Tyler County Forest Landowner 2018 Fall General Meeting

The Tyler County Landowners Association (TCFLOA) met for the Fall General Meeting on Saturday, September 15, 2018 and elected new officers. After elections, members enjoyed presentations by Kent Evans (Coordinator, Texas Longleaf Implementation Team), Tyler Wayland (Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute) and Sheila Jones (Owner, Trouble Shooters Tax Consultants).

Longleaf Pine Initiative. Kent Evans discussed industrial timberland owners' conversion of selected loblolly stands to longleaf stands, along with cost share and incentive programs available for landowners. Tyler County is in the historic longleaf pine range and is also in one of the highest lightning frequency areas in North America. The frequent lightning-initiated fires not only enabled the longleaf pines to thrive, they also retarded the growth of the native yaupon. In 1882, the newly completed railroad from Rockland to Beaumont enabled timber companies to more easily harvest the forests, creating several short-lived boom towns in the process. At that time the yaupon shrubs among the longleaf pines were small and sparse. Today, most of the newly planted forests in Tyler County are loblolly pines – and the yaupon approach tree size (only a slight exaggeration). Kent listed several reasons to convert from loblolly back to native longleaf pines.

- Longleaf pines are more resistant to fire, as was observed during Texas' 2011 and 2015 wildland fires.
- Longleaf pines are more resistant to the Southern Pine Bark Beetle (SPB).
- Longleaf pines, depending on their age and diameter, are more resistant to damage by high winds, as observed during the destructive Rita and Ike hurricanes

that targeted East Texas in 2005 and 2008. Sparse stands of all species are subject to wind damage; e.g., following a heavy thinning operation.

- While loblolly pines struggle in soil with a low site index, longleaf pines will grow well. Much of northern Tyler County has soil with a low site index because of the deep sands and sandy loams with little clay or clay loam within 48 inches. Note that longleaf pines will grow better in good soil.
- Federal funds and coaching resources are available for planting longleaf pine seedlings.

Yaupon, in addition to several other species, both native and invasive, compete with pine trees for water and nutrients. To control the competition, use herbicides and/or controlled burning. Some use a shredder but that can cause intensive re-sprouting. Controlled burns executed in summer will kill the yaupon up to 90%, which is much more effective than other times of the year. Kent recommended that the first burn on new longleaf pines be conducted in the dormant season at 12 to 14 months. Be sure the root collar diameter (RCD) is at least ½ to 1" in diameter with good soil moisture. Follow-up burns could be at 18 to 36 month intervals. Fall burns in a longleaf stand can be problematic and are not recommended. Do not burn if the trees are less than a year old, the trees exhibit poor vigor, the root collar diameter is less than 1/2 inch, or the candles are exposed; i.e., wait until the white buds are covered by green needles. Longleaf pines will grow candles several times a year. Kent recommends using a professional burn contractor. Sweetgum trees are also problematic in pine forests and can be controlled by herbicides. Kent encourages tree farmers to promote a native grass ground cover in forests, so when applying herbicides for yaupon and/or sweetgum, consider keeping the native grass. Herbicides may be applied by helicopter, skidder or backpack. Backpack applications can be more selective but are

more expensive because of the associated labor costs. Kent mentioned banded herbicide applications, in which herbicides are sprayed directly over the crop row for a specified width. While there are no financial growth and yield models for longleaf pine in Texas, Kent projected yield based only on interviews with knowledgeable foresters that include harvesting 30-40 year old longleaf pines for poles. He encourages tree farmers to work with their professional forestry consultant to obtain federal cost shares through the Texas A&M Forest Service and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Access www.txlongleaf.org for more information.

East Texas Native Grass Seeds. Tyler Wayland followed with a longleaf-related topic of natural grasses for East Texas and gave an update on local seed production and the importance of ground cover for industry and for private tree farmers. Tyler is an Assistant Director with the Texas Native Seeds program and is helping lead the East Texas Natives project. Tyler is working to locate and collect seeds from important native plant species in the region for evaluation. Selected seeds will be increased for commercial production and then made available for restoration efforts.

Tyler discussed valuable native grass species including Pinehill bluestem, an important species of the Southeastern Gulf Coastal Plains that is native to Tyler County's historic longleaf pine ecosystem. Pinehill bluestem grass likes well drained soils, is 60% shade tolerant and provides good fuel for controlled burns. Pinehill bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium var. divergens*) is also known as Little bluestem but is different from the commercially available Little bluestem *(Schizachryium scoparium var. scoparium)* that grows in prairies. In addition to Pinehill bluestem grass, other plants of interests include pineywoods dropseed, swamp sunflowers, prairie

blazingstar, purpletop tridents, longleaf woodoats, silver bluestem, Virginia wildrye, Canada wildrye, and inland sea oats.

Native seeds collected from across East Texas – from the I-10 to the Red River and from I-35 to the Sabine River – will be planted in evaluation plots at the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service – East Texas Plant Materials Center (ETPMC) in the Stephen F. Austin Experimental Forest south of Nacogdoches. Pinehill bluestem, pineywoods dropseed and swamp sunflower are three species currently being increased by the US Forest Service at the ETPMC. Hopefully, we will see them commercially available soon.

Tyler encourages landowners to purchase seeds on a high Pure Life Seed (PLS) basis, which indicates the percentage of seed that is pure, viable and capable of germination. Seed companies currently producing certified seeds released by the Texas Native Seeds program are Douglass King Seeds in San Antonio and Bambert Seed Company in Muleshoe, Texas. Roundstone Native Seeds Company in Kentucky is projected to have seeds available next year. Per Tyler's request for landowners to participate by providing native seed sources, TCFLOA member Christine Sanders invited Tyler to visit her tree farm which hosts numerous native plants.

Taxes. Shelia Jones, a former IRS employee, defined forest-related tax terminology, went over tax schedules and highlighted commonly overlooked expense deductions for landowners.