

Hurricane Harvey Disaster, Hunting Season Property Rights, Dozer Site Preparation and Master Tree Farmer Course

On Saturday, September 9, 2017, President Elizabeth Parker called the Tyler County Forest Landowner Association meeting to order, welcomed the attendees and introduced the speakers.

- **Emergency Situations: Chief Scott Yosko**, Woodville Police Department, reported that there was very little damage from Hurricane Harvey within the Woodville city limits. However, all houses the Barlow Lakes community on the Neches River were damaged by rising water and some of the houses collapsed. Chief Yosko demonstrated night vision goggles and infrared viewing equipment that are assets to law enforcement in search and rescue situations, as well as criminal events. For example, the heat imprint of an individual can be viewed immediately after a person has left the scene, providing evidence of their presence in the area. Some of the newer viewers provide visibility through smoke which can enable firefighters in locating a person who needs rescue. The attendees then walked outside where Chief Yosko exhibited three specialized vehicles – a Mine-Resistant-Ambush-Protection (MRAP) vehicle for entering shooter situations, a 5-ton truck with a snorkel that rises 10 feet above ground for high water situations, and a Hummer for diverse situations.
- **Impact of Emergency Disasters in Tyler County: Ken Jobe**, Tyler County Emergency Coordinator, reported that Hurricane Harvey, which made its initial landfall on August 24-25, 2017, brought 25-30 inches of rain to Tyler County. The hurricane's additional landing at Port Arthur early in the morning of August 30th, contributed to the excessive rainfall. There was no loss of life in Tyler County attributed to Hurricane Harvey. Over 4000 sandbags were filled by volunteers and distributed by the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) -- providing each person with up to 10 sandbags. Emergency responders completely evacuated the area just below the Dam B on the Neches River. The Red Cross established a temporary shelter for the evacuees which was open for about 20 hours. Since Tyler County is a pass-through county, the residents were transported from the shelter in Woodville to a longer-term shelter in Nacogdoches. Power was turned off to the evacuated area. As the water threatened to overflow Dam B, it was necessary to release water into the Neches River above the evacuated area. The Neches River peaked at just below 81 feet and stayed there for four days. About 300 homes were damaged; some are completely gone. In addition to the structures damaged along the Neches River, about a dozen homes in Woodville behind the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) were also impacted. During the recovery phase, the Red Cross will provide long term housing (30 days) in the county for displaced residents. While all paved roads in Tyler County had outages during the flooding, they were open by September 9th -- except for a bridge on Hwy-256 where the soil was washed from under the pavement near Clear Fork Creek. Because all residents near this washout have access to their homes from alternate routes, repairs will probably be a lower priority for the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT). The road damage to White Tail Ridge was so extensive that pallets were used to reestablish access. Texas' extensive road damage from Hurricane Harvey will probably make it difficult to quickly obtain road materials for repairs. FEMA will provide partial funding to return the roads to pre-disaster condition, but they will not provide funds for improvements. Tyler County is now in the recovery phase. If you have insurance to cover the damage to your home, FEMA can help with the cost of the deductible. Also, FEMA will reimburse

rebuilding costs of primary residences only if the new structure is built to code and the owner acquires appropriate insurance. Residents with house damage can email Ken Job at HarveyDamageTC@yahoo.com. To request a FEMA inspection, access <https://www.disasterassistance.gov>. FEMA Disaster Recovery facilities will be set up next to Tractor Supply on US-69 South in Woodville.

Ken Jobe encouraged the attendees to heed evacuation notices. Texas Parks and Wildlife personnel will perform search and rescue of individuals, but will not conduct supply deliveries to individuals who refuse to evacuate. He also encouraged individuals to manage the trees around their homes to minimize damage from downed trees and to invest in a generator.

- **Property Rights During Hunting Season: Brandon Mosley**, Tyler County Game Warden, explained that game wardens work with landowners to deal with timber theft and trespassers. Brandon acknowledged that thieving and trespassing are prevalent in Tyler County – usually by repeat offenders. He said that many of his calls are regarding hog hunters using dogs. Brandon emphasized that while game wardens have the right to go on private property without the consent of the owner, he does not do so without a specific reason.

It is important for landowners to obtain descriptions and license plate numbers of trespassers and he encouraged landowners to use game cameras to do so. Because poachers are likely to destroy or remove a camera at a feeder, he recommended mounting a second, well-hidden camera nearby. Brandon likes Spartan Gocam cameras (about \$500) for real time monitoring and Reconyx cameras (about \$1200).

If some individual shoots across a property line onto your property, the shooter can potentially be charged with both “hunting without consent” and “trespassing by projectile”. However, it is hard to file charges unless something is shot.

Trespassing is typically a Class C misdemeanor. (It escalates to a Class B felony for trespassing in a personal residence.) Technically, a tree line can serve as a “notice” of a property line, but to file charges a landowner must keep gates closed and clearly mark property lines with “No Trespassing” signs and purple paint. The purple paint must be vertical lines of not less than eight inches in length and not less than one inch in width, placed so that the bottom of the mark is not less than three feet from the ground or the top of the mark more than five feet from the ground; and placed at locations that are readily visible to any person approaching the property and no more than 100 feet apart on forest land or 1000 feet apart on land other than forest land.

https://tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/land/habitats/faq/law_enforcement/trespass1.phtml

By-laws for hunting leases on adjoining properties can provide some protection; for example, lands managed by John Hancock have by-laws for hunting leases that prohibit blinds closer than 150 feet from a property line.

- **Dozer Site Preparation: Todd Harrell**, Harell Dozer Service, emphasized that there is a strong, direct and positive correlation between seedling survival and site preparation. Preparation may include reducing unwanted competition for seedlings, removing slash and logging debris, and preparing or modifying the soil. Preparation can be done by either mechanical or chemical means. While chemical treatments produce better competition control, mechanical procedures produce better debris removal and can also prepare the soil. The appropriate site preparation is determined by the soil. Types of mechanical site prep including chop, shear, rake (pile), bed (row), subsoil breakup, and combinations of the various techniques.

- Chopping is similar to mulching, but the chips are not as small. It can be performed on trees up to 6 inches in diameter, but not stumps. Chopping does not disturb the soil and seedlings must be hand planted rather than machine planted.
- Shearing shears off stumps, brush and saplings, Debris is moved aside to leave clean lanes for planting. Shearing can displace topsoil and facilitates machine planting. Machine planted seedlings have a better survival rate.
- Raking or piling is performed after shearing. Debris is usually pushed into long windrows that can be burned, if desired. Leaving the windrows unburned, promotes wildlife habitat but reduces the area available for planting. If the equipment used has teeth, the topsoil can be displaced.
- Bedding may be performed after shearing. It creates mounds of organic matter and topsoil. The mounds will keep seedlings out of standing water. This technique is ideal for contour slopes but is not appropriate for drought prone sites.
- Ripping is good for hard red clay that is hardpan. In Tyler County, this occurs in small sections in the northern part of the county. Ripping loosens compacted soil, allows rainfall to percolate in the soil and seedling roots to get deeper into the ground. Time must be allowed for the rip to close before planting.
- Combination plows, which combine bedding and subsoiling, throw topsoil into the rip made by the ripping tool on the plow. Most often performed after shearing, combination plowing is adapted to both upland and lowland areas.
- The most effective mechanical technique is a single piece of equipment that shears, rips and beds in a single pass. Letting stumps decay for a year after clear cutting simplifies site prep. The most effective approach for creating pasture land is to shear, rake and then burn. The cost of mechanical site preparation varies from \$120 - \$250 per acre, depending on the techniques selected. There is usually a \$500 move-in fee for less than 50 acres.

Precision, site specific tree farming will become prevalent in the future. Not all sites are the same and not all soils on a single site are the same. Using soil tests, nutrient tests and electronic/computer controls, the soil can be prepared and treated, as appropriate, per GPS coordinates.

- **Master Tree Farmer Course:** Col. Eddie Boxx, a Tyler County tree farmer, sought to socialize and gain member feedback on a new Tree Farmer course modeled after the former Master Tree Farmer Course previously available. The new course would be specific to the East Texas ecosystems. The classes would be presented using webinars along with guest speakers and experts, culminating with a field trip and a “certificate of completion”. Suggested content would include long leaf restoration, hardwood management, wildlife and recreation interests, forestry terminology, the value of Streamside Management Zones, how to locate vendors, where to put gates, how to identify boundaries, and more.

Dr. Eric Taylor, Silviculturist with Texas A&M Forest Service, Elizabeth Parker, SFA graduate student, and Jacob Spivey, Tyler County’s Agriculture Agent, are collaborating with Eddie to design and develop the course. The proposal presented was for classes held in Woodville one evening a week, i. e., Tuesday, in April – July, 2018. At least half the interested attendees expressed a preference for Saturday classes – maybe every 2 weeks. The schedule is particularly sensitive to tree farmers who live outside the county and tend to their farms on weekends. The course materials would be made available to other East Texas counties upon completion of the initial offering in Tyler County. Jacob Read Spivey (Tyler County Extension Agent) followed Col Boxx’s presentation to further illustrate the proposed course modules and canvass the attendees for potential students

(15-20 attendees expressed interest in the course). In conclusion, the TCFLOA articulated a clear “demand signal” for the timber education course to the county agent and Jacob will continue to work with the Texas representatives on the course content and design.