



Northeast Texas Forest Landowners Association Newsletter

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Do's and Don'ts for Absentee Landowners

Lin Risner, Regional Forester, Texas Forest Service, Longview, Texas

Are you an absentee landowner? An absentee landowner is simply a person or partnership owning land they do not reside on. The owner(s) may live in the next town, a large metropolitan area or any place in the world. I have worked with absentee owners who lived as far away as Norway. Since the absentee owner may be able to make only irregular visits to their land, there is some additional risk to be recognized and avoided.

Presented below are some recommendations an absentee landowner should seriously consider.

Do clearly mark your property lines. A painted line is good but a fence is better. Texas now has what is commonly known as the purple paint law. The law states that a property line marked at certain intervals, at a certain height and with a more or less specific color of purple constitutes a legally established property line in Texas. While the painted line is legally adequate it would be a good idea to place *No Trespassing* signs along your line. Since the paint is usually applied to trees along the line and any timber theft might remove these trees, it would be a good idea to take photos of the marked line. Make sure to capture permanent features such as roads, power lines, creeks, etc. in the photos as reference points. A plowed or disked fire line can also be used to identify a change in land ownership but is not recognized as legal line.

Do maintain a locked gate at all entrance points around the property. It would be helpful to provide the local VFD and the Texas Forest Service with a key in case access is needed for fire suppression or forest pest field checks. Another important benefit of a locked gate is it will discourage trespassing by most violators.

Do arrange for a trusted party to do a walk-around at least once a year. This person could be a relative, a neighbor, the hunting lease holder, your forest consultant, a local Texas Forest Service representative or someone else who you can count on to make periodic checks of the property. Items to be watched for include unapproved use of the property, timber theft, harvest activities on adjacent properties, condition of property lines, illegal dumping, wildfire damage, insect or disease infestations, storm damage, new oil/gas well sites and any other activity you may not be aware of. Of course this ground check has little value unless the results are reported back to you. The report can be as formal as a forest management plan or as casual as a phone call.

Do be very aware that all dumps are not equal; some can quite literally kill you. For decades, un-gated properties or properties along isolated or dead end roads have been used as illegal dump

sites for everything from brush to household garbage to furniture. Unfortunately we have a new criminal in the woods. It has become common practice for illegal drug producers to dump their 'Meth' lab by-products at these same sites. The residual chemicals and related apparatus are extremely toxic and can kill very rapidly if inhaled at close range. During routine wild land fire suppression, it is not uncommon to have a meth lab dump involved in the fire scene. When the toxic chemicals are burned, the smoke produced is deadly and canisters used in the process can explode. I recommend you become aware of what items identify a meth lab dump. Your local law enforcement agency should have educational materials on the subject.

Do use a professional forester to not only periodically check your property but to provide such services as developing a formal resource management plan, to maintain timber inventory records, to settle any timber theft issues, to conduct and manage a timber harvest, to keep you informed as to cost assistance funds, tax abatements and possible mitigation opportunities, handle easement contracts with mineral owners, to qualify your land as a certified tree farm and to provide professional advice on a variety of topics.

Do become well versed in Texas ownership rights if the land is held as a family partnership or an undivided interest by several parties. An annual meeting of all owners to discuss and agree upon future management activities is essential to avoid conflicts.

Do not allow access to your property for recreational or other uses without a written understanding as to the limit of the use you are granting. If the situation involves long term users, such as hunting leases then a formal contract is recommended to protect all parties.

Do not make any type of timber harvest based solely on mail, phone or email solicitations. As stated above use the services of a professional forester. I have often said that timber is the only commodity where the seller should be aware. Most owners do not know the true value of timber they are selling. This is where the forester comes in to represent you. A side bar as relates to solicitations - the majority of timber buyers and cutters are honest, hardworking individuals. However there is a small group that scans the tax rolls for timber owners or partnerships living far from their property. These become prime targets for timber thefts. There is little you as an owner can do to change how your property is listed in the tax rolls but you should be aware that your mailing address may give a potential thief more information than you care for them to have.

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FROM THE FOREST



As I look up at the header for this column, am beginning to wonder if we will still have a forest on our patch here in Camp County, or whether it will all one day wind up like wheat, just "cured on the stem." Not that bad yet, but still pretty tough, especially following last year and the year before. Been a long time since I've seen the pond full. Gets pretty interesting when you find yourself spraying those steep banks with Round-Up to keep down the young volunteer pines from last year...

Good news is that the hogs haven't found the remaining 6" depth to wallow in, and the deer and other critters can still get a drink. More good news is that if summer continues this way, we'll see a major fire ant die-off. And the good news continues: even the bahia grass has browned off, so no fuel costs for the tractor, and it's been way too dry to spray herbicides, so less work for the old man. Best get off this topic before it leads to too many "how hot was it" and "how dry was it" competitions.

Ken Stewart was the unanimous pick of the directors to replace Bill Voss as interim director for Upshur County, and has agreed to do so. Welcome, Ken!

Brian Pope is working on a letter to forest landowners in Titus County to help recruit members there and give us a pool of future directors.

William Robertson from Upshur County has been named Texas Logger of the Year — see the article on page 5.

Your Association sponsored three teachers to the TFA Teachers Conservation Institute this year. Their names are Rita Casas, Janet Espresi, and Patricia Sharon, all from the Houston area, which fits with a strategy of getting our sustainable forestry message out to the major voter concentrations in the metropolitan areas.

Sept. 15 is the cutoff date for the TFA County Association membership contest, so if you like those free lunches, get your NETFLA and TFA dues current. It was really close last year, and this year could be tougher. Remember, these costs should be tax deductible for most of you.

Finally...I know you appreciated Sid's thoughtful quotations. I'm not Sid, but would leave you with this little story I found while cruising forestry sites on the web. From a Florida forester:

"the snake shook from head to tail"

One fairly common truism here in Florida was of a south Alabama boy fishing for bream but ran out of worms. He heard something slithering alongside and saw a cottonmouth moccasin with a worm in its mouth. He started to take the worm but had second thoughts and decided that a drop or two of "shine" from his Mason jar would be more effective. He put some in that snake's mouth, the snake shook from head to tail, dropped the worm and slithered off real fast into the woods.

The snake's worm caught another big bream and the boy was wondering what he was going to use for bait next when he heard some slithering next to him again. He looked down and it was that snake with another worm in his mouth...

Bill Tucker

Program and Meeting Notes

Our speaker for the August meeting will be Paul Hale, President and Coordinator of the Texas Logging Council. We've never had a logger address the group, and it should be interesting to hear about forestry from the logger's point of view. Paul has had a varied career, and has been a logger for twenty years. He has seen many changes during that time, including the birth of the TFA Pro Logger Certification Program. He will explain what's involved in this process and how using a Pro Logger benefits the landowner, as well as giving us an overview of modern harvesting practices and his take on Texas timber and economics in the future. Be thinking of questions you'd like addressed, as there will be plenty of time for Q & A.

Justin Penick, head of Acorn Outdoor Services, will be our guest for the November meeting. His firm is the only one *licensed and insured* in Texas to do prescribed burning, and yes, they will work in our area. What this means to you is that if you want to do a burn, hiring these folks will absolve you of all liability, including smoke, for your burn. Acorn also has other services available, including heavy equipment site prep, machine planting, and chemical operations and fertilization.

Finally, the next meeting of the Forest Landowners Council will be on Friday, August 11, at 9:30 AM. The normal site has been moved to the Stephen F. Austin School of Forestry in Nacogdoches (a little closer for us) to accommodate a larger audience. We will have a guest speaker on current water issues and there should be some good discussion. All the Council members have been encouraged to bring several guests, since this will take the place of the planned Water Symposium, and water issues never go away, including our own proposed Marvin Nichols lake. Contact me for further details. If you've never been to one of these meetings, you've been missing a lot, and this would be a great time — especially in the middle of a drought — to get your feet wet...(pun intended) — *Bill*

2006 PROGRAM CALENDAR

Saturday, August 12, 10:30 AM

Working Your Timber

Paul Hale

Pro Logger's Views and Comments

Pilgrim Community Center

Pittsburg, Texas

Saturday, November 11, 10:30 AM

Burn, Mulch, Rip, Bed, Spray?

Acorn Industries

Pilgrim Community Room

Pittsburg, Texas

The red dot program continues. If you have a red dot on your newsletter, you owe 2005 or 2006 dues of \$15.

This is tax deductible for most.

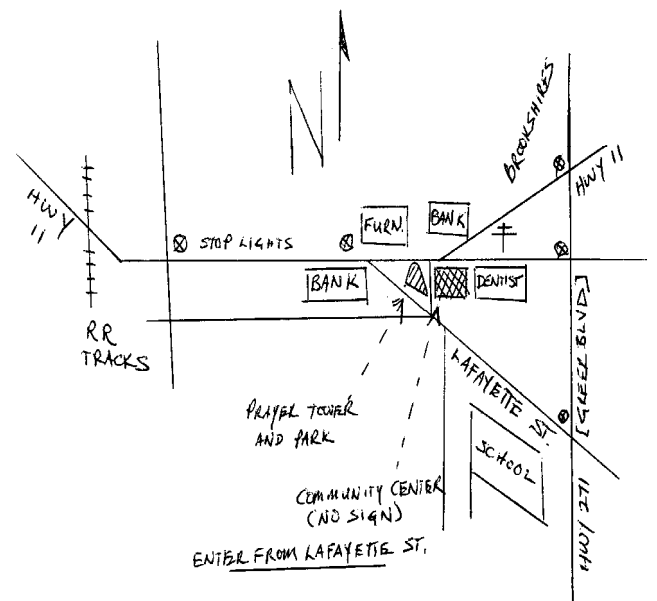
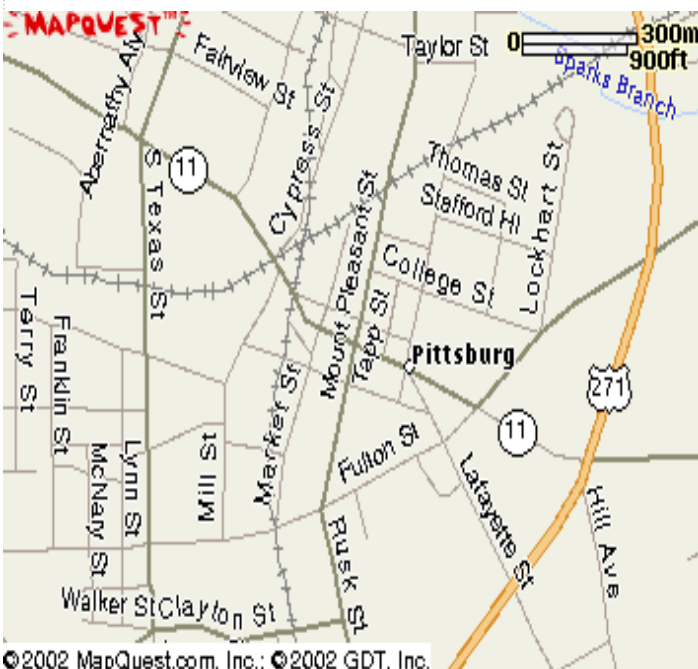
Please make checks payable to and remit to:

NETFLA

PO Box 642

Mt. Vernon, TX 75457

If you have questions, contact Harry Earl — contact info is on the facing page.



Site Preparation, Foundation for the Future Forest –

*Ken Conaway, District Forester, Texas Forest Service,
Gilmer, Texas*

Not many people would consider planting a vegetable garden without first tilling to prepare the soil for planting the seeds, as this would surely result in failure. Likewise, planting pine or hardwood tree seedlings without adequate site preparation greatly increases the odds for failure, resulting in the loss of time, loss of investment and loss of future income. Proper site preparation improves access for the tree planters, facilitates the planting operation, improves seedling survival and improves initial and long-term growth of the trees. Related benefits may include protection of watershed, protection or improvement of wildlife habitat and aesthetic improvements.

There are many different types of site preparation available to the forestland owner planning for natural regeneration, direct seeding or planting tree seedlings for timber production, wildlife habitat, erosion control or watershed protection. Site preparation costs vary over a wide range and much consideration should be given to selecting the most effective method available for budgeting purposes. Spending too much for site preparation may greatly reduce the return on the investment, but scrimping on site preparation may cause failure of the reforestation operation resulting in loss of the entire investment or it may require additional money for re-planting or inter-planting.

In this article, we will briefly cover three broad areas of site preparation, the use of fire, mechanical site preparation and chemical site preparation

Fire as Site Preparation

Fire is one of the oldest types of site preparation and may be used on both cut-over land and open land. Burning can reduce logging debris, kill back hardwood sprouts, reduce herbaceous vegetation to improve visibility, facilitate planting, reduce the cover for rabbits and rodents that may damage the tree seedlings and it reduces the fire hazard as well. It is often used in combination with mechanical and chemical site preparation. Compared to other methods, it is less expensive and very effective when used under the right conditions.

On the negative side, when burning there is always the risk of the fire escaping the treatment area resulting in a wildfire and liability for damages on other property. Smoke must be considered to prevent negative impact on population areas, highways, schools, airports and health facilities. Burning requires exacting weather conditions, which limits its availability; considering burning bans; and the need for effective results. It should only be done by well trained and experienced personnel.

Mechanical Site Preparation

Mechanical site preparation has become an important forest management tool during the past century by providing a method to remove unwanted competing

vegetation, reducing or removing logging debris and preparing

the soil for the tree planting operation, direct seeding or natural regeneration. It usually involves the use of heavy equipment, but at times may only require equipment designed for other agricultural uses. Because heavy equipment is involved, it usually has a greater impact on the landscape and environment and may be quite expensive.

Shear and pile is one type of site preparation used on harvested sites and low quality timber stands to remove logging debris, cull trees and brush. With shear and pile, a large bull dozer with a cutter blade is used to shear or saw off the stumps, standing trees and brush. The debris is then pushed into piles or windrows using a bull dozer equipped with a rake blade. The windrows may then be burned to provide more area for planting or they can be left to reduce cost and the seedlings can be planted around them.

Variations of shear and pile include raking only and shearing only. Raking only may be used on harvested sites to pile the logging debris into piles or windrows to make room for planting or natural regeneration. During shearing only, a dozer equipped with a cutter blade makes repeated passes in a parallel pattern back and forth across the treatment area cutting down cull hardwoods and brush. This usually results in lanes of somewhat open ground with brush between them. These lanes can later be planted by hand or by wildland machine planting equipment.

Sub-soiling or ripping may be used to break up hard pans or heavy compaction so seedlings can be planted. In some cases, a 3-in-1 plow pulled by a bull dozer is used to rip the compacted soil, loosen the adjacent surface soil and build a bed or terrace on which to plant the seedlings. These operations usually facilitate planting of the seedling, provide a better root development zone, and improve water holding capacity of the soil. In bottomland areas, the bed permits planting the seedling above the level of standing water, creating a better environment for survival and growth.

On tracts primarily covered with brush and small trees or logging debris, drum chopping may be used to push down and chop the debris and vegetation to reduce its size to improve access, permit planting and to reduce competition. Drum chopping may be followed by burning to further reduce the debris cover on the ground.

Mulching uses specially designed machines equipped with a mulching head that includes a high speed rotating drum fitted with “teeth” to make repeated passes over the treatment area to cut down and mulch unwanted vegetation and debris. The resulting chips are deposited on the soil surface as mulch that helps hold moisture, insulates the soil and provides nutrients to the soil as it decays

On open and semi-open land, mowing (a. k. a. shredding or bush hogging) and disking using standard farm tractors and equipment may be used to reduce the competing vegetation or to improve soil conditions.

Chemical Site Preparation

This includes the use of herbicides which are chemicals designed to kill vegetation. Most herbicides used in forestry operations are selective in killing specific types of vegetation when applied at the correct rates. As needed, two or more herbicides may be mixed together to achieve the desired results. Depending on the goal and the application rate, herbicides may provide short-term or long-term control of vegetation to improve survival and growth of the tree crop. Herbicides may be broadcast over the treatment area in a uniform pattern by using helicopters or skidders equipped with spray booms or nozzles. For spaying spots or bands of herbicides, sprayers on farm tractors or ATVs, as well as back pack sprayers for hand operations can be used.

Landowners who are not familiar with site preparation should confer with their consulting forester or other trained resource management professional regarding the site preparation method or methods best suited for their tract, desired results and budget.

More information on site preparation methods and a listing of the approximate costs for reforestation practices can be found on the Texas Forest Services web site at <http://texasforestservice.tamu.edu>. On the home page, click on Forest Management; then click on Reforestation. Information is also available from consulting foresters, Texas Forest Service District Offices and from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

ROBERTSON NAMED OUTSTANDING LOGGER IN TEXAS

The votes are in and **William Robertson of Gilmer** has been chosen as the Texas Logging Council's 2006 Outstanding Logger of the Year. Robertson was formally announced the winner at Forest Family Fun Day & Equipment Show held on May 13th at the Angelina County Expo in Lufkin, Texas.

"William Robertson is a man of high standards and does quality work in his logging business," said Paul Hale, Coordinator of the Texas Logging Council. "He has willingly accepted and implements sound logging practices and is an asset to the logging community and to the local community of Gilmer as well," he added. Robertson is the contractor requested by many landowners and consultants. He has been in the timber harvesting business more than 35 years and delivers wood to many mills, including Cal-Tex, Georgia-Pacific, Norbord and Peebles Lumber Company. Robertson is a member of the Texas Logging Council (Chapter 1) and Texas Forestry Association.

Robertson will go on to compete with winners of several other state competitions in the Southern Region Outstanding Logger competition held by the Forest Resources Association. The winner of that competition will compete in the national competition. The national winner will be announced in the fall. The Texas Logging Council is an organization of the Texas Forestry Association, a nonprofit trade association representing over 3,200 members who grow, manage, harvest and process forest resources.

Got Biomass for Alternative Fuels? You Betcha, Forestry Expert Says

June 8, 2006

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OVERTON – When it comes to alternatives for petroleum, ethanol from row crops is not the only game in town, said a Texas Cooperative Extension expert.

In Texas alone, nearly 3.5 million tons of woody biomass – scrap left over from forest harvests – could be had for essentially the cost of bundling and hauling, said Dr. Eric Taylor, Extension forestry specialist. Technology is available that could be used to convert the woody biomass into automotive fuel, 'green-diesel' or a substitute for the other use of petroleum that is rarely talked about: the manufacture of films, adhesives and plastics.

And woody biomass has several advantages over ethanol from row crops, Taylor said.

First, it's already available. Of the 3.5 millions tons of wood residue burned or left to rot at harvest sites, about 65 percent could be easily harvested for biomass, he said. And growing the biomass doesn't require any additional inputs of those used to grow the more valuable forestry products such as wood for timber or pulp for paper. Moreover, disposal or management of the residue – if not used in the biomass industry – is expensive.

"It's essentially 'free goods,'" he said.

The catch? Currently there are no operational bio-energy plants in East Texas, where most of the state forest residue is created. And there's a lot to do both on the education and research fronts, Taylor said.

Taylor and Dr. Darwin Foster, also with Extension forestry, are already involved remedying the need for education as partners with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as the University of Georgia, and other southern region land-grant universities. The partnership is producing educational materials on how to "sustainably and economically manage, harvest and process woody biomass in the southern U.S.," Taylor said.

The products will include fact sheets, a video and distance learning courses.

"Our target audience is (composed of) forest management professionals and forest landowners," Taylor said.

The idea is to collect and integrate available scientific information on woody biomass and make it assessable to the general public.

Meanwhile some commercial concerns are already seriously considering using woody biomass for on-site energy production, Foster said.

Delton Smith, site facilities manager with Abitibi-Consolidated in Lufkin, said his company is considering refitting the plant with a woody biomass fired boilers. The boilers would be used to generate steam, which would in turn be used to generate electricity.

In 2003, the Lufkin plant was one of two Abitibi-Consolidated newsprint Texas plants closed due to high energy costs and dropping product demand. Before the closure, the plant employed more than 600 people. Now idled, it has a full-time staff of 12.

Plants such as the Lufkin mill are energy intensive, Smith said, relying primarily on natural gas-fired boilers. Prior to the closing, the Lufkin mill was no exception. It had a small wood-fired boiler that utilized scrap from processing on site, but the major boilers used natural gas. The plant was profitable until energy prices went up, and the demand for newsprint went down, Smith said.

Smith is hopeful woody biomass energy production could mean a restart for the plant, but nothing is definite yet.

Debbie Johnston, Abitibi-Consolidated public relations manager, said if the plant goes back online, it would not produce newsprint, but instead retrofit to make lightweight coated stock and other paper products.

"Such papers are used for magazines, coupons, etc.," she said. "We're looking for investment partners for both the energy production side and the paper side."

Taylor said the education materials produced by the southern regional forestry group only constitutes the first step.

"There's a lot we need to know yet," he said. "Such as how the various (forestry) management strategies affect production of woody biomass and how harvesting woody-bio mass might affect the residual tree crop.

"But I am encouraged that a new market like the bio-energy/bio-based products industry will lead to more valuable timber products and improved wildlife habitats, reduce losses to catastrophic events like fire and greatly improve overall forest health," he said.

Taylor is currently seeking grant funding for such a study.

Wanted: Citizen Scientists to Help Detect Invasive Plants in Texas

Ronald F. Billings, Texas Forest Service

Do you have an interest in invasive plants and a willingness to help detect where these plants are becoming established in Texas? If so, the Texas Forest Service is offering you an opportunity to get involved as a "Citizen Scientist in Invasive Plant Detection." Invasive plants have become the target of a new cooperative project in Texas. The *Pulling Together Initiative – A Texas-sized Partnership to Manage Invasive Plants* is a collaborative project involving the Texas Forest Service and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, with funding provided by the USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Protection. As part of this collaborative effort, the first state-wide conference on invasive plants was held last November in Austin. One of this year's project objectives is to train interested persons as "Citizen Scientists" to identify and report invasive plants within different regions of the state.

Three training sessions are being offered for anyone wishing to become a Citizen Scientist in this project. The first training session was held July 29 in Kerrville at the County Extension office for the Central Texas region; the second will take place in Overton on August 12 at the Texas Cooperative Extension office for northeast Texas; and the third on August 26 at the Angelina County Extension building in Lufkin for those in southeast Texas. Additional training sessions are being planned for later in the year in Houston and Corpus Christi. A nominal registration fee will be charged and training materials will be provided at each training session. Enrollment is limited to the first 30 persons to sign up per region.

Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, or anyone else interested in becoming a Citizen Scientist in invasive plant detection will need to attend one of these sessions. Following one day of training, each trainee will be responsible for detecting and reporting the exact geographical coordinates of selected invasive plants they encounter in public and private forests, in riparian areas, along roadways, or in other natural areas in Texas. The identifications will be confirmed by invasive plant experts, based on data from field reports and digital photographs of the plant that the Citizen Scientists submit to an online database. Site locations and species observations will then become part of the state-wide early detection database on the Texas invasive plant web page at <http://www.texasinvasives.org>.

Each region will target 12 invasive species, although other invasive plants may be reported when found. The targeted species selected for East Texas are Chinese tallow, Chinese privet, Japanese climbing fern, Japanese honeysuckle, kudzu, Asian bamboos, Chinaberry, Chinese wisteria, giant reed, mimosa, tropical soda apple, and giant Asian dodder. For Central Texas, the targeted species include tree of heaven, Chinese tallow, Chinaberry, Chinese pistache, chaste tree, giant reed, Japanese ligustrum, castor bean, parasol tree, mimosa,

Japanese honeysuckle, and kudzu.

Each training session will present information on how to identify these 12 invasive plants, how to collect field information and GPS coordinates, how to take close-up digital photos for confirmation, and how to report new findings via the Internet. Upon completion of the training, each volunteer will receive a certificate as a *Citizen Scientist in Invasive Plant Detection*. His/her efforts in detecting and reporting invasive plants will help to expand our knowledge of where these invasive plants have become established throughout Texas. This is the first step in managing these unwanted invasive plants.

For more information, or to participate in one of the East Texas training sessions, contact one of the following Texas Forest Service staff members:

Northeast Texas: Allen Smith, phone (903) 297-4968; e-mail lasmith@tfs.tamu.edu.

Southeast Texas: Michael Murphrey, phone (936) 639-8170; e-mail mmurphrey@tfs.tamu.edu.

Central Texas: Susan Sander, phone (830) 257-7744; e-mail rainlily@omniglobal.net.

[Note that there is a conflict between the Overton date and our meeting, but none with the meeting in Lufkin — Bill]

IRS Timber Tax “Form T” Updated and Timber Tax Relief Provided by Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005

- Dr. Linda Wang, Economist and Tax Analyst, Texas Forest Service

Forest landowners with timber holdings in a trade or business (under Section 631(b)) who make an outright sale of timber (lump-sum sale) that qualifies for capital gains treatment, or forest landowners who claim a depletion deduction, are required to file a Form T—Forest Activities Schedule, available from the IRS website (<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/ft.pdf>). The IRS revised and updated Form T in December 2005 to conform to the latest tax law changes.

In the revised Instructions for Form T, the IRS stated that up to \$10,000 of reforestation costs *per qualified timber property per year* can be deducted. If you are required to file Form T, the reforestation costs are to be reported in Part IV of Form T—Reforestation and Timber Stand Activities. If you are not required to file Form T, to claim a reforestation cost deduction, you still need to attach a statement to your return providing tract information, acreages reforested and total amounts of qualified expenses.

[Note: The rest of the article has been omitted since it pertains only to counties eligible for relief from Katrina or Rita — Bill]

Market Report March-April, 2006

Product	Statewide Average Price This Period		Previous Average Price		Volume Difference (*)
	Volume	Weight	Volume	Weight	
Pine-Sawlogs	\$313.04/mbf	\$40.47/ton	\$260.75/mbf	\$36.93/ton	+20.05%
Pine-Pulpwood	\$14.74/cord	\$5.49/ton	\$18.52/cord	\$6.91/ton	-20.4%
Pine-Chip’n’Saw	\$44.53/cord	\$16.49/ton	\$43.79/cord	\$16.82/ton	+1.7%
Mixed Hardwood-Sawlogs	\$133.74/mbf	\$14.26/ton	\$121.17/mbf	\$14.09/ton	+10.4%
Hardwood-Pulpwood	\$16.15/cord	\$5.73/ton	\$9.88/cord	\$3.49/ton	+63.5%

See Timber Price Trends at <http://texasforests.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.