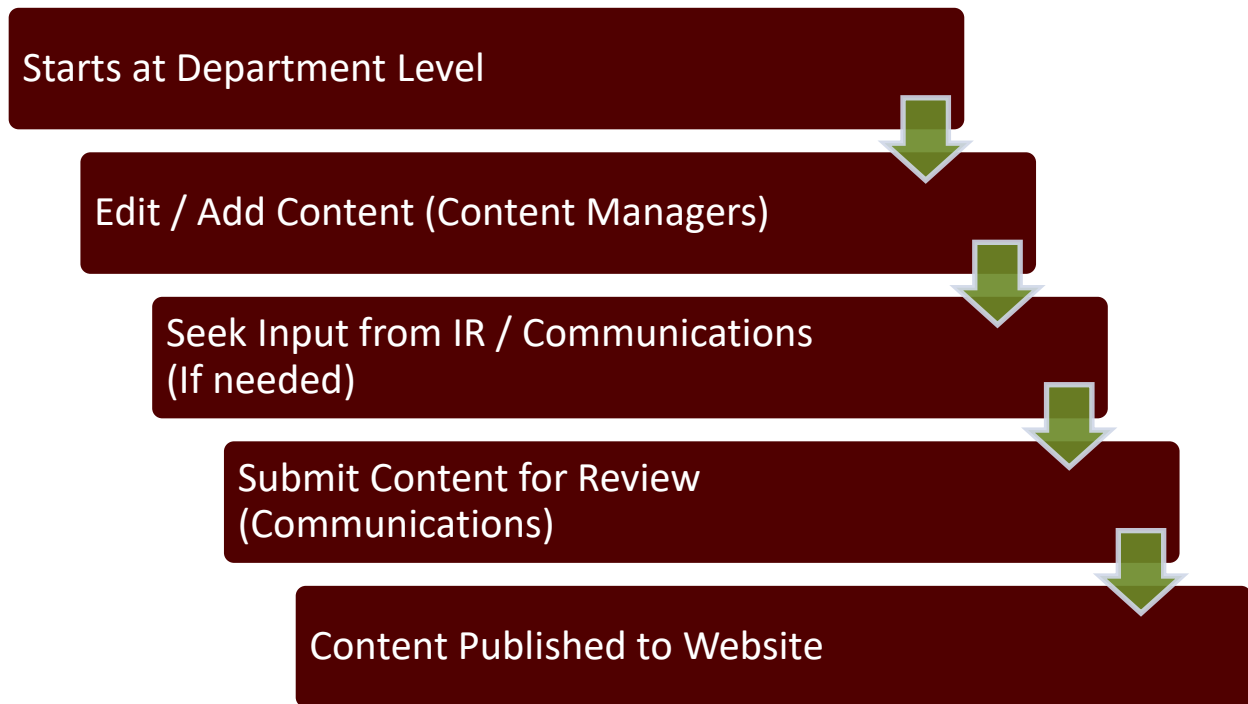
1.4 Responsive Design

Over the past few years, the number of devices of differing sizes that people use to access websites has grown tremendously. The most notable change is the increasing use of smart phones and associated mobile Web browsers. The following diagram shows some of the different screen sizes that users view websites through:

Why is this important? Editing content is not as simple as it once was. Websites were primarily static and had a fixed width and height. Today's websites are more dynamic and adjust to the screen size of the device being used to access the website. The new TFS website is no exception.

As content is edited on the new website, keep responsive design in mind. For example, when inserting a table to show
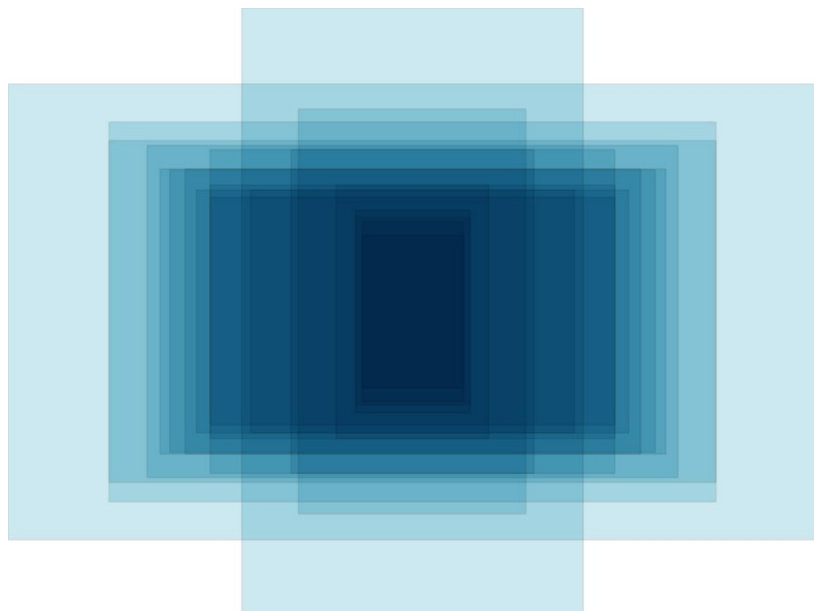
tabular data, don't use fixed column widths. Use percentages instead. Some tips to keep your content optimized for mobile design:

- Avoid placing large images side by side. Instead, place images one on top of the other.
- Avoid the use of fixed column widths for tables
- For hyperlinks, use text or words instead of the raw URL. A long hyperlink can cause the text to not wrap and can produce mixed results on smaller screen sizes.

1.5 Where to Get Help

Should you need help editing content or writing for the Web, please contact IR, communications or your fellow content managers. We are your support group and want to help in any way we can to make content management as seamless and easy as possible.

Contact Information:

Information Resources:
Phone: (979) 458-7309
Chat: tfshelp.tamu.edu
E-mail: support@tfs.tamu.edu

Communications:
Phone: (979) 458-6600
E-mail: communications@tfs.tamu.edu

All Content Managers:
E-mail: ektroncontentmanagers@tfs.tamu.edu

2.0 Editing Content (Ektron)

In the following section, we'll explore Ektron, how to edit and add content, the workarea, smart forms, and all of the details that go with it. This section is mostly technical in nature. For details on how to write for the Web, go to section 3.0 Writing for the Web

2.1 Introduction to Ektron

2.1.1 Logging In

To login to Ektron, follow these steps.

Note: If you can't remember your password of have trouble logging in, call the IR Help Desk (979) 458-7309 or start a support session.

1. Go to tfsweb.tamu.edu/login
2. Click "Login".
3. Enter in your user name and password.
4. Once logged in, the webpage will refresh automatically.

From here, you can click "workarea" or simply browse to the webpage you need to edit to get started.

2.1.2 The Workarea (Quick Reference)

- 1—**Workarea Tabs**
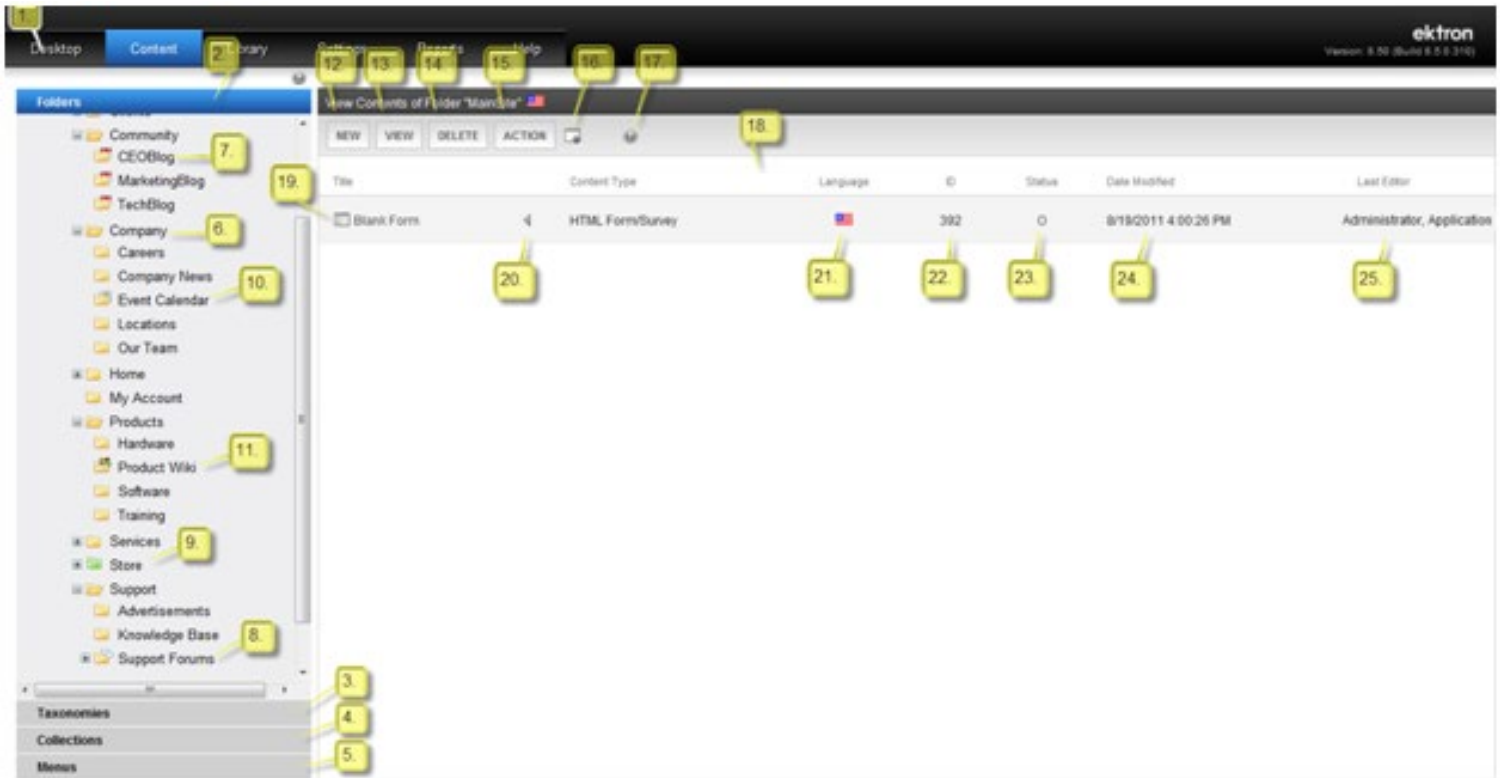
- o Desktop—Smart personalization desktop
- o Content—Folders, contents, DMS, taxonomies, collections and menus
- o Library—Content folder structure that organizes images, files , hyperlinks and quicklinks
- o Settings—Manage CMS settings based upon permissions
- o Reports—Content reports and site analytics
- o Help—Access to this document
- **Content Tab Types**
  - o 2—Folder Tab—View folder architect structure of CMS
  - o 3—Taxonomy Tab—View Taxonomy Structure and options
  - o 4—Collections Tab—View Collections and options
  - o 5—Menu Tab—View Menus and options
- **Folder Types**
  - o 6—Content Folder—View contents in the selected folder
  - o 7—Blog Folder—View the posts and comments on this blog
  - o 8—Forum Folder—View the discussion forums, categories, topics and replies
  - o 9—eCommerce Folder—View the eCommerce items
  - o 10—Calendar Folder—View and plan events on the calendar
  - o 11—Community Folder—Folders for membership uses to edit content, select to view contents
- **Drop-down Menus**

- o 12—New menu—Create new content, forms documents, folders menus and collections
- o 13—View menu—View language, properties and archived content and more
- o 14—Delete menu—Delete multiple items; administrators can delete folders
- o 15—Action menu—Export for translation, search, move/copy content, eSync
- o 16—DMS/ Add asset—Use the pop up window to drag and drop documents from local machine
- o 17—In Context Help—Context help
- o 18—Content Organization Bar—Sort content by the title
- **Content Types**
  - o 19—Content Items—HTML content, forms, DMS, or multimedia content
  - o 20—Quick Edit Menu—For content editing, properties and content eSync
  - o 21—Language Flag—Indicate the content language version
  - o 22—Content ID—Automatically generated by system
  - o 23—Content Status—Current status of a piece of content
    - ▪ (A) Approved, published and on the website
    - ▪ (O) Checked out only, available for editing by the content editor who checked it out
    - ▪ (I) Checked in, available for editing
    - ▪ (S) Submitted, currently in the approval chain; waiting for acceptance
    - ▪ (M) Deletion, marked for deletion
    - ▪ (T) Awaiting tasks, currently awaiting completion of tasks
    - ▪ (P) Pending, Awaiting scheduled start date
    - ▪ (D) Pending Deletion, Pending deletion but created with a future start date
  - o 24—Date Modified—Last modified date of the content
  - o 25—Last Editor—Person who made the last modification

2.1.3 The Folder Structure

While in the work area, you can click on "Content" -> "Folders". The folder structure is where all the content of the website is stored and mimics the mega menu structure. The hierarchy goes as follows:

- Main Folder (TFS Main)
  - o Bucket Folder
    - ▪ Landing Pages (Tier 1)
      - ▪ Content Pages (Tier 2)
        - ▪ More Content Pages (Tier 3+)

This is what you will see from the Ektron Workarea:

- ⊟ 📂 TFS Main
  - o 📁 Campaign
  - o ⊞ 📁 Connect

- o ⊞📁 <u>Data and Analysis</u>
- o ⊞📁 <u>Finance and Administration</u>
- o ⊞📁 <u>Learn and Explore</u>
- o ⊞📁 <u>Manage Forests and Land</u>
- o ⊞📁 <u>Preparing for Wildfires</u>
- o ⊞📁 <u>Urban and Community Forestry</u>
- o ⊞📁 <u>Wildfires and Disasters</u>

Clicking the "+" icon expands the folder and reveals the sub folders below. Clicking on a folder reveals the content contained within.

Note: Folder names and placement should not be edited. To request a new folder or modification, please <u>contact</u> IR or communications.

2.2 Adding New Content

2.2.1 Smart Forms

Each type of content page in Ektron uses what is called a smart form. Each smart form is specific to the type of content being entered. There are smart forms for:
- Landing (Tier 1) pages.
- Content (Tier 2, 3, +) pages.
- Campaigns
- News articles
- Events

To help visualize how these smart forms affect the website, the following images are of each smart form and what they look like when completed:

Landing Page (Tier 1)

Content Page (Tier 2, 3, +)

Campaign

Article thumbnail image is displayed to the homepage

News Article

Events

2.2.2 Content Pages (T1 & T2 +)

Most of your time in Ektron is spent creating, editing, and performing other activities with content. Authors can conveniently update content directly from the website (after logging in).

1. In the workarea, navigate to the folder in which you want to create or edit the content.
2. In the View Content screen, choose **New -> select page type (Landing or Article page)** to add a new page.
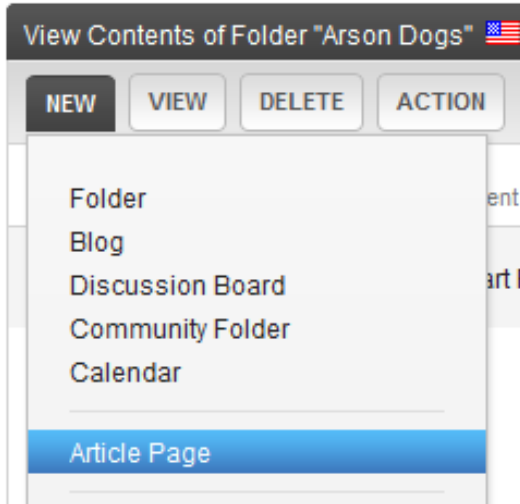
Or **click on the existing page name** and then **click on Edit button** on to left of View Content screen to edit the page.
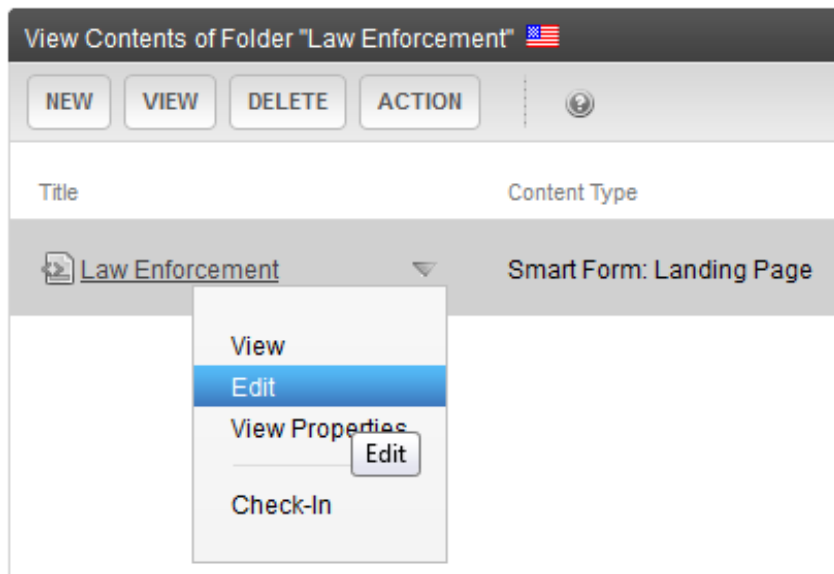
Title

Title or Page Names are important since they appear in page URLs and Bread Crumbs. It is important to keep it short and sweet. Also, using relevant keywords improves search results.

1. Click on Title area and enter the title of the page.

Summary

The summary can include images, files, and hyperlinks. If the summary is blank, Ektron copies the first 40 words of content to the summary.

Click the **Summary** tab below title area.Enter a summary for the content.
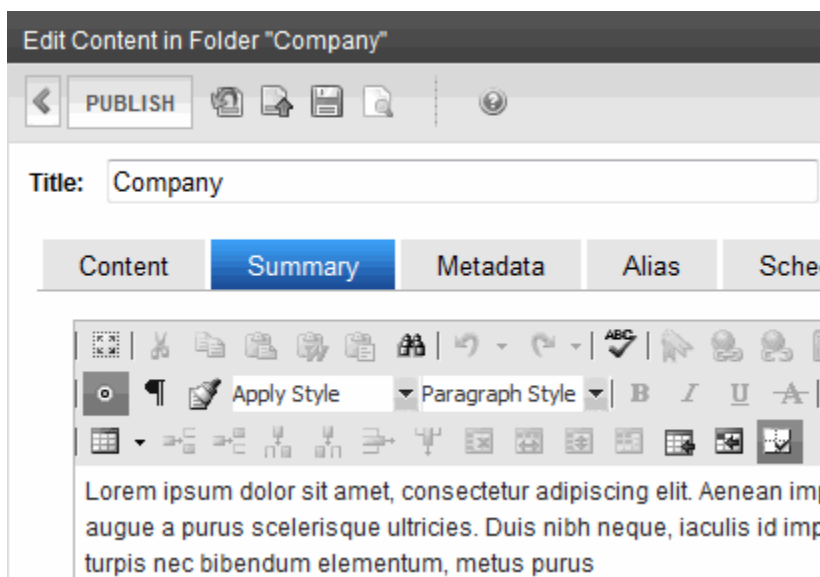
Aliases

Aliases provide a way to give a friendly name to a web page. Ideally, all content pages in Ektron should have at least one alias. For example, lets say the URL for the Law Enforcement webpage is http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/main/content.aspx?id=203004. With an alias, we can change the URL to something like http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/lawenforcement/ or http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/le/.

To add an alias to a content page:

1. Click on **Aliases** tab below the title area
2. Enter the name of the page (avoid using spaces, special characters etc)
3. Change the dropdown option from '.aspx' to '/'

| Content | Summary | Metadata | **Aliases** | Schedule | Comment | Templates |

Add Manual Alias

Alias: [....] [.aspx ▼]

To add Manual Alias to an existing page:

1. Click on Alias tab below the title area
2. Click on ADD MANUAL ALIAS tab
3. On Alias Data pop-up screen, check on both Primary and Active boxes
4. Enter the name of the page (avoid using spaces, special characters, etc)
5. Change the dropdown option from '.aspx' to '/'
6. Click on Save button

Alias Data

[SAVE]   ⓦ

Active: ☐
Primary: ☐
Language: [English (U.S.) ▼]

Define URL

Alias: [....]
[.aspx ▼]

Query String Action: [None ▼]
Additional Variables: [....]

Note: Selecting the "Primary" checkbox tells Ektron to make that alias the primary URL when other Content Managers link to the page.

Schedule

Scheduling lets you control when a version of content becomes visible on the website or when it expires (and is removed). When content reaches its end date, it appears on the Expired Content report.

1. Click on **Schedule** tab below the title area.
2. Click **Add** (⊞) next to the **Start Date** field.

3. A calendar pops up. Select the date and time when this version of the content will become visible on the website.

4. Click **Done**. The date and time appear in the **Start Date** field.
5. Follow the above steps to set an **End Date**
6. Choose content's archive options to determine what happens upon reaching end date/time.

Comments

You can briefly describe the content or comment on changes made when editing content using Comment tab. This area can be seen by all content managers and is a good place to jot down things that may be unique about the page. Or you can simply put a note regarding the status. "Waiting on more content" or "To edit later" for example.

1. Click on **Comment** tab below title area.
2. Enter comments in the given box.

Tabbed Content

Content entered here is placed at the bottom of the page. It provides horizontal tabbed headers to display multiple sections of content. When you click on an accordion tab, the other tabs slide up or down to reveal the content of the selected tab.

1. Click on Tabbed Content's drop down menu ( ) to Insert new tab above or below the current tab.
2. Click on Title area to enter the title.
3. Click on Tab Content to enter content, which will expand once clicked on the title.
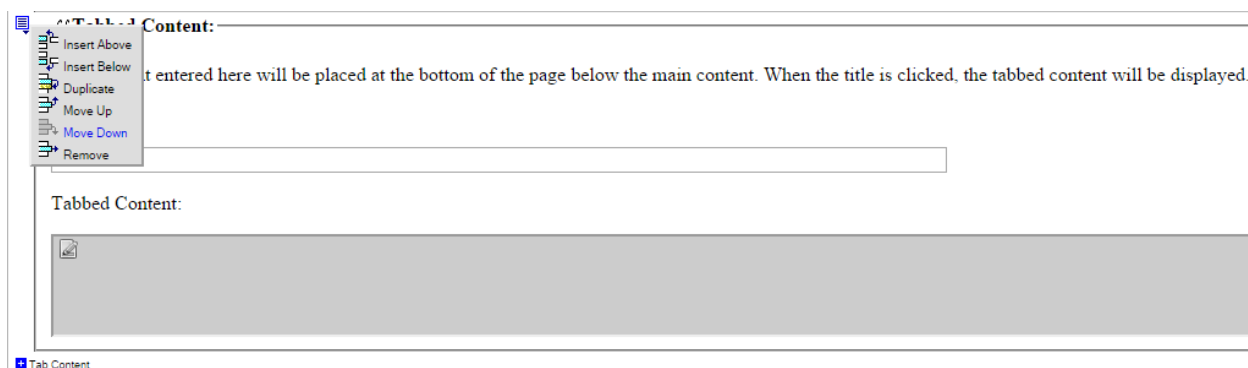
4. You can also delete a tabbed item by simply clicking on the Remove option from the drop-down menu.

Embedding Video

Most video displayed on the TFS website comes from YouTube. To put a video from YouTube in a piece of content, perform the following:

1. Using a Web browser, go to the YouTube video you want to embed.
2. Click "Embed."
3. Copy the code that is displayed.
4. While editing your content, place your cursor where the video is to be displayed.
5. Click the HTML button at the bottom of the editor window.
6. Paste the code copied in step 3.
7. Remove the "allowfullscreen" attribute from the code.
8. Go back to the preview mode and the video should be displayed.

An example video embed code:
```
<div class="embed-youtube">
<iframe src="//www.youtube.com/embed/f-y9qrdqjtI"
frameborder="0" allowfullscreen="true" autoplay="true"
class="video"></iframe>
</div>
```

Tip: To control the height and width, simply change the appropriate values. These are in pixels. Be careful to keep the proportions the same or you could end up with a skewed video.

Hyperlinks

Linking to Text

1. Highlight text that you want to become a hyperlink.
2. Click **Link** (🔗) on the Format tab.
3. Specify the URL you want.
4. If it is an external link then select target as New Window, otherwise go with default choice.
5. Click **OK** – the selected text becomes a hyperlink.

.
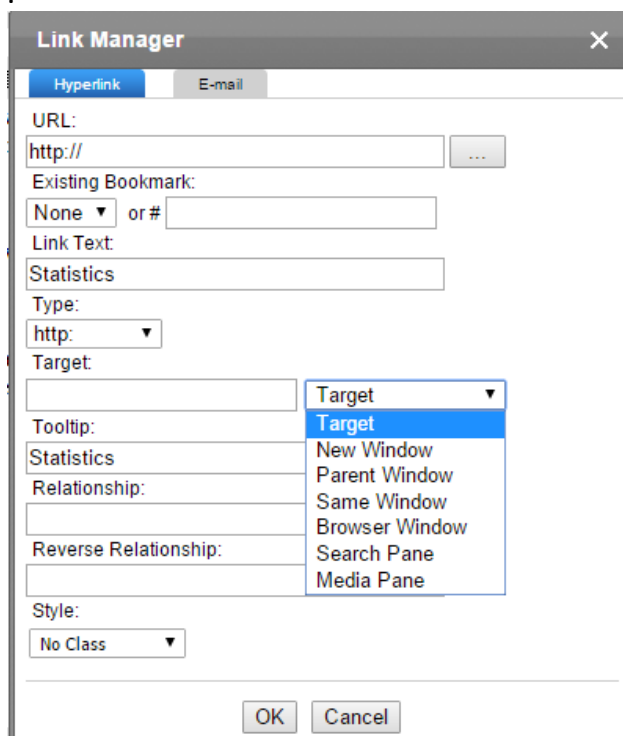
Removing a Link
1. Click the cursor on the linked item.
2. Click **Break Link** (💥). The link is removed.

Images & Documents

Before you can insert an image into content, the image must be uploaded to the library. You can upload an image to the library while editing content using the **Add Library** button.
1. Place the cursor where you want the image to appear.
2. Click **Library** (▣). The CMS400 Library screen appears.

3. From the left panel, navigate to the folder containing the image you want to insert. If you do not know its folder, use **Search** (image) to find an image by title, description, or internal file name.
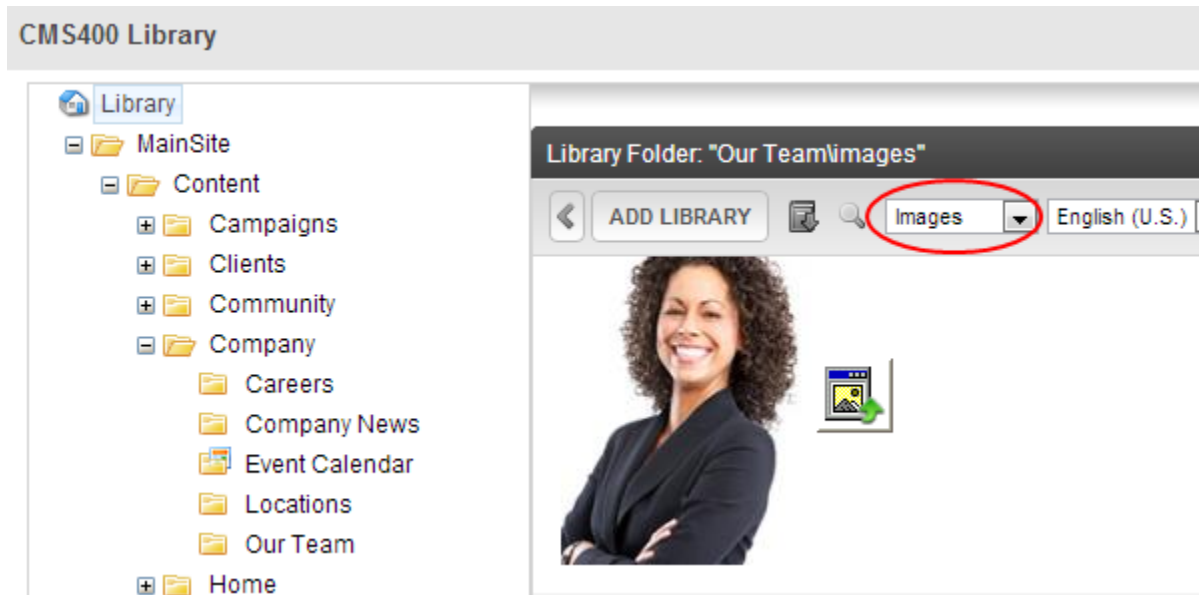
4. Select **Images** from the content type drop-down.
5. Select an image and click **Insert** (image). The image is inserted into the content. (You can also double-click the image.)
6. You can add an image to the library by clicking on the ADD LIBRARY button which allows you to upload and insert a local file.

Alternatively, you can insert a miniature version of the image, called a *thumbnail*, by clicking the thumbnail button (image). When the thumbnail appears on a Web page, a site visitor clicks it to view a full-sized image.

Similarly, after a file or document is copied to the library, users can add it to content. They can also add an item into the library while inserting it to content.

2.2.3 Library Items
Items that you have uploaded and used in the content are stored in the library. To get to the library select the Library tab located at the top of the workarea.
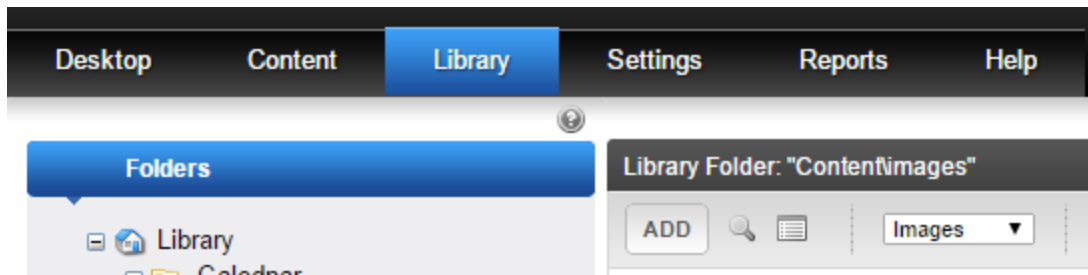
The folder structure for the library is the same as the content area. Clicking a folder in the left navigation will show the various library items that have been uploaded to that folder.

Tip: Change the drop down list to show the different kinds of library items. Library item types include:

- Images
- Files (PDF's, Word & Excel Docs, etc.)
- Quicklinks (Aliases)

Adding New Items

For the file being added, its type is defined in the Library Properties screen's **Image Extensions**or **File Extensions** field.

To add a file to the library:

1. In the workarea, browse the library folder and select a folder to which you want to copy a file.
2. When you copy a file to a folder, only users with permissions to that folder can insert the file into content. A list of files in that folder appears.
3. Click **Add**. The Add Library Item to Folder screen appears.
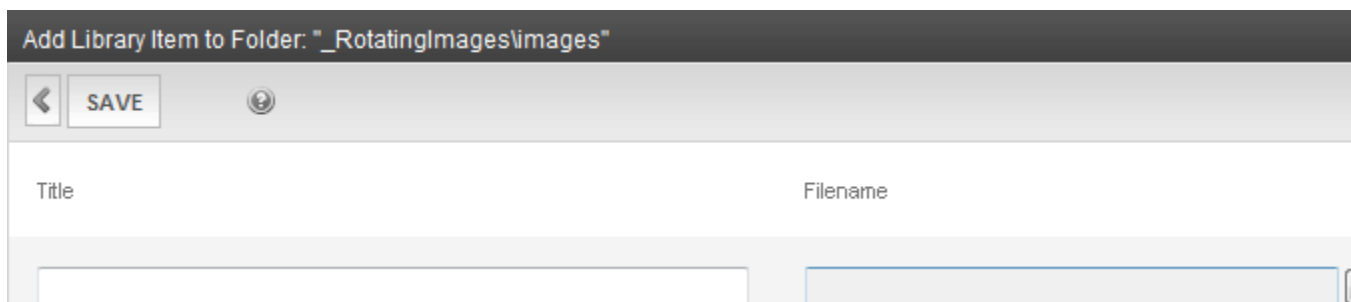
4. Enter the necessary information according to the following list.
    a. **Title**—Enter a title for the file to be copied.
    b. **Filename**—Enter the path to the file to be copied. You can use the **Browse** button to find it. (This is a location on your computer.)

c. **Description**—Enter a full text description to help other users identify this file. The **Description** appears on the View File and Search Results screens.

5. Click **Save** to copy the file. Users with permissions to the selected folder can insert the file into their content.

Over-writing Items

If a library file or image becomes out-of-date or the wrong version was copied, you can replace it with a new version. Overwriting files lets you minimize disk space and the number of library files.

When overwriting an image, the new image uses the same size dimensions and file extension as the older image. Be sure that the two images have the same file extension and size or make the adjustments at each occurrence of the image.

Remember, all links that point to the overwritten file now point to the new file.

To overwrite a library file:

1. Navigate to the View File screen for the file you want to overwrite and click **Overwrite** ( ). The Overwrite File screen appears.

2. Click **Browse**. A window lets you navigate to the new file.

3. Select a file, click **Open**. You return to the Overwrite File screen with the path to the new file in the **Filename** field.
4. Optionally, enter a description for the new file.
5. Click **Update** to overwrite the current version of the file with this version. A message appears before you can continue.
6. Click **OK** to overwrite the file.
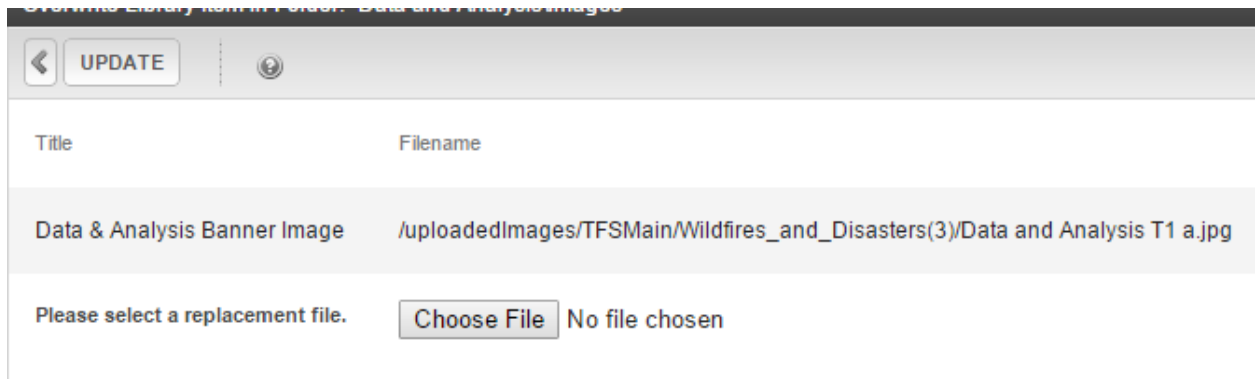
2.2.4 Campaigns

Campaigns are organized through the communications office. Contact them to schedule a campaign.

2.2.5 News Articles

News Articles are organized through the communications office. Submit your news to the communications office

2.2.6 Events

Events are coordinated through the communications office. Contact communications to get your event listed.

2.3 Edit Existing Content

2.3.1 Editing Content in the Workarea

One primary way to edit content is to browse the workarea. From here, you can see all content and library items that you have access to. Simply select a folder, view its contents, and edit the piece of content you want to modify.
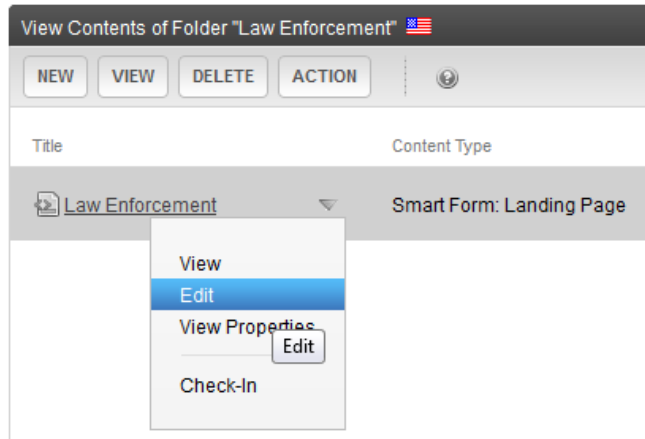
2.3.2 Editing Content Directly on the Website

Another way to edit content is to log in and navigate to the exact page on the website using the mega menu or by direct link. Once on the page, hover over the "bubble" icon and select "Edit" from the menu.
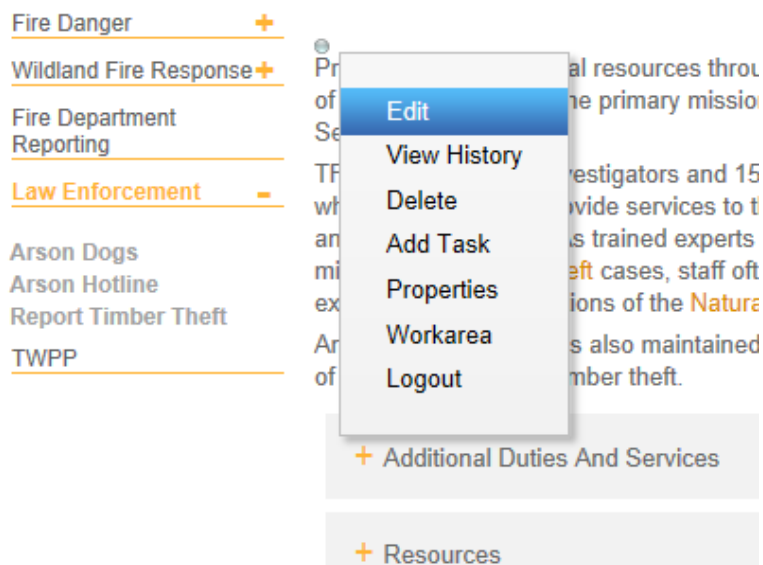
2.3.3 History

While working on content you may find it necessary to restore a previous version of the page you are working on.

To restore a piece of content to an earlier version:

1. Browse to the content you want to restore.
2. Click on the history icon.
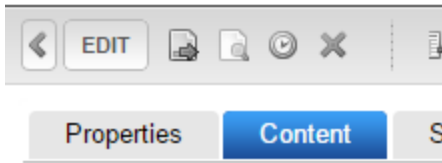
3. Select content version you wish to restore by clicking on the corresponding date.

4. Click the button "Restore."
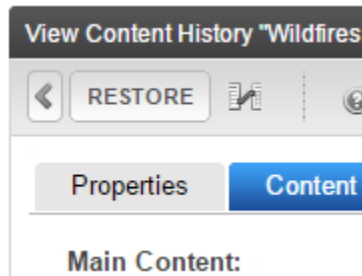
2.4 Related Content (Taxonomy)

On landing and article pages there is an area for related content. Related content is information that has similar characteristics. To populate this area of the webpage, you need to –link- your content to other areas. The way we do this is through the –Taxonomy- tab in the Workarea.

1. On the left hand side of the workarea open the -Taxonomy- tab.
2. You will notice that the taxonomy structure is similar to the menu structure.
3. Open TFS Main by clicking the '+' button located to the right of TFS Main.
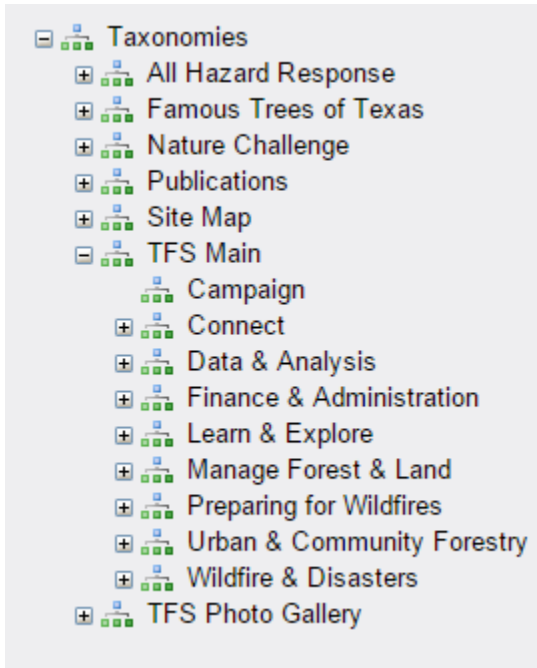
4. Find the area you want to relate your content to by "drilling down" through the taxonomy tree.
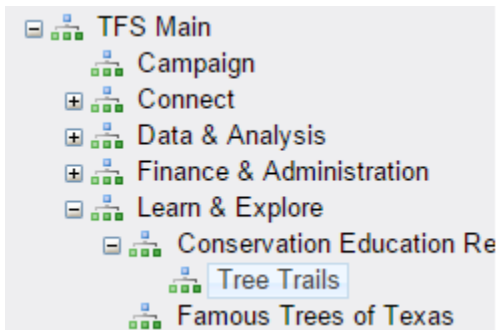
5. Once you have the taxonomy selected, click the "Assign Item(s) to Taxonomy" button.
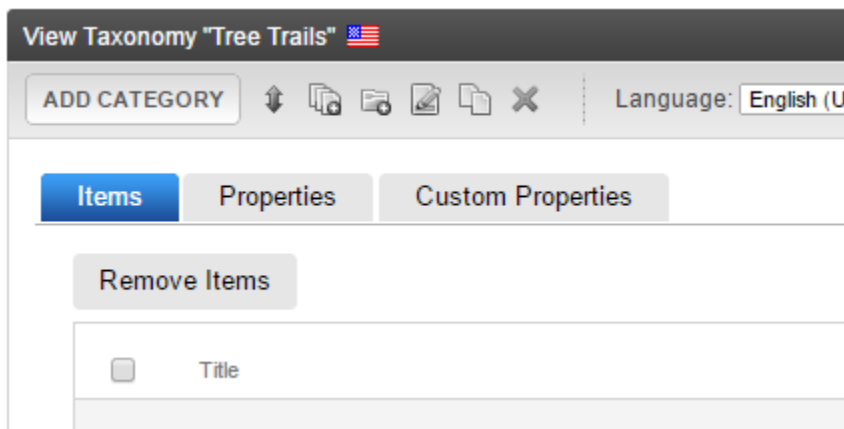
6. On the -Type- dropdown select -Content-. This ensures that only content and not images or files are added into the related content Area.
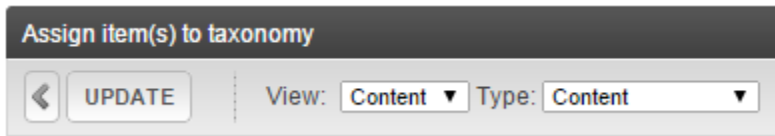
7. Browse through the folder structure to locate your content.
8. Select the content by placing a check in the box nest to the title of the content. Finally click the -Update- button to finish and add the content to the taxonomy.
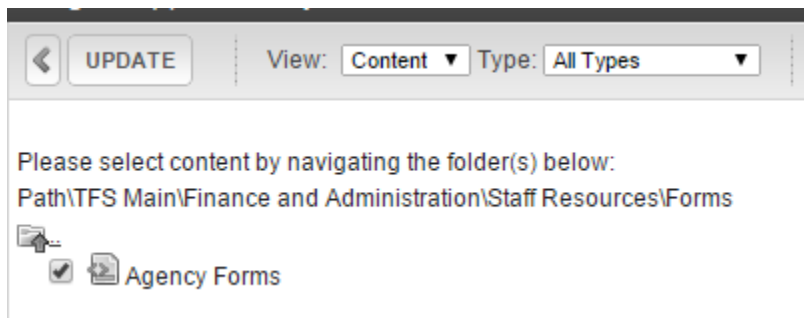
2.4.1 Relating Content through the Smartform

Relating content through the smartform has the advantage of forcing that content to always display under the Related Content heading. To relate content through the Smart Form:

1. On the smartform there is a field called related content. Click on the blue plus sign.
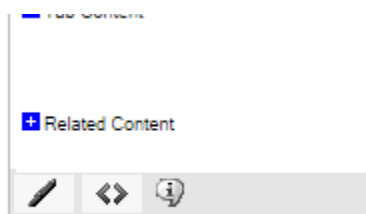
2. This will change the Icon to a folder with a red border.
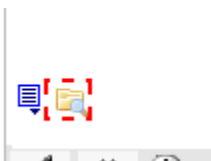
3. Click on the folder with a red border and locate the content you would like to relate by browsing through the folder structure. Select the content and press the OK button.
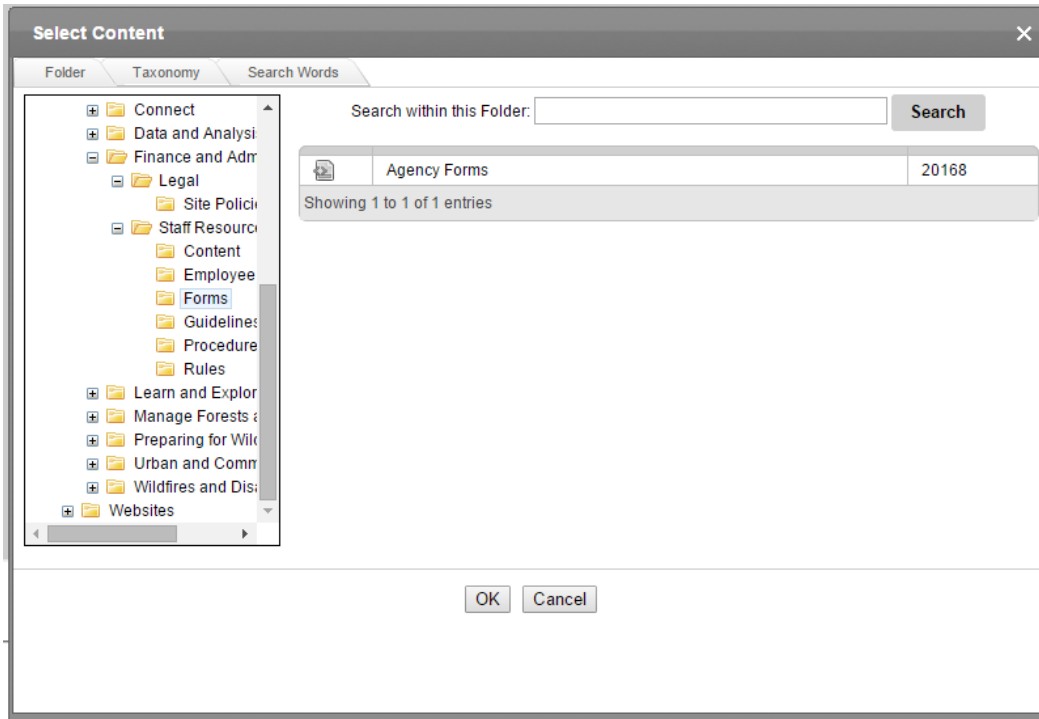
2.5 Left Navigation Menu Adjustments

Each area of the TFS website has its own left navigation menu. The following image is an example of the Wildfires & Disasters left navigation.

At times, especially when adding a new page to the website, these left navigation menus may need adjusting.

To add an item to the Menu:

1. Open the -Menus- tab on the left had side of the workarea.

2. Find the menu you would like to edit by navigating through the -menu- structure.
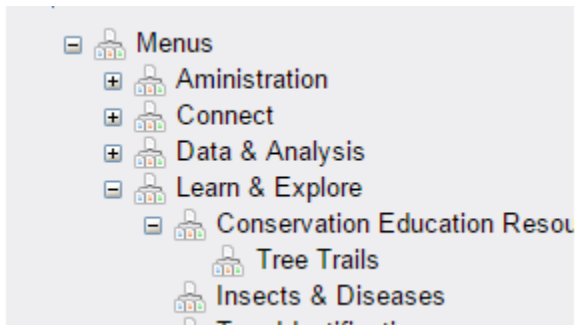
3. Click the "ADD ITEMS" button.
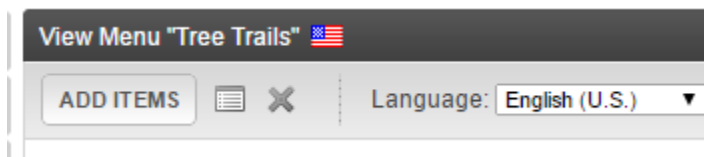
4. Select the Sub Menu radio button then click next.
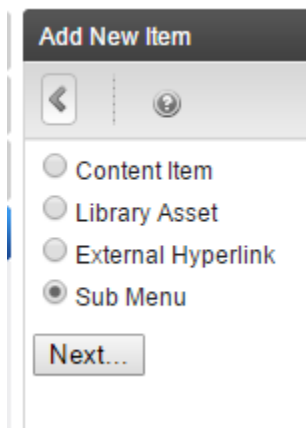
5. Insert a Title. The title is what your users will see when they are looking at your menu.

6. Insert a URL in the URL Link text box.

   a. The format of the URL can be the alias that is assigned to the page you want the visitors to go to;

b. Or in the format of "content/article.aspx?id=111" or "content/landing.aspx?id=111" where 111 will be the ID of your content;

c. Or use a fully qualified domain such as http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/. If using the full domain the entry must start with http://.

7. Under the -Folder Associations- area select -Change-.

Note: -Folder Associations- informs Ektron to open the correct menu with the correct item selected.

8. Browse to the folder containing the content by navigating the folder structure. Once you are in the proper folder, click the -SAVE- button.

9. Click the -ADD SELECTIONS- button.
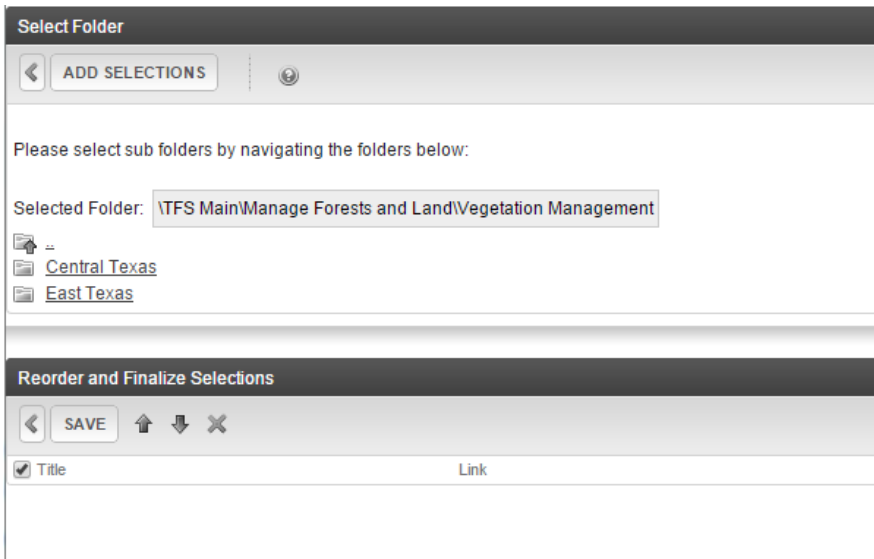
2.6 Mega Menu & Footer Adjustments

Mega Menu and Footer adjustments are handled through communications. If you would like a change to the Mega Menu or the footer please contact communications.

If you notice an error, broken link or bug please contact IR.

2.7 Accessibility

Electronic and Information Resources (EIR) accessibility means providing electronic information and services through multiple ways so that communication is not contingent on a single sense or ability. EIR accessibility is a responsibility shared by Texas state agencies and institutions of higher education. Thanks to innovative technologies such as screen readers, text magnifiers, and speech recognition software, providing access to the four million Texans with disabilities is more attainable than ever before. Yet, compliance can still be challenging.

Other ways that people navigate can include:
- Screen readers
- Text magnifiers
- Keyboard controls
- Speech recognition

Screen readers, especially, are a common technology that users with visual impairments will use to navigate websites. This methodology literally reads everything aloud, in order. Some users will have the screen reader technology to only read aloud the headings or just the links.

As a content manager, you have an added responsibility to ensure content pages are rendered as accessible as possible. Here are a few things you need to have:

Hyperlink Alternate Text

For reach hyperlink on a content page, there must be an alternate "alt" text available. This is the text that a screen reader would read aloud to the end user. This text should be what the link is about and where the link will take the end user. Do not include the URL in the alt text, this is already covered by the link itself.

For any hyperlink on a content page, simply right-click the link and select -Set Link Properties-. This will open the Link Manager.
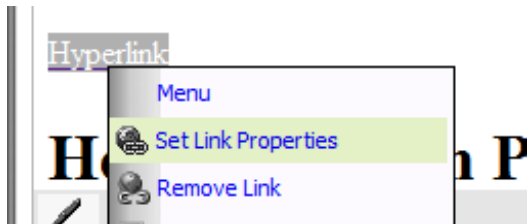
Once you have the manager open, specify the alt text and click -Ok-.

Image Alternate Text

Images must have an alternate "alt" text associated with them. Even the best screen reading technology will have trouble interpreting an image that is on a webpage. To get around this, the screen reader will read aloud the alt text associated with the image.

Image alternate text can be done in two ways, 1) describing the image and 2) identifying people and places. The former is required for accessibility compliance. The latter is optional. However, you can combine the two into a single alternate text to ensure maximum accessibility compliance.

To add alternate text to an image, right-click any image and select "Image Properties". This will open the Image Properties box.
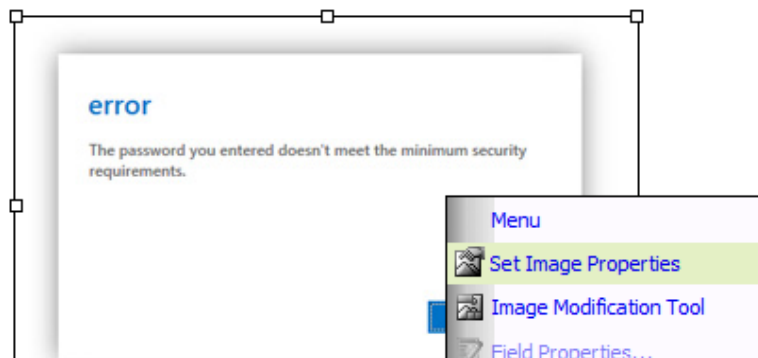
Specify the Image Alt Text: and click Ok.
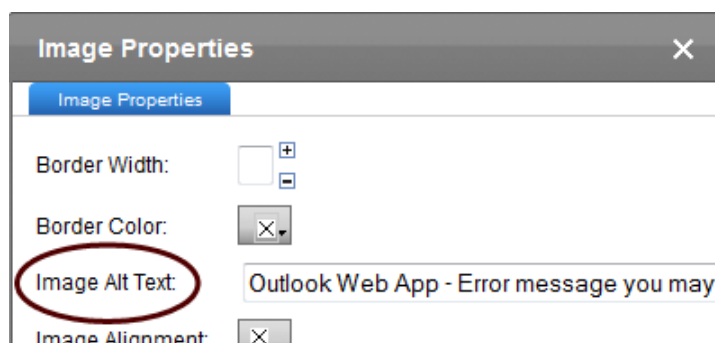
PDF Text

PDF documents that have been uploaded and linked from a webpage can also present challenges for screen readers. Here is a checklist of things that a PDF needs to have in order to be more accessible:

- Make sure the text is selectable. If you can't select the text with a cursor, a screen reader won't be able to read it.
- Make sure to scan PDFs with OCR enabled.
- Fill out the PDF properties such as Title, Author and Summary.
- Ask the question, does the document need to be a PDF? Where feasible, make the document into a web page.

2.8 Font Styles vs. Headings

Use Word heading styles—instead of using font size and the bold button—to make headings bigger and bolder. Heading styles become HTML heading tags. This structure conveys meaning to search engines and screen readers. Appearance (bigger, bolder) is meaningless to them; what matters is the hierarchy of Heading 1, Heading 2 and so on. The use of headings also aids in accessibility compliance. Screen readers can see bold text, but understand the difference

between headings. Some screen readers may read headings exclusively and therefore may miss other important parts of the webpage.

To use headings in Ektron:

1. Open the workarea or navigate to the page on the website you want to edit and click -Edit-.
2. Select the text you want to make into a heading or title within your content.
3. Select the appropriate heading from the drop-down menu.
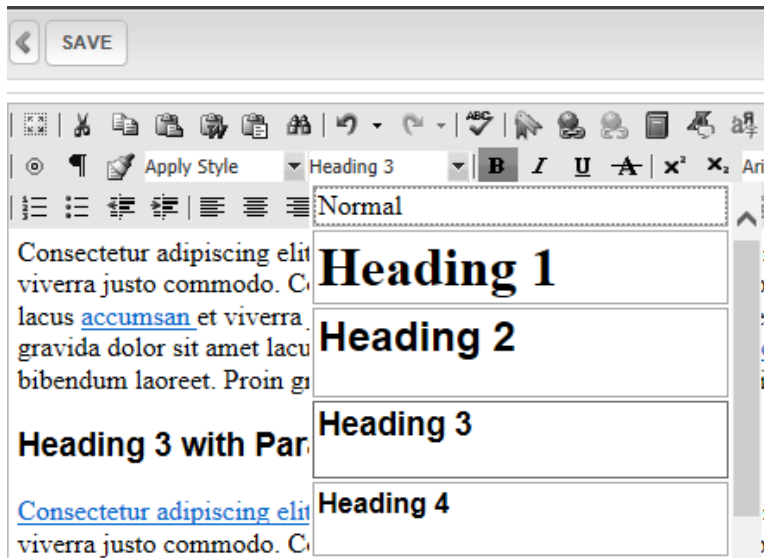
2.9 Basic HTML

In the following section, we'll go over some basic HTML tags that may be useful to know when editing content.

HTML elements are written with a start tag, with an end tag, with the content in between:

```
<tagname>content</tagname>
```

The HTML element is everything from the start tag to the end tag:

```
<p>My first HTML paragraph.</p>
```

Paragraph Tag <p>

Browsers automatically add some space (margin) before and after each <p> element. The margins can be modified with CSS (with the margin properties).

**Break Tag
**

The `<br />` inserts a single line break.

The `<br />` tag is an empty tag which means that it has no end tag.

Tables <table>

The `<table>` tag defines an HTML table.

An HTML table consists of the <table> element and one or more `<tr>`, `<th>`, and `<td>` elements.
The `<tr>` element defines a table row, the `<th>` element defines a table header, and the `<td>` element defines a table cell.

An HTML table has two kinds of cells:

- Header cell contains header information (created with the `<th>` element)
- Standard cell contains data (created with the `<td>` element)

Table Row <tr>

The `<tr>` tag defines a row in an HTML table.
A `<tr>` element contains one or more `<th>` or `<td>` elements.

Table Header <th>

The `<th>` tag defines a header cell in an HTML table.

Table Cell <td>

The `<td>` tag defines a standard cell in an HTML table.

**Unordered List **

The `<ul>` tag defines an unordered (bulleted) list.
Use the `<ul>` tag together with the `<li>` tag to create unordered lists.

**Ordered or Numbered List **

The `<ol>` tag defines an ordered list. An ordered list can be numerical or alphabetical.
Use the `<li>` tag to define list items.

**List Item **

The `<li>` tag defines a list item.
The `<li>` tag is used in ordered lists (`<ol>`) and unordered lists (`<ul>`)

Hyperlink Tag <a>

The `<a>` tag defines a hyperlink, which is used to link from one page to another.

The most important attribute of the `<a>` element is the href attribute, which indicates the link's destination.

Image Tag <img>

The <img> tag defines an image in an HTML page.

The <img> tag has two required attributes: src and alt.

Note: Images are not technically inserted into an HTML page, images are linked to HTML pages. The <img> tag creates a holding space for the referenced image.

Tip: To link an image to another document, simply nest the <img> tag inside <a> tags.

Heading Tags <h1> - <h6>

The <h1> to <h6> tags are used to define HTML headings.

<h1> defines the most important heading. <h6> defines the least important heading.

* For more information about the above tags or HTML in general please visit
http://www.w3schools.com/tags/

3.0 Writing for the Web

Our website is the online face of our agency. It is our job and responsibility to provide content that is

- meaningful,
- easy for users to find; and
- easy to understand.

TFSweb.tamu.edu is an integral link between us and those we serve whether it be community members, landowners, firefighters or educators and is a tool used to **build trust, confidence and respect** with those who come to us for information.

As you write content pages, use this information as a guide to create meaningful web-friendly content.

Why it Matters

We read differently online than we do when reading print materials. Readers rarely read Web pages word for word. Instead, we scan the page, picking out individual words and sentences.

- Users typically scan for information. In a study of online reading behavior ☐, Jakob Nielsen found that "on the average webpage, users have time to read at most 28% of the words during an average visit; 20% is more likely."

- People scan because we need to know the page will have our answer before we commit to reading it.

Employ scannable text:
- Highlighted keywords (links, boldface, colors, fonts)
- Meaningful subheadings
- Bulleted lists
- One idea per paragraph
- Inverted pyramid
- Half the word count than conventional writing

Identify Users' Top Tasks

People come to our website with a specific task in mind. When developing content for your pages, keep your audiences' tasks in mind and write to ensure you are helping them accomplish those tasks. If our website—which is made up of your content—doesn't help them complete that task, they'll leave; and, in turn, we will lose credibility with our audience.

Knowing/anticipating your users' top tasks can help you identify:

- Content to feature on your Tier 1–3 pages
- Page headers and sub-headers
- A logical structure to each page's content
- Related content
- Possible campaigns

How to Write User-Friendly Content

It's important to target your audience when writing for the Web. By knowing who you are writing for, you can write at a level that will be meaningful for them. Use the Questions to Ask During Persona Development table to help you visualize your audience (see appendix).

Use plain language. This is the most important thing to remember. Using plain language allows users to:
- find what they need,
- understand what they find,
- use what they find to meet their needs; and
- easily share the information.

It's important to understand how what you are writing fits into the overall content strategy, what the content lifecycle entails and who is involved in the process. Keep these points in mind:

Use the words your users use. By using keywords that your users use, you will help them understand the copy—the text they are reading—and will help optimize it for search engines. Search engine optimization communicates to search engines the user's intentions so it can recommend relevant websites.

Chunk your content. Chunking makes your content more scannable by breaking it into manageable sections.

Front-load the important information. Use the journalism model of the "inverted pyramid." Start with the content that is most important to your audience, then provide additional details.

Begin with the topic sentence, the most important information.

Next, add the body, the supporting information.

End with the fluff.

Use pronouns. The user is "you." The organization or agency is "we." This creates cleaner sentence structure and more approachable content.

*Example: A written plan for **your** property is the foundation of good land stewardship.*

*Example: **We** work with local fire departments and communities to provide training and grants for equipment.*

Use active voice. "TFS opened a nursery" not "The nursery was opened by TFS."

Use short sentences and paragraphs. The ideal standard is no more than 20 words per sentence, five sentences per paragraph. Use dashes instead of semi-colons or, better yet, break the sentence into two. It is ok to start a sentence with "and," "but" or "or" if it makes things clear and brief.

Example: As a private landowner in East Texas, you perhaps have the most to gain from the Forest Stewardship Program. But, you also have the most to lose if good land and timber management practices are not followed.

Use bullets and numbered lists. Don't limit yourself to using this for long lists. One sentence and two bullets is easier to read than three sentences.

Use clear headlines and subheads. Don't be creative; be meaningful and to-the-point.

Use images, diagrams or multimedia to visually represent ideas in the content. Videos and images should reinforce the text on your page.

Use white space. Using white space allows you to reduce noise by visually separating information. http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/Stewardship/
The following is an example of a web page that takes advantage of white space:

LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE: STEWARDSHIP

Giving Texas Landowners a Hand

Long-term care of private land is critically important to Texas. Sound management practices increase land productivity and enhance ecosystem services provided by forests. These critical benefits include clean air and water, improved wildlife habitat and additional opportunities for quality outdoor recreation.

Through the Forest Stewardship Program, Texas A&M Forest Service promotes land stewardship to landowners all over Texas—from the Pineywoods of East Texas to the West Texas Panhandle. As a landowner, professional assistance is tailored to your individual needs.

The foundation of good land stewardship is a written plan for your property. TFS foresters are available to help you develop a written 10-year course of action, outlining step-by-step measures that will enable you to meet the goals and objectives established for your property.

Working together, TFS and Texas landowners can move toward a brighter future with thriving forestlands, healthy economic rewards and sustained environmental benefits.

East Texas

As a private landowner in East Texas, you perhaps have the most to gain from the Forest Stewardship Program - and the most to lose if good land and timber management practices are not followed.

While this region is heavily forested, 2.6 million acres of timberlands are under stocked. Similarly, on private family forestland, only 1 out of every 7 acres that is harvested is replanted. Technical assistance is readily available to help you get the most from your land. Call your local TFS office or a professional forester (PDF 66KB) for help.

Forest stewardship will pay dividends not only to you and the forest products industry, but to the overall environmental health of the region as well.

Central Texas

The Central Texas Hill Country has been named one of the world's "Last Great Places." Natural resources in this region are threatened by poor land management, fire exclusion, invasive species, oak wilt and rapid population growth.

As a Texas landowner, you have the ability to conserve Central Texas trees and natural resources for future generations. TFS is available to help address your interests in trees, wildlife, recreation, water, as well as concerns about drought, wildfire, forest health and diseases such as oak wilt. Call your local TFS office or a professional forester (PDF 66KB) for information.

Write in a way that improves comprehension. Use headings, subheadings, bulleted lists.

Write for people with low literacy. Keep it at a fifth-grade level. Again, this may not work for all content but is a rule for general audiences.

Short words, short sentences and short paragraphs.

It's also important to **create an editorial calendar**. If you create a page that has a potential need for updating or freshening up (new pictures, new quote, graph, etc) place a reminder on your calendar, include the communications office (communications@tfsweb.tamu.edu) and follow up. Our content is only as good as our diligence in keeping it current.

Source: http://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/writing-for-the-web.html

3.1 Web Guide

Headings
Prioritizing topics/tasks
Eliminate jargon
Tone
Links
Keywords
URLs

Headings

Styling Headings

Use Word heading styles—instead of using font size and the bold button—to make headings bigger and bolder. Heading styles become HTML heading tags. This structure conveys meaning to search engines and screen readers. Appearance (bigger, bolder) is meaningless to them; what matters is the hierarchy of Heading 1, Heading 2 and so on.

Example:

```
<h1>Landowner Assistance: Stewardship</h1>
<h2>Giving Texas Landowners a Hand</h2>
<h3>East Texas</h3>
<h3>Central Texas</h3>
<h3>West Texas</h3>
```

Write Good Headings

Page titles and subheadings should include the keywords you chose for the page or topic.

For task-based pages, questions make excellent headings. ("How do I apply for a permit?") However, if all the questions use the same format ("how do I…"), start with the action instead.

How to get a permit	Get a permit
How to fill out the permit	Fill out the permit
How to change your address	Change your address

Chunking & Prioritization of Topics

Each time you change topics, mark the change with a new subheading that describes or summarizes the content below. Make sure that the most important topic on the page is in the page title and the first paragraph. Within each subsection, the most important topic should appear first.

Tabbed Content
Separate topics using tabbed content, which are expandable sections.

Bullet lists
If you find long lists of items within a paragraph, break it up into bullet points instead. Bulleted lists make it easier to distinguish each item in the list. The reader should be able to skim the first few words of each item to see if the information they want is in the list.

Eliminate Jargon

It's much easier to stay in your comfort zone and include industry terms and technical jargon. Writing for readers is hard work; but, it's worth the effort.

This is perhaps the biggest departure from the way you write other professional materials. You have to balance the need for plain language with the need to maintain credibility with your peers.

Knowing the audience for each page is essential. Is it for the general public, or for your fellow professionals? If it's both, try leaning more toward plain language than jargon.

Put Readers First
- Focus on the benefits of the product or service
- Avoid uncommon acronyms
- Avoid industry and business jargon
- Have a conversation with readers
- Avoid euphemisms (six feet under, water pollution control plant)

Jargon	Plain
Reduction in force	Layoffs
Economic downturn	Recession
Friendly fire	Shot our own troops
Involuntary undomiciled	Homeless
Riverine avifauna	River birds
Employment opportunities	Jobs

Using more common phrases also helps our search engine rankings.

Tone

Speak to your readers, not at them
- Avoid passive verbs (it was done by…)
- Take responsibility
- Invite the reader to take action

Before: The lands and resources of the Lone Star State are conserved and protected by Texas A&M Forest Service.
After: Texas A&M Forest Service conserves and protects the resources and lands of the Lone Star State.

Personal address
- Talk to a person, not an abstract group
- The reader *is* the audience
- Be relevant

Before: This article will help landowners understand streamside management zones.
After: Learn about streamside management zones.

Links

Links should be:
- **Descriptive**. What will the reader find when they get to the destination?
- **Unique**. A screen reader user shouldn't hear a long list of similar-sounding linked phrases for different destinations (or worse, "click here, click here, click here").

- **Similar to the keywords on the destination site**. Be consistent. When there are several synonyms for a page's topic, like *environment*, *atmosphere* and *habitat*, choose one and use it throughout your pages and in the link to that page.

Never write "click here." The destination is important, not how the reader gets there.

Never underline text that is not a link.

When links appear in lists or tables without other surrounding text to provide context, consider whether the linked phrase alone is enough to give the reader an idea of where you're leading them.

Example: http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/servicesforresidentsandhomeowners/

- The Big Tree Registry is a way to learn how big trees can get. Almost every species of tree in Texas is represented showing the largest tree or champion tree of that species. Some Texas trees are even national champions!
- Famous Trees of Texas tells the stories of many trees that helped shape Texas history. Check out the site to see famous trees near you. Buy the book through Texas A&M University Press!
- Our Conservation Education program is where students, teachers and families can learn how to get in touch with nature through program
- Protect your property from wildfire (PDF, 7.6MB)
- Drought Tips
- Urban Forestry Information Sheets provide answers to commonly asked questions and problems that arise for tree owners and managers.

Keywords

- How would your audience search for this page?
  - "How do I…?" is common
- Jargon AND plain language
  - "low fares" and "cheap flights"
- Two- to four-word phrases are best
- Pick one primary word or phrase for the URL

URLS

You can and should create an alias for the ugly URL that's generated for each page in the content management system. A good URL indicates at a glance what the subject of the page is. A reader who encounters this URL in print, in an email or in a tweet should have no question what they'll find when they get there.

Incorrect: http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/content/landing.aspx?id=19833
Correct: http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/wildfiresanddisasters

The alias you should enter into the template is the part after the domain name:

http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/**abouturbanandcommunityforestry/**

You can include slashes in your aliases to create a hierarchy within each bucket.

http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/**abouturbanandcommunityforestry**/*urbanforestryinformationsheets/*

URL aliases cannot include spaces or capital letters. The only punctuation allowed are dashes, underscores and slashes. Numbers are fine.

Omit ~~Needless~~ Words

"Cut text by half, then by half again." — Steve Krug, *Don't Make Me Think*

Example:
Like the term "weeds," insect pests should be reserved for those insects causing unreasonable problems to the products we are trying to produce.

Like ~~the term~~ "weeds," the term ~~insect~~ pests should be reserved for ~~those~~ insects causing unreasonable problems ~~to the products we are trying to produce~~.

Like "weeds," the term "pests" should be reserved for insects causing unreasonable problems.

Hurricane season **is in effect** from June 1 to November 30.

Hurricane season **runs** June 1—Nov. 30.

3.2 Style Guide

The following is a set of standards to follow when writing for Texas A&M Forest Service. We adhere to standards set forth in <u>The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law</u>.

acronyms

Do not follow an organizations full name with an abbreviation or acronym in parentheses or set off by dashes. If an abbreviation or acronym would not be clear on second reference without this arrangement, do not use it.

capitalization

In general, avoid unnecessary capitals. Use a capital letter only if you can justify it by one of the principles listed here.

PROPER NOUNS: Capitalize nouns that constitute the unique identification for a specific person, place, or thing: *John, Mary, American, Houston, Texas.* Some words, such as those just given, are always proper nouns. Some common nouns receive proper noun status when they are used as the name of a particular entity: *General Electric, Gulf Oil.*

PROPER NAMES: Capitalize common nouns such as *party, river, street* and *west* when they are an integral part of the full name of a person, place or thing: *Democratic Party, Mississippi River, Fleet Street, West Virginia.*

> Lowercase these common nouns when they stand alone in subsequent references: *the party, the river, the street.*

> Lowercase the common noun elements of names in all plural uses: *the Democratic and Republican parties, Main and State streets, lakes Erie and Ontario.*

POPULAR NAMES: Some places and events lack officially designated proper names but have popular names that are the effective equivalent: *the Brazos Valley, Aggieland, the Greater Houston Area.*

> This principle applies also to shortened versions of the proper names of one-of-a-kind events: *the Series* (for the World Series), *the Derby* (for the Kentucky Derby). This practice should not, however, be interpreted as a license to ignore the general practice of lowercasing the common noun elements of a name when they stand alone.

DERIVATIVES: Capitalize words that are derived from a proper noun and still depend on it for their meaning: *American, Christian, Christianity, English, French, Marxism, Shakespearean.*

Lowercase words that are derived from a proper noun but no longer depend on it for their meaning: *french fries, herculean, manhattan cocktail, malapropism, pasteurize, quixotic, venetian blind.*

OFFICIAL NAMES: Do not capitalize unofficial, informal, shortened or generic names. Do not capitalize phrases such as the center, the academy, the department or the museum.

> *Texas Forestry Museum; the museum*
> *Wildfire and Incident Management Academy; the academy*
> *TFS communications office*

county

Capitalize when an integral part of a proper name: *Dade County, Nassau County, Harris County.*

Capitalize the full names of county governmental units: *the Harris County Commission, the Bexar County Department of Social Service, the Travis County Legislature.*

Retain capitalization for the name of a county body if the proper noun is not needed in the context; lowercase the word *county* if it is used to distinguish an agency from state or federal counterparts: the *Board of Supervisors, the county Board of Supervisors, the Department of Social Services, the county Department of Social Services.* Lowercase *the board, the department, etc.* whenever they stand alone.

Capitalize *county* if it is an integral part of a specific body's name even without the proper noun: *the County Commission, the County Legislature.* Lowercase *the commission, the legislature, etc.* when not preceded by the word county.

Capitalize as part of a formal title before a name: *County Manager John Smith.* Lowercase when it is not part of the formal title: *county Health Commissioner Frank Jones.*

Avoid *county of* phrases where possible, but when necessary, always lowercase: *the county of Sabine.*

Lowercase plural combinations: *Reeves and Pecos counties.*

Apply the same rules to similar terms such as *parish.*

courtesy titles

Refer to both men and women by first and last name, without courtesy titles, on first reference: *Susan Smith* or *Robert Smith.* Refer to both men and women by last name, without courtesy titles, in subsequent references. Use the courtesy titles *Mr., Miss, Ms.* or *Mrs.* only in direct

quotations or after first reference when a woman specifically requests it: for example, where a woman prefers to be known as *Mrs. Smith* or *Ms. Smith.*

When it is necessary to distinguish between two people who use the same last name, as in married couples or brothers and sisters, use the first and last name, without courtesy title.

In cases where a person's gender is not clear from the first name or from the story's context, indicate the gender by using *he* or *she* in subsequent references.

dates

Always use Arabic figures without st, nd, rd or th.

datelines

October 13, 2008 — COLLEGE STATION, Texas — Text

Cities that do not need a state name to follow:

Atlanta	Houston	Philadelphia
Baltimore	Indianapolis	Phoenix
Boston	Las Vegas	Pittsburgh
Chicago	Los Angeles	St. Louis
Cincinnati	Miami	Salt Lake City
Cleveland	Milwaukee	San Antonio
Dallas	Minneapolis	San Diego
Denver	New Orleans	San Francisco
Detroit	New York	Seattle
Honolulu	Oklahoma City	Washington

Use *New York state* when necessary to distinguish from *New York City*. Use *state of Washington* or *Washington state* when necessary to distinguish from District of Columbia.

directions and regions

In general, lowercase north, south, northeast, northern, etc., when they indicate compass direction; capitalize these words when they designate regions.

COMPASS DIRECTIONS: *He drove west. The cold front is moving east.*

TFS REGIONS: Capitalize North Texas, South Texas, West Texas, East Texas, the Panhandle, Central Texas, High Plains, Trans Pecos, Hill Country, Rio Grande Plains, Pineywoods, (See the predictive services graph for more information on counties that make up these areas http://ticc.tamu.edu/Documents/PredictiveServices/Fuels/erc_map.htm

fire

TFS uses wildfire in most references. Wildland fire is also acceptable.

fire department

FULL NAME: Capitalize the full proper names of fire departments: *the Houston Fire Department.*

WITHOUT JURISDICTION: Retain capitalization in referring to a specific body if the dateline or context makes the name of the nation, state, county, city, etc. unnecessary: *the Fire Department* or *the city Fire Department* (in a story from Houston).

Lowercase fire department in plural uses: the Bryan and College Station fire departments.

Lowercase *the department* when it stands alone.

firefighter

TFS uses wildland firefighter or wildland fireman in all references. Use these abbreviations for firefighter titles: fire Lt. David Jones, fire Chief Todd Leddy, fire Capt. John Doe, fire Battalion Chief Tom Kreel, fire Assistant Chief Lonny Frey.

headlines

Press releases or news articles: Only capitalize the first word in a headline: High wildfire danger alert for Central Texas or Tax workshop detail incentives for timber landowners.

Website headlines: Capitalize the first letter of each word, known as title case. Articles, conjunctions and prepositions do not get capital letters unless they start the title: Prepare for Wildfires.

jargon

The special vocabulary and idioms of a particular class or occupational group.

In general, avoid jargon. When it is appropriate in a special context, include an explanation of any words likely to be unfamiliar to most readers.

months

Capitalize the names of months in all uses. When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell out when using alone, or with a year alone.

When a phrase lists only a month and a year, do not separate the year with commas. When a

phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas. Example: January 1972 was a cold month. Jan. 2 was the coldest day of the month. Feb. 14, 1987, was the target date. She testified that it was Friday, Dec. 3, when the accident occurred. His birthday is May 8.

names

In general, use only last names on second reference.

When it is necessary to distinguish between two people who use the same last name, use first and last name. See **courtesy titles.**

In stories involving juveniles, generally refer to them on second reference by surname if they are 16 or older and by first name if they are 15 or younger. Exceptions would be if they are involved in serious crimes or are athletes or entertainers.

numbers

SENTENCE START: Spell out a numeral at the beginning of a sentence. If necessary, rewrite the sentence. There is one exception—a numeral that identifies a calendar year. *Last year 993 freshmen entered the college. 1976 was a very good year.*

CASUAL USES: Spell out casual expressions. *A thousand times! Thanks a million. He walked a quarter of a mile.*
PROPER NAMES: Use words or numerals according to an organization's practice: *3M, Twentieth Century Fund, Big Ten*

FIGURES or WORDS?
Spell out first through ninth when they indicate sequence in time or location: *first base, the First Amendment, he was first in line.* Starting with 10th use figures.

Use 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc. when the sequence has been assigned in forming names. The principal examples are geographic, military and political designation such as the *1st Ward, 7th Fleet* and *1st Sgt.*

Spell out whole numbers below 10, use figures for 10 and above. Typical examples: *They had three sons and two daughters. They had a fleet of 10 station wagons and two buses.*

IN A SERIES: Apply the appropriate guidelines: They had 10 dogs, six cats and 97 hamsters. They had four four-room houses, 10 three-room houses and 12 10-room houses.

Other: 4-acre piece of land; 4 acres; 2,540 acres; .05 acre; The factory floor is 10,000 square feet. It's a 10,000-square-foot area; 100-acre ranch

punctuation

- **apostrophe (')**

  - PLURAL NOUNS NOT ENDING IN S: Add 's: *alumni's contribution, firefighter's PPE*
  - PLURAL NOUNS ENDING IN S: Add only an apostrophe: *the girls' toys, states' rights*
  - SINGULAR NOUNS NOT ENDING IN S: Add 's: *the horse's food, the VIP's seats*
  - SINGULAR COMMON NOUNS ENDING IN S: Add 's unless the next word begins with s: *the witness's answer, the witness' story*

- **brackets ([ ])** — they cannot be transmitted over news wires. Use parenthesis or rewrite material.
- **colon (:)** — The most frequent use of a colon is at the end of a sentence to introduce lists, tabulations, text, etc. Use one space after colons.
  - EMPHASIS: The colon often can be effective in giving emphasis: *He had only one hobby: eating.*
  - LISTINGS: Use the colon in such listings as time elapsed (*0:31:07.2*), time of day (*8:31 p.m.*), biblical and legal citations (*2 Kings 2:14; Missouri Code 3:245-2560*)
- **comma (,)** — The following guidelines treat some of the most frequent questions about the use of commas.
  - IN A SERIES: Use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction in a simple series: *The flag is red, white and blue. They planted pines, oaks and cedars.*
    - Do put a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series if an integral element of the series requites a conjunction: *I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.*
    - Use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases: *The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.*
  - WITH INTRODUCTORY CLAUSES AND PHRASES:
    - A comma is used to separate an introductory clause or phrase from the main clause: *When he had tired of the mad pace of New York, he moved to Dubuque.*
    - The comma may be omitted after short introductory phrases if no ambiguity would result: *During the night he heard many noises.*
    - Use the comma if its omission would slow comprehension: *On the street below, the curious gathered.*
  - WITH CONJUNCTIONS:
    - When a conjunction such as *and, but* or *for* links two clauses that could stand alone as separate sentences, use a comma before the conjunction in most cases: *She was glad she had looked, for a man was approaching the house.*

- As a rule of thumb, use a comma if the subject of each clause is expressly stated: *We are visiting Washington, and we also plan a side trip to Williamsburg. We visited Washington, and our senator greeted us personally.* But no comma when the subject of the two clauses is the same and is not repeated in the second: *We are visiting Washington and plan to see the White House.*
  - INTRODUCING DIRECT QUOTES:
    - Use a comma to introduce a complete one-sentence quotation within a paragraph: *Wallace said, "She spent six months in Argentina and came back speaking English with a Spanish accent."*
    - Do not use a comma at the start of an indirect or partial quotation: *He said the victory put him "firmly on the road to a first-ballot nomination."*
  - BEFORE ATTRIBUTION:
    - Use a comma instead of a period at the end of a quote that is followed by attribution: *"Rub my shoulders," Miss Crawley said.*
    - Do not use a comma, however, if the quoted statement ends with a question mark or exclamation point: *"Why should I?" he asked.*
  - WITH HOMETOWNS AND AGES:
    - Use a comma to set off an individual's hometown when it is placed in apposition to a name (whether *of* is used or not): *Mary Richards, Houston, and Maude Findlay, Bryan, Texas, where there.*
    - If an individual's age is used, set it off by commas: *Maude Findlay, 48, Bryan, Texas, was present.*
  - NAMES OF STATES AND NATIONS USED WITH CITY NAMES: *His journey will take him from Dublin, Ireland, to Fargo, N.D., and back. The Brownwood, Texas, group saw the governor.*
  - WITH YES AND NO: *Yes, I will be there.*
  - IN DIRECT ADDRESS: *Mother, I will be home late. No, sir, I did not take it.*
  - PLACEMENT WITHIN QUOTES: **Commas always go inside the quotation marks.**
- **dashes**
  - The em dash (—), like commas, semicolons, colons, ellipses and parentheses, indicates added emphasis, an interruption or an abrupt change of thought. *The wildfire — which consumed over 25,000 acres — was the worst fire in over 20 years.*

  - The en dash (–) is slightly wider than the hyphen (-) but narrower than the em dash (—) and is used to represent a span or range of numbers, dates or times. *300–400; Sept. 5–8; 6 a.m.–5 p.m.*

- **ellipsis (…)**
  - QUOTATIONS: In writing a story, do not use ellipses at the beginning and end of direct quotes:
    - *"It has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong political base," Nixon said.*

- NOT *"…it has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong political base…," Nixon said.*
- **exclamation point (!)** — Follow these guidelines:
  o EMPHATIC EXPRESSION: Use the mark to express a high degree of surprise, incredulity or other strong emotion.
  o AVOID OVERUSE: Use a comma after mild interjections. End mildly exclamatory sentences with a period.
  o PLACEMENT WITHIN QUOTES: Place the mark inside quotations marks when it is part of the quoted material: *"How wonderful!" he said. "Never!" she shouted.*
    - Place the mark outside the quotation marks when it is not part of the quoted material: *I hated reading Spenser's "Faerie Queen"!*
  o MISCELLANEOUS: Do not use a comma or a period after the exclamation mark:
    - WRONG: *"Halt!", the corporal cried.*
    - RIGHT: *"Halt!" the corporal cried.*
- **hyphens (-)** — Hyphens are joiners. Use them to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words. They are never used interchangeably with dashes.
  o *well-maintained landscape; full-time job; non-flammable landscaping materials*
- **parentheses ()** — Try not to use parentheses. Commas or an em dash is preferred.
- **periods (.)** — Follow these guidelines:
  o END OF DECLARATIVE SENTENCE: *The fire is out.*
  o END OF MILDLY IMPERATIVE SENTENCE: *Shut the door.*
    - Use an exclamation point if greater emphasis is desired: *Be careful!*
  o END OF SOME RHETORICAL QUESTIONS: A period is preferable if a statement is more a suggestion than a question: *Why don't we go.*
  o END OF AN INDIRECT QUESTION: *He asked what the score was.*
  o INITIALS: *John F. Kennedy, T.S. Eliot* (No spacing between T. and S., to prevent them from being placed on two lines in typesetting.)
    - Abbreviations using only the initials of a name do not take periods: *JFK, LBJ.*
  o ENUMERATIONS: After numbers or letters in enumerating elements of a summary: *1. Wash the car. 2. Clean the basement.* Or: *A. Punctuate property. B. Write simply.*
  o PLACEMENT WITH QUOTATION MARKS: **Periods always go inside quotation marks.**
  o SPACING: Use a **single space** after a period at the end of a sentence.
- **question mark (?)** — Follow these guidelines:
  o END OF A DIRECT QUESTION: *How did the fire start?*
    - *Did he ask who started the fire?* (The sentence as a whole is a direct question despite the indirect question at the end.)
    - *You started the fire?* (A question in the form of a declarative statement.)
  o INTERPOLATED QUESTION: *You told me — Did I hear you correctly? — that you started the fire?*
  o MULTIPLE QUESTION: Use a single question mark at the end of the full sentence:
    - *Did you hear him say, "What right have you to ask about the riot?"*
    - *Did he plan the riot, employ assistants, and give the signal to begin?*

- Or, to cause full stops and throw emphasis on each element, break into separate sentences: *Did he plan the riot? Employ assistants? Give the signal to begin?*
  - CAUTION: Do not use question marks to indicate the end of indirect questions:
    - *He asked who started the riot. To ask why the riot started is unnecessary. I want to know what the cause of the riot was. How foolish it is to ask what caused the riot.*
  - QUESTION AND ANSWER FORMAT: Do not use quotation marks. Paragraph each speaker's words:
    - *Q: Where did you keep it?*
    - *A: In a little tin box.*
  - PLACEMENT WITH QUOTATION MARKS: Inside or outside, depending on the meaning:
    - *Who wrote "Gone With the Wind"?*
    - *He asked, "How long will it take?"*
  - MISCELLANEOUS: The question mark supersedes the comma that normally is used when supplying attribution for a question: *"Who is there?" she asked.*
- **quotation marks (" ")** — The basic guidelines for open=quote marks (") and closed-quote marks ("):
  - FOR DIRECT QUOTATIONS: To surround the exact words of a speaker or writer when reported in a story:
    - *"I have no intention of staying," he replied.*
    - *"I do not object," he said, "to the tenor of the report."*
    - *Franklin said, "A penny saved is a penny earned."*
    - *A speculator said the practice is "too conservative for inflationary times."*
  - RUNNING QUOTATIONS:
    - If a full paragraph of quoted material is followed by a paragraph that continues that quotation, do not put close-quote marks at the end of the first paragraph. Do, however, put open-quote marks at the start of the second paragraph. Continue in this fashion for any succeeding paragraphs, using close-quote marks only at the end of the quoted material.
    - If a paragraph does not start with quotation marks but ends with a quotation that is continued in the next paragraph, do not use close-quote marks at the end of the introductory paragraph if the quoted material constitutes a full sentence. Use close-quote marks, however, if the quoted material does not constitute a full sentence. For example:
      - *He said, "I am shocked and horrified by the incident.*
        "I am so horrified, in fact, that I will ask for the death penalty."
      - But: *He said he was "shocked and horrified by the incident."*
        "I am so horrified, in fact, that I will ask for the death penalty," he said.
  - DIALOGUE OR CONVERSATION: Each person's words, no matter how brief, are placed in a separate paragraph, with quotation marks at the beginning and the end of each person's speech:

> *"Will you go?"*
> *"Yes."*
> *"When?"*
> *"Thursday."*

- o NOT IN Q-AND-A: Quotation marks are not required in formats that identify questions and answers by *Q:* and *A:*.
- o NOT IN TEXTS: Quotation marks are not required in full texts, condensed texts or textual excerpts.
- o IRONY: Put quotation marks around a word or words used in an ironical sense: *The "debate" turned into a free-for-all.*
- o UNFAMILIAR TERMS: A word or words being introduced to readers may be placed in quotation marks on first reference: *Broadcast frequencies are measured in "kilohertz."*
  - ▪ Do not put subsequent references to *kilohertz* in quotation marks.
- o AVOID UNNECESSARY FRAGMENTS: Do not use quotation marks to report a few ordinary words that a speaker or writer has used:
  - ▪ Wrong: *The senator said he would "go home to Michigan" if he lost the election.*
  - ▪ Right: *The senator said he would go home to Michigan if he lost the election.*
- o PARTIAL QUOTES: When a partial quote is used, do not put quotation marks around words that the speaker could not have used.
  - ▪ Suppose the individual said, *"I am horrified at your slovenly manners."*
  - ▪ Wrong: *She said she "was horrified at their slovenly manners."*
  - ▪ Right: *She said she was horrified at their "slovenly manners."*
  - ▪ Better when practical: Use the full quote.
- o QUOTES WITHIN QUOTES: Alternate between double quotation marks ("or") and single marks ('or'):
  - ▪ *She said, "I quote from his letter, 'I agree with Kipling that "the female of the species is more deadly than the male," but the phenomenon is not an unchangeable law of nature,' a remark he did not explain."*
  - ▪ Use three marks together if two quoted elements end at the same time: *She said, "He told me, "I love you.'"*
- o PLACEMENT WITH OTHER PUNCTUATION: Follow these long-established printers' rules:
  - ▪ The period and the comma always go within the quotation marks.
  - ▪ The dash, the semicolon, the question mark and the exclamation point go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.
- ▪ **semicolon (;)**— In general, use the semicolon to indicate a greater separation of thought and information than a comma can convey but less than the separation that a period implies.
  - o TO CLARIFY A SERIES: Use semicolons to separate elements of a series when the items in the series are long or when individual segments contain material that also must be set off by commas:
    - ▪ *He is survived by a son, John Smith, of Chicago; three daughters, Jane Smith, of Witchita, Kan., Mary Smith, of Denver, and Susan Smith, of Boston; and a sister,*

Martha Smith, of Omaha, Neb. (Note that the semicolon is used before the final *and* in such a series.)

- TO LINK INDEPENDENT CLAUSES: Use semicolon when a coordinating conjunction such as *and, but* or *for* is not present: *The package was due last week; it arrived today.*
  - If a coordinating conjunction is present, use a semicolon before it only if extensive punctuation also is required in one or more of the individual clauses: *They pulled their boats from the water, sandbagged the retaining walls, and boarded up the windows; but even with these precautions, the island was hard-hit by the hurricane.*
  - Unless a particular literary effect is desired, however, the better approach in these circumstances is to break the independent clauses into separate sentences.
- PLACEMENT WITH QUOTES: Place semicolons outside quotation marks.

smokejumper

One word, lowercase

Smokey Bear

Do not use Smokey the Bear

states

Never abbreviated

Alaska	Maine
Hawaii	Ohio
Idaho	Texas
Iowa	Utah

Abbreviations for other 42:
Even in datelines, you use these abbreviations

Ala.	Md.	N.D.
Ariz.	Mass.	Okla.
Ark.	Mich.	Ore.
Calif.	Minn.	Pa.
Colo.	Miss.	R.I.
Conn.	Mo.	S.C.
Del.	Mont.	S.D.
Fla.	Neb.	Tenn.
Ga.	Nev.	Vt.
Ill.	N.H.	Va.
Ind.	N.J.	Wash.
Kan.	N.M.	W.Va.
Ky.	N.Y.	Wis.
La.	N.C.	Wyo.

Texas A&M Forest Service

Reference the agency as Texas A&M Forest Service, never the/The Texas A&M Forest Service. In long reports, articles and feature stories use of Texas A&M Forest Service upon first reference is mandatory. Second reference may be TFS in the same report, article or feature. Do not use Forest Service, forest service or TX Forest Service.

titles

Capitalize someone's title when it comes before the name, lowercase after the name. *Director Tom Boggus; Mark Stanford, associate agency director*

Lowercase titles when not associated with a name. *Several resource specialists met to discuss urban tree care. Agency department heads went to a conference in the Greater Houston Area.*

trees

In general, lowercase the names of trees, but capitalize proper nouns or adjectives that occur in a name. *tree, fir, white fir, Douglas fir, Scotch pine*

If a botanical name is used, capitalize the first word; lowercase others. *pine tree (Pinus), red cedar (Juniperus virginiana), Kentucky coffee tree (Gymnocladus dioica)*

Scientific Names: The genus name is always italicized. The first letter of the genus name is always capitalized. The specific epithet is always italicized.

weather terms

The following are based on definitions used by the National Weather Service. All temperatures are Fahrenheit.

blizzards—Wind speeds of 35 mph or more and considerable falling and/or blowing of snow with visibility near zero. *Severe blizzard*, winds of 45 mph, temperature at or below 10 F and visibility reduced to near zero.

coastal waters—The waters within 100 miles of the coast, including bays, harbors and sounds.

cyclone—A storm with strong winds rotating about a moving center of low pressure. The word sometimes is used in the United States to mean *tornado* and in the Indian Ocean area to means *hurricane.*

dust storm—Visibility of one-half mile or less due to dust, wind speeds of 30 mph or more.

flash flood—A sudden, violent flood. It typically occurs after a heavy rain or the melting of a heavy snow.

flash flood warning—Warns that flash flooding is imminent or in progress. Those in the affected area should take necessary precautions immediately.

flash flood watch—Alerts the public that flash flooding is possible. Those in the affected area are urged to be ready to take additional precautions if a flash flood warning is issued or if flooding is observed.

flood—Stories about floods usually tell how high the water is and where it is expected to crest. Such a story should also, for comparison, list flood stage and how high the water is above, or below, flood stage.
> **Wrong** – The river is expected to crest at 39 feet.
> **Right** – The river is expected to crest at 39 feet, 12 feet above flood stage.

freeze—Describes conditions when the temperature at or near the surface is expected to be below 32 degrees during the growing season. Adjectives such as *severe* or *hard* are used if a cold spell exceeding two days is expected.

A freeze may or may not be accompanied by the formation of frost. However, use of the term *freeze* usually is restricted for occasions when wind or other conditions prevent frost.

frost—Describes the formation of very small ice crystals, which might develop under conditions similar to dew except for the minimum temperatures involved. Phrases such as *frost in low places* or *scattered frost* are used when appropriate.

high wind—Normally indicates that sustained winds of 40 mph or greater are expected to last one hour or longer; or winds of 58 mph regardless of how long they last.

hurricane categories—Hurricanes are ranked 1 to 5 according to what is known as the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale. Categories 3, 4 and 5 are considered major.

> **Category 1**—Hurricane has central barometric pressure of 28.94 inches or more and winds of 74 to 95 mph, is accompanied by a 4 to 5 foot storm surge and causes minimal damage.

> **Category 2**—Pressure of 28.50 to 28.93 inches, winds from 96 to 110 mph, storm surge 6 to 8 feet, damage extensive.

> **Category 3**—Pressure of 27.91 to 28.49 inches, winds from 111 to 129 mph, storm surge 9 to 12 feet, damage devastating.

> **Category 4**—Pressure of 27.17 to 27.90 inches, winds from 130 to 156 mph, storm surge 13 to 18 feet, damage catastrophic.

> **Category 5**—Pressure of 27.17 inches, winds greater than 157 mph, storm surge higher than 18 feet, damage catastrophic.

Only three *Category 5* storms have hit the United States since record-keeping began: the 1935 Labor Day hurricane that hit the Florida Keys and killed 600 people; Hurricane Camille, which devastated the Mississippi coast in 1969, killing 256 and leaving $1.4 billion damage; and Hurricane Andrew, which hit South Florida in 1992, killing 43 and causing $30.5 billion in damage. Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which killed 1,200 people and caused $108 billion in damage, reached Category 5 in open water but hit the coast as a Category 3.

hurricane eye—The relatively calm area in the center of the storm. In this area winds are light and the sky often is covered only partly by clouds.

hurricane or typhoon—A warm-core tropical cyclone in which the minimum sustained surface wind is 75 mph or more.

> Hurricanes are spawned east of the international date line. Typhoons develop west of the line. They are known as cyclones in the Indian Ocean and Australia.

> When a hurricane or typhoon loses strength (wind speed), usually after landfall, it is reduced to *tropical storm* status.

hurricane season—The portion of the year that has a relatively high incidence of hurricanes. In the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, this is from June through November. In the eastern Pacific, it is May 15 through Nov. 30. In the central Pacific, it is June 1 through Nov. 30.

hurricane warning—Warns that one or both of these dangerous effects of a hurricane are expected in specified areas in 24 hours or less:

- Sustained winds of 74 mph or higher, and/or
- Dangerously high water or a combination of dangerously high water and exceptionally high waves, even though winds expected may be less than hurricane force.

hurricane watch—An announcement for specific areas that a hurricane or incipient hurricane conditions may pose a threat to coastal and inland communities.

ice storm warning—Reserved for occasions when significant and possibly damaging, accumulations of ice are expected.

ice storm, freezing drizzle, freezing rain—Describes the freezing of drizzle or rain on objects as it strikes them. *Freezing drizzle* and *freezing rain* are synonyms for *ice storm.*

National Hurricane Center—The National Weather Service's National Hurricane Center in Miami has overall responsibility for tracking and providing information about tropical depressions, tropical storms and hurricanes in the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean.

The service's Central Pacific Hurricane Center in Honolulu is responsible for hurricane information in the Pacific Ocean area north of the equator from 140 degrees west longitude to 180 degrees.

On the Web: www.nhc.noaa.gov

nearshore waters—The waters extended to five miles from shore.

nor'easter—The term used by the National Weather Service for storms that either exit or move north along the East Coast, producing winds blowing from the northeast.

offshore waters—The waters extending to about 250 miles from shore.

sandstorm—Visibility of one-half mile or less due to sand blown by winds of 30 mph or more.

Santa Ana wind—In Southern California, a weather condition in which strong, hot, dry, dust-bearing winds descend to the Pacific Coast from inland desert regions.

severe thunderstorm—Describes either of the following:

> **Winds**—Thunderstorm-related surface winds sustained or gusts 58 mph or greater.

> **Hail**—Surface hail 1 inch in diameter or larger. The word *hail* in a watch implies hail at the surface and aloft unless qualifying phrases such as *hail aloft* are used.

sleet (one form of ice pellet)—Describes generally solid grains of ice formed by the freezing of raindrops or the refreezing of largely melted snowflakes. Sleet, like small hail, usually bounces when hitting a hard surface.

sleet (heavy)—Heavy sleet is a fairly rare event in which the ground is covered to a depth of significance to motorists and others.

storm tide—Water level rise due to the combination of storm surge and the astronomical tide.

tornado—A violent rotating column of air forming a pendant usually from a cumulonimbus cloud, and touching the ground. It usually stars as a funnel cloud and is accompanied by a loud roaring noise. On a local scale, it is the most destructive of all atmospheric phenomena. Plural is *tornadoes.*

tornado warning—Warns the public of an existing tornado or one suspected to be in existence.

tornado watch—Alerts the public to the possibility of a tornado.

tropical depression—A tropical cyclone in which the maximum sustained surface wind is 38 mph or less.

tropical storm—A warm-core tropical cyclone in which the maximum sustained surface winds range from 39 to 73 mph inclusive.

wind shear—A sudden shift in wind direction and/or speed. It can prevent development of some storms and is sometimes visible when the wind shears off the top of a cloud to form an anvil.

winter storm warning—Notifies the public that severe winter weather conditions are almost certain to occur.

winter storm watch—Alerts the public to the possibility of severe winter weather conditions.

website

The website address should always be listed as tfsweb.tamu.edu

Web is capitalized when referring to the World Wide Web.

years

Use figures, without commas: 1975. Use commas only with a month and day: Dec. 18, 1994, was a special day. Use an s without an apostrophe to indicate spans of decades or centuries: the 1890s, the 1800s.

Years are the lone exception to the general rule in numerals that a figure is not used to start a sentence: 1976 was a very good year.

3.3 Social Media

Texas A&M Forest Service views social media as an opportunity to enhance communication between the public, stakeholders and the agency. Social media can help build public awareness of our agency and strengthen dialogue with our audiences.

The purpose of these guidelines is to define agency requirements relating to the use of social media and to ensure the portrayal of a consistent and accurate message and branding of TFS via online media outlets. In addition, the following guidelines supplement the Texas A&M System Social Media Guidelines.

The agency has approved the use of Blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, Picasa, Google, Vimeo, YouTube, LinkedIn and Pintrest. The use of other media must be approved through the Communications Manager.

Create Content That's Sharable

Social media is often overlooked as a search engine optimization tool. Not only does it increase interest and discovery, social media links can also increase a website's rank in search—the higher our rank, the more visitors we'll receive.

When a user comes to your content page, it's important that any piece of content is one click away from being shared on social media.

Here are a few ways to make your content more social media friendly, encouraging social shares and organic SEO.

1. **Use keywords.** Keywords are important here as well, just as they are in your URLs, headings, subheadings and content. Use the same keywords both in your image file names, alt and description tags. Share your keywords with the communications office, and we can incorporate them into social media posts to make your content more discoverable.

2. **Add images and tag posts. Images share better on social media. Tagging adds value by broadening our reach and by including our partners.**

3. **Keep content short, interesting and relevant.** This will make the content more likely to be read and shared.

   Keep content relevant by tracking what's trending on social media in your industry. While our content has more permanence, consider revising or catering content to current trends. One example from urban forestry is adding information about flood damaged trees because flooding was a hot topic in May. This part takes some research, but will give you a deeper understanding of your audience and make it easier to create share-worthy content.

4. **Proofread!** This cannot be stressed enough. Proofread before and even again after you hit "post" and edit if necessary.

5. **Include short tweetable phrases**. Link to pre-written tweets to make your content more sharable. These will be hyperlinked and once a person clicks on them, they have the option to share that information on their own Twitter handle. Free services like Click To Tweet are a good option. You can have two basic formats, either just a hyperlinked sentence, or a sentence that ends with the hyperlink *Click to Tweet.*

3.4 Writing Tools

There are a number of government websites devoted to writing in plain language instead of bureaucratic jargon:

• Plain Writing Act of 2010
• PlainLanguage.gov
• Usability.gov
• Center for Plain Language

Plain language in industry
• Nielsen Norman Group research on jargon

4.0 Definitions

Content Management System (CMS): A content management system is a computer application that allows publishing, editing and modifying, organizing, deleting as well as maintenance of content from a central interface. Such systems of content management provide procedures to manage workflow in a collaborative environment.

Subject Matter Expert (SME): A subject-matter expert or domain expert is a person who is an authority in a particular area or topic. The term domain expert is frequently used in expert systems software development, and there the term always refers to the domain other than the software domain.

Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML): HyperText Markup Language, commonly referred to as HTML, is the standard markup language used to create web pages. It is written in the form of HTML elements consisting of tags enclosed in angle brackets (like <html>).

Uniform Resource Locator (URL): URL is an acronym for Uniform Resource Locator and is a reference (an address) to a resource on the Internet. A URL has two main components: Protocol identifier: For the URL http://example.com , the protocol identifier is http . Resource name: For the URL http://example.com , the resource name is example.com.

Optical character recognition (OCR): OCR is the mechanical or electronic conversion of images of typewritten or printed text into machine-encoded text.

Source: http://www.google.com

EIR Accessibility: Electronic and Information Resources accessibility means providing electronic information and services through multiple ways so that communication is not contingent on a single sense or ability. An example is a video presentation that also includes closed captioning, which enables accessibility for hearing-impaired individuals.

Source: http://dir.texas.gov/View-Resources/Pages/Content.aspx?id=36

Electronic and Information Resources (EIR): Includes information technology and any equipment or interconnected system or subsystem of equipment that is used in the creation, conversion, duplication, or delivery of data or information. The term EIR includes, but is not limited to, telecommunications products (such as telephones), information kiosks and transaction machines, websites, multimedia, and office equipment such as copiers and fax machines. The term does not include equipment that contains embedded information technology that is used as an integral part of the product, but the principal function of which is not the acquisition, storage, manipulation, management, movement, control, display, switching, interchange, transmission, or reception of data or information. For example, HVAC

(heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) equipment such as thermostats or temperature control devices, and medical equipment where information technology is integral to its operation, is not information technology.

5.0 Important URLs

Full Online Ektron CMS User Guide:
http://documentation.ektron.com/cms400/v9.10/ECMSUG/Web/ECMSUG.htm

CMS Official Website:
http://www.ektron.com

For more information about the HTML tags or HTML in general please visit
http://www.w3schools.com/tags/

6.0 Contact Info

All Content Managers

EktronContentManagers@tfs.tamu.edu

Communications

200 Technology Way, Suite 1120
College Station, TX 77845

Call: (979) 458-6600
E-mail: communications@tfs.tamu.edu

Information Resources

200 Technology Way, Suite 1120
College Station, TX 77845

Call: (979) 458-7309
Chat: https://tfshelp.tamu.edu
E-mail: support@tfs.tamu.edu

7.0 Appendix

7.1 Persona Development

Questions to Ask During Persona Development

The following questions and areas of discussion will help you construct a snapshot of the visitors to your site.

Objective	**Questions**
Define the Purpose/ Vision for the Site	• What is the purpose of the site? • What are the goals of the site?
Describe the User	**Personal** • What is the age of your person? • What is the gender of your person? • What is the highest level of education this person has received? **Professional** • How much work experience does your person have? • What is your person's professional background? • Why will they come to the site? (User needs, interests, and goals) • Where (or from whom) else is this person getting information about your issue or similar programs or services? • When and where will users access the site? (User environment and context) **Technical** • What technological devices does your person use on a regular basis? • What software and/or applications does your person use on a regular basis? • Through what technological device does your user primarily access the web for information? • How much time does your person spend browsing the web every day?

Objective	Questions
User Motivation	• What is your person motivated by? • What are they looking for? • What is your person looking to do? • What are his needs?

7.2 Plain Language Checklist