



Congressman Brady in Woodville

Congressman Kevin Brady Talks with Forest Landowners

At the Saturday, October 25th meeting of the Tyler County Forest Landowners at the Extension Office in Woodville, Congressman Kevin Brady discussed his plans for reintroducing the Big Thicket National Preserve expansion proposal in the US House of Representative. Landowners may sell or donate land to the expansion project which is designed to address connectivity, awareness and access of the Big Thicket. The new proposal will be “smaller and smarter” than the initial proposal and will give individual landowners the ability to “opt in” rather than requiring them to “opt out.”

Congressman Brady was followed by three experts from the area. Rich Dottellis, Texas Forest Service District Forester, reported Hurricane Ike damaged over 21,000 acres of Tyler County’s forests. Much of the damage was from “wind tunnels” which bent young trees and sheered or twisted larger trees. Texas Forest Service has submitted a recovery program proposal to the State.

Mike Murphrey, Texas Forest Service Staff Forester for Pest Management, stated that aggressive efforts are in progress to eradicate a patch of cogongrass growing north of Spurger and threatening Tyler County. This invasive species typically grows up to four feet high in our area and, in addition to crowding out native plants, cogongrass is particularly dangerous in the fall when it is dry and dormant. Reaching extremely high temperatures when it burns, Mike added that a cogongrass fire can kill even mature pine trees.

Charles Spurlock, a former Chairman of the Texas Logging Council, stated that rising equipment and fuel costs have reduced the number of loggers in Tyler County to only five or six. Loggers prefer to keep trips from the farm to the mill under a hundred miles, which makes the mills in neighboring counties critical to marketability of Tyler County’s trees.