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# FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

Timber ★ Wildlife ★ Water Quality ★ Soil Conservation ★ Best Management Practices ★ Recreation ★ Aesthetics

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## THE PERPETUAL WILDLIFE FEEDER

A primary responsibility of wildlife biologists in Texas is to disseminate information to private landowners on how to better manage wildlife populations on their properties. Tools used to meet this responsibility are presentations delivered at programs, workshops, handouts, and site visits designed to provide management advice that can be implemented to improve habitat.

Every landowner seems to be searching for the “magic bullet” of wildlife management that requires a minimum of time, effort, and money to transform their piece of the world into a wildlife utopia. Probably the two most commonly asked questions of wildlife biologists are: “what can I plant?” and “what should I put in my feeder?” There is something on the horizon that may hold great promise for forest landowners in East Texas.

In 2001, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) began a pilot hardwood regeneration project with the help of Dr. Kormanik (see article below) and the staff of the Georgia State Forestry Commission’s Flint River Nursery. During the fall of 2001, approximately 1,400 native oak acorns (southern red, nuttall, shumard, swamp chestnut, willow, and water oak) were collected in East Texas and sent to the Flint River Nursery.

During February of 2003, about 800 oak seedlings of the original 1,400 acorns germinated were planted on the Alazan WMA and the Winston 8 Ranch in Nacogdoches Co., TX. The seedlings cost 50 cents a piece and were planted at a 15 x 15 spacing (@200 trees/acre). The seedlings were planted in 12” x 12” augured holes with a slow release fertilizer packet placed in each hole on 4, 2-acre sites. During the summer, the sites were mowed and herbicides were sprayed around the base of each seedling to reduce competition and keep the seedling in full sun.

During fall 2002, TPWD expanded the pilot project by sending an additional batch of acorns including: southern red, nuttall, shumard, live, water, cherry bark, willow, white, and swamp chestnut oak. These acorns should yield about 40,000 oak seedlings for the February 2004 planting season. Forest landowners participating in this pilot project will be provided the seedlings and fertilizer packets FREE during February 2004. Landowners will be responsible for the cost of preparing the planting site, planting the seedlings, and site maintenance. Priority will be given to landowners enrolled in cost sharing projects like East Texas Wetlands, Partners for Wildlife, Landowner Incentive Program, and farm bill projects.

*by John Burk, Statewide Turkey Program Leader, Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept., Nacogdoches, TX*

*If you are interested in participating in the TPWD hardwood regeneration project, mail or e-mail your request to:*

- John D. Burk TPWD; P.O. Box 4655; SFA Station; Nacogdoches, TX 75962 [jburk@sfasu.edu](mailto:jburk@sfasu.edu)
- Request should include: Name, address, phone and/or e-mail address; acres to be planted; county of planting site; cost share program enrolled in (if any)

## HARDWOOD REGENERATION TECHNIQUE

Dr. Paul Kormanik; a research scientist with the USFS in Georgia, has worked to develop effective hardwood regeneration techniques. He is trying to dispel the myths that oaks are moderately shade tolerant and slow growing tree species.

Through his work he has discovered that acorn selection, seedling selection, planting techniques, and care the first year or two can dramatically affect growth rates of hardwoods. Dr. Kormanik has consistently produced native oak seedlings that grow to mast producing size in 5 - 7 years using these techniques.

Native oak acorns are planted in the nursery and exposed to a scientifically proven regimen of fertilizer and water applications. In February of the following year, the seedlings are lifted and graded. Part of Dr. Kormanik's success is based on the theory that not every acorn that germinates will make a good tree. Oak seedlings are therefore culled using a combination of measurements including seedling height, root collar circumference, and the number of first order lateral roots. Using this process, an average of one third of the germinated seedlings will be discarded. However, many of the seedlings retained for planting will measure over head high, be as thick as your finger, and have 8 or more lateral roots as thick as the trunk after only one year in the nursery!

Although initial seedling costs and planting labor costs using Dr. Kormanik's procedures are much higher than traditionally used hardwood planting techniques, the results promise to make the initial costs pay for themselves over time. This is particularly true for landowners that have wildlife benefits as a priority. Unless landowners are willing to absorb the labor costs of planting using Kormanik's procedures, his technique is not realistically intended to plant large acreages. However, by planting 2 – 3 acre motts of Kormanik's seedlings within a larger traditionally planted hardwood tract, these motts will create islands of usable habitat for mast eating species (squirrels, deer, turkey, waterfowl) 20 – 30 years sooner than the surrounding stands.

*by John Burk, Statewide Turkey Program Leader, Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept., Nacogdoches, TX*

*For more information:*

- John Burk, [jbukr@sfasu.edu](mailto:jbukr@sfasu.edu)

## NATIONAL SATELLITE CONFERENCE

Stewardship of the nation's private forest lands is a perennial issue facing natural resource and extension professionals. Local forestry cooperatives and similar organizations have emerged as a tantalizing innovation to improve stewardship. Cooperatives foster sustainable forestry (e.g., forest certification), land protection, and ecological restoration. They may also seek to identify market opportunities for low-value, small-diameter trees-common byproducts of improving forest productivity and quality and reducing wildland fire risk. While much of this activity is currently centered in the Upper Midwest, recent research indicates that there is growing interest in other parts of the country.

A satellite conference will be conducted for natural resource, Extension, and cooperative development professionals on November 18, 2003. Cooperative members, consultants, service providers, and researchers will provide a framework for better understanding forestry cooperatives and their potential role in helping private forest landowners achieve their objectives.

More information about the conference will be made available on this website - <http://www.wisc.edu/uwcc/forestcoops/index.html>. For more information about conference content or to find out how to establish a downlink site in your area, contact us at [fc-conf@extension.umn.edu](mailto:fc-conf@extension.umn.edu).

# NEW CHAMPION LIVE OAK CROWNED

The Texas Forest Service has recently confirmed the dimensions of the largest live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) in Texas. The tree will be added to the Texas Big Tree Registry, a listing of the largest specimen of every tree species found in Texas.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Michael Lange discovered the tree while surveying the newly acquired property and nominated it for the state Big Tree Registry. Located on the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge in Brazoria County, the new champ eclipses the famous “Big Tree” at Goose Island State Park near Rockport, which has been listed since 1966.

“This tree is just huge - even for a live oak,” said Mickey Merritt, Texas Forest Service forester in Houston, who officially measured the tree in January. “Its circumference really makes the difference when you compare it to other trees of the same species.”

Trees in the registry are compared by a “tree index,” which combines trunk circumference in inches with total height in feet, plus one-quarter of the average crown spread in feet. The new champ has a circumference of 386 inches, a height of 67 feet, and a crown spread of 100 feet, giving it a tree index of 478 points. The dethroned champion at Goose Island State Park has an index of 407 points. Only trees within five points of each are listed as co-champions.

The new champion stands on a 1,371-acre tract of land recently added to the San Bernard refuge through the efforts of the Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national conservation organization, which purchased the land with assistance from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and grants from the North American Wetlands Conservation Council and the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. The property was transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2001.

The Texas Forest Service recognizes 290 native or naturalized tree species that qualify for the Big Tree Registry. Of these, 73 are current or pending national champions or co-champions, a listed in the National Register of Big Trees, published by the non-profit conservation group, American Forests.

*by Pete Smith, Texas Forest Service, State Big Tree Registry Coordinator, College Station, TX*

*For more information:*

- Pete Smith, psmith@tfs.tamu.edu; or 979-458-6650
- <http://texasforestsservice.tamu.edu/shared/article.asp?DocumentID=825>
- <http://texasforestsservice.tamu.edu/shared/article.asp?DocumentID=476&mc=urban>
- <http://www.americanforests.org/resources/bigtrees/>

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## *Landowner Meetings with Stewardship Topics – 2003*

### Harris Co. Forest Landowners Seminar

**August 23** - For more information or to RSVP, call (936) 273-2261 (TFS, Conroe)

Topics will include: Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Economics of Silviculture, Forest Taxation, Forestry Legislation, Reforestation, Wildlife Management, Best Management Practices, and the Benefits of Landowner Associations.

This seminar will be held at the Texas Cooperative Extension (Extension Service) auditorium near Bear Creek.. These facilities are located at #2 Abercrombie Dr. in Houston. Abercrombie is off of Patterson Rd., which runs east off of Hwy. 6 between Clay Rd. and I-10 on the west side of Houston.

Time: 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. (registration starts at 8:30 am; speakers start at 9:00 am)

This seminar and LUNCH are provided FREE OF CHARGE, thanks to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative<sup>SM</sup> Committee of the Texas Forestry Association.

*Continuing Education for Logging Professionals*

2003 BMP Workshops

7:30 am - 3:30 pm

Aug. 15 Lufkin  
Nov. 14 Lufkin

2003 PhaseII Workshops (Silviculture, Endangered Species, Wildlife, Wetlands)

1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Oct. 10 Diboll

- Fee (per workshop): \$10 for TFA/TLC members; \$35 for non-members
- For registration, call TFA at (936) 632-8733

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