Texas A&M Forest Service

February 2018

FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

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

HELP FOR UPLAND BIRDS

from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department website

For more information:

- https://tpwd.texas.gov/pub

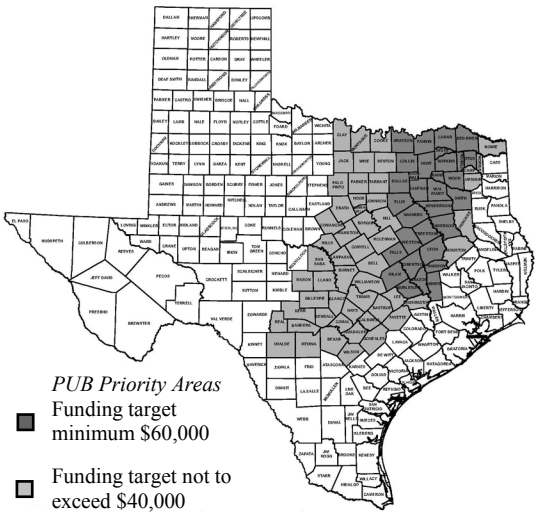
The **Pastures for Upland Birds Program** (PUB) provides cost-share incentives and technical guidance to private landowners to restore native grass and forb vegetation on pastures and hayfields dominated by exotic grasses such as Bermudagrass, bahiagrass, and Old World bluestems. Funding for this Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) program is made possible, in part, through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

Historically, native tallgrass prairies and prairie-oak savannahs dominated over 24 million acres in East-Central Texas. These ecosystems provided essential habitats for many forms of wildlife. Grassland birds that were part of this native prairie ecosystem: Eastern Meadowlark, Northern Harrier, Le Conte's Sparrow, Short-eared Owl, Dickcissel, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Mourning Dove, Northern Bobwhite, Eastern Wild Turkey, and others.

Over the last century and a half, most of the region's native prairies and savannah grasslands were lost due to conversion to agricultural land uses and development. Breeding Bird Surveys show that most grassland bird species have continued to experience long-term population declines.

The PUB program promotes grassland bird conservation on private lands by restoring native prairie vegetation on exotic grass pastures and hayfields. Native prairie vegetation established through PUB will increase biological diversity and provide habitat for resident, breeding, migrating, and wintering bird populations. Projects will also include a significant pollinator/monarch butterfly seed mix component. Under proper management, native grass-forb pastures and hayfields can also provide nutritious livestock forage.

PUB will service a focal area in East-Central Texas coinciding with portions of the Blackland Prairie and Post Oak Savannah focus area map. TPWD will provide herbicides (to kill exotic grasses), native grass and forb seed mixtures, technical guidance, and a no-till seeder (as available).



The landowner will provide labor associated with any pretreatments (grazing, prescribed burning, etc.), herbiciding, native plant seeding, or any supplemental treatments identified by the project plan.

TPWD field biologists have identified over 40 native species of plants for seeding in PUB projects, including: little bluestem, big bluestem, indiangrass, sideoats grama, switchgrass, purple coneflower, partridge pea, and butterfly milkweed.

To participate in this program, contact your local TPWD biologist to set up a site evaluation or ask any questions.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

National Water Quality Initiative

from USDA-NRCS Press Release and website

For more information:

- https://goo.gl/wWEZyg
- https://goo.gl/i2U46K

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will add 30 new watersheds in 2018 to its premiere water quality initiative, which helps landowners improve water quality while strengthening agricultural operations. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will invest more than $30 million in 2018 in 201 high-priority watersheds across the country.

The National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), now in its seventh year, focuses resources in watersheds most in need and where farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners can use conservation practices to make a difference.

"Watershed studies have shown that targeting conservation on vulnerable acres leads to greater water quality improvements." said Acting NRCS Chief, Leonard Jordan. "This latest investment focuses on small watersheds, where we have opportunities to work with partners and farmers to accelerate conservation efforts and deliver real results for communities downstream."

Through NWQI, farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners receive one-on-one personalized advice and financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to address a broad range of natural resource concerns, including water quality.

Systems and practices involved in this program include:

- Conservation systems include practices that promote soil health, reduce erosion, and lessen nutrient runoff - such as cover crops, reduced tillage, and nutrient management;
- Waste management systems that treat agricultural waste and livestock manure;
- Irrigation systems that capture and recycle nutrients back to the field; and
- Wetland restoration that increases wildlife habitat, mitigates flooding, and improves water quality.

These practices not only benefit natural resources but enhance agricultural productivity and profitability by improving soil health and optimizing the use of agricultural inputs.

Texas already has some watersheds involved in this program: Upper Mill Creek, Middle Mill Creek, Upper Big Onion Creek, Lower Big Onion Creek, Cummins Creek, Briar Creek, Cedar Creek-Chambers Creek, Lake Leon-Leon River, Nash Creek-Lake Leon, Salt Branch-Leon River, Flat Creek-Leon River, City of DeLeon-Leon River, Walker Creek-Leon River, and Jameson Peaks-Hog Creek.

Since 2012, NRCS has worked with more than 3,500 producers to adopt conservation practices on more than 730,000 acres in priority watersheds through NWQI.

There's an App for That - Ag/Forestry

from Southern Regional Extension Forestry website

For more information:

- https://sref.info/resources/mobile-apps

There is a website where you can find many mobile apps for use in agricultural and forestry activities. Here are just some of the applications that this sites links to:

- **Fire Weather Calculator** - allows quick calculation of RH, Fine Dead Fuel Moisture (FDFM), and Probability of Ignition (PIG) based on standard fire line weather observations; provides means of archiving and sharing them through email.
- **Invasive Plants in Southern Forests** - provides information on accurate identification of the 56 nonnative plants and groups that are currently invading 13 southern states.
- **RxBurnTracker** - allows the user to monitor fire effects and keep track of prescribed burns.

Note: Some of the apps are not available in this country yet, or may not support all types of devices.

State Conservatinist Award

The Katy Prairie Conservancy (KPC) was awarded the **Statewide Wildlife Conservationist Award** from The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

This award is given to an outstanding wildlife conservationist who has incorporated wildlife conservation into farming and ranching activities. Katy's wildlife related activities, prairie restoration and enhancement, and collaborative conservation work on a district and state level contributed to earning this award.

Since its inception in 1992, the Katy Prairie Conservancy has been working to protect a sustainable portion of the prairie. While KPC now protects more than 20,000 acres in Harris, Waller, and Fort Bend Counties, officials are working to save more land while they can.

KPC's preserve system is in the middle of the Central Flyway and is a safe haven for more than 300 resident and migratory bird species; 110 species of mammals, amphibians, and reptiles; 600 species of wildflowers and grasses; and thousands of terrestrial insects and aquatic invertebrate species. Restored Showcase Prairies are rich with native grasses and wildflowers and refueling stops for migrating Monarch butterflies. The Katy Prairie has been designated a Global Important Bird Area by National Audubon – one of only 17 sites in Texas – due in large part to the incredible habitat on the prairie that is available to upland species in decline.

KPC supports an ecosystem that plays an important role in flood control, cleaner air and water, and local food production. Prairie grasses absorb and hold floodwaters; native grassland soils store carbon; and wetlands filter water and help improve water quality. KPC works with the local community including outdoor activity enthusiasts, conservationists, landowners, local residents, farmers, and developers who are interested in the continued health and vitality of the prairie.

Moving forward, KPC seeks to protect the prairie lands that remain and to connect the people in the region with their prairie heritage on a vast Katy Prairie Preserve. To accomplish this vision, KPC will use direct land acquisition and voluntary partnerships with local landowners, collaborate with other organizations, educate the public through programming and outreach, and support sound land-use decisions through public policy and research.

from Houston Chronicle online article dated 11/28/2017

For more information:

- https://goo.gl/CHvTVT
- https://goo.gl/2dFNiR
- http://www.katyprairie.org

Invasives Extending Their Range

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) has confirmed the presence of invasive giant salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) at three locations on Lake Fork – the largest total infestation ever found on the lake.

Personnel from the Sabine River Authority (SRA) and the Tyler North district fisheries office confirmed the infestation within hours of being notified by a local property owner. The TPWD Brookeland aquatic invasive species team later coordinated the placement of a containment boom to isolate the worst-affected cove and surveyed sections of shoreline to determine the extent of the giant salvinia's presence.

TPWD biologists have also classified Lake Georgetown as infested with an established, reproducing population of invasive zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) and have also changed the status of Lake Livingston to fully infested. This brings the statewide total to 13 infested lakes.

All these new infestations underscore the importance of cleaning boats and trailers before leaving the ramp. Boaters are also required to drain all water from their boat and onboard receptacles before leaving or approaching a body of fresh water in order to prevent the transfer of zebra mussels. In Texas, it is unlawful to possess or transport invasive species, dead or alive.

from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department press released dated November 13 and 14, 2017

For more information:

- https://texasinvasives.org
- https://goo.gl/GJRfL1
- https://goo.gl/hRzyF6

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.

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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.

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LANDOWNERS' GUIDE TO THE ESA

Do you or any of your clients, neighbors, or any other people you come in contact with have questions dealing with threatened or endangered species? Are there concerns or confusion about what the laws really say about these species?

Agricultural Law experts with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service have written and recently released a good, easy-to-read fact sheet on this subject. The "Texas Landowners' Guide to the Endangered Species Act" can be found and downloaded at this site: **https://agrilife.org/texasaglaw/2018/01/22/texas-landowners-guide-endangered-species-act/** or **https://goo.gl/L6tJ5S.**

This 6-page document gives an overview of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), defines terms associated with the Act, and includes a table with different options landowners may have when dealing with protected species. It also covers the questions:

- What defines protected species and how do they get listed?
- What is against the law once a species is listed under the ESA?
- What is critical habitat and how does it affect me?
- How does a species get off the endangered species list?
- Where does the landowner fit into the ESA listing process?

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