Burns Forestry Newsletter

Wild Hogs in Texas

A recent article in Texas Monthly (April 2023) described the invasion of wild hogs in the United States and our current problem in Texas. Christopher Columbus brought eight pigs to the Caribbean in 1493, but Hernando De Soto brought them to North America when he arrived in Florida in 1539. Panthers do eat some hogs in Florida, but not enough to keep them from invading at least 34 more states.

Most wild pigs in the United States have the DNA of European domestic pigs and Eurasian wild boars and some show lineage from domestic pigs in Asia. They can be found in every county in Texas except El Paso in the West and Dallam in the Panhandle. The pigs were actually eradicated in Dallam County before they got well established.

Texas hogs typically deliver a litter every seven months and a five or six month sow can conceive four to six piglets. "Sounders" are comprised mostly of females and their young, while the males have a wide range, roaming among different sounders. The population is established in East Texas where there is plentiful rainfall and freshwater. The hogs, however, are more recent arrivals in the drier western reaches of Texas, where more effective control may be possible.

Feral hogs can pollute water with *E. coli from their feces and kill native wildlife. Their rooting causes erosion and can destabilize dams. Their rubbing of creosote telephone poles for insect protection can damage the poles. Hog hunters field dressing the animal can contract brucellosis if the pigs' fluids or tissues come into contact with a cut.*

The most effective pig control at the present is a combination of trapping, fencing, and systematic hunting. Hunting pigs from helicopters with semiautomatic and automatic weapons is the most lethal method of hunting since the "pork chopper" bill became law. Even a fully automatic machine gun in a helicopter is a legal hog hunting method. Researchers are seeking the "silver bullet" for feral hog control, currently exploring the use of contraceptives and toxicants.

SFASU Joins UT System

The Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU), with only one dissenting vote, moved to become the 14th institution in the University of Texas System. The state legislature was expected to approve the transition in 2023. The other systems interested in obtaining SFASU were Texas A&M, Texas State, and Texas Tech.

The University of Texas offered the largest financial incentive- $124 million in resources over the next four years. This was more than what the other three systems offered combined. Texas A&M came in second with $33 million.

The University of Texas system receives two- thirds of the permanent University fund which consists of assets created by oil and gas revenue. It is the second largest university endowment in the United States, behind Harvard.

SFASU's forestry school will get $20 million for a new forestry building, $1 million a year in scholarships beginning in the fall, and a $500,000 grant.

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Eminent Domain

Eminent domain in Texas allows the government or an authorized private entity to take private property for the benefit of public use. “Condemnation” is the exercise of the power of eminent domain. The formal condemnation process is executed only if the landowner and the authorized condemning entity cannot agree on the amount of compensation for the land.

The law now requires that the initial offer by the condemning entity be in writing and include a copy of the “Landowners Bill of Rights.” Common carrier pipeline entities must provide two days advance notice before they enter the property to conduct a survey and entry is limited to the portion of the property that is anticipated to be used for the proposed pipeline.

If an appraisal report is to be used at a special commissioners’ hearing on the property valuation, the condemning entity must give the landowner copies of all appraisal reports at least three business days before the hearing if an appraisal report is to be used at the hearing.

A property cannot lose its agricultural exemption due to a right-of-way condemnation that is less than 200 feet wide. Additional taxes due because the condemning entity changed the use to nonagricultural land use, are the responsibility of that entity. The landowner can repurchase their property if the condemning entity has not shown “actual progress” on the easement within ten years.

Many changes protecting the rights of property owners have been legislated in recent years in the hope of improved transparency of the eminent domain process.

The State of Texas Landowners’ Bill of Rights

This Landowner's Bill of rights applies to any attempt to condemn your property. The contents of this Bill of Rights are set out by the Texas Legislature in Texas Government Code Section 402.031 and chapter 21 of the Texas Property Code. Any entity exercising eminent domain authority must provide a copy of this Bill of Rights to you.

1. You are entitled to receive adequate compensation if your property is condemned.
2. Your property can only be condemned for a public use.
3. Your property can only be condemned by a governmental entity or private entity authorized by law to do so.
4. The entity that wants to acquire your property must notify you that it intends to condemn your property.
5. The entity proposing to acquire your property must provide you with a written appraisal from a certified appraiser detailing the adequate compensation you are owed for your property.
6. If you believe that a registered easement or right-of-way agent acting on behalf of the entity that wants to acquire your property has engaged in misconduct, you may file a written complaint with the Texas Real Estate Commission (TREC) under section 1101.205 of the Texas Occupations Code. The complaint should be signed and may include any supporting evidence.
7. The condemning entity must make a bona fide offer to buy the property before it files a lawsuit to condemn the property - meaning the condemning entity must make a good faith offer that conforms with chapter 21 of the Texas Property Code.
8. You may hire an appraiser or other professional to determine the value of your property or to assist you in any condemnation proceeding.
9. You may hire an attorney to negotiate with the condemning entity and to represent you in any legal proceedings Involving the condemnation.
10. Before your property is condemned, you are entitled to a hearing before a court-appointed panel of three special commissioners. The special commissioners must determine the amount of compensation the condemning entity owes for condemning your property. The commissioners must also determine what compensation, if any, you are entitled to receive for any reduction in value of your remaining property.
11. If you are unsatisfied with the compensation awarded by the special commissioners, or if you question whether the condemnation of your property was proper, you have the right to a trial by a judge or jury. You may also appeal the trial court's judgment if you are unsatisfied with the result.

BILL OF RIGHTS PREPARED BY THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

Carbon Sequestration

Carbon storage is the amount of carbon contained in an entity while carbon sequestration is the actual process of removing carbon dioxide (CO_2) from the air by photosynthesis and storing it in the tree and soil. It is measured in tons per year.

Carbon emission is when the forest emits CO_2 back into the atmosphere through cellular respiration, combustion (fire), or decomposition. Another carbon gas, methane (CH_4), may be emitted in decomposition under low oxygen conditions, as wet soils. A forest is a carbon sink when sequestration exceeds emissions and it is a carbon source when emissions exceed sequestration.

A carbon pool is a reservoir of carbon. A live biomass pool is made up of living trees. Animals and other plants also contain carbon, but their quantity is not significant and it is difficult to measure. Carbon from live trees is the major source of carbon for other pools when the tree dies.

The deadwood pool consists of snags and portions of trees on the ground, while the litter pool consists of leaves, needles, and twigs on the soil. The soil pool is made up of decomposed tree material. It is the largest carbon pool, followed by the live biomass pool. The harvested wood products pool consists of wood products constructed outside the forest.

Younger tree stands (about 25-70 years old) are growing faster and sequester carbon at a higher rate, but older stands store more carbon. While carbon stored in the forest is influenced by tree species, it is more influenced by site conditions, disturbance histories, and past land use.

Climate changes can affect tree mortality, resulting in loses from stored carbon and reducing future sequestration. Therefore forests need to be managed for “resilient carbon,” as well as for storage and sequestration. This means promoting regeneration, thinning, etc. We can also reduce our dependence on more carbon- intensive materials such as concrete, steel, fossil fuels, and plastics.

Forest Carbon University

The Forest Landowner Foundation has recently launched the Forest Carbon University to help Forest Landowners “navigate the ever-changing voluntary carbon market arena.” The Foundation created a six-part webinar series for forest landowners and is working on a comprehensive website about carbon markets. You can check out their current website at:

Forestlandowners.com/forest-carbon-university

Webinar information, recordings, and slide decks are online at:

Forestlandowners.com/FCU-webinars

Wood Handbook

The Forest Products Laboratory 2021 Wood Handbook is now available online (General Technical Report FPL-GTR-282). The authors are USDA Forest Service researchers stationed at the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin.

The book summarizes information on wood as engineering material and presents properties of wood and wood-based products of concern to architects and engineers. The handbook is available at:

https://www.fpl.fs.usda.gov/labnotes/?p=28063

Timber Volume Conversions

Tons per Thousand Board Feet by Log Rule

Product	Doyle	Scribner	International
Pine Sawtimber	8.0	7.0	5.5
Pine Chip-n-Saw	9.975	8.0	6.225
Oak Sawtimber	9.0	8.0	6.5

Cord Measurements

1 standard cord= 128 ft*3 of stacked logs (bark, air, and solid wood)
1 standard cord= 90ft*3 of solid wood and bark
1 standard cord of pine = about 75 ft*3 of solid wood
1 standard cord of mixed hardwood= about 80 ft*3 of solid wood
2.8 cords of pine pulpwood and chip-n-saw = 1 MBF Scribner (ratio of weights)
3.2 cords of hardwood pulpwood = 1 MBF (ratio of weights)

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