

Groundwater, Wildfires, and Cost Shares

The program for the Tyler County Forest Landowners Association Fall Meeting on Saturday, September 16, 2023, included the following topics.

Groundwater: John Martin, General Manager of Southeast Texas Groundwater Conversation District, discussed Water Wells and Drilling Considerations on Your Property. He shared that while surface water is managed by the state, ground water (the water under your land) is owned by you, the landowner. Even though there is no registration fee for homeowner wells, new wells must be registered. This information assists the Groundwater District in assessing the potential impact on your well if there is a request for a large-producing, water well nearby.

Wildfires: Conor McInnerney, District Forester with Texas A & M Forest Service, spoke about the Current Wildfire Situation and Steps to Mitigate Risk. He stated that in dealing with wildfires, it is better to be lucky than to be good. He was reflecting on two big August 2023 wildfires – one was the Shearwood Creek Fire in Jasper County that was threatening to cross the Neches River into Tyler County when the winds luckily turned the flames back. The second big wildfire in August was the Neches River Fire in NE Tyler County that was quickly halted by what Conor described as an air show. Helicopters and airplanes that were already luckily staged in the area immediately began dropping fire retardant and water that suppressed the fire quickly. Landowners can help mitigate wildfires by thinning forests to reduce density and conducting prescribed burns every two to three years.

Cost Shares: Michelle Moore, Texas A & M Forest Service, described the status of the new Cost Share Grants for Landowners with Small Timber Tracts that are less than 50 acres. While details of the program are still being developed, it seems that the emphasis of this federally funded program has shifted more toward mitigating climate change than assisting landowners of small tracts with acquisition of services such as thinning and herbicide application.