

Sustainable Forestry Initiative Program



The Tyler County Forest Landowner Association and the Texas A&M Forest Service hosted a Sustainable Forestry Initiative Program on Saturday, June 14, 2014 in Woodville, Texas. The packed room of 140 attendees included multiple generations of several families. Many of the attendees, while owning land in Tyler County, traveled considerable distances from their homes outside the county

John Matel, Tyler County's Texas A&M Forest Service Forester, and Betty Zimmerman, President of the Tyler County Forest Landowner Association, welcomed everyone.



Steve Mayo, SFI Committee Representative and Procurement Forester for MeadWestvaco Corporation, explained the **Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) in Texas**. SFI promotes responsible forestry practices and is the world's largest single forest certification standard by area.

Steve stressed that having a certified tree farm increases the marketability of the trees as many of MeadWestvaco's customers require their paper products be made from trees harvested from sustainable forests. SFI's chain-of-custody certification is an accounting system that tracks fiber content through production and manufacturing to the end product.

Landowners may be asked to allow an on-site audit after a harvest or thinning to ensure that the logging operation met SFI requirements.



Susan Stutts, Assistant Director of the Texas Forestry Association, explained the **differences between the three tree farm certification programs** -- the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

While all three programs promote good stewardship and sustainable forests, the program most effective for private landowners is the American Tree Farm System.

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative is more effective for very large forests and is applicable to the forests managed by investment companies. The Forest Stewardship Council is an international initiative that requires complex paperwork. Few, if any tree farms in Texas have FSC certification.



Ron Hufford, Executive Director of the Texas Forestry Association, presented a **Legislative Update**. The 2014 Texas election will result in a lot of new faces in Austin.

The Texas Forestry Association is continuing to work with Texas legislators to modify Texas' recent transportation law that increased fees and fines for logging trucks.

Only 13 of the 150 members of Texas House of Representatives are from East Texas. They work diligently to ensure that the perspectives and needs of East Texas are met.



Chris Gregory, Texas Parks and Wildlife Biologist, delivered an entertaining discussion of **Deer Management for the Private Landowner**. Chris recommended that landowners maintain habitat diversity, protect large hardwoods, maintain streamside management zones and periodically thin. He encouraged landowners to plant food plots in the open areas created after thinning a forest. Also, repetitive control burns of a forest will naturally increase the number of kinds of plants deer like to eat.

Deer hunting programs available in Tyler County include Doe Days, the Landowner Asset Management Permit System (LAMPS), and Managed Lands Deer Program (MLDP)



Eddie Chalmers, Chief Appraiser for Tyler County, explained the process and criteria for acquiring the lower **timberland property tax valuation**. The valuation applies only to the land, not the timber. While property tax is local, the timberland valuation is based on state legislation and requirements.

Eligibility is based on the land being devoted primarily for timber production with the intent to produce income. The value differs by forest and soil types. The three forest types are pine, hardwood and mixed. There are four soil types – with Type II being the most prevalent in Tyler County.



Kent Evans, Texas Longleaf Implementation Team, explained that **longleaf pine forests** have a reduced risk from wind and wildfires.

Most of Tyler County's native longleaf pine was logged over a 50-year period beginning in 1883 when the railroad was completed from Rockland in northern Tyler County to Sabine Pass on the Gulf Coast. To restore the longleaf forests in Texas and eight other southern states, Longleaf Implementation Teams were formed under the leadership of the USDA Forest Service and other federal organizations.

Kent encouraged landowners to consider longleaf pine seedlings for their next planting.



Lux Davis, ArborGen, explained that ArborGen's **SuperTree seedlings** include the widely grown tree species in the commercial forestry industry.

ArborGen commonly uses four production processes – open pollinated, mass controlled pollinated, varietal propagation and trait-specific breeding. An open pollinated tree is a cross between a known mother tree and a random father tree. Mass control pollination controls both the mother and the father. The varietal propagation process yields identical seedlings. The trait specific breeding process focuses on adding a specific trait, such as disease resistance, growth improvement, drought resistance, cold resistance, heat tolerance or insect resistance.

Landowners can select seedlings with the features that are best suited to his/her environment and market.



Donna Work, Texas A&M Forest Service, presented Reasonable **Best Management Practices (BMP)** Expectations in Forestry Operations. BMPs are good, sound forestry practices that prevent soil erosion and protect water quality. Loggers are expected to follow them and landowners should be knowledgeable of them. The manual is available online at <http://texasforestservice.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=15307>.

Donna demonstrated the Texas Forest Information Portal found at <http://texasforestinfo.tamu.edu/>. This website provides landowners access to information about trees and forest lands across the state. It lists the mills available in a specified area; e.g., Tyler County. Landowners can use the Map My Property Application to print a map of his/her tree farm.

The meeting was closed about 2:30 pm by Jack Clark's prayer for Bill Tetley, a charter member of the Tyler County Forest Landowner Association, who was experiencing critical health issues.

Lunch was catered by Z's Fillin' Station in Woodville. Texas Forestry Association's Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) Committee sponsored the event.

The attendees' survey responses revealed that they acquired a significant increase in knowledge.

