

FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

Timber ◇ Wildlife ◇ Water ◇ Soil ◇ Best Management Practices ◇ Forest Health ◇ Recreation ◇ Aesthetics

WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM

from NRCS news release,
dated February 17, 2010

For more information:

- http://www.tsswcb.state.tx.us/files/docs/infoed/Con_News/2010WRPnewsrelease.pdf
- <http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/>
- <http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>

Wetlands provide habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species; improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals; reduce flooding; recharge groundwater; protect biological diversity; and provide opportunities for educational, scientific, and limited recreational activities.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications from landowners interested in wetlands restoration through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).

WRP is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners and Tribes to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring eligible land from agriculture.

“While Texas landowners have restored thousands of wetland acres through the program, changes made in the 2008 Farm Bill make WRP an even better investment,” said Don Gohmert, NRCS state conservationist for Texas. “The new program rules make it easier for landowners to enroll acres and provide a better system for assessing the value of the land enrolled.”

The 2008 Farm Bill changes the process for determining the easement value, directing NRCS to pay the lowest of:

- the fair market value of the land according to the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices or an area-wide market analysis;
- the geographic area rate cap as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture; or

- the landowner’s offer.

WRP offers three enrollment options:

1. **Restoration Cost-Share Agreement.** This is an agreement for a minimum of 10 years in duration to reestablish degraded or lost wetland habitat. NRCS pays 75 percent of the cost of the restoration activity. This does not place an easement on the property. The landowner provides the restoration site without reimbursement.
2. **30-Year Easement.** This is a conservation easement lasting 30 years. Easement payments are 75 percent of what would be paid for a permanent easement. NRCS also pays 75 percent of restoration costs.
3. **Permanent Easement.** This is a conservation easement in perpetuity. NRCS pays for the easement, as well as 100 percent of the costs of restoring the wetland.

For both permanent and 30-year easements, NRCS pays all costs associated with recording the easement in the local land records office, including recording fees, charges for abstracts, survey and appraisal fees, and title insurance.

NRCS's natural resources conservation programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters. Public benefits include enhanced natural resources that help sustain agricultural productivity and environmental quality while supporting continued economic development, recreation, and scenic beauty.

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STEWARDSHIP ON THE RANGE

from Lower Colorado River Authority website

For more information:

- http://www.tsswcb.state.tx.us/files/docs/infoed/Con_News/ConservationPartnershipInJohnson-CityPaysOffForLongtimeRanchingFamily.pdf
- <http://www.lcra.org/community/conservation/creekside.html>
- <http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/EQIP/index.html>

Back when Corrie Craig-Furber's great-great-grandfather William McCarty was ranching just north of Johnson City, native grasses flourished and springs flowed continually, providing water to people, livestock and wildlife alike.

Over the years, suppression of fire and overgrazing began to take its toll. Cedar began to encroach on the land, choking out native grasses and leaving the soil underneath the cedar canopy bare and vulnerable to excessive erosion. Seeps and springs began to dry up, and what was once a virtual oasis of tall grasses, forbs and flowing water became an infestation of cedar.

The one thing that hasn't changed on McCarty's old homestead after six generations is the family's determination to maintain its ranching legacy and to treat the land within its capabilities. Corrie's grandfather, H. D. Crofts, helped pass along McCarty's land stewardship ethic. In his honor, the family affectionately named their land the H. D. Crofts Ranch.

In the past two years, they have embarked on a rangeland restoration project for their ranch that would make their ancestors proud. They selectively removed much of the cedar, allowing native grasses to reestablish while maintaining natural shelter

belts for deer, turkey and quail. This was accomplished through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

C.A. Cowser, NRCS district conservationist, said, "In order to rotate their cattle from pasture to pasture in a manner that facilitates vigorous plant growth, they installed new cross-fencing with the help of the Lower Colorado River Authority's (LCRA) **Creekside Conservation Program.**"

This program is a partnership among LCRA, NRCS and local soil and water conservation districts to help landowners plan and implement conservation practices such as brush management, cross-fencing and alternative water source development.

The Creekside Conservation Program operates on a cost-share basis, where the landowner provides at least 50 percent of project costs, and LCRA provides up to 50 percent reimbursement.

"Without these partnerships, we wouldn't be able to accomplish our land conservation goals," said Garrett Craig, Corrie's oldest son. "Our family is blessed to have this land, and we intend to pass this blessing on to our children."

FLEMING OAK

Martin V. Fleming and his father arrived in Texas from Georgia in 1854. They spent their first night under the live oak that later became known as the Fleming Oak. When the county seat was established at Comanche, this same oak was on the southwest corner of the site chosen for the courthouse.

About 1911, Comanche's city fathers decided to pave the courthouse square. As the workmen were busily clearing trees

from the area, "Uncle Mart" Fleming stopped the workmen as they approached "his tree" and politely told them he had been tying his horse to that tree for years and he was used to seeing it there. In the exchange of words that followed, Uncle Mart threatened to use his "No. 10s" on them if they even touched the oak with an axe. Thinking he meant a 10-gauge shotgun, the workers backed down, and the tree was spared. Uncle Mart later confided that he had meant his size 10 boots!

from the Texas Forest Service website—Famous Trees of Texas

For more information:

- <http://famousoftexas.tamu.edu/TreeHistory.aspx?TreeName=FlemingOak>

HARDWOOD HABITAT AND BEARS

The Hardwood Habitat Cooperative is an easy to use cost-share program delivered by the East Texas Black Bear Task Force (ETBBTF). This program is an excellent deal for landowners with a goal to restore or enhance hardwood habitat.

The Hardwood Habitat Cooperative provides private landowners technical and financial assistance to restore and enhance hard and soft mast producing hardwood habitat in bottomlands, riparian areas or uplands to benefit wildlife species dependent upon hardwood dominated systems.

Examples of projects funded include:

- Mechanical and chemical site preparation
- Hardwood tree planting
- Improvement cuts
- Invasive plant control
- Prescribed burns
- Fence construction to exclude cattle from bottomlands and riparian areas.

Agreements may reimburse up to 75% of project costs to private landowners, and

in-kind services may be contributed towards the landowner's match. Funding will generally be less than \$250 per acre.

Habitat Agreements are a minimum of 10 years in length, which is short term considering hardwood production. The one caveat for the program can be location. The ETBBTF developed a series of maps to strategically focus black bear conservation and education efforts. Counties within the focus area are Anderson, Angelina, Bowie, Cass, Cherokee, Franklin, Hardin, Houston, Jasper, Lamar, Liberty, Marion, Morris, Nacogdoches, Newton, Polk, Red River, Sabine, San Augustine, Shelby, Titus, Trinity and Tyler.

Streamside management zones are ideal areas to focus efforts to improve wildlife habitat and water quality. Additionally, land that is marginal for pasture, crop or pine production may be good to consider. So, take advantage of this program while you can. For more information call 903-945-2129, write the ETBBTF at 1910 E SE Loop 323 BOX 327 Tyler, TX 75701 or email texasbears@bbcc.org

by Aron Flanders, Diversity Biologist, TPWD, Sulphur Springs, TX

For more information:

- <http://www.bbcc.org/etbbtf/>

NEW FERAL HOG PUBLICATIONS

Texas AgriLife Extension Service has developed five new feral hog control publications to help landowners corral this growing menace. Publications are available online at: <http://plumcreek.tamu.edu/feralhogs/>.

These publications specifically target the Plum Creek Watershed in Hays and Caldwell counties, but are applicable wherever feral hogs are a problem.

The five publications are:

Recognizing Feral Hog Sign - deals with the evidence or sign the hogs leave in passing. By reading signs, landowners can learn where the animals are traveling and apply the appropriate management technique to reduce their numbers.

Corral Traps for Capturing Feral Hogs

- discusses large traps that have proven useful in reducing hog numbers quickly. Feral hogs typically travel in large family groups called "sounders," and a corral trap can often be used to capture the entire group.

Box Traps for Capturing Feral Hogs

- deals with a second option that should be considered after corral traps. While they are not the best choice for removing large hog numbers, box traps, because they are readily movable, can be used to quickly remove small numbers from trouble spots.

Snaring Feral Hogs - offers instructions on placement and handling of snares.

Building a Feral Hog Snare - provides step-by-step instructions for producing snares used for catching feral hogs.

by Steve Burns, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Bryan, TX

For more information:

- <http://agnews.tamu.edu/showstory.php?id=1772>
- Chancey Lewis at 979-393-8517 or cdlewis@ag.tamu.edu

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Editorial Board

- Rusty Wood, TPWD, Nacogdoches, Texas
- Joe Pase, TFS, Lufkin, Texas

PRODUCT AND VENDOR GUIDE

Texas Forest Service Best Management Practices (BMP) Project has recently updated its "Product and Vendor Guide" for land-owners and loggers needing to build roads or stream crossings.

This guide lists vendors for such products as:

- Geotextiles, geogrids, and geocells
- Reno mattresses
- Gabion baskets
- Culverts
- Drag-line mats and skidder mats
- Railcars for stream crossings
- Silt fencing
- Erosion control blankets
- Hydromulches and hydroseeders
- Fill materials
- And more items and information

Go to the TFS Best Management Practices webpage at <http://texasforestservicetamu.edu/BMP>, click on "Publications," and look under the "Reports" section. There, you'll find the "BMP Product and Vendor Guide."



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