



Northeast Texas Forest Landowners Association Newsletter

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New Thoughts on Firewood: Planning Ahead Increases Opportunities *Ed Dougal, Wood Utilization and Marketing, Texas Forest Service, Lufkin, Texas*

It's that time of year again when many of us start thinking about burning wood in our homes. Questions arise. What am I going to burn this winter? What have I got out the back of the house? Anything ready to use? What needs to be split? Maybe I better buy a cord to get me through the winter! When it comes to the wood we burn, if we don't already have it, our options may be somewhat limited, especially in terms of how dry the wood may be, given the lateness in the year. We all have to do whatever we have to do to get through this winter: burn whatever is left in the yard; buy and burn 'seasoned' wood that is, unfortunately, often really very wet; or cut down a tree and go straight from the tree to the fireplace!

However, when one burns green or wet wood, much of the heat energy is used (lost) evaporating the water in the wood and is not available to use in the house as heat. Maybe this is o.k. if you are not after the heat, but, nowadays, many of us are looking to save money on our energy bills.

There can also be a number of other issues when you process and burn wood that is not sufficiently dried. A few years ago when Hurricane Rita came through, it happened that a lot of elm and some hackberry was blown down in our neighborhood. I had some time on my hands so I proceeded to collect about 4 cords of it, mostly elm, and move it to my yard before the city got to it. While I was doing this a number of people approached me to let me know that it wasn't worthwhile getting this wood. Now everyone knows elm is hard to split, but I was happy to get the exercise and was willing to live with that. But, more disturbingly, the comments had to do with things like: "Oh that wood will smoke too much"; or "that wood won't give you any heat"; or "that wood sparks too much"; or "that wood will have too many bugs".

This made me a little nervous and unsure of myself, but also curious! Maybe they were right. Being a bit stubborn and having access to lots of this 'free' wood to burn in our fireplace insert (wood stove), I persevered and did not take the advice of the naysayers. Fortunately, that first winter after Rita (2005/2006) we pretty much had enough old dry firewood to get us through and did not have to burn much of the green elm wood. I split and stacked it all that winter. I made sure it was stacked about a foot off the ground using old bricks, 2 by 4's on edge and some spare wood pallets to construct a base for the stacks. I left open space around the stacks to ensure good ventilation. Most importantly, I covered the stacks with thin 4 by 8 foot sheets of painted (one side) hardboard (masonite). The firewood was stacked in a way so that the hardboard on top of the pile was slightly sloped to shed the rainwater. A few

pieces of firewood or spare pieces of lumber were used as weights on top of the hardboard to keep it from blowing off when it was windy.

Then the 2006 Texas summer did its thing! I'm sure you have guessed the end to this story: we had two great winters burning the Rita elm and hackberry wood and still have some left for this winter. The elm and hackberry wood, once dried for at least one summer, gave little to no smoke, had few (if any) bugs, gave very few sparks and produced great heat. Sure, dry elm and hackberry do not burn quite as hot or quite as long as dry oak, but only burn a little cooler and only a little quicker. For most of our mild winter days this worked great because a really hot fire was not needed. We had some oak and pecan from the hurricane as well; so on the few really cold winter days we mixed some of that in with the elm.

The point is this: pretty much any wood will produce significant heat energy if split and then dried under cover and off the ground through at least one summer (especially in Texas!). Up north, due to shorter and cooler summers, two summers of drying are really needed for fresh cut green wood.

As most of us know, the pines, even if dried well, will give some smoke because of the resins, and also at times will spark. Also, the pines tend to burn very hot and fast, and in a wood stove, that can overheat the metal if one is not careful. No problem with elm, hackberry, even laurel, gum or poplar in this regard.

So, if you are presently working away creatively to meet this winter's wood energy needs in your household or cabin, that's great; better get moving, but try also thinking ahead to next winter! I know it can be hard planning that far ahead; dry storage area may be an issue, time, money, etc... However, the rewards are great. The dry wood (whether oak, hickory, elm, hackberry, etc.) burns clean with little smoke and you may find that your supply lasts longer since less of it is being used to burn off the water! The dry wood is lighter and easier to handle. And for some of us, we feel good on the inside when we make use of wood such as the elm that would otherwise, back in the days of Rita, have gone to landfill. And if you can get at least one year ahead this year, then in future years you just have to keep up with it and not have to play catch-up!

So, if some of that Hurricane Ike wood is still lying around and no one wants it because it is not oak, and you have the time and space, and have a strong back or maybe a friend with a wood splitter, well maybe?

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



FROM THE FOREST



Boy, there's a lot goin' on in the TV world today. Stock market crashes and elections dominate the nightly news, for the declining number of folks that still watch the networks. Surprised they've given up showing all these distressed folks having their houses foreclosed, but with the big shiny cars still in the drives. If you have cable or satellite, and the stomach for it, you can watch Congress and the Executive branch play the blame game for this mess. Blame whom you will, we all know who gets to pay for the mistakes.

Fat times are gone, but fat government budgets are not. Watch your wallets. And your votes. 40% of American voters pay no taxes. They receive government payments instead, either directly in the form of a check, or indirectly through tax-free benefits paid by the government. But they can, and do, vote. Most just once, legally, and a few several times, illegally.

Regardless of the national fortunes, and the death of 401k's, retirement plans, etc., we must really be blessed over here in East Texas, because as I read my property tax statement, this old place just keeps on going up in value, as much as 10% a year, including this year. I had a visit with our local government folks earlier this year, and thought we had that straightened out, but evidently not. I got my bill last week and when I flipped it over, the tax history from previous years was blank. All I could see was this year's appraisal. We will correct that as well. With the economy in the tank this year and next, any bets that appraisals will go down? Well, then, let me tell you about this bridge that's for sale really cheap...

A lot of folks don't realize that they have a right to question the government take on what they owe, but they should. There is real money at stake here, and it's either staying in your pocket or going into the government's. Local taxing authorities are the only area where the tax payer can directly negotiate his bill, and I advise you to do so whenever possible.

And pay very close attention to your local school districts. They are the real hogs in the pecan orchard, and will not suffer cuts lightly, if at all.

Remember, I'm just talking about houses and buildings, not timber. We're fortunate that the state has a formula for calculating timber value, and that the rule is consistent from year to year. You might not know, however, that this code is not required, just recommended. Almost all Texas counties follow the code, but a few do not. Timber value calculations are the program this month, and Mrs. Hull is both fair and a very good teacher. Be sure to bring something so you can take notes.

Finally, please take note of the programs on page 6. The pine program should be a great one. Substitute ice storm damage for hurricane damage; the strategies are very similar. The tax programs always sell out early and are worth many times the cost. I recommend the Overton facility.

Bill Tucker

Program and Meeting Notes

We all know that timber gets a real tax break as opposed to regular undeveloped land, but do you know how the State of Texas determines the assessed value of your timber? For most of us, the answer is probably “no.” This is your chance to find out, and to determine if your county is following the state guidelines, and protest to your local authority if need be.

The Texas Timber Tax Code is pretty explicit, but consists of several steps and formulas. Mrs. Hull has been the chief appraiser in Camp County for the last eight years, and has seventeen years in the business. You may want to take some notes, and there will certainly be time for questions.

As you know, our Association has struggled over the years to get our annual dues paid on time, basically consisting of nagging and reminding through the newsletter. Please remember, dues are both tax deductible as a business expense and payable Jan. 1 of each year, hopefully by the Feb. meeting. We had some success this August by sending reminder postcards to members who had overlooked payment. There was a critical cutoff date for the Texas Forestry Association membership contest, and the directors agreed to try the post card approach. This brought in dues from ten members, with nine remaining outstanding. We are mailing post cards again to the remaining nine.

On a more positive note, give yourselves a pat on the back!. We won the TFA Landowners Association membership contest again this year! This would make six years running by my count. This means we can once again eat free, courtesy of TFA, and this ain't just chump change. The tab can easily run to \$400 or more. And by the way, only landowner association members in good standing—that is, whose dues are current both with TFA and their local Association—are counted.

And finally, our own internal contest for recruiting new NETFLA members for the year continues. So far, Ben Best, closely followed by Ken Stewart, lead. Great way to get your TFA dues paid, and contest is open 'till Dec. 31.

2008 PROGRAM CALENDAR

Saturday, Nov. 8 10:00 AM
Pilgrim Community Room
Pittsburg, Texas

Local Timber Productivity Taxes
(How your timber is taxed)
Geraldine Hull, Chief Appraiser,
Camp County Appraisal District

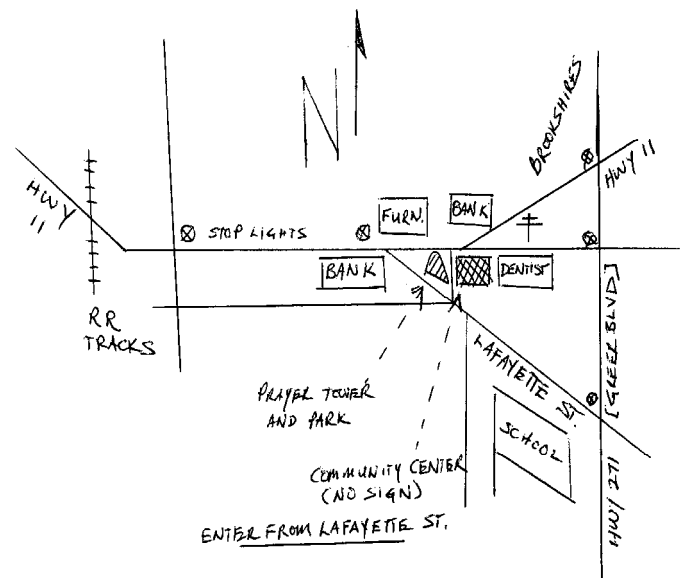
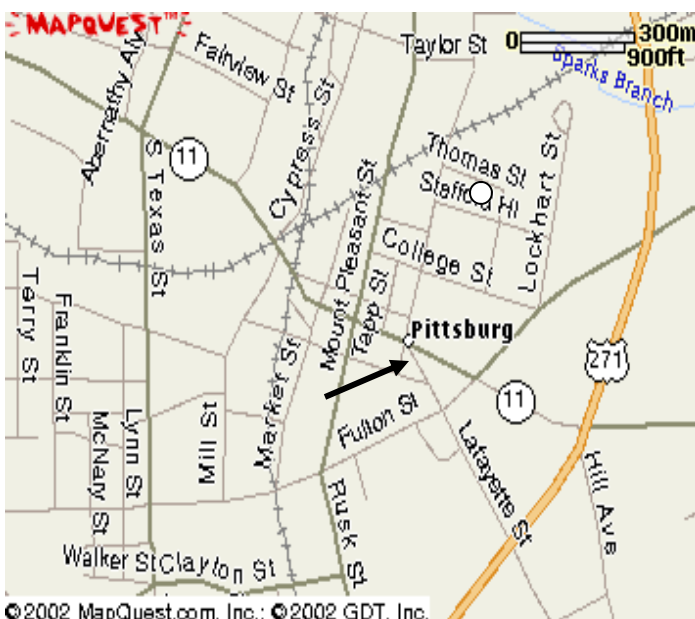
2009 Programs and Tour
Open for your suggestions.
Please email or call any Director,
Officer, or TFS Forester.
We will be planning in December
and January. Contact information
is in the box on the left-hand page.

Please Remit 2008 Dues to:

NETFLA
PO Box 642
Mt. Vernon, TX 75457

Dues are \$15 per member or associate per year. Make checks payable to NETFLA, and thanks!

Note: New members paying dues after Nov. 1 will have their payment credited to 2009.



Trinity County Forest Land Owners Address Long Term Timber Issues

Editors Note: In response to this letter and continuing concerns from other segments of our timber industry, the TFA has established a working group/committee to develop an organized proposal to re-establish the timber industry in Texas. The first meeting will be shortly after the annual TFA convention.

TRINITY COUNTY FOREST LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION

Mr. Ron Hufford
Executive Vice-President, Texas Forestry Association
PO Box 1488
Lufkin, Texas 75902-1488

Dear Mr. Hufford:

We, the Trinity County Forest Landowners' Association, wish to express from our perspective a general concern for the present state of the Texas forest industry. While many may say that today's low prices, even for quality sawtimber, are but a passing phase or "Stage," we know that our economic situation has been in decline for many years, long before the present building slump or real estate financing mess. Prices for our raw material are and have been very low for a protracted period of time and no relief is in sight. Scores of loggers have quit the business in recent years and no new production plants have opened in quite some time. Many other plants have closed. The specter of "the wall of wood" from overseas competitors is always just over the horizon. We are aware that this scenario is well known to you. Nevertheless, as longterm stakeholders in the forest industry of Texas, we are very concerned both about the future viability of our industry as well as the future of the private Texas forest landowners.

We seem to be inexorably drifting toward the acceptance of some form of urban/suburban hobby farm colonialism, where East Texas is viewed primarily as a forest recreation playground for the urban privileged and well connected, and where forest management and local economic concerns are of last consideration. This is a frightening and distressing picture and one we feel can and should be addressed and changed. I will remind you that our reduced ad valorem treatment by the State is based on the assumption that the raw material we produce stokes the local economy. This, if our industry goes down, we and future generations could all lose our ability to even afford the property we presently own. Also, it should be remembered that forest management has brought our region back from a state of near nothingness in the 1930's to its

present condition, one we all take pride in. But management is expensive and the use of management as well as the general state of our forests will likely decline if economic return from timber investment continues to be depressed. Landowners have to operate as a business and cover costs. Industry has to also cover their production costs and make a return for shareholders.

Therefore after stating this preamble, our organization urges the Texas Forest Association and its leadership to make an effective plan to improve the East Texas forest community's economic conditions and its industry's plight.

- TFA [*should*] organize a regional forest summit and invite all state holders to attend. At this summit we attempt to put our problems in view and perspective, and produce a plan aimed at improving our situation. This summit, first suggested to us by State Representative Jim McReynolds, must be led by knowledgeable people with a problem-solving thinking and a can-do outlook and not, as has been the case too often in the past, by people with defeatist mentalities or vested interest in suppression of our local forest industry. As sites for this summit we suggest Crockett, Lufkin, or Nacogdoches, all with adequate facilities and all centrally located.

Alert all the State and Federal elected officials serving our region as to our problems and ask for their involvement in their solution. Related to this, ask these officials, given the population growth numbers for Texas proclaimed by the "powers" in Austin as a basis for their support for the Trans-Texas Corridor, what plan do they have for East and rural Texas sharing in this growth and its assumed economic benefits? Or do they propose all this growth and the attendant wealth it generates continue to be funneled to our already congested and increasingly environmentally troubled largest cities?

The status and condition of the old paper mill in Lufkin should be thoroughly investigated and analyzed. If available for development, it could be the location for a combined new state of the art saw mill, chipping saw mill, and chip consuming paper or OSB plant, all on one site. All the different facilities could be fired by one single electrical system fueled by forest waste, thereby reducing the energy costs for all these enterprises as well as possibly providing income by the sale of excess electrical capacity to "the Grid." Additionally, with a multiple facility site,

each stick of wood could be put to its “highest and best use.” While enhancing profitability, this could also possibly drop the raw material costs of pulp to a point where reopening the paper mill might become economically feasible. All the plants could take advantage of the existing road, water, and rail infrastructure at this site. The Lufkin location is also key in that it is in the center of a vast timber reserve, rather than on its periphery, thus insuring an ample timber supply while minimizing the fuel that producers will consume in getting the raw product to the plant. Given its potential economic impact on the local area, the City of Lufkin and the Deep East Texas Council of Governments should be involved in this discussion.

Include the railway system in innovative plans for future forest product utilization. Invite railway company representatives to all Forest Summit or other sessions where finding solutions to the current unfortunate impasse are being considered. The Texas logging industry started with hauling logs by rails; it is time to haul forest products by rail again, as an affordable alternative to high fuel costs for hauling logs and forest products on the highways.

TFA should call together a blue ribbon committee of stakeholders representing landowners, nurseries, foresters, state and federal agencies to determine a way to revitalize the TRE program for replanting Texas forests. With current genetic improvements available in pine seedlings, it is essential that forest landowners have access to some funding that supports the cost of replanting their acreage. Combined costs of replanting with improved seedlings have increased to the point that cost is a barrier to many private landowners. The TRE program was the most innovative forest restoration program in the country as it operated and now, with changes in ownership of company timber lands and lack of accessible markets by landowners, is the time to reopen the program. Every manufacturing company would retain a small percentage fraction of payments and profits for the TRE program funding. Having a reliable supply of quality forest products available will keep the plants in business at a lower cost for timber products and improve markets for the private landowners.

Continue to push for production of electricity or biofuels from forest waste. Though not a big primary income source for landowners, it does hold out the possibility of more jobs in the area and lower electrical bills for the region. It would also potentially save the forest landowner the expense of clearing this debris from his or her land prior to replanting. This site prep savings could be considerable.

Hire an expert to definitely find out why new forest product plants choose to locate in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma rather than Texas so that Texas can also become a favorable locale for plants. This situation exists even though the plants need East Texas wood to operate and our forests are the closest source of wood products to the still booming Texas urban centers of Houston, Dallas, Ft. Worth, San Antonio, Austin, Beaumont, Waco, the Golden Triangle, Tyler and Longview.

We in Trinity County hope you will take our suggestions and comments to heart. We offer them not as criticism but as a sincere attempt to “get the ball rolling” toward a remedy of our present unacceptable situation. Though a small county, our organization has a history and well deserved reputation for both leadership in progressive forest management and the betterment of the overall East Texas condition. We feel prompt action on our problems is called for. As our friend, the late, great Brady Wadsworth would say, “it is time to lead, follow, or get out of the way.” For the sooner we begin, the sooner we will see improvement.

Sincerely,

Jane Gibson Baxter, President
Trinity County Forest Landowners Association

CC: Representative Jim McReynolds

ONE VOTE COUNTS — YOURS!

Did You Know That...

- In 1645 — one vote gave Oliver Cromwell control of England.
- In 1649 — one vote caused Charles I of England to be executed.
- In 1776 — one vote gave America the English language...instead of German.
- In 1839 — one vote elected Marcus Morton to be Governor of Massachusetts.
- In 1845 — one vote brought Texas into the Union.
- In 1876 — one vote changed France from a monarchy into a republic.
- In 1923 — one vote gave Adolph Hitler leadership of the Nazi Party.
- In 2008 — ????

Timber Taxation Workshops

November 17, 2008— **Montgomery-Harris County Forest Landowners Association Year-End Meeting & Dinner** 6:30 p.m. at Grace Crossing Church of Christ Conference Room, Conroe (I-45 and FM 1488 - Exit 81). Dr. Yanshu Li, Economist, Texas Forest Service will update landowners on **Timber Taxation changes and Casualty Loss after the Hurricane Ike**. **RSVP** and information by calling Robin at (936) 273-2261 by November 14.

January 27, 2009—**East Texas Timber Income and Property Tax Workshop**. Dr. Linda Wang (USFS), Dr. John Greene (USFS), Dr. Yanshu Li (TFS) will be instructors. Lufkin, TX, Pitser Garrison Civic Center. 601 N. Second St., 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. For more information contact Monica Jadowski at mjadowski@tfs.tamu.edu or (979) 458-6630. To register, visit <http://texasforests.tamu.edu> and click on Events Calendar. Fee is \$65 for workbook, lunch and refreshments. Class size is limited. Deadline for registration is January 12, 2009.

January 28, 2009—**East Texas Timber Income and Property Tax Workshop**. Dr. Linda Wang (USFS), Dr. John Greene (USFS), Dr. Yanshu Li (TFS) will be instructors. Overton, TX, Texas AgriLife Research & Extension Center, 1710 FM 3053 North, 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. For more information contact Monica Jadowski at mjadowski@tfs.tamu.edu or (979) 458-6630. To register, visit <http://texasforests.tamu.edu> and click on Events Calendar. Fee is \$65 for workbook, lunch and refreshments. Class size is limited. Deadline for registration is January 12, 2009.

Pine Thinning Workshop

Texas Forest Service is sponsoring a landowner workshop in East Texas on thinning young pine stands. Periodic thinning is recommended to reduce stand density and provide space for crop trees to rapidly mature. Thinning is one way that young pine stands are managed for maximum growth and protection from pine bark beetles, fire and other destructive agents. How landowners should respond to damage caused by Hurricane Ike and what to expect with regard to insect and disease problems in damaged pine stands also will be addressed.

Workshop topics include:

- Why, how, when to thin your pine stand.
- Economics of thinning - does thinning cost or does it pay?
- How to deal with damage to your pine stand from Hurricane Ike?
- What insect and disease problems can you expect following Hurricane Ike?
- Southern pine beetle biology and management.
- The SPB Prevention Program and how you can get federal cost shares for thinning.

The same workshop is offered at three different locations:

Saturday, December 6 in Nacogdoches County; Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, Room 117, in Nacogdoches

Wednesday, December 10 in Tyler County; Tyler County Extension Office, 201 Willow Street, in Woodville

Saturday, December 13 in Marion County; Community Center in Kellyville, 4 miles west of Jefferson on Hwy 49

Classroom session 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Optional field trip to unthinned and recently-thinned stands 2- 4 p.m.

Registration fee is \$10/person (includes lunch and refreshments).

To pre-register (and ensure a place at the lunch table), call 936-639-8170 or contact Mike Murphrey at mmurphrey@tfs.tamu.edu. Registration fee can also be paid at the door.

Speakers are experienced TFS foresters, entomologists and private consulting foresters knowledgeable about pine management in East Texas.

Websites of Interest -

U. S. F. S. tax publications:

<http://www.fs.fed.us:80/spf/coop/programs/loa/tax.shtml>

AF&PA Grow the Vote: a guide to politics and important issues for the forest products industry: <http://www.bipac.net/page.asp?g=afpa&content=startpage>

How to Select a Tree Planting Vendor: <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/main/popup.aspx?id=1434>

Timberland Decision Support System – financial calculators and a simulator to help landowners consider management options: <http://tfsfrd.tamu.edu/tdss/default.htm>

Reforestation – list of webpages on various reforestation practices, decision-making: <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=1802>

Species and Communities of Concern: http://www.texasforestry.org/docs/Species_Concern%20Insert.pdf

NETFLA Bits and Pieces



What's this?

Hopefully, it's our new logo. Those that got a post card got to see the color version. Trust me, it's better in color.

Our Teachers Conservation Institute scholarship recipients for this year were:

Annette Anderson
Big Sandy, Texas
She teaches at Harmony ISD

Tony Glasscock
Winnsboro, Texas
He teaches at Como/Pickton ISD

Both were tops in their classes. Our third award was to have gone to Gloria Harris of Sulphur Bluff, but she had to be disqualified because the Cooper ISD had already paid her tuition.

Market Report – July/August, 2008

Product	Statewide Ave. Price		Previous Ave. Price		Weight Difference
	Weight	Volume	Weight	Volume	
Pine-Sawlogs	\$26.92/ton	\$224.63/mbf	\$23.25/ton	\$177.65/mbf	+15.8%
Pine-Pulpwood	\$9.52/ton	\$25.63/cord	\$8.00/ton	\$21.58/cord	+19.0%
Pine-Chip'n'Saw	\$13.32/ton	\$49.98/cord	\$13.40/ton	\$36.19/cord	-0.6%
Mixed Hardwood-Sawlogs	\$18.73/ton	\$161.05/mbf	\$24.29/ton	\$218.71/mbf	-22.9%
Hardwood-Pulpwood	\$9.75/ton	\$27.86/cord	\$5.49/ton	\$15.42/cord	+77.6%

See *Timber Price Trends* at <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/timberpricetrends> 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.

1. Stumpage price statistics include gatewood sales. Stumpage prices for gatewood sales are estimated by subtracting cut-and-haul costs, other expenses, and profits provided by reporter.
2. Statewide data excludes U.S. Forest Service sales.
3. Price calculated from specific conversion factor reported for each sale if available; otherwise, the average conversion factors listed on page 4 of Texas Timber Price Trends (<http://texasforests.tamu.edu/timberpricetrends>) are used.

Northeast Texas Forest Landowners Association
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