

**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
State Technical Committee
Meeting Agenda
May 7, 2024
8:00 – 11:30**

**Hilton Garden Inn Temple
1749 Scott Blvd., Temple, Texas**

8:00-8:30	Registration	
8:30-8:40	Welcome – Announcements – Overview of Meeting	Charles Kneuper
8:40-8:50	Agency Updates	Kristy Oates
8:50-9:00	Natural Resources Conservation Service, State Conservationist	Kelly Adkins
9:00-9:10	Farm Service Agency, Executive Officer	Lillian Salerno
9:10-9:20	Rural Development, State Director	
9:20-9:45	Farm Bill and Inflation Reduction Act updates	Charles Kneuper
9:45-10:10	Local Work Group summary	Stacy Riley
10:10-10:30	NRCS	Becky Weaver
10:30-10:50	FSA	
10:50-10:55	Break	
10:55-11:20	Subcommittee Reports	Committee Representatives
11:20-11:30	Agronomy	Johanna Nuding
	Forestry	Jason Raines
	Grazing	Madeline Milner
	Water Resources	Kyle Wright
	Wildlife	Cyndee Watson
10:50-10:55	Open Discussion	
10:55-11:20	Overview	Charles Kneuper
11:20-11:30	Comments and open discussion	All
	Closing comments/Adjourn	Kristy Oates

**** Written agenda item comments are encouraged.
Agenda is subject to minor adjustments.**

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Charles Kneuper, State Resource Conservationist, called the State Technical Committee (STC) to order at 8:30 a.m. on May 7, 2024, in Temple, Texas.

Present for the meeting were 45 STC members and several Texas NRCS staff.

Agency Updates:

Kristy Oates, State Conservationist Texas NRCS:

- Provided update of current Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) activities.
- Summarized status of NRCS funding, including Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) dollars, to reach people and meet NRCS goals.

Kelly Adkins, State Executive Director, Farm Service Agency (FSA):

- Summarized FSA activities following panhandle wildfires.
- Summarized activities in other parts of the state experiencing recent flooding.

Lillian Salerno, State Director, Rural Development (RD):

- Provided update on funding availability and energy development through RD.

Farm Bill and Inflation Reduction Act updates:

Charles Kneuper, NRCS

- Summarized local workgroup and priority resource concerns
- Highlighted local workgroup general feedback including:
 - General concerns related to population growth impact on water availability and quality
 - Concerns continue related to wild hogs.
 - Concerns regarding payment rates continuing to stay behind actual implementation costs.

Stacy Riley, NRCS

- Requested committee to spread awareness for RCPP sign-up
- Noted CIG announcements would be coming out soon.
- Highlighted National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) sign up batching period May 17th and emphasized need for more applicants.
- Provided updated funding numbers for Texas.
- Discussed Conservation Activity Plan payments.
- Discussed priority practices for source water protection.
- Discussed identifying priority practices for Texas. Stated Texas provides maximum rate available for priority practices.
- Answered question regarding conservation practice, well decommissioning.

Becky Weaver, FSA

- Wildfire update
- LIP – Producers still have time to report LIP losses.
- Currently over 100 applications in ECP, mainly for fences. Application period through June 9th.
- Currently no requests for emergency loans.
- Question regarding interest rate on emergency loans. Currently 3.75%
- Provided updates on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and IRA numbers.

Subcommittee Reports:

Agronomy, Johanna Nuding:

- Discussed grazing and haying cover crops and following the take half leave half principle
- Discussed hemp production and how to get approved to grow in Texas.
- Reviewed interim conservation practice standard 810.
 - Recommended Texas combine interim standard 810 with cover crop standard.

Forestry, Jason Raines

- Discussed carbon capture rates of Texas forestlands
- Recommendations
 - Prescribed burning: create pay rates to account for size of property and type of fire. Could pay rate be on an “each” basis for smaller properties?
 - Forestry TSPs: have those contracts and plan to go beyond a one-year contract. Current funding only covers one year, can the funds match the plan lifespan?

Grazing, Madeline Milner

- Discussed comments to be submitted by subcommittee during comment period for conservation practice standard Grazing Management
- Updated on recent grazing subcommittee meeting and topics discussed.

Water Resources, Kyle Wright

- Recommended no changes be made for FY25 and the NWQI continue in the current watersheds
- Source water protection area bulletin released April 28th with deadline of August 23rd. Subcommittee will meet again soon to discuss recommendations for FY25 SWPA.

Wildlife, Cyndee Watson

- Recommended to expand the EQIP/CRP pilot project to Texas
- Provide greater support and training for wildlife friendly fences
- Keep conservation practice 338 Prescribed Burning as a climate smart practice.

Open Discussion:

Statement to put more focus on water and water storage across Texas. Strain from urban growth competing with ag production.

Additional discussion on the economic value of commodity crop areas.

David Gibson, Texas Corn Producers, mentioned TPWD program restoring playa lakes. Discussed potential issues with migratory birds and potential diseases brought to cattle. A follow up was to remind the committee about following BMPs to avoid disease transfer, biosecurity protocols available online, and various programs that assist.

Will Newman, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, stated support for the EQIP/CRP pilot stacking of programs. Also stated support for use of wildlife friendly fences in the wildfire areas in the panhandle.

Adrienne Wright, Landowners Association of Texas, inquired if there will be something to address damage by feral hogs. Also inquired of the action items to come from the meeting. Kristy mentioned the pilot program with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and NRCS for feral hogs. Also stated with new farm bill being discussed and worked on, not sure if it will be addressed on a larger scale.

Stacy added input was always welcome on the pay schedule and cost percentage per practice. Reminded everyone that recommendations should be based on wide scale and not individual basis.

Charles addressed the question about action items and how to use subcommittees to elevate local concerns to a statewide level. Regarding hogs and diseases related to animal health, NRCS currently does not have those items as potential resource concerns to address.

Johanna Nuding, Texas Soil Sisters, asked if financial assistance was available specifically to incentivize use of heirloom species. Stacy responded by stating there were Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) enhancements available that would lend themselves to that end.

Kristy provided closing comments.

Meeting adjourned – 11:08 am



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

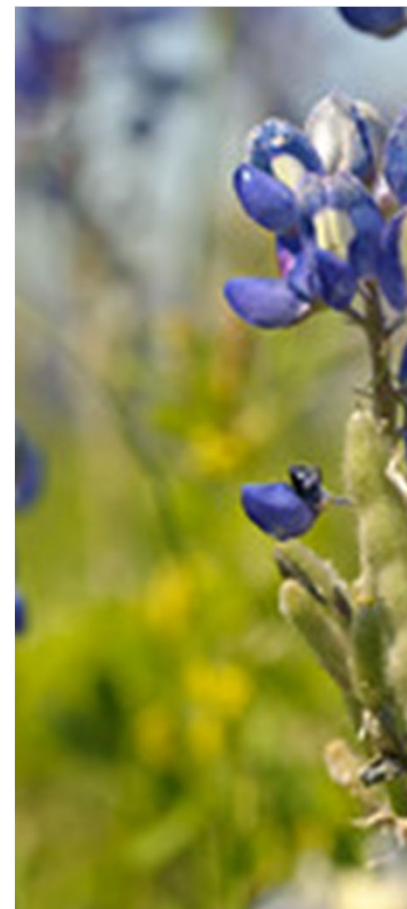
USDA-NRCS Texas Priority Resource Concerns – FY 2025



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Responsibilities of the LWG

- Identify priority resource concerns and identify, as appropriate, high-priority areas needing assistance.
- Assist NRCS and the conservation district with public outreach and information efforts and identify educational and producers' training needs.
- Participate in multicounty coordination were program funding and priority area proposals cross county boundaries.
- Utilize the conservation needs assessment to identify priority resource concerns that can be addressed by USDA programs.



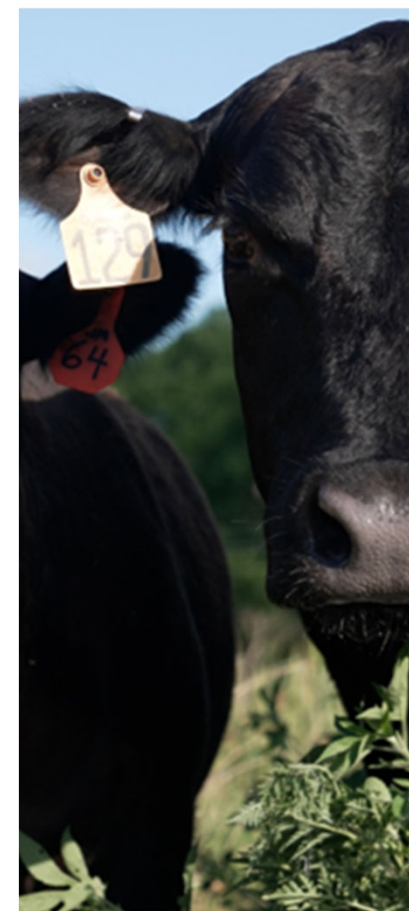
2025 LWG Resource Concerns

- Dryland Cropland
 - Sheet and Rill Erosion
 - Wind Erosion
 - Organic Matter Depletion
 - Plant Productivity and Health
 - Classic Gully Erosion
- Irrigated Cropland
 - Inefficient Irrigation Water Use
 - Groundwater Depletion
 - Organic Matter Depletion
 - Sheet and Rill Erosion
 - Wind Erosion



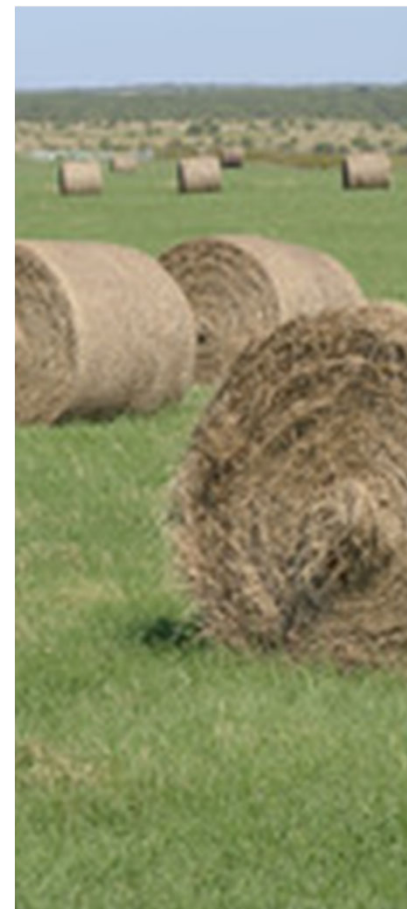
2025 LWG Resource Concerns

- Rangeland/Pasture
 - Plant Productivity and Health
 - Inadequate Livestock Water Quantity, Quality, & Distribution
 - Feed and Forage Imbalance
 - Plant Structure and Composition
 - Plant Pest Pressure
- Forestland
 - Plant Productivity and Health
 - Plant Structure and Composition
 - Terrestrial Habitat for Wildlife and Invertebrates



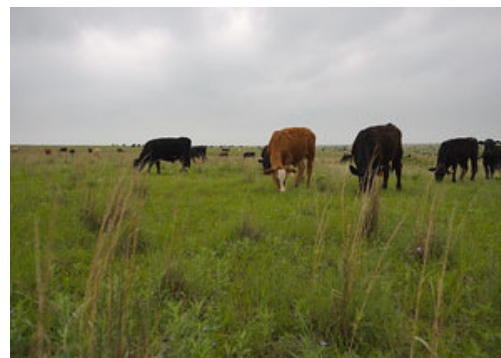
2025 LWG Resource Concerns

- General Concerns
 - Population growth upstream and impacts on
 - demand on water sources
 - water quality.
 - Damage due to feral hogs
 - Payment rates





Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Texas NRCS Programs Update for State Technical Committee FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
May 2024 FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Announcements!!

- RCPP National Funding Opportunity open until July 2, 2024
- State CIG announcement should be out soon!
- NWQI Batching period two open until May 17 for applications for FY 2024 funding



FY 2024 Program Funding

- IRA Funding for Texas
 - EQIP \$112,934,000
 - CSP \$10,977,000
 - ACEP funding was National Priority areas
- EQIP Farm Bill Funding
 - Original Allocation \$84,901,248
 - Additional funding received to date \$12,156,519
- CSP Farm Bill Funding
 - Original Allocation \$16,545,000
 - For Renewals, Organic and Classic applications



FY 2024 Program Funding cont.

- ACEP-ALE Farm Bill Funding
 - Original Allocation \$4,068,599
- ACEP-WRE Farm Bill Funding
 - Original Allocation \$3,123,895
- ACEP-WREP Farm Bill Funding
 - Original Allocation \$1,080,000
 - Additional Funding received \$

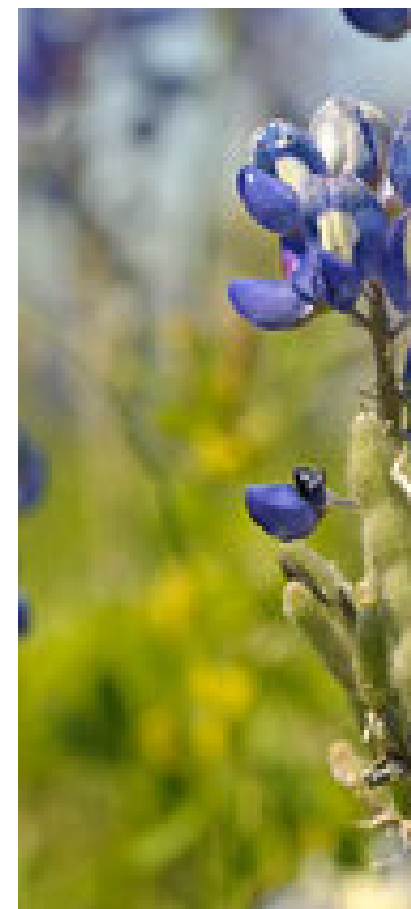


Preparing for FY 2025- CSP State Priorities?

Degraded Plant Condition	Field Sediment, Nutrient & Pathogen Loss	Livestock Production Limitation*	Soil Quality Limitations
Wind & Water Erosion	Terrestrial Habitat	Source Water Depletion*	Concentrated Erosion
Fire Management**	Pest Pressure**		

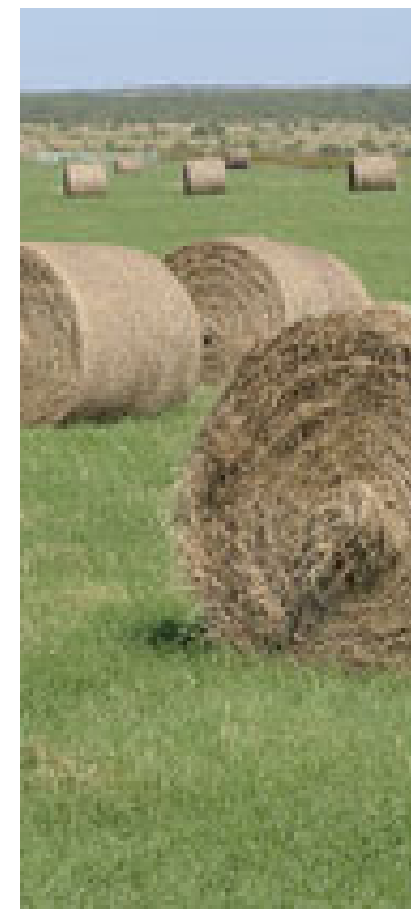
*Only applies to Agricultural Land

**Only applies to Non-Industrial Private Forest



Preparing for FY 2025 Payment Schedules- Why

- NRCS financial assistance programs authorize NRCS to base program payments upon NRCS determination of incurred costs and income foregone associated with practice implementation. This authority affords the agency the ability to:
 - Justify program payments to assure compliance with World Trade Organization treaties and agreements;
 - Make payments for certified practices based upon NRCS determination of cost estimates without need to collect receipts or verify actual cost; and
 - Document costs for typical practice application in payment schedules



Preparing for FY 2025 Payment Schedules- Why

- Process designed to achieve the following:
 - Provide transparency and timely payment rate information to program applicants and agency partners.
 - Ensure that payment schedules are consistent with program authority.
 - Provide a consistent, reliable, and defensible method for documenting eligible costs.
 - Use established and accepted economic geographic areas aligned with States and regions based on farm employment data, crop costs, and other economic factors.
 - Ensure payment rates and financial assistance are consistent with the definition, purpose, and requirements of approved conservation practice technical standards.
 - Provide for simplification of program payment processes.



Preparing for FY 2025 Payment Schedules- How

- Southern Plains Region (Texas and Oklahoma)
- Review Practices and determine components need to implement the practices.
 - Develop Payment Schedule Scenarios based on this
- Develop Payment Schedule
 - Farm Bill Establishes the maximum allow payment percent allowed by program
 - Payment Rate uses these factors:
 - Materials, Equipment for Installation, Labor, Mobilization, Acquisition of technical knowledge, and Forgone Income



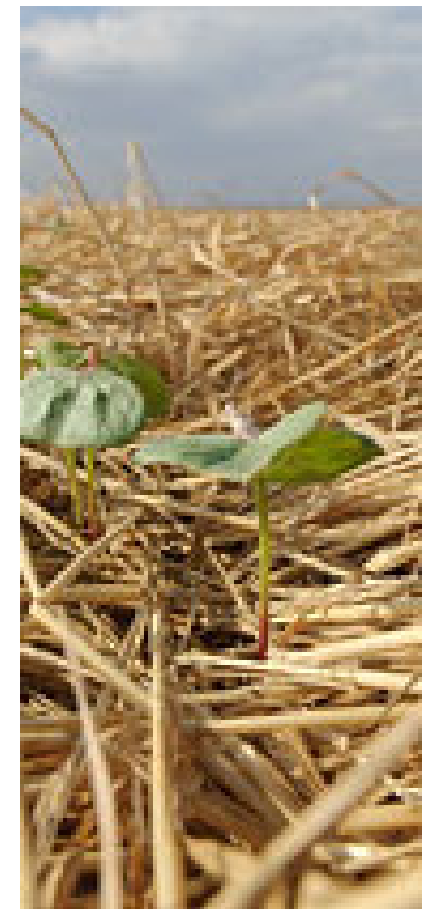
Preparing for FY 2025 Payment Schedules- How

- State Technical Committee and Local Work Groups Role
 - Provide recommendations for practices and program payment percentages for programs that support the State and Local Resource Concern Priorities
 - Recommendations on payment caps for a specific practice in a specific program



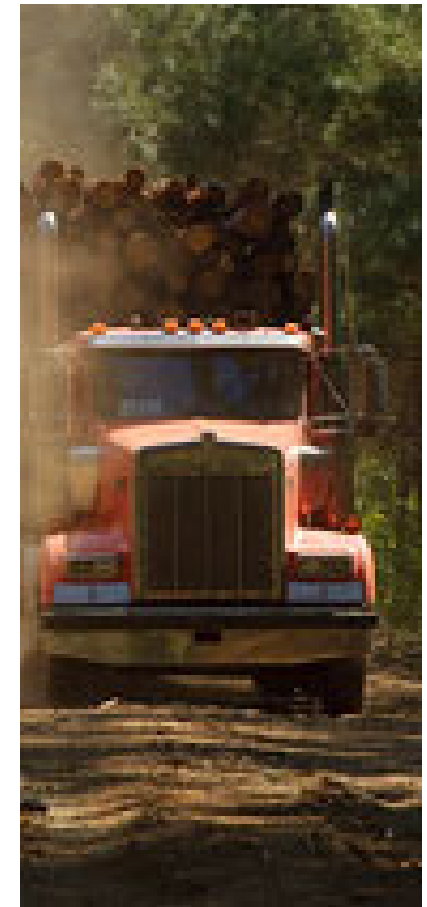
Source Water Protection Practices for FY 2025?

Brush Management	Herbaceous Weed Treatment	Conservation Cover	Conservation Crop Rotation
No Till	Contour Buffer Strips	Prescribed Burning	Cover Crop
Critical Area Planting	Reduced Till	Sediment Basin	Well Decommissioning
Pond	Fence	Woody Residue Treatment	Field Border
Riparian Herb. Cover	Riparian Forest Buffer	Filter Strip	Stream Habitat Improvement
Grade Stabilization	Grassed Waterway	Irrigation Reservoir	Microirrigation



Source Water Protection Practices for FY 2025?

Sprinkler System	Irrigation- Surface and Subsurface	Irrigation Water Management	Access Control
Forage Harvest Management	Pasture and Hay Planting	Livestock Pipeline	Prescribed Grazing
Pumping Plant	Grazing Land Mechanical Treat.	Range Planting	Stream Crossing
Streambank and Shoreline Protection	Channel Bed Stabilization	Strip Cropping	Structure for Water Control
Nutrient Management	Pest Management	Terrace	Vegetative Barrier
Salinity and Sodic Soil Mgmt.	Tree/Shrub Establishment	Watering Facility	Water and Sediment Ctrl. Basin
Water Well	Restoration of Rare or Declining Habitat	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Mgmt.	Upland Wildlife Habitat Mgmt.
Wetland Restoration	Wetland Creation	Wetland Enhancement	



Priority Practices for FY 2025?

No Till	Cover Crop	Well Decommissioning	Riparian Forest Buffer
Grassed Waterway	Wildlife Habitat Planting	Mulching	Nutrient Management
Terrace	Upland Wildlife Habitat		



Questions?

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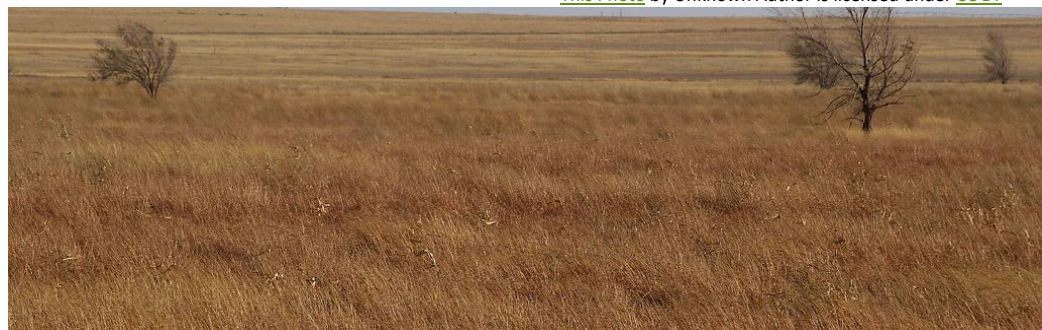
fax: (202) 690-7442; or

email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Farm Service Agency Updates

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Wildfire Update

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)

- Currently accepting application. Still determining number of cattle that died.

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)

- Signup has started for all counties. Over 100 applications accepted. More than \$10 million in extent needed requests.

Emergency Loans

- Currently no request for emergency loans

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

2023 CRP

- Issued \$68,546,880 in Annual Payments

Continuous CRP Signup 61

- 17,717 acres requested with most of those acres being requested for TX Prairie SAFE

General CRP Signup 62

- Texas received 270 offers for a total of 31,045 acres

Grasslands CRP Signup 206

- Waiting for signup announcement

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Active Enrollment (April 2024)

CRP General

- Contracts: 9,615
- Acres: 1,393,085
- Annual Rent: \$50.2 million

CRP Continuous

- Contracts: 1365
- Acres: 51,190
- Annual Rent: \$2 million*

SAFE

- Contracts: 1410
- Acres: 247,495
- Annual Rent: \$10.7 million*

CRP Grasslands

- Contracts: 1315
- Acres: 410,510
- Annual Rent: \$7 million*

HEL/CLEAR 30

- Contracts: 506
- Acres: 61,602
- Annual Rent: 2.7 million*

**estimated*

Inflation Reduction Act

Assistance for Distressed Borrowers (Section 22006)

- Cash Flow-Based Assistance
 - ❖ For FSA direct loan borrowers who did not have sufficient cash flow to make their scheduled loan payment between Aug. 1, 2022 - Jan. 15, 2024.
- Extraordinary Measure Assistance
 - ❖ For FSA direct loan borrowers who took extraordinary measures to keep their loan accounts current between Feb. 28, 2020 – Oct. 18, 2022.

Request assistance at farmers.gov or in-person at local FSA office.

Inflation Reduction Act

Assistance for Distressed Borrowers (Section 22006)

Inflation Reduction Act Payments

- Cash Flow-Based Assistance (as of 4/29/2024)
 - ❖ \$337,379,512 – 12,068 Borrowers - Nationally
 - ❖ \$14,333,437 – 472 Borrowers – Texas
- Extraordinary Measures (as of 4/29/2024)
 - ❖ \$237,140,964 – 5213 Borrowers – Nationally
 - ❖ \$13,329,053 – 274 Borrowers – Texas
- Grand Total of all Section 22006 IRA Assistance
 - ❖ \$2,329,468,236 – Nationally – 36,849 Borrowers
 - ❖ \$173,693,049 – Texas – 2,711 Borrowers

Inflation Reduction Act

Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program (Section 22007)

- This program will fund cooperative agreements or grants for project in one of the areas of concern:
 - ❖ Capital access or markets access concerns that affect ability to access land; or
 - ❖ A combination of one or more of land, capital, and market access concerns.
- Center for Heirs Property Preservation, H.O.P.E. for Small Farm Sustainability, Kansas Black Farmers Association, Inc.

Inflation Reduction Act

Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program (Section 22007)

- The application period for this program ended January 17, 2024.
- You can check the status of your application by calling
 - ❖ 1-800-721-0970, or
 - ❖ forms.22007apply.gov if you filed you application online

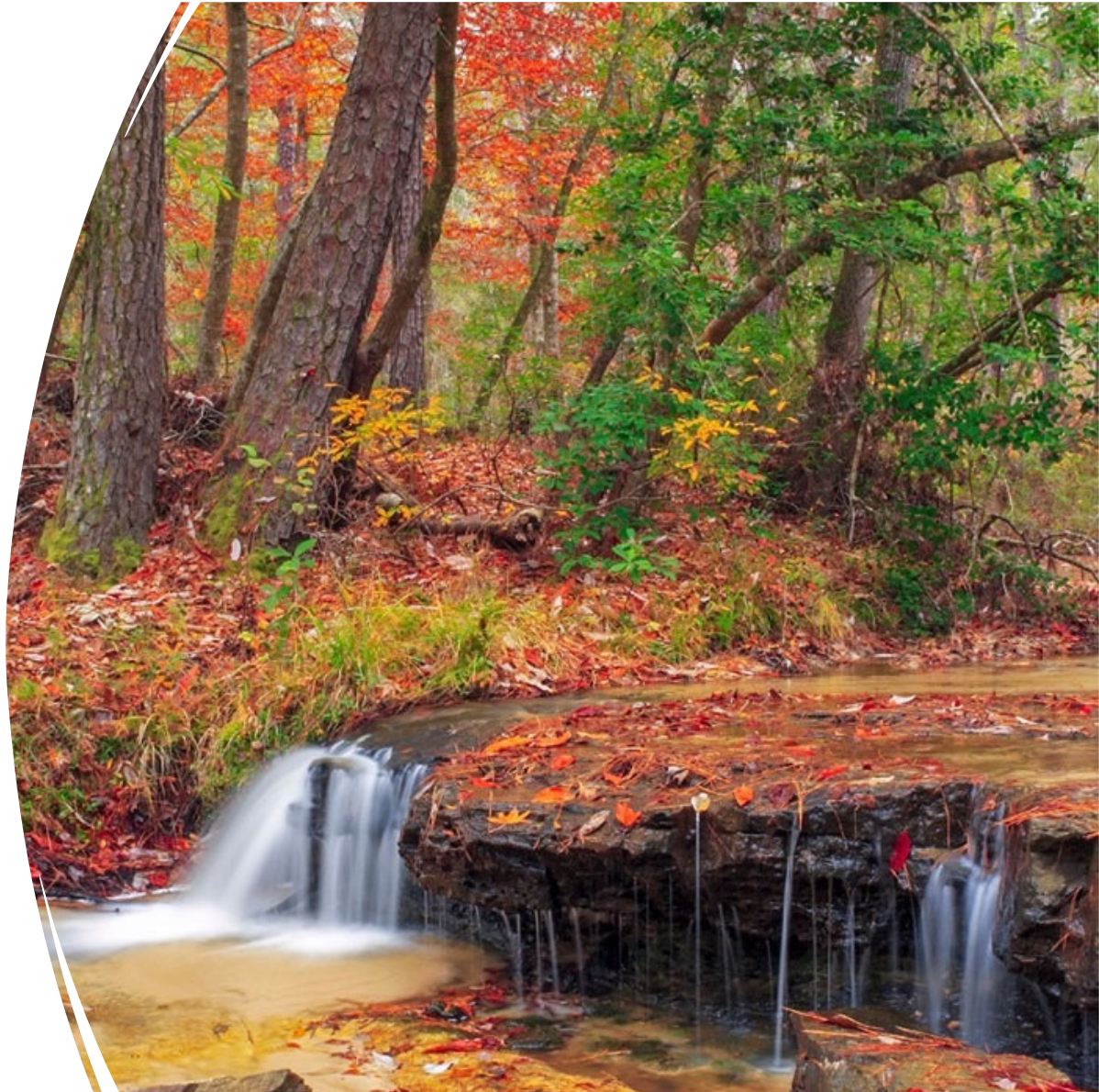
Stay in Touch



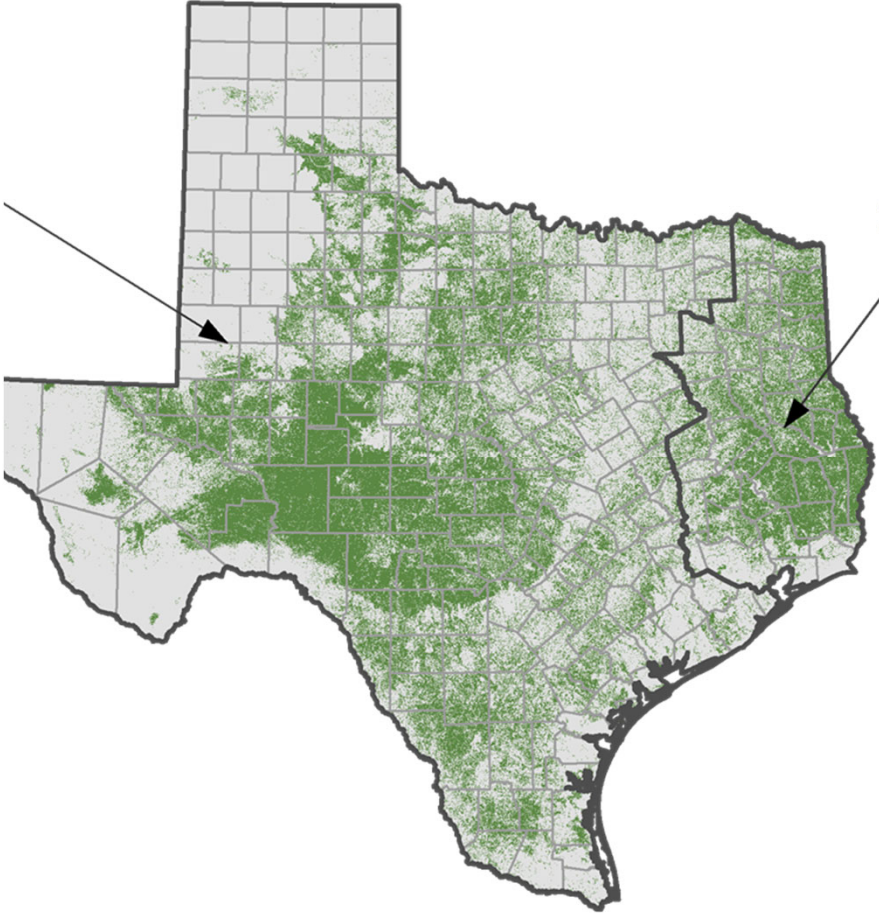
- Producers can signup at farmers.gov/subscribe for email communications.
- Producers can text STCountyName to FSANOW (372-669) for text alerts.
 - ❖ Example: TXBrazos, TXFortBend, TXLubbock

Forestry Subcommittee

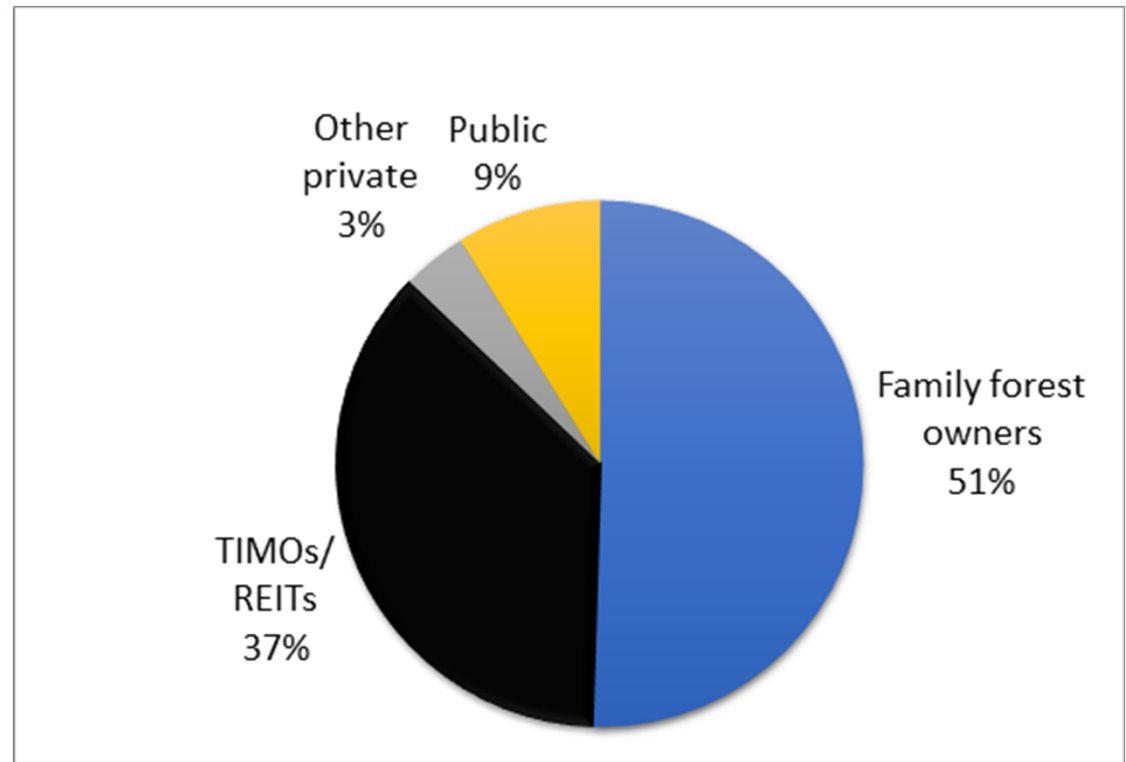
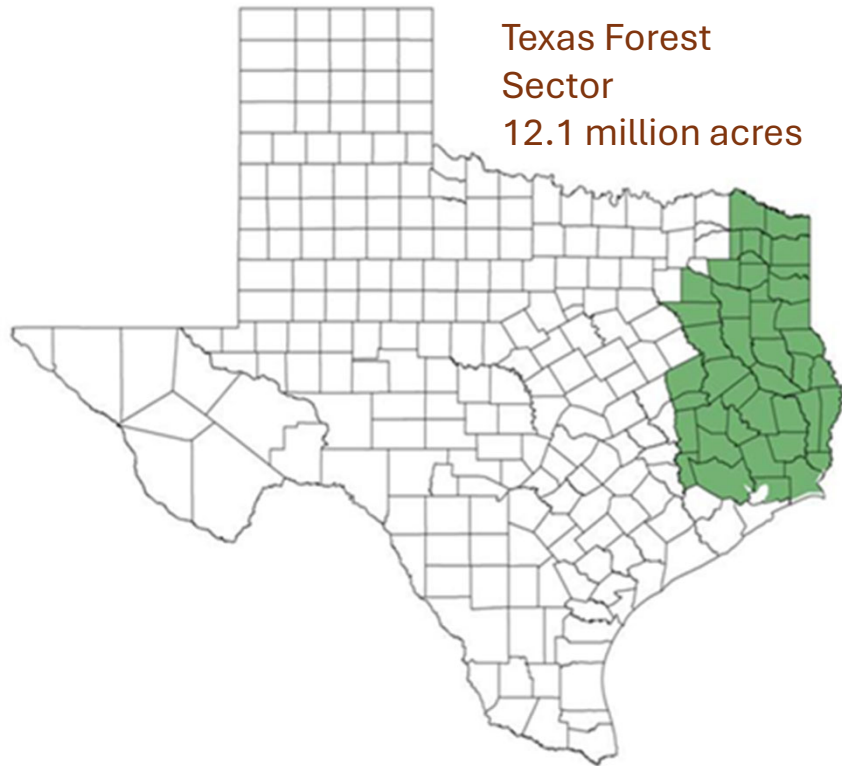
Forests provide clean air, clean water, diverse wildlife habitat, and jobs which produce products that enrich our daily lives



64 million total acres of forests
12 million acres of timberland



Who owns working forests in Texas?



Source: *Forest Inventory and Analysis 2019*

WHY ARE WORKING FORESTS SUCH A POWERFUL NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTION?

The entire working forest supply chain is critical to the health of our forests and their ability to mitigate the effects of climate change. Together, working forests and forest products deliver substantial carbon benefits, including:

SEQUESTRATION

As they grow, forests already capture more than 15% of the Nation's annual industrial carbon emissions.

STORAGE

Most people think about storage only as the massive carbon sink in forests on the landscape. But durable wood products – like homes, buildings, and furniture – store significant amounts of carbon long-term. And as a natural material, forest products are recyclable, biodegradable, and renewable.

SUBSTITUTION

Forest products – like wood – can displace more fossil fuel-intensive materials, reducing net atmospheric carbon over time.

Healthy markets for forest products maximize the power of working forests to increase sequestration, storage, and substitution. Climate mitigation strategies must prioritize keeping forests intact, which means keeping the entire forest products supply chain intact as well. Without healthy markets for trees, private forest owners face increasing pressure to convert their land to other uses that are not as carbon beneficial.

Texas forests

sequester one ton of carbon
every **1.47 seconds** 1,000 tons of carbon
every **24.5 minutes**

58,836 tons of carbon are captured from the
atmosphere every day, equivalent to the
amount of carbon emitted by **11,603 passenger
vehicles** for an entire year.

One ton of carbon is converted into lumber and
paper products every **6.27 seconds**.

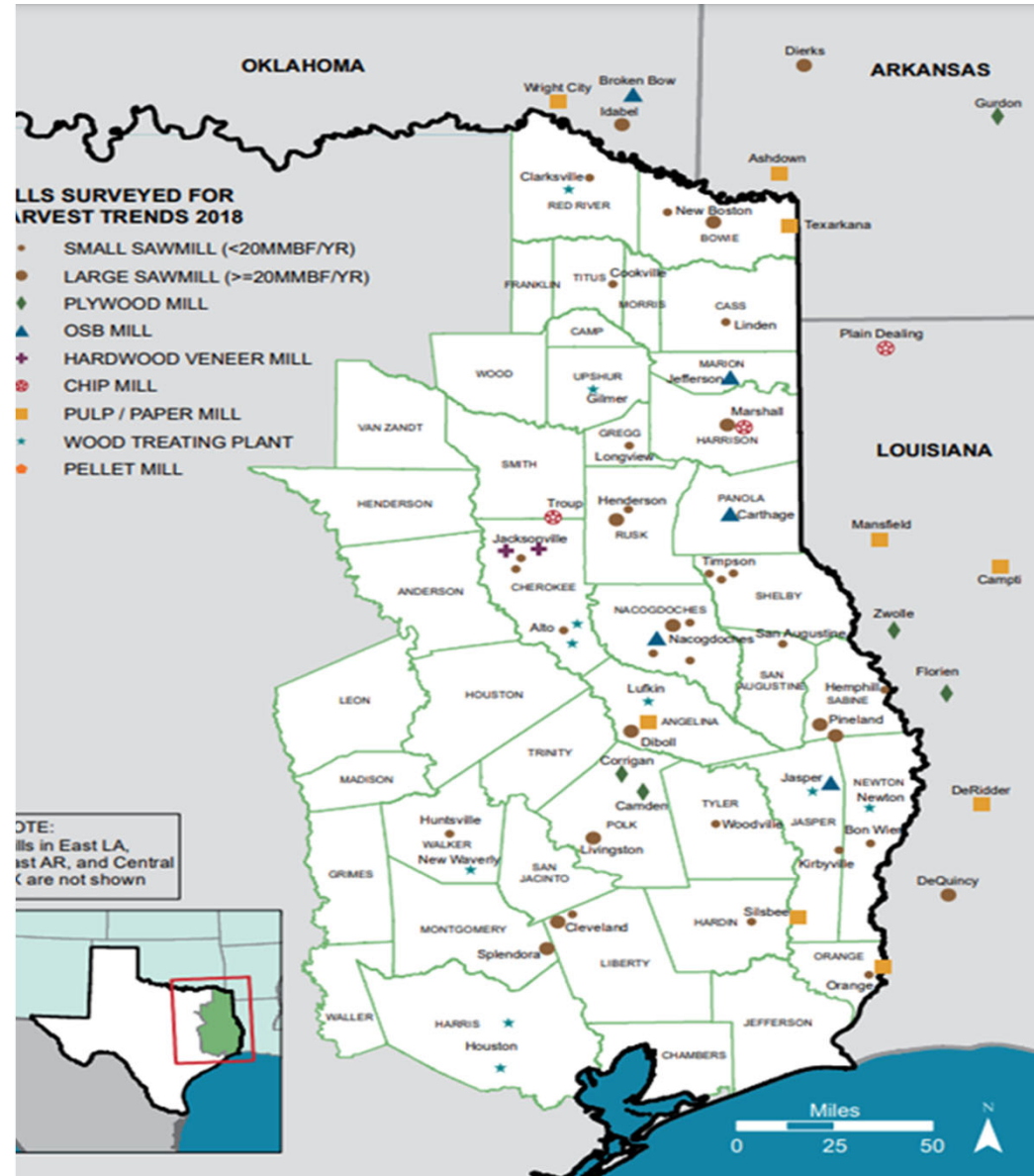
Economic Impact

- **\$21.4 billion in Direct Output**
- **68,917 Direct Jobs**
- **Total economic impact of \$41.6 billion**
- **Total 172,730 direct and supporting jobs**



Primary Wood Processing Facilities

- 44 sawmills
- 7 plywood & OSB mills
- 2 pulp/paper mills
- 2 chip mills
- 2 pellet mills
- An abundance of tie and pallet mills



Fish and Wildlife Subcommittee Update

**Cyndee Watson
NRCS STC Fish and Wildlife
Subcommittee Chair**

**State Coordinator for Texas
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program
cyndee_watson@fws.gov**

Fish and Wildlife Subcommittee

- Role – we serve in an advisory capacity to provide information regarding pressing wildlife concerns in Texas to the State Conservationist for her consideration
- The subcommittee met via Microsoft teams on April 4, 2024. In total, 45 people called into the meeting.

Subcommittee Discussion

- During our meeting, we had several updates and ample discussion on:
- Migratory Bird Resurgence Initiative
- 10% EQIP fund pool,
- Southern Great Plains GRIP
- Wildlife-friendly fencing needs
- CRP Migratory Bird SAFE
- Riparian Trainings by Hill Country Alliance & TPWD

Formal Requests

We respectfully and formally request:

- The expansion of the EQIP/CRP Pilot Project to expand to TX
- More support, training and outreach for wildlife-friendly fencing e.g., in areas receiving wildfire relief EQIP funds. Further, we respectfully request an increased incentive for this practice in certain areas important for pronghorn antelope.
- That prescribed fire be added as a full practice under Climate Smart practices rather than just a provisional practice or used for patch burning
- To understand the usage of the 'Wildlife' land use modifier and the associated CART wildlife fund pool questions

Thanks on behalf of the Fish and Wildlife Subcommittee

