Northeast Texas Forest Landowners Association Newsletter

May 2007 Published by the Northeast Texas Forest Landowners Association Vol. 28 Issue 2

The Changing Landscape of Texas

John R. Warner, Urban District Forester, Texas Forest Service, Conroe, Texas

Communities are changing at an ever hastening pace. Whether in rural landscapes of deep east Texas or the vast openness of Texas' high plains and prairies or in suburban expansions found in metropolitan regions such as Houston, El Paso, Dallas and Austin, the demands being placed upon land, ecosystems, watersheds and environments are forever going to change them. Land fragmentation, increasing risk of wildland wildfires along the rural-urban interfaces, ground and surface water being juxtaposed between the haves and the "have nots", are just a few of the challenges facing us today, not only in Texas but around the globe.

In turn, these changing expectations placed upon the land and natural resources of today and tomorrow will create new challenges as well as opportunities for society to come up with ways to handle and create sustainability and balance between society needs and nature's capacity. It is imperative that natural resource managers, planners and leaders face their changing role head-on.

As forests and ecosystems become more fragmented, their capability for providing services such as clean air and water, habitat for wildlife, products to enhance and sustain human life, as well as an ecosystem's ability to sustain itself are diminished. Ecological services are natural processes that ecosystems provide as a benefit. Ecosystem services are commonly defined as **benefits people obtain from ecosystems**. As the populations grow, the demands on nature's once free "services" will start costing society to maintain them. Can we rely on nature to continue to provide us with these ecosystem services; or, will there have to be human intervention to insure these benefits? Think of it this way… rain replenishes a watershed in east Texas and as it makes it way through the trees and forest floors to the streams and creeks, it is filtered…. and naturally makes its way to an area where a population can use it as a store of clean drinking water. Now, if you remove the watershed, the forest, and the soils, and replace them with concrete, reshaped drainages, channelized rivers and bayous, in years to come you could have detrimental effects to the water on which many people may be dependent.

Agencies such as the Texas Forest Service are redefining their roles to include Texas' fastest growing segment of forest landownership, helping them understand the importance of maintaining ecologically sound ecosystems on their properties. These landowners may own one to 10 acres located in the rural-urban interface, where the natural environment meets development. They bring new challenges for the natural resource manager. Instead of a few owners of large acreages to deal with, there now many more landowners of smaller acreages with houses and outbuildings - small woodlots that still need attention to maintain their health in a new setting, which is unlike the historic forests and vegetation covers found before the 1800s. In rural-urban interfaces or otherwise fragmented landscapes, yards are now becoming the new ecosystems.

Look at it this way - there are still large acreages of trees, once owned by one or a few entities, providing wildlife habitat, ecosystem services and clean air. But now, these coveted acres are owned by 30 or more different individuals with more diverse needs and expectations of what their corner of the world will provide them.

Worldwide the planet's landscape is changing, being influenced by the countless factors humans are placing on it to sustain a growing population. One innovative practice being used today is conservation easements that protect the land's abilities to provide for a stable ecosystem by limiting development. Other examples are green building, also known as sustainable building, that lends itself to practices that reduce operating costs by increasing energy efficiency and water conservation, thereby improving health due to better indoor air quality, and reducing environmental impacts , for instance, by lessening storm water runoff and the heat-island effect. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the heat-island effect is a phenomenon that "describes urban and suburban temperatures that are 2 to 10°F (1 to 6°C) hotter than nearby rural areas. Elevated temperatures can impact communities by increasing peak energy demand, air conditioning costs, air pollution levels, and heat-related illness and mortality." Heat islands are formed when cities replace natural land cover with pavement, buildings, and other infrastructure.

Finally a new innovative and forward-thinking concept is the development of ecocities, which influence the evolution of city planning and encourage ecologically responsible urban design. According the Ecocity Builders, an "ecocity is a human settlement that enables its residents to live a good quality of life while using minimal natural resources". For more information on ecocities, go to www.ecocitybuilders.org.

Northeast Texas Forest Landowners Association Officers

President:
Bill Tucker
(903) 856-6316
btimber@aol.com

Vice President
Glenn Weiss
(903) 645-3782
weissgj@bluebonnet.net

Secretary-Treasurer:
Harry Earl
(903) 860-3306
hearl@quik.com

Director of Camp County:
Bob Turner
(903) 856-6419
robertarc2@aol.com

Director of Franklin County:
Blanche Handy-Sparks
(903) 860-2507
bhandy@peoplescom.net

Director of Morris County:
Diane Dalby
(903) 572-0151

Director of Titus County:
Open

Director of Upshur County
Kenneth Stewart
903-843-2174

Director of Wood County
Larry Hoffman
(903) 569-2237
Fax (903) 569-2908

Newsletter editor: Bill Tucker

TFS Foresters for our area:
Brian Pope
(903) 856-7181 Pittsburg
Ken Conaway
(903) 734-7007 Gilmer

NETFLA WEB SITE:
www.txforest.org

FROM THE FOREST

As I review this issue, am wondering whether we should call it the Enviro Services and Property Rights Newsletter. There are many changes taking place that have and will affect our little corners of the woods, some quite dramatically. Several of our northeast Texas counties may see population increases of 50% by 2020; Camp and other counties are already classified as "semi-urban." The rural counties in Texas are now outvoted by the urban, and the trend is predicted to continue.

Environmental, societal, and economic issues are increasingly with us, and will not go away. Along with these comes the political and financial power play, and what seems of latter years to be an increasing hype and hysteria on the part of the mass media about the "global warming crisis." On the soapbox here...

Like most of you, Leslie and I have survived the environmentally predicted "global cooling/global freeze" emergency of the late 70's and early 80's, as well Paul Erlich's "population bomb" theory of that era, which would have had us starving and standing on one another's shoulders by this date. Erlich would have had the U.S. population at almost 3 billion today. What happened? Bad science, junk science, or just hype to gain political ends? Or maybe all of the above?

Unlike almost all journalists of that time or this, I actually read the summary of the original Kyoto Report, as well as many, many pages of the underlying report. I noted at the time that less than 2% of those signing the Summary were climatologists. The balance was overwhelmingly made of sociologists, psychologists, economists, and other unrelated disciplines. Many participating scientists in the broad study protested vehemently, but were never heard, nor were the many former Nobel Prize winners who protested the Summary at the next Kyoto Convention.

What does this mean to us? Short term means forest owners that fit the specs can pocket some bucks. Watch out for the strings. More about this at the Field Day.

My take: the quest for power and money, coupled with the politics of envy, still drive most issues in the global economy, as well as the environmental movement.

On a more factual note, I asked Walt Sears, manager of the Northeast Texas Municipal Water District, to give us a legislative update on groundwater. He hit the high points in this email:

"The good news is that we tried to get the law changed to 'one county, one vote.' For a time, it was in SB 3. After testimony was taken in SB 3, the concept was removed because of pressure from west Texas groundwater conservation districts who did not want to change from the original concept of 'one district, one vote.' The bad news is that we were not successful in getting the change. This means that most of northeast Texas does not have a vote when it comes to setting the desired future conditions of our part of the aquifer.

It seems apparent that the next two years will be spent on determining whether our citizens prefer to go without representation and without any groundwater control or whether they want to form a groundwater district. Since the law is still "one district, one vote", I think that the most prudent thing to do is to form districts where needed on a single county basis. If those single county districts want to join together for efficiency, then there may only be one office that covers all of the districts. I remain dedicated to the proposition that the local citizens should determine what they want and that reasonable minds could differ on the strategy."

What to do now? Stay informed, check the facts, remain rational, form considered opinions, and then use the tools available, including politicians, to defend your own interests. Sheep do not long remain free.

Bill Tucker

Program and Meeting Notes

Dr. Eric Taylor will be our host for the May Field Day at the Texas A&M Forest Research Center just north of Overton, Texas. Please note that this is on Thursday.

Program agenda:

- 09:30 Carbon Credits — what they mean to us — an objective analysis
- 10:30 Planting Strategies for today's forests
- 11:00 View the bareroot/containerized seedling study (field)
- 12:00 Lunch — **Dutch treat** — at the Center
- 12:45 Invasive Species — slides, discussion, reference material
- 1:45 Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program — what it is and how our group can benefit
- 2:30 Adjourn

We will meet in the Gilmer Civic Center Parking lot and go from there. The Civic Center is on the east side of 271, north of downtown and adjacent to Walmart. Look for the white Forest Service vans. The trip takes just under an hour, so we will leave the parking lot at 8:30 sharp. Van capacity is about 30, so if we have more people than that, some of us can go in our cars.

We need to know: 1) how many of you are going on the tour, and 2) how many want to ride in the vans. Please check out the box on the last page and RSVP me by the cutoff date of Monday, May 21, on both counts. You are encouraged to bring prospective members and guests, but be sure to include them in your head count. We need this information for both the caterer and the drivers, as well as our hosts.

The maps below the quickest route to Overton from Gilmer. I will have detailed driving directions at Gilmer for those taking their own vehicles to the Research Center, or contact me and I can email, post office mail you one, or provide phone directions. If you will be traveling from other locations, please contact the Research Center directly at (903) 834-6191

2007 PROGRAM CALENDAR

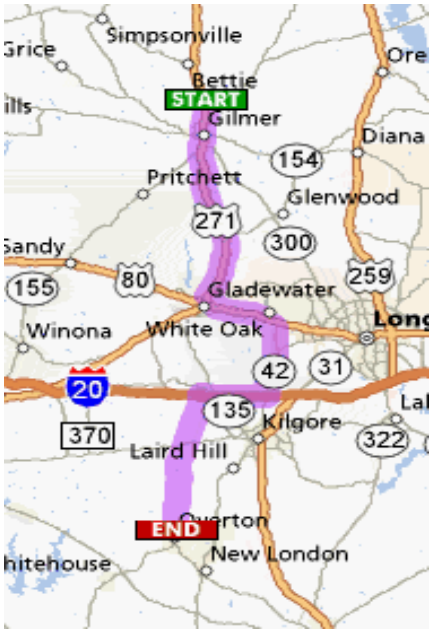
THURSDAY, May 24
Field Day: 9:30 AM - 2:30 PM
Overton Research Station
Overton, Texas

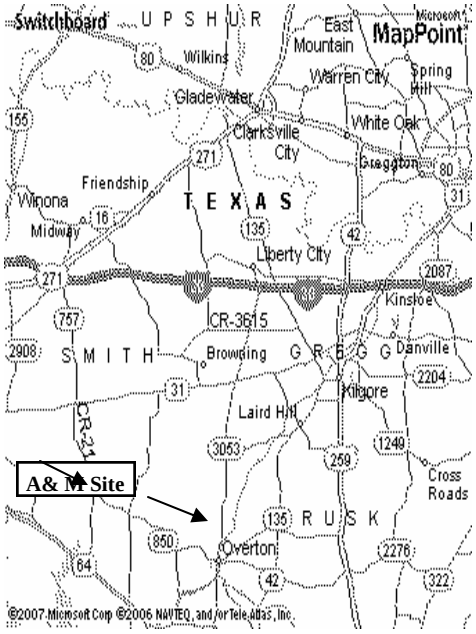
Saturday, August 11, 10:AM
Wildfire — what you should expect and how to deal with it
Doyce Winchester
TFS Fire Specialist
Pilgrim Community Room
Pittsburg, Texas

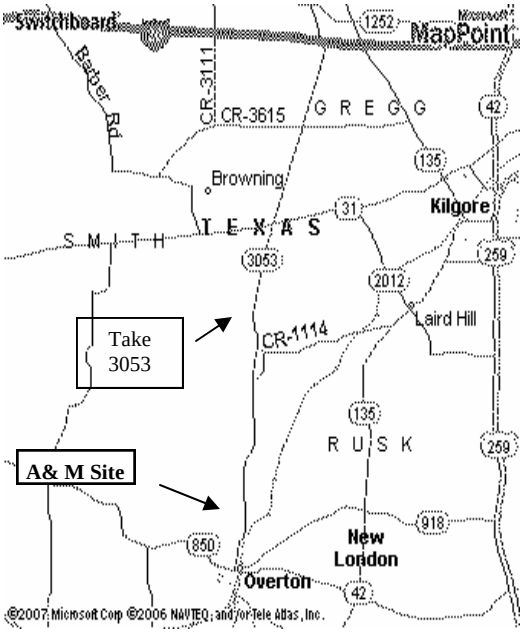
Saturday, November 10, 10:00 AM
Pilgrim Community Room
Pittsburg, Texas
Elections, Program to be announced
Free TFA catered barbecue lunch

2007 dues of $15 are still payable, and those with unpaid dues will find a red dot on their newsletter. This year's cutoff date for the TFA contest is August 1, so we need to get everyone paid to win a free lunch and keep our victory string alive.
Make your checks to NETFLA, and send to:

NETFLA
PO Box 642
Mt. Vernon, TX 75457







Ecosystem Services – Not the Same Old Goods from the Woods

Robert Deal, Research Silviculturist, U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station

Ecosystem services are the goods and services that people obtain from our environment. These services include clean air and water, pollution control, and flood regulation, in addition to food and wood products. Recent developments in the markets for ecosystem services may present some new opportunities for forest landowners and managers. Many of these services have been provided from forestland with little consideration of their "market" value. Using market-based analyses for valuing multiple forest benefits has long been the domain of forest economists, but interest from business and government agencies are now providing new impetus to develop market based mechanisms for ecosystem services.

Businesses often prefer market based regulations because it gives them options to find the most cost effective solution to comply with environmental standards. Compliance can be obtained through production improvements to reduce pollution by purchasing "credits" from other firms, or from purchasing offset credits from approved activities that compensate for pollution increases elsewhere. These new markets offer potential financial incentives to landowners to maintain and manage forestlands rather than converting these forests into other uses.

Market-based mechanisms for carbon exchange are one way to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. Cap-and trade regulations establish a limit for carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gases, and then emission allowances are either auctioned or allocated to regulated sectors based on historic emission levels. Excess emission allowances can be generated by production improvements and these allowance-based transactions can be traded among firms in regulated sectors. Examples of offset credits include forest carbon sequestration, methane recapture and alternative energy use.

Markets for water quality credits are established from a regulatory structure that producers or developers must follow in order to acquire permits for their operations. Water quality trading provides a market based process for polluters to pay for the reduction of pollutant levels to achieve targets for a watershed.

Another market for ecosystem services is species and wetland mitigation banking. These markets are based on regulations that require developers to offset any loss of wetland with another area. Developers must obtain a permit before they are allowed to harm a wetland or an endangered species. Wetland and species mitigation banks sell credits to developers. As a result of these regulations, a new industry has emerged in the U.S. with the expressed purpose of providing developers and private landowners with mitigation credits they need to get their development approved.

The USDA's plan for the 2007 Farm Bill includes a new focus on incentive based conservation. The Farm Bill includes a series of far reaching proposals that allocate conservation funds based on cost per environmental benefit and create stronger incentives for private markets in ecosystem services.

Many of these market-based incentives for ecosystem services are new and the markets have only recently begun to function. These new financial incentives may expand opportunities for forest landowners to gain revenue from their lands while providing benefits to society as good land stewards.

This article, submitted by Jan Davis, Forest Legacy and Heritage Forest Coordinator, Texas Forest Service, College Station, Texas, is an excerpt taken from the Society of American Foresters' *Western Forester*, March 2007 edition. The full article is available at http://www.forestry.org/pdf/march07.pdf.

Websites of Interest

Texas Water Resources Education – http://texaswater.tamu.edu/

The other side of the Global Warming debate, and other matters.
http://www.junkscience.com

Biomass Publications of the Forest Operations Research Unit: A Synthesis - http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/biomass_cd/

Millennium Seed Bank Project (some participation by Texas entities, including the Jones State Forest near Conroe) – http://www.rbgkew.org.uk/msbp/

Tree Ring Society (bulletins published since 1934) – http://www.treeringsociety.org/

TEXAS LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Courtesy Texas Forest Service, as of April 25

State Agency

HB 2458, by Bryon Cook - is a result of the Sunset Commission recommendation to abolish the Structural Pest Control Board and transfer its functions to the Texas Department of Agriculture. The Texas Structural Pest Control Board was created in 1971 to ensure that those who perform pest control activities in buildings, homes, and other structures are qualified, competent, and adhere to established professional standards. The Board has two primary functions: license commercial and non-commercial pest control professionals, and enforce the Texas Structural Pest Control Act and federal law through inspections and complaint investigations. The wood treating industry falls under the SPCB's regulations which require annual continuing education for those individuals who treat wood products. HB 2458 passed the House by a vote of 136/2.

Personal Property

C.S.H.B. 1022, by Hilderbran - exempts from ad valorem taxation one's personally owned motor vehicle used both for personal and business purposes. This bill passed the House by a vote of 142/0.

C.S.H.B. 1472, by Miller - allows a municipality to enter into a development agreement with a landowner of agricultural, forest or wildlife management use land instead of choosing annexation. Current law does not provide for the ability of a municipality to offer a non-annexation agreement to agricultural producers who own land in an area that a municipality wants to annex. This bill passed the House second reading with two amendments.

Property Tax

S.B. 575, by Nichols - decreases from 10 to five percent the percentage of the appraised value of the property from the last year to be used in the calculation of the current year's appraised value. The bill authorizes the commissioners court of a county to call an election, no more than once every 10 years, to allow the voters to set the percentage limitation on increases in appraised value at a rate higher than fiver percent but no more than 10 percent. This bill is pending action in the Senate Finance Committee.

S.J.R. 23, by Nichols - proposes a constitutional amendment to provide a limitation of five percent, rather than 10 percent, on the annual growth of property tax appraisals, and authorizes the voters in a political subdivision to elect a limitation above five percent, but not exceeding 10 percent, through a local option election. Action is pending in the Senate Finance Committee.

S.B. 1576, by Wentworth - creates a new appraisal category for ad valorem tax purposes for qualified recreational land. This bill provides that qualified recreational land would be subject to appraisal at 20 percent of the land's market value. This bill also serves as the enabling legislation for S.J.R. 51, which proposes a constitutional amendment to allow for ad valorem taxation of recreational land on the basis of a percentage, but not less than 20 percent, of the land's market value. This bill is pending in the Senate Finance Committee.

HB 1404, by Dutton - requires the taxing unit to send a notice to each owner of real property that is contiguous to the abandoned property informing those owners of their right to purchase the property for the total amount owed on the abandoned property. To qualify to purchase the property, an owner would have to demonstrate substantial maintenance of the abandoned property for at least one year before the property was seized by the taxing unit. HB 1404 was voted favorably from the House Local Government Ways and Means Committee.

Transportation

SB 1897, by Carona - requires TxDOT to refuse to register a vehicle if the vehicle owner owes the county money for a fine, fee or tax. SB 1897 was voted favorably as substituted from the Senate Committee on Transportation and Homeland Security.

S.B. 1268, by Nichols - prohibits TxDOT from converting an existing non-tolled state highway or a segment of a state highway to a toll road. Current law authorizes TxDOT to convert an existing non-tolled state highway or segment of a highway into a toll road, if the county commissioners court or a municipality in which the road exists consents. This bill was reported favorably from the Senate Committee on Transportation and Homeland Security.

S.B. 333, by Carona - applies the sanction for violating an out-of-service order to the operators of smaller commercial motor vehicles (with a gross weight rating of 10,001 lbs. to 26,000 lbs.). This means that a person driving a commercial motor vehicle who does not have or need to have a CDL is subject to the same penalties as those who do have a CDL. This bill passed in the Senate by a vote of 30/0 and is currently in the House Law Enforcement Committee.

Energy

H.B. 1214, by Christian - clarifies that 500 MW of non-wind renewable generation must be installed by 2015. The 79th Legislative Session (S.B. 20), adopted a target for 500 MW of "non-wind" renewable generation to be installed by 2015 in order to support the development of renewable energy resources such as biomass power, geothermal power, solar power, hydropower and others. S.B. 20 left uncertainty regarding whether the Legislature intended the 500 MW non-wind target to be voluntary or mandatory. This bill passed the House by a vote of 141/0 and is now in the Senate Committee on Business and Commerce.

Feral Hog Control Field Day

Thursday, May 17 2:30-7:30 PM

Pilgrim Farm, Pittsburg, Texas

Free Hamburger Meal at 5:30 PM + 3 CEUs
No Charge for Program

Program Covers these topics and more:

* "Feral Hogs" - life history, behavior and legal control methods
* Feral hog trap design and strategies for control and exclusion, including costs
* Hunting regulations concerning feral hogs
* Marketing hogs to processors, including a list of buyers
* Regulations for transporting and holding feral hogs and disease implications
* Pasture Renovation and cost/acre
* Participants will receive bound handbook with latest information to keep as a reference

Please pre-register at (903-843-4019) for meal planning purposes.

Pre-registration by Monday, May 14 qualifies for Grand Door Prize. ($300.00 value)

Directions to Field Day Site:

From Hwy 271 in Pittsburg, turn East on Lafayette Street, go ½ mile.

Turn left onto Arch Davis Road (FM 2254) and go 1.9 miles - continue on FM 2254 for 1.6 miles.

Turn right onto CR 1120 for 0.4 miles.

Arrive at 1047 CR 1120 - turn right. Signs will be posted at site.

For more information, contact your county agent:

Galen Logan, Camp CEA, 903-856-5005
Mike Berry, Franklin/Delta CEA, 903-395-4400
Stephen Gowin, Rains CEA, 903-472-2412
Brian Hill, Upshur CEA, 903-843-4019
Clint Perkins, Wood CEA, 903-763-2924
Kenny Rollins, Titus CEA, 903-572-0261

NATIVE VS. EXOTIC FOREST PESTS: SOME VERY IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES – AND WHY WE SHOULD BE CONCERNED

Dr. E. L. Barnard, forest pathologist and supervisor, Forest Health Section, Florida Division of Forestry, FDACS

If you are a southern forest landowner growing pines for pleasure or profit, you've likely heard of (and perhaps had experience with) fusiform rust, pitch canker, annosum root disease, and/or pine bark beetles (southern pine beetles, Ips engravers, black turpentine beetles). Indeed, these diseases and insects have been the "poster children" of biological threats to southern pine forestry for decades, and for reasons that are understandable. They are common throughout the South, they are recognizable, and many landowners have suffered significant economic loss as a result of their activity.

Interestingly, all of these diseases and insects have something in common. All are native (endemic to the southern U.S.) and all, in one way or another, respond to predisposing forest conditions. None has the capability to annihilate its host pine species or permanently alter the forest ecosystem of which it is part. Contrast these realities with the history and potential represented by non-native (exotic) forest pests (pathogens, insects, and invasive pest plants).

Exotic pests are now the "headliners" in the world of forest health, and for good reason. Chestnut blight, caused by an exotic fungus introduced into North America early in the 20th century, has effectively eliminated American chestnut (the once dominant hardwood in the Appalachian Mountains) from its entire native range – within a few decades. Dutch elm disease, the product of an exotic fungus and two bark beetles (one native, one exotic) has decimated populations of American elms in forests, on city streets and on college campuses, with losses estimated in billions of dollars – within a single human generation.

Today, exotic forest pests (pathogens, insects and invasive pest plants) continue their legacy. Dogwood anthracnose, putatively a function of an exotic fungal pathogen, has wreaked havoc in the eastern U.S., eliminating flowering dogwood from many forest habitats. Butternut canker, caused by another suspected exotic pathogen, has killed 90 percent of butternut trees in certain parts of North America and apparently close to 80 percent of this species in the Southeast.

More than 20 million ash trees have been destroyed by the emerald ash borer, another Asian insect, in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana since its initial detection in Detroit in 2002. The hemlock woolly adelgid, again from Asia, has invaded nearly half of the eastern range of eastern hemlock from Georgia to Maine; it is expected to completely eliminate eastern hemlock in time. And, since its initial detection in Savannah, Ga., in 2002, an Asian ambrosia beetle has been vectoring a previously undescribed vascular wilt fungus that is killing redbays and sassafras trees at alarming rates along the Atlantic coastal plain from Charleston, SC, to Indian River Co., Fla. Loss of redbay as a forest tree species is now considered a distinct possibility.

These are just some of the more noteworthy or damaging exotic pathogens and insects that have impacted or are impacting our native forests. We could easily add any number of non-native (exotic) invasive pest plants (kudzu, melaleuca, cogongrass and old world climbing fern) that are displacing native species, changing fire conditions and threatening natural ecosystems. Collectively these foreign invaders have altered the forests that we have known and loved.

The USDA Forest Service and others are now advocating and initiating efforts to collect seed of trees threatened by exotic insects and pathogens for re-establishment of the species after foreign invaders have killed off the current native populations and then died off themselves for lack of host material. The seriousness of the threats represented by invasive pest species resulted in a Presidential Order (#13112) in 1999, establishing a national Invasive Species Council and the development of a federal Invasive Species Plan. Effective measures, including public awareness and responsible action (particularly effective regulation of imported goods and associated packing materials) to prevent new introductions and minimize the impacts of exotics are essential.

Market Report – Jan./Feb., 2007

Product	Statewide Ave. Price Jan./Feb., 2007		Previous Ave. Price Nov./Dec., 2007		Volume Difference (*)
	Volume	Weight	Volume	Weight	
Pine-Sawlogs	**$371.91/ mbf**	**$48.54/ton**	**$328.08/ mbf**	**$42.75/ton**	**+13.3%**
Pine-Pulpwood	**$29.65/cord**	**$11.04/ton**	**$23.53/ cord**	**$8.73/ton**	**+26.0%**
Pine-Chip'n'Saw	**	**	**$42.07/ cord**	**$15.58/ton**	**N/A**
Mixed Hardwood-Sawlogs	**$101.10/ mbf**	**$10.98/ton**	**$136.11/ mbf**	**$14.24/ton**	**-25.7%**
Hardwood-Pulpwood	**$27.19/cord**	**$9.75/ton**	**$17.92/ cord**	**$6.45/ton**	**+51.7%**

See Timber Price Trends at http://texasforestservice.tamu.edu for more detailed information. Copies can be purchased from the Texas Forest Service, Office of the Director, John B. Connally Building, 301 Tarrow, Suite 364, College Station, TX 77840-7896. It is recommended that you use the services of a professional consulting forester in managing any timber sale. Important factors affecting timber prices include the type, quality and volume of timber for sale, accessibility, distance to mills/markets, weather conditions, economy/market conditions, who is handling the sale, who is buying the timber, and contract requirements by the landowner.

*Conversion factors between volume and weight vary from sale to sale, so the differences in volume prices above may not equal differences in weight prices.
**Insufficient sales to report price statistics (less than three sales).

RSVP FOR OVERTON FIELD DAY AND LUNCH, Thursday, May 24

Contact Bill Tucker at 903-856-6316 (email btimber@aol.com) or fill out, tear off and mail this strip to:

Bill Tucker
1172 CR 2412
Leesburg, TX 75451

Your name _____
Number in your party _____
Number riding in TFS vans _____

Monday, May 21, is the cutoff date.

Northeast Texas Forest Landowners Association
P.O. Box 642
Mt. Vernon, TX 75457