



Tim Parker explains Chinese privet mulching demonstration at McAfee Nature Preserve

Tyler County Forest Landowners

The Tyler County Forest Landowners Association was enlightened by the mulching demonstration at the McAfee Nature Preserve during its March 17th meeting. The 67-acre McAfee Nature Preserve was donated by Jerry McAfee and wife, Geraldine McAfee, to the Natural Area Preservation Association (NAPA) in 1992 to protect the flora and fauna of the locality in their natural habitat as well as perform an education function. The property is located just west of Woodville, Texas city limits between Cobb Mill Road and Spring Valley Road (CR 1020).

Several acres of an old field in the McAfee Nature Preserve have been overtaken by Chinese privet – an invasive species that was choking out the native flora. Using modern mulching equipment, Charles Dean demonstrated how mulching can be used to remove debris, underbrush and even unwanted trees while minimizing the impact to the land and preserving the natural flora. The old field will be reforested with longleaf pine seedlings in 2008.

The demonstration was preceded by a panel of tree farm management experts. Doug Dvorman, who manages the timberland ad valorem property taxes for 500,000 acres managed by Hancock Forest Management, reviewed several laws that specifically address tree farms. In 2003, the Texas legislature recognized the more recent chip-and-saw tree industry and made other technical corrections to bring stability, equity and

economics to the appraisal process. Volumetric reporting was changed from board feet to tons. Property tax values have generally been declining the last three years due to rising interest rates and sluggish timber prices.

Ralph Day, who is a consulting forester and appraiser, stated that there are over 90 types of entities with eminent domain powers in Texas. While all citizens are respectful of the needs of the greater community, landowners are entitled to 'just compensation'. Landowners' rights can be waived -- even by inaction -- and landowners should take steps to ensure their rights are protected.

Michael Easley, Texas Forest Service forester for Tyler County, described how fire is used as a tool both for tree planting site preparation and for forest underbrush maintenance. Native yaupon holly is a prevalent underbrush annoyance in the county and can be controlled by prescribed burning every three-to-five years. Michael cautioned that your trees must be adequately large and taller than the underbrush to minimize damage to the trees. Burns should be conducted by trained, experienced burners.