



Northeast Texas Forest Landowners Association Newsletter

May 2005 Published by the Northeast Texas Forest Landowners Association Vol. 25 Issue 2

Thinning Pine Stands

*Rich Dottellis, District Forester,
Texas Forest Service*

In any timber stand, trees compete with each other for light, soil moisture, and nutrients. The more crowded trees are; the more intense the competition. In a very crowded stand the growth rate is reduced, and eventually the weaker trees die. Thinning improves tree vigor, growth, stand quality, and wildlife habitat by removing diseased trees, trees with poor form, slow growing trees, and others competing with the best trees.

The main objective of thinning is to redistribute growth potential of the stand to well-formed, high-quality sawtimber crop trees.

Most pine stands are even-aged. That is, all trees are within a few years of the same age. If all trees are about the same age, then larger trees are growing at a faster rate. On good sites, pines will grow more than 10% each year up to age 35, nearly doubling in volume every 7 years. Trees in the 6 to 8-inch diameter range are usually sold as pulpwood, OSB, chips, or low-grade lumber. Trees in the 10-inch diameter size or larger are usually sold as more valuable products, such as sawlogs, veneer, or poles.

WHEN TO THIN: Conduct the first thinning when trees reach pulpwood size, about 6 inches in diameter. Trees will normally be between 12 and 15 years old when they reach this size. When thinning, the weak, diseased, poorly formed, and damaged trees are removed.

Another thinning should be considered 5 to 10 years later before the trees become crowded again and the growth rate slows. A good way to determine when to thin is by looking at the *live crown ratio*, the percentage of the length of the stem that has live branches. When the live

crown ratio drops to near 30% it is time for another thinning.

Another rule of thumb is to use the "D + 6" rule. Space trees equal to the average diameter expressed in feet. The "D" represents the diameter of a tree as represented in feet. For example, 10-inch diameter trees should be spaced approximately 16 feet apart from each other (10+6=16).

METHODS: A combination of row-thinning and selective thinning is strongly recommended. This method entirely removes every third, fourth or fifth row, then selectively removes trees from between the unthinned rows. Removing rows creates corridors that make equipment use easier and helps minimize damage to crop trees. Trees between the thinned rows that are diseased, of poor form, small and slow growing, and crowding better trees are harvested.

Other methods include simple row thinning and selective thinning. Simple row thinning is removal of entire rows with no thinning between rows. This method is uncomplicated, but offers no opportunity to favor good trees over bad trees and does not effectively create free-to-grow conditions for trees that remain.

Selective thinning is marking individual trees throughout the stand for removal. This method allows full control to free up the best trees in the stand, but equipment operation can be difficult in dense stands and damage to remaining trees can be significant.

CONDUCTING THE SALE AND HARVEST: It is strongly recommended that you use a professional consulting forester to handle your thinning. A consulting forester can inventory and mark the stand, contact and solicit bids from potential buyers, develop written harvest contracts to protect your personal interests, and oversee the thinning operation

for satisfactory performance. Consulting forester fees are handled in different ways such as a percentage of the timber sale income, flat per-acre fees for marking or other arrangements suitable to both parties. Studies show that using a professional forester often results in higher revenues to the landowner, even after consultant fees are paid. To find the list of consulting foresters for Texas please go to <http://txforests.tamu.edu>.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:

Thinnings are cuttings made in immature stands to stimulate growth of remaining trees and improve the yield of the stand.

Trees compete for light, moisture, and nutrients. If they become too crowded, growth slows and they may die.

Pines grow rapidly, and trees grown for sawlogs are entire rows as worth far more than trees grown for pulpwood.

The result of a thinning operation should be to provide more growing space for the best trees, while harvesting diseased, damaged or dying trees.

The first thinning is usually made between ages 12 and 15, when trees reach pulpwood size.

Subsequent thinnings should be made before the live crown ratio drops below 30%.

In natural stands, thinning is best accomplished by individual tree selection where each tree to be cut is marked.

In pine plantations, a modified row thinning is best. Every third, fourth, or fifth row should be removed and intermediate rows thinned by individual selection.

***Northeast Texas
Forest Landowners
Association Officers***

President:

Sid Greer
(903) 645-3232
sid@greerfarm.com

Vice President

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

Secretary-Treasurer:

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

Director of Camp Co.:

Robert Turner
(903) 856-6419
robertarc2@aol.com

Director of Franklin Co.:

Blanche Handy
(903) 860-2507
bhandy@sbcglobal.net

Director of Morris Co.:

Glen Weiss
(903) 645-3782
weissgj@bluebonnet.net

Director of Titus Co.:

Diane Dalby
(903) 572-0151

Director of Wood County

Leon Lester
(903) 342-0062

Director of Upshur County

Bill Voss
(903) 734-4699
genvoss@iamerica.net

Newsletter editor: Bill Tucker

TFS Foresters for our area:

Ken Conaway
(903) 734-7007 Gilmer
(903) 856-7181 Pittsburg

**NETFLA WEB SITE:
www.txforest.org**



My View

Out my study doors and across the green lawn I see all the signs that spring has sprung and we are on the cusp of summer (forget the cool nights, its coming). Those of you that grow trees are seeing the pines jump this year. It is amazing how they get most of their growth for the year in such a small period of time in the spring. Even those little trees planted just a few months ago. We are having a dry year so far, but we can keep our fingers crossed that the rains will come and refresh our forests. Enjoy these last cool days and get out into your forest and take in the magnificence of a hundred shades of green.

Our tree cutters took a break so things can dry out and plan to finish by August. The clear cut area looks pretty messy, but I am excited about trying to use mulching if possible to prepare for replanting next winter. I will let you know how this goes in my October article. Not having enough to do in the wood lot, my son and I have planted 1,200 blueberry and blackberry plants this spring. Not an undertaking for the faint of heart. They cover only 1.8 acres and we have a total of 9 acres to plant before we finish.

I will not make the field tour this year as it conflicts with the graduation of our youngest from the University of Texas at Austin. As amazing as it seems, we will have graduated four children and each did it in four years (all form UT). She is headed to Tanzania for three years to work for Young Life in Africa. If you are interested in this let me know and she can tell you about it and the challenges she has laid out for herself.

Each of my children is a blessing in their own way, but do you remember Helen Keller? I wonder if her family thought they were blessed when she was young. For those of you that do not know who she is hit Google and prepare to be amazed.

Helen Keller was an old lady when I was young or so it seemed to me. My dad was a good friend of her brother "PB" and he brought this very famous lady into my life. Helen had a philosophy of life that focused on caring for others and seeking happiness in everything she did. She was astounded when she discovered that mankind suffered famine and carried out war against each other. Being deaf and blind, she was isolated from the real world until she learned how to communicate. She often said that happiness is not magic, but the final and perfect fruit of obedience to the laws of life. Life to her meant nature, something we tree huggers can appreciate. She had severe personal handicaps, but she said her happy life consisted not in the absence, but the mastery of hardships. To be happy you have to learn the secrets of self-discipline and do those things that produce happiness. Happiness to Helen Keller was one of the slowest ripening fruits in the "Garden of Life". She said happiness had to be grown. She would challenge others by pointing out some have never planted anything in their lives to grow the fruit of happiness. Not one sound seed in their hearts or if they did plant a seed, it got so little sunshine it never matured. To be happy, be good and do well and follow the laws of cause and effect. You cannot gather figs from thorns or grapes from thistles. A tree bears fruit after its kind both in the soil and in the soul. I was blessed to know her from a distance.

I hope you consider what makes you happy. Perhaps it's family or that forest you care for. Maybe it is a flower or vegetable garden. I hope part of your happiness derives from your sharing with others. Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only a few will leave footprints in your heart. Norman McClain said, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

My time is up for this newsletter. Remember to make good use of today since you will never have it again. As for life, of all the paths you take make sure a few of them are dirt. Enjoy the field day tour.

Sid Greer

Meeting and Program Notes

We should have a great time at Peach Springs Nursery on the 21st! Please check the start times at the right.

Hans Hansen and Jason Hightower are the new owners of — and bring new energy to — a pine and hardwood seedling nursery that has been in business for many years. Wayne Morris continues to manage the nursery, assuring the continuity of operations and quality seedlings. Hans and Jason have been members of our Association for over a year.

Our lunch is paid for by the Texas Forestry Association, since we have once again won their membership contest. (Give yourselves a pat on the back.) We will have real barbecue with the works and eat well. Dining area is covered in case of rain.

Ron Hufford, the Executive Vice President of TFA, will be there to present this year's award to the Association. Hope someone remembers to bring a camera.

According to the brochure, max travel time from Mt. Vernon or Pittsburg is about half an hour, with Gilmer closer at about 20 minutes. We will have two Forest Service Vans in Pittsburg for those of you that are farther away or just like the company and conversations. We are limited to 28 spots total in the vans. Since it's so close, many of you may want to use your own cars, but if you want to ride in a van, please be sure to let me know.

We need to know: 1) how many of you are going on the tour and will eat, and 2) how many want to ride in the vans. Please check out the box on the last page and RSVP me before the cutoff date of Wed., May 18, on both counts. This particular meeting is not open to the general public. You are encouraged to bring prospective members, and spouses are fine, 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 will give you directions to the Nursery and to the pickup point — Smith Furniture — in Pittsburg. They are not to scale! Sid will not be there, so contact Bill Tucker if you have questions. *Thanks — Bill*

2005 PROGRAM CALENDAR

Saturday, May 21,

**NETFLA FIELD DAY
Peach Springs Seedling Nursery
Free Catered BBQ Lunch
TFA Award Presentation
Near Winnsboro, Texas
Tour starts at 9:30 AM approx.
Vans leave Pittsburg at 9AM**

Saturday, August 13, 10:30 AM

**Status of Black Bears and Their
Management in East Texas
Nathan Garner, TP&W
Region III Wildlife Director
Pittsburg, Texas**

Saturday, Nov. 12, 10:30 AM

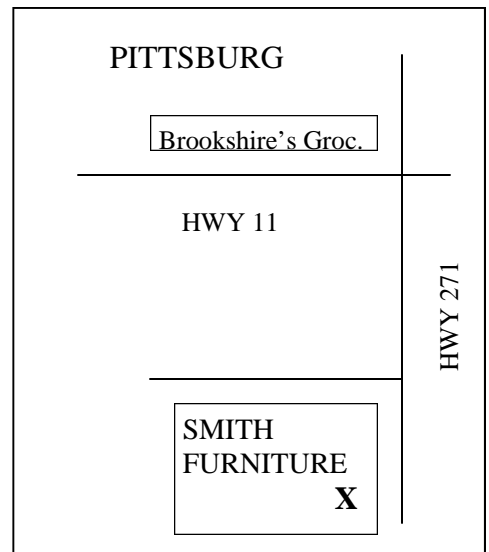
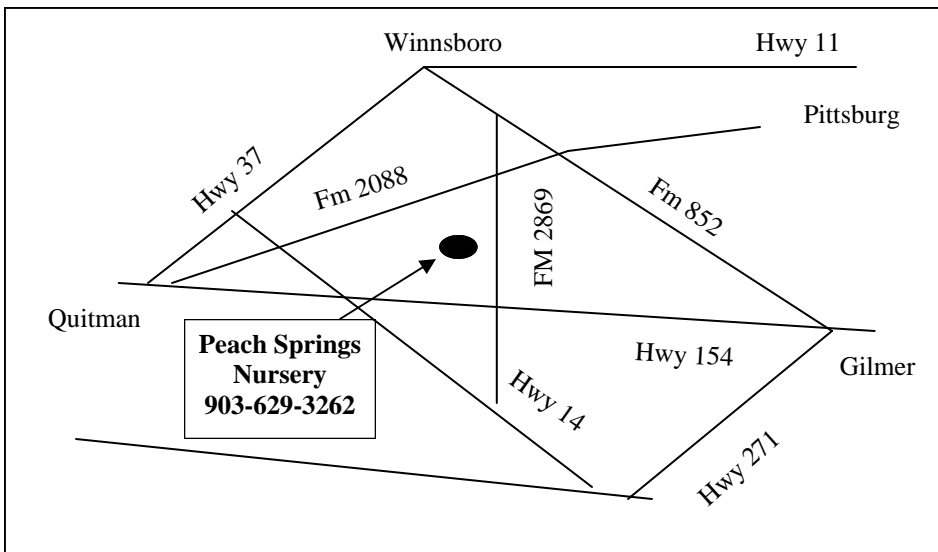
**NETFLA Biennial Elections
Program Not Yet Set
Pittsburg, Texas**

Please note: 2005 dues of \$15 were payable as of Jan. 1, 2005.

The red dot program continues. If you have a red dot on your newsletter, you owe 2005 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



Industry News: 'Tree-Power' Could Be Future Energy Source

News Release from AF&PA, March 15, 2005

A wood-fueled electricity generating plant may be in your future. In fact, the future is 'now' in some Scandinavian countries, said Dr. Darwin Foster, Texas Cooperative Extension forestry program leader.

"In Sweden, they're already bundling up what we're leaving in the forest after a timber harvest and using it as bio-fuel," Foster said.

"Bio-fuel" is all-inclusive term that includes any renewable resource used to generate energy. As with ethanol distilled from small grains byproducts and methane from animal-waste, wood refuse is another renewable energy source.

The key word is "renewable," Foster said. "As compared to fossil fuels which take hundreds of millennia to create and are not renewable," he said.

Using forest bio-mass - limbs, bark, tree tops - as a bio-fuel is not unheard of in the United States. Forest product manufacturing concerns already burn wood residue in steam boilers. The steam is used to drive electrical generators and supply part of the energy needed to run the plant.

Other mills use "black liquor" - the lignin-rich residue of the pulp and paper industry - for heat, steam and electric power generation.

But currently, in both examples, the residue used is created at the plant during the manufacturing process, not recycled from the harvest site as many European countries do, Foster said.

"In one of our meetings, a forest product manufacturer indicated that about 12 percent of the volume delivered to their plant wound up as residue," he said. "It's mostly bark, but there's some fines (sawdust) too. But it's just a drop in the bucket as far as their energy needs go. "

But the use of forest bio-fuel is not limited to energy production of forest industry plants. With prices of natural gas, crude oil and other non-renewable sources rising, scientists are looking at using bio-fuels for residential consumption, Foster said.

At least one company in Texas, Green Mountain Energy in Austin, has turned this from science fiction into science fact. Green Mountain uses wood residue to generate a part of the electricity it produces and sells to Austin area clients.

"The potential is huge," Foster said.

In the United States and many other countries, tree tops are left at the harvested sites. Though the tonnage is huge, these tops

are considered "unmerchantable" and are left where they fall to bio-degrade or are burned or chipped to speed up the process. The tops are left in the field because they are considered too bulky and too small in diameter to be worth the cost of hauling to a processing plant.

But the Scandinavians have shown harvesting this potentially huge energy source is economically feasible - at least in Europe. But can it be so in the United States?

Science and preliminary economic studies say forest residue can be an economically viable energy source. What's required is for everyone involved in the forestry industry - foresters, plant operators, forest landowners, energy producers and educators - to rethink how they do things, Foster said.

Armed with a \$500,000 grant from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Foster and his colleagues in Extension Forestry and the Texas A&M University department of forest science plan to develop education modules on forest bio-fuel production, harvest and utilization. Foster expects the modules will be comprised of not only printed material, such as brochures and handbooks, but also Web pages and multi-media CD-ROMs and DVDs.

Specifically, the training modules will address:

- An overview of how forest residue is already used in Southern forests;
- How to manage forests, old and new, for enhanced bio-fuel production;
- How to harvest and process forest residue for bio-fuel and other products;
- How to utilize biomass for bio-energy, bio-fuels and bio-based products;
- The socio-economic impacts and community development issues; and
- How to develop environmentally sustainable biomass production systems for bio-energy and bio-based products.

The last subject - environmental sustainability - may be expanded to educate the public, Foster said. Some people might not understand the environmental benefits of burning forest residue to produce fuel.

But the economic benefits are two-fold, he said. First it is a truly renewable resource. Trees are efficient at turning sunlight, moisture and a few basic nutrients into bio-mass. Using forest residue as bio-fuel also will utilize a resource that is being left to rot in the field.

But another important issue is carbon sequestration. Trees "breathe" in carbon dioxide, one of the major greenhouse gases. The trees "breathe out" oxygen and sequester the carbon as part of the biomass.

"Carbon is the 'C' in CO₂," Foster said.

True, burning the residue emits carbon dioxide, but as most of the harvested forest mass would be used for lumber, furniture and paper, there would still be a net sequestration of carbon.

Another common concern, Foster said, was that harvesting forest residues could cause nutrient deficiencies and retard future re-forestation efforts. But studies have shown, residues can be harvested without loss of regrowth productivity as long as a few simple precautions are taken, he said. These precautions include not taking 100 percent of the residues, avoiding harvesting on sensitive sites, and not removing residues after every harvest. In some areas, returning most of the nutrients as ash to the harvest site might be possible, he said.

"The whole point of this program is to work to reduce our dependence on non-renewable fossil fuels," Foster said.

Wood is "Greener"

Hatton-Brown Letter, Vol. 2, Quarter 1, 2005 (Hatton-Brown Publishers, www.hattonbrown.com)

A new report concludes what we knew all along, that wood is one of the most environmentally sensitive building materials for home construction as it uses less overall energy than other products, causes fewer air and water impacts and does a better job of the carbon "sequestration" that can help address global warming. The \$1 million study was prepared by the Consortium for Research on Renewable Industrial Materials (COR-RIM), a non-profit corporation of 15 research universities. It showed that steel framing used 17% more energy than wood construction for a typical house built in Minnesota, and concrete construction used 16% more energy than a house using wood construction in Atlanta. And in these two examples, the use of wood had less global warming potential, with steel at 26% more and concrete at 31% more.

The new study looks at the total "life-cycle assessment" of different construction products and techniques, considering such issues as how materials are grown, mined, processed, produced, used and ultimately disposed of, to give a better picture of their overall impact on the environment. It considers effects on energy use, air and water emissions, global warming and other topics.

Timber Sale Contract Basics

Shane Harrington, BMP Forester, Texas Forest Service

Landowners choose to harvest timber to increase forest productivity, address forest health concerns, salvage storm damaged timber, or for financial considerations.

Timber sale contracts provide a set of guidelines for the sale to operate under but most importantly a timber sale contract protects the interests of both the buyer and seller. Here are few basic points that should be included in the contract.

- Name, address, and signature of all parties involved in the timber sale
- Legal description of the property along with maps showing property boundaries and harvest area
- Date of execution (length of time given to the buyer to harvest the timber, typically in the south 18 months is adequate)
- Payment schedule (will this be a lump sum or pay as cut timber sale)
- Penalty to buyer if unmarked trees are harvested; Best Management Practices (BMPs)

BMPs should always be included in timber sale contracts because it may be necessary to spell out specific practices such as where and how to cross streams, where to place roads and skid trails, and when work should be halted due to wet weather.

It is recommended that a professional forester help you sell your timber. Before signing any contract, be sure you understand everything outlined in it. These are only a few of the points that should be included in a timber sale contract. If you would like more information on timber sale contracts please contact Shane Harrington at (936) 639-8180 or your local Texas Forest Service office.

Photography Deadline — Win \$500!

June 1, 2005

Deadline for entries in the Sustainable Forestry in Texas Photography Contest sponsored by the Texas Forestry Association.

Photos must illustrate the principles of the Sustainable Forest Initiative. Categories are "Working in the Forest" and "Sustainable Forestry in Action". Contact Susan Stutts at (936) 632-8733 or sstutts@texasforestry.org for more information.

Ed Note: There will be a \$500 first prize, \$250 second prize, and \$100 third prize in each category.

The prices in this table do not represent market price for a specific tract of timber.

Market price for any specific tract of timber may vary considerably due to variation in tract size, timber quality, species, total volume and volume per acre, logging conditions, distance to the mill, utilization, current demand and local competition for timber, and rapidly changing timber market.

For timber prices used for timberland property taxation, please see page 3.

STUMPAGE PRICE TRENDS IN TEXAS

January/February 2005

14-Apr-05
Volume 23, No. 1

Product/Region	Average Price		Average Price Last Period		Average Price Same Period A Year Ago		# of Sales Reported	Total Volume	
PINE									
Sawlogs	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/MBF</u>	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/MBF</u>	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/MBF</u>		<u>Ton</u>	<u>MBF</u>
Northeast TX	41.00	360.53	40.65	345.81	34.70	308.28	20	109,783.21	12,486.41
Southeast TX	44.87	337.95	42.05	230.22	41.36	302.60	3	5,355.46	711.01
Statewide*	41.18	359.31	41.37	273.87	38.19	305.03	23	115,138.67	13,194.42
USFS	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Pulpwood	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/Cord</u>	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/Cord</u>	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/Cord</u>		<u>Ton</u>	<u>Cord</u>
Northeast TX	14.36	38.19	13.43	35.84	6.79	18.31	37	124,470.77	46,820.15
Southeast TX	9.46	25.86	7.05	19.03	6.02	16.24	31	296,802.69	108,596.38
Statewide*	10.91	29.57	9.25	24.86	6.43	17.35	68	421,273.46	155,416.53
USFS	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Chip-N-Saw	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/Cord</u>	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/Cord</u>	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/Cord</u>		<u>Ton</u>	<u>Cord</u>
Northeast TX	19.38	51.57	22.27	55.67	**	**	12	10,114.99	3,800.51
Southeast TX	**	**	17.61	29.60	13.03	33.89	1	65.94	25.12
Statewide*	19.37	51.56	17.71	29.97	13.03	33.89	13	10,180.93	3,825.63
HARDWOOD									
Mixed Sawlogs	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/MBF</u>	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/MBF</u>	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/MBF</u>		<u>Ton</u>	<u>MBF</u>
Northeast TX	16.98	159.19	18.42	172.36	14.29	122.65	3	434.04	46.28
Southeast TX	**	**	21.85	186.00	14.04	114.78	2	503.33	64.38
Statewide*	15.01	127.17	18.82	174.09	14.14	117.71	5	937.36	110.67
USFS	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Pulpwood	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/Cord</u>	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/Cord</u>	<u>\$/Ton</u>	<u>\$/Cord</u>		<u>Ton</u>	<u>Cord</u>
Northeast TX	9.92	28.38	10.53	29.56	6.35	17.96	9	21,861.00	7,640.83
Southeast TX	8.27	22.74	8.04	22.64	4.14	11.90	3	139,736.04	50,819.19
Statewide*	8.49	23.48	9.73	27.34	5.98	16.95	12	151,597.04	28,460.02
USFS	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**

1. Stumpage price statistics included gatewood sales. Stumpage prices from the gatewood sales were estimated by subtracting cut and haul costs, other expenses and profits if any provided by the reporters.

2. Price is calculated from a *specific* conversion factor reported for each sale if available; otherwise, the average conversion factors listed on page 8 are used. MBF = Thousand Board Feet. The DOYLE LOG SCALE is used for board foot measurements.

* Statewide data excludes U.S. Forest Service sales.

** Insufficient sales to report price statistics (less than three reported sales).

TEXAS FOREST SERVICE COMMENTS — Price Stayed Firm for Pine But Eased Off for Hardwood

Average stumpage prices of pine sawtimber for January-February 2005 increased slightly for northeast Texas, from \$40.65/ton in November/December 2004 to \$41/ton. In Southeast Texas, price appreciated from \$42.05/ton in the November/December period to \$44.87/ton, a \$2.82/ton increase. Statewide average stumpage prices of pine sawtimber were almost the same as for the previous two-month period, around \$41/ton.

Compared to the same period a year ago, average stumpage prices of pine sawtimber this winter rose sharply. They increased by 7.85% or \$3/ton from the \$38.19/ton last year.

Statewide average prices of hardwood sawtimber went down during the January/February 2005 period, to \$15.01/ton. This was a 20.2% or \$3.81/ton drop from the November/December period. Last year, the average price of hardwood sawtimber was \$0.87/ton lower for the same period.

Finally, pine pulpwood prices had a healthy gain this period. They rose to \$10.91/ton, or an 18% or \$1.66/ton increase, from the previous two-month period. Compared to the same period last year, this was a whopping 69.7% or \$4.48/ton jump. Particularly in the Northeast Region, average prices of pine pulpwood for this period went up to \$14.36/ton, a level that has not been seen for the last several years.

Pine small sawtimber (chip-n-saw) prices also increased during the January/February 2005 period, to \$19.37/ton. This was a 9.4% or \$1.66/ton increase from the November/December period, which was \$17.71/ton. Last year, the statewide average stumpage price of pine small sawtimber was only \$13.03/ton, which was 32.7% or \$6.34/ton lower than January/February this year.

Hardwood pulpwood stumpage prices averaged \$8.49/ton, a 12.7% or \$1.24/ton decrease from November/December 2004. However, stumpage price of hardwood pulpwood for this period is still much higher than for the same period a year ago, and timber markets have done better than last year. Pulpwood markets for both pine and hardwood increased in the first two months of this year.

Tailgate Party

The maiden voyage of this TFA Landowners Council spring field day was very successful. This was the first time the private forest landowners associations had sponsored such an event.

Your association was well represented. Eight of us rode down in a Forest Service van (thanks, Ken) and I saw the same number who drove on their own. Mike Murphrey was in charge of the food (nice casting) and proved a great grill meister.

If you didn't make it, you missed a good one. Some of the highlights were the hardwood log grading and sawing, and a class on judging the quality and relative prices of pine timber on the stump. The mule-drawn wagon rides to and from the Nature Trail and the trail itself may have been the hit of the day. There were plenty of vendors, logging equipment and demonstrations galore, including the area champion crosscut saw team. Most of us also stopped by the nearby Hardwood Barn and sawmill.

The plan is to make this a biennial affair, alternating with the Forest Family Fun Day in the off years, so the TFA will have an outdoor field day every year.

Bring a Bear to Our August Meeting

Well, not really, but do bring a friend. There's been a lot of talk about the return of black bears to East Texas, and we are fortunate enough to have Nathan Garner, Texas Parks and Wildlife Region III Wildlife Director, as our speaker.

Mr. Garner is perhaps the most knowledgeable man in Texas on the black bear, and will present the East Texas Black Bear Management Plan and answer questions. TP&W is still in the comment phase of the plan and especially welcomes your input as forest landowners, since the returning bears will use and seek out our forests.

The Winds -- and Wildfires -- of Summer

Mahlon Hammett, Texas Forest Service, Lufkin, TX

Summer months typically find East Texas weather stuck in a rut. Forecasters routinely predict isolated afternoon thundershowers for days on end. Homeowners and forest landowners hope that some of these isolated showers will head their way, bringing welcome moisture to parched yards and to acres of seedlings.

Unfortunately, this weather pattern can bring some unexpected consequences. Thunderheads packing lightning without much moisture can leave a trail of lightning strikes and sleeper fires. Sleeper fires can result when lightning strikes hit flammable vegetation, particularly dead tree snags or logs and branches on the ground. Rains associated with the shower may be nonexistent or light enough that the burning material won't flare up but instead will remain smoldering. If humidity drops and winds rise, the "sleeping" fire can awaken and become a rapidly spreading wildfire. Thundershowers also can be a fire hazard when control fires are whipped out of control by increased wind and erratic changes in wind direction.

To prevent fires from escaping, establish wide firebreaks down to bare dirt around any material to be burned – before you ignite your fire. Stay with the fire until it is out and cold to the touch. Always check the weather before you use fire outdoors, so you will know if changes in weather conditions could make it unsafe for outdoor fires.

As I write, I have piles to burn, but my rainfall records for this place show 1.2" in March, 1.2" in April, and .1" for May, so the fire note may be appropriate — Bill

RSVP FOR THE BARBECUE AND MEETING

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 _____

Wednesday, May 18, is the cutoff date.