

## Managing a Small Tree Farm Tract

Tyler County Forest Landowners learned ways to address the issues and challenges of managing a small tree farm tract at the September 20, 2014 meeting.



Nolan Alders, a private landowner from Nacogdoches, explained the obstacles that landowners face when **Harvesting a Small Tract** (less than 50 acres).

The price per ton that a landowner receives for logs from a small tract will typically be less than the price per ton received for a larger tract. For the first thinning of the small tract, loggers must discount the price they pay the tree farmer by 15% - 50%. This discounted price allows the logger to recoup the significant cost of moving his equipment to the tract. Distance to the mill is also a factor in the price offered. The second thinning, because fewer trees are harvested, will be discounted even more than the first thinning. The discount for the final harvest will be the smallest – approximately 15%.

There are reportedly still a few small-job loggers around who have limited equipment – chain saws, a tractor and a skidder. Since the small-job logger's overhead is lower, he may be able to offer a greater price per ton than the large-scale loggers. Keep in mind that it may take him two weeks to do what larger-scale loggers could complete in three days.

Reach out to your neighbors within ten miles to coordinate harvesting. If multiple small tracts in the same area are harvested at the same time, each participating tree farmer may be able to receive a higher price per ton from the logger.

Regardless of the size of the tract, it is best to work through a forestry consultant rather than negotiating directly with potential loggers. If you decide to negotiate directly with a logger, ask to see his insurance certificate – and, then verify the current status of his insurance with his insurance company.

To maximize the profits from a small tract, farmers should employ good management practices to increase the tonnage per acre. It is important that forests are thinned when they need to be thinned – regardless of market prices. Trees that cannot acquire the nourishment, water and sunlight they need will not grow properly and their value will be stunted. When replanting the forest, ensure that good quality seedlings are selected.



Mike Murphrey, Texas A&M Forest Service, presented a fast-paced update on **East Texas Forest Health**. Mike explained that few trees in the South live to be a hundred years old because of the stress and destruction from heat, humidity, bugs, diseases, fires, lightning, tornadoes and hurricanes. When weather conditions put a tree in stress, the tree becomes susceptible to insects and diseases.

Ips beetles are prevalent in East Texas but seldom bother reasonably healthy trees. Ips beetles attack stressed trees from the top down. If you observe red pine needles in the top of your pine tree and pitch tubes at the base of the tree, it is displaying the symptoms of an ips beetle infestation. Prompt removal of any infested trees is recommended. Maintaining healthy trees is the best approach preventing an ips beetle attack.

Black turpentine beetles respond to fresh pine sap associated with injured trees. They attack the bottom six to eight feet of the trunk and are commonly found in stumps and injured trees after a logging activity. They are not usually a serious problem because they typically attack scattered trees. If control is needed, there are some insecticides that can be applied – if the insecticide is available.

The most dreaded beetle – the Southern Pine Bark Beetle – has not been detected in Texas since 1998, but we must be diligent. If you suspect that you have an infestation of these tiny beetles, it is important to react immediately as the beetles can destroy an entire forest in a few months. Contact your forester!

As trees grow they need more resources. Proactively thinning the forest by logging to ensure that each tree has enough space for it to acquire adequate sunlight, water and nutrients will improve the overall health of the forest and help prevent a destructive thinning by insects and diseases.

Other threats to East Texas forests include Chinese tallow trees, Japanese climbing fern, glossy privet, emerald ash borers, cogongrass, tropical soda apples and cactus moths.

The emerald ash borer is eliminating ash trees in the United States. No emerald ash borers have been found in any of the 1800 traps Mike has set out in Texas, but they have been detected in Arkansas and

will eventually arrive here. The adult borers are a bright, metallic green and are smaller than a penny. Chemical treatments are available but are considered by most to be too costly -- except for an occasional ornamental ash tree.

Cogongrass from Southeast Asia was first detected in Alabama in 1912. Cogongrass is aggressive and grows up to 6 feet tall. Because it generates a high temperature when it burns, any pine trees in the tract will be killed by a fire. While this grass has spread extensively in Florida, Mississippi and Alabama, there are only two plots of cogongrass in Texas – one is on Hwy 92 in Tyler County. There is an aggressive multi-year effort to eliminate it with herbicides. For more information access <http://www.cogongrass.org>.

The tropical soda apple from South America is now in Cass, Jefferson, Jasper and Orange counties. It has prickly plant parts that can restrict wildlife movement, is poisonous to humans and hosts viruses that can infect agricultural crops.

For more information about invasive species in Texas and what you can do, access [www.texasinvasives.org](http://www.texasinvasives.org).



Shane Harrington, Texas A&M Forest Service, explained the provisions and status of the **Agricultural Act of 2014** also known as the Farm Bill. Over 79% of the funds for the Farm Bill are dedicated to nutrition programs such as food stamps and public school meal programs. The remaining funds are for Crop Insurance, Conservation Programs, Commodity Programs and a few miscellaneous provisions.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), one of the conservation programs included in the Farm Bill, includes funding incentives for tree farmers. Tree farmers are advised to begin working with NRCS as early as possible to ensure adequate time is provided for planning and contract approval (typically if you can begin thinking a year in advance that will give enough time to get all the paperwork completed). Although the new Farm Bill was signed into law, Congress must still appropriate funds for most programs. Existing programs are currently funded under the Continuing Resolution passed by Congress earlier in September 2014. New programs will have to have an appropriations bill passed unless the sponsoring agency can make funds available within their current budget. The EQIP program

is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Tyler County's NRCS office is located in the south-west corner of the Nutrition Center in Woodville. For more information access [www.usda.gov/farmland](http://www.usda.gov/farmland) and [www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs](http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs).

Due to the rising cost of wildfire suppression and number of wildfires nationwide, the US Forest Service currently transfers funds from other programs to cover the cost of wildfire suppression. Currently the Senate and House have versions of the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (WDFDA) which would provide a more permanent solution to funding wildfire suppression and minimize fund transfers within USFS. The Senate version (S2593) sponsored is sponsored by Senator John McCain (AZ) and the House version (H3992) is sponsored by Representative Michael Simpson (ID). Both versions of the bill have been slow to reach the floor of the respective chambers but there is some thought they may reach the floor early in 2015. For updated information on WDFDA visit <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr3992>. A miscellaneous provision of the Farm Bill authorizes the US Forest Service to establish an aerial asset lease program which could increase the number of the large DC-10 air tankers. For more information access <http://www.npr.org/2014/08/18/340416210/bigger-faster-air-tankers-help-forest-service-tackle-wildfires>.

The Texas Longleaf Conservation Assistance Program can provide landowners with both technical and financial assistance for establishing and/or enhancing longleaf pine stands. The program is being funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and International Paper through their Longleaf Stewards Program and will be administered by Texas A&M Forest Service. . The program can provide landowners with a 50% cost share of the total cost up to a maximum amount. Landowners must own property within the Longleaf Ridge Significant Geographic Area which includes the northeast corner of Tyler County. For more information access <http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/longleaf>.



Susan Stutts, Texas Forestry Association Assistant Director, and Jerry Mallett, a Tyler County tree farmer, joined the speakers to answer questions from the audience. Jerry explained how his personal experiences have taught him to work through a forestry consultant. Susan Stutts explained that the Texas Forestry Association proactively works with legislators at the state and national level to promote

legislation that advances and protects the forestry industry. To learn more and to join, access <http://www.texasforestry.org/>.



Betty Zimmerman, outgoing President of the Tyler County Forest Landowner Association, announced the results of the election for new officers.

President – Sarah Reinemeyer

Vice President – Jeff Parker

Secretary – Brianne Parker

Treasurer – Charles Zimmerman

Board of Directors – DeAnna Turner, Jack Clark and Jay Fish

As Past-President, Betty Zimmerman will continue to be on the Board of Directors.