Texas A&M Forest Service

December 15, 2018

FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

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

EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION

from NRCS website

For more information:

- http://bit.ly/2LtltyQ
- Shawn Anderson, Acting EWP Program Manager - **shawn.anderson@wdc.usda.gov** or **202-720-5795** (office).

Wildfires ravaged a hillside, turning all trees and vegetation into piles of ash and leaving the soil exposed and vulnerable to the next heavy rainfall. A tornado flattened homes, businesses, and other infrastructure, depositing the debris in local creeks, streams, or drainage ditches. Torrential rains from a powerful hurricane scattered debris into drainage ways, causing waterways to overflow their banks and wreak havoc in coastal areas.

The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program, a federal emergency recovery program, helps communities recover after a natural disaster strikes. The program offers technical and financial assistance to help communities relieve imminent threats to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural disasters that impair a watershed.

The EWP Program allows communities to quickly address serious and long-lasting damages to infrastructure and land. The EWP Program authorities offer Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) the flexibility to act quickly to help local communities cope with adverse impacts resulting from natural disasters. EWP does not require a disaster declaration by federal or state officials for program assistance to begin, but ultimately partial funding must be provided by the state Legislature. If funding becomes available, all funded projects must demonstrate they reduce threats to life and property; be economically, environmentally, and socially sound; and must be designed to acceptable engineering standards, if applicable.

The EWP Program has two distinct options for assisting local communities and individual landowners: EWP Program-Recovery and EWP-Floodplain Easements (EWP-FPE).

NRCS offers financial and technical assistance for various activities under EWP Program-Recovery, including:

- remove debris from stream channels, road culverts and bridges;
- reshape and protect eroded streambanks;
- correct damaged or destroyed drainage facilities;
- establish vegetative cover on critically eroding lands;
- repair levees and structures;
- repair conservation practices.

In addition to recovery projects, NRCS may purchase EWP floodplain easements instead of trying to recover damaged floodplain lands if it proves to be more cost effective than recovery.

The EWP Program cannot be used in certain circumstances, such as addressing problems that existed prior to the disaster, or to repair private or public transportation facilities or utilities, among other things.

All EWP Program-Recovery projects begin with a local sponsor or legal subdivision of state or tribal government. Eligible sponsors include cities, counties, towns, conservation districts, or any federally-recognized Native American tribe or tribal organization. Interested public and private landowners can apply for EWP Program-Recovery assistance through one of those sponsors.

Landowners can apply for assistance through the EWP-floodplain easement option directly at the local NRCS office when funds become available.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Trees and Mental Health

from Vibrant Cities Lab website, case study

For more information:

- http://bit.ly/2A4T4ut
- http://bit.ly/2R6tXkz
- http://bit.ly/2R3sOdD

Inspired by Research . . .

Numerous studies done by health professionals and government agencies have shown again and again that being surrounded by natural settings, specifically urban forests, tremendously improves mental health. Taking a 20-minute walk or sitting in a forested park within a bustling metropolis can reduce mental stress for people with ADHD, improve concentration, and promote creativity.

This was taken into account at University of Texas-EL Paso (UTEP), where the vegetative area was expanded by 60% in their Campus Transformation Project.

. . . Designed For Mental Health

Previously, the campus consisted of pavement and rock-designed common spaces without much green space, leading to a campus lacking access to favorable mental restorative conditions. In order to combat stress associated with academics and work, new trees were planted and the campus was beautifully redesigned. Despite being located in a desert region, there are numerous native trees such as the live oak, honey mesquite, desert willow, and Mexican palo verde that can survive high heat and little precipitation. These trees were strategically planted alongside native shrubs and cacti in nine new campus commons. These plantings were designed with the community's health as the highest priority and aimed to improve mental relaxation using Attention Restoration Theory (ART), a cognitive functioning theory that explains how natural settings reduce stimuli and allow the brain to rest.

Hidden among the trees in shady locations, there are spots for students to simply restore their mental health and find reprieve from their studies; an effective way to reduce the stresses associated with academic work. In addition to the quiet spaces, open commons in rotundas and stadium-like seating offer a chance for UTEP members to connect with each other in a natural and calming environment.

Partners in this project were: University of Texas-El Paso, Campus Transformation Project, Sustainable Sites Initiative, and International Society of Arboriculture.

Since the integration of a simulated urban forest on site, students and faculty have a greater sense of relaxation and a decrease in mental stress when walking on campus.

UTEP's Efforts Recognized

from The Sustainable SITES Initiative press release dated September 15, 2016, by Rachel Gilbert

For more information:

- http://bit.ly/2LniF69

Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI) announced, in September 2016, that the University of Texas at El Paso's Campus Transformation Project was awarded Silver certification under the Sustainable SITES Initiative (SITES) rating system, and is the first project to certify under SITES v2.

The SITES redesign on UTEP's campus converted parking lots and unusable sloped landscapes into an 11.57-acre community landscape and meeting space in the center of campus. The core of the project is Centennial Plaza and Centennial Green, which include richly detailed outdoor gathering spaces that feature a performance lawn, a 130-seat amphitheater, desert gardens, vegetated bioswales that mimic natural arroyos, walking paths, and a diverse array of trees, shrubs, and perennial plants native to the Chihuahuan desert. The green infrastructure and landscape design techniques increased the vegetative area of the site by 60%. The project, which was rated on a number of areas including site design, construction, operations, and maintenance, received the maximum amount of points for innovation.

The SITES rating system provides a metrics-based approach to important concepts such as ecosystem services and green infrastructure so that developers and owners can make informed decisions about their land use.

Prevent Spread of Oak Wilt

Oak wilt is one of the most destructive tree diseases in the United States, and it has been known to kill oak trees in Central Texas at epidemic proportions. Texas A&M Forest Service urges Texans, hunters in particular, to take preventative measures and be cautious when collecting and purchasing firewood at this time of year to stop the spread of oak wilt.

Transporting and storing diseased wood spreads devastating oak wilt fungus spores to previously uninfected neighborhoods. Hunters should be especially careful not to transport wood off of ranch land, especially west of IH-35.

By following these preventative steps, citizens can stop the spread of oak wilt:

Select well-seasoned firewood. Well-seasoned wood is cut before the summer and is typically dry with loose bark and cracked ends. The extreme heat and dry conditions of a full Texas summer effectively destroy the fungus in cut firewood.

Safely store unknown sources of firewood under plastic. If oak wood comes from an unknown source and it is not well seasoned, cover the woodpile with a clear piece of plastic. Burying the edges of the plastic will prevent the entry or exit of insects that might have been attracted to diseased wood and fungal mats.

Destroy diseased red oaks. A knowledgeable arborist or forester should diagnose red oaks (i.e., Texas red, blackjack, or shumard oak) that die rapidly (2-3 weeks) or in groups (2 or more trees over several years) for oak wilt. Trees suspected to have died recently from oak wilt should be destroyed by burning, burying, or chipping. The heat of a fire destroys the fungus and the smoke emitted poses no threat to healthy trees.

Avoid wounding oaks during vulnerable seasons. The general recommendation is to avoid injuries to oaks from February through June. The best times to prune oaks are during the heat of the summer (minimal spore production) or the cold of winter (minimal insect activity).

Paint all oak wounds including pruning cuts. Throughout the year, immediately apply a thin coat of latex or pruning paint to all fresh wounds and other injuries that expose the inner bark or sapwood of oaks. This prevents contaminated sap beetles from infecting the wound with oak wilt spores.

Oak firewood is an important commodity to Texans. By selecting well-seasoned, disease-free firewood and by following the disease prevention guidelines, Texans are helping prevent a new oak wilt disease outbreak in their neighborhood.

from Texas A&M Forest Service press release

For more information:

- http://bit.ly/2rLIWC1
- https://texasoakwilt.org
- www.dontmovefirewood.org

Improving Turkey Habitat

The I.D. Fairchild State Forest consists of many different forest stand types, from young pine areas to century-old shortleaf pines. Located just 2 miles east of the Neches River in Cherokee County, Texas, the I.D. Fairchild State Forest contains nearly 1,970 acres.

The National Wild Turkey Federation, along with the Texas A&M Forest Service, conducted two separate projects within the state forest to improve turkey habitats.

The first project set out to improve wild turkey habitats on a 126-acre tract. This included foraging, roosting, and nesting sites. A mulching machine was used to eliminate heavy hardwood, shrubs, brush and invasive species in those habitat areas. This was followed up with herbicide applications. Prescribed fire will be used in the areas as well.

The second project included the same type of work on a smaller 82-acre area within the state forest.

These projects were made possible by the donation of NWTF Super Fund monies by the Texas State Chapter of NWTF.

from National Wild Turkey Federation website

For more information:

- http://bit.ly/2UUXoVW
- https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/mmm/nov2018

Distribution of this newsletter is provided free of charge to professional foresters, state and federal agency professionals, county judges and commissioners, state senators and representatives, various forestry-related associations, and others.

PLEASE ADVISE US IF YOU WISH YOUR NAME REMOVED FROM OUR MAILING LIST.

This newsletter is also available on the web at tfsweb.tamu.edu/StewardshipPublications. If you would rather receive this newsletter electronically (by e-mail), contact us at the address, phone number, or e-mail address above.

The Texas A&M Forest Service is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer committed to Excellence through Diversity.

Editorial Advisor:
Joe Pase, TFS-Retired; Lufkin, Texas

Texas Forestry Association

The goal of the Texas Forestry Association (TFA) is to advance forestry in Texas by serving the broad needs of the forest resource of landowners, producers, and consumers, while enhancing, perpetuating, and promoting the understanding and acceptance of forest resource management throughout the state. They do this through programs such as their forestry political action committee (FORPAC), the Texas Wood Preservers Advisory Committee, and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative®.

Membership in the TFA has many advantages. Their monthly newsletter, informative website, workshops, seminars, and training events keep members up-to-date on current legislative efforts and tax issues. TFA remains in contact with elected officials, continuously reminding them of the far reaching affects that proposed forestry related legislation can have on the East Texas economy.

TFA is an opportunity for members to learn from others through participation in such programs as the Texas Logging Council, Texas Forest Landowners Council, and the Tree Farm Program. Education on all levels leads to understanding and greater appreciation of this incredible renewable resource ... the forest.

To learn more about TFA programs and membership, go to **www.texasforestry.org** and explore the website. Their office is in Lufkin in East Texas.

TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

Texas A&M Forest Service
P. O. Box 310
Lufkin, TX 75902-0310

Phone: 936-639-8191

Email: dwork@tfs.tamu.edu