State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

Texas 2024

Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2023 Estimate
Community Forestry and Open Space	$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	$1,248,378
Forest Legacy	$65,000
Forest Stewardship	$379,593
Landscape Scale Restoration	$896,489
State Fire Assistance	$2,972,357
Urban and Community Forestry	$1,808,670
Volunteer Fire Assistance	$951,794
Total	**$8,322,281**

NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

Texas is a large state that has a diverse landscape with with a diverse set of challenges. Challenges such as forest markets, water quality and quantity, fragmentation and changing demographics have an affect on the natural resources across the state. Texas A&M Forest Service (TAMFS) provides statewide leadership in the management of Texas' vast natural resources and works to protect and restore them from natural disasters, weather extremes, wildfire and invasive pests.

Program Goals

- To maintain and improve the health of rural and urban forests and to protect the forests and citizens of Texas. These programs maximize cost effectiveness through the use of program delivery partnerships and increase forestland sustainability and value in a non-regulatory, voluntary manner.
- The cooperative programs, implemented through partnerships between Texas, USDA Forest Service, and other entities, emphasize forest sustainability and the production of amenity and commodity values.

Key Issues

- Ensuring environmental equity and accessibility to conservation assistance programs and ensuring equal access to all programs
- Addressing landscape scale issues, including climate mitigation and developing incentive-based programs that increase water quality and forest health.
- Enhancing awareness and application of the role that urban trees and forests play in human health through the Healthy Trees, Healthy Lives initiative
- Protecting the health and value of trees for wildlife and water where woodlands are not traditionally harvested commercially.
- Invasive plants, insects, diseases, and drought-related impacts are key issues within forest health.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value
Population	29,145,505
Acres of Forest Land	59,938,183
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	53,881,097
Number of NIPF Landowners	285,614
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	0
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	157,658,560
Number of Rural Fire Departments	1,663
Cities and Towns	1,223
Forest Based Employment	68,917
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	7
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	69,089,941

FY 2023 Accomplishments	Value
Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	80,981
Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	76,425
Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	67,555
Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	460
State Fire Communities Assisted	158
Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	4,250
Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	127
Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	15,692,077
Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	21,979

Program Highlights

Conservation Education

Texas A&M Forest Service during FY 23 continued to place an emphasis in developing programs and resources based in Spanish. This is the fastest growing demographic in Texas. The agency also continued to expand its Conservation Education program by employing a full time coordinator as well as adding an additional conservation education position to facilitate programs in the greater Houston area and East Texas as a whole. During FY 23 the Conservation Education program was able to accomplish: 1) hosted 44 con-ed events reaching more than 3,000 school children and more than 400 school teachers, 2) developed a new Forest Literacy Audience Matrices for K-12 educational content, 3) hosted and guided two forest and nature therapy sessions, 4) collaborated with the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum to develop the "The Value of Conservation and Forest Products Laboratory Research" exhibit to educate museum visitors on the history and value of the forest products industry in Texas.

Cooperative Fire Protection

Texas A&M Forest Service (TAMFS) continued to work with counties, communities, and homeowners to mitigate wildfire risk using the Ready Set Go program. During FY 23 TAMFS provided more than 800 community protection programs (RSG, Firewise and fire prevention workshops/presentations) educating almost 60,000 Texans on mitigating wildfire risk. VFA funds were allocated to training almost 2,000 firefighters and assisted 46 rural fire departments in acquiring personal protection equipment. State and local firefighters responded to 1,108 wildfires burning 115,313 acres in 2023. State Fire Assistance provided funding to support fire protection and training activities across Texas. The federal excess property programs (FEPP and FFP) provided 64 assists in and placing fire equipment in rural communities throughout the state. In addition, TAMFS administered Volunteer Fire Assistance Program funds to support firefighter safety and the training efforts of rural community fire departments.

Economic Action

During 2023 Texas A&M Forest Service continued to advocate and increase the awareness and adoption of mass timber in new building designs. The agency has partnered with several large scale projects across Texas which demonstrate firsthand the viability of using mass timber versus steel in large scale construction projects. Along with mass timber portion, the agency continues to monitor economically viable sources of biomass and promote traditional and forest products, biomass energy, and new emerging markets such as ecosystem service credits. TAMFS staff are continually expanding the capabilities of www.texasforestinfo.com, a web-based portal that provides all Texans and others information on Texas' forest resources. The "Timber Supply Analysis" web application allows current and potential wood using industries in Texas and across the south quantify the wood resource available in a

given area. This aids in the development of new wood using markets and the expansion of traditional markets. TAMFS continues to support the development of "ecosystem value" markets and routinely updates estimated values contained within the "Forest Ecosystem Values" application on www.texasforestinfo.com. TAMFS Water Resources Coordinator continues to partner with USFS, SGSF and water utility districts to promote and incentivize sustainable forest management techniques within Texas watersheds. This effort is part of the regional Forest and Drinking Water Campaign funded project from USFS in which Texas along with other southern states are working to develop incentives supported by water utility districts to assist landowners in maintaining and managing forest watersheds.

Forest Health Protection

Texas A&M Forest Service continued to coordinate public outreach and technical assistance to Texans regarding a variety of forest and tree pests in 2023. Forest Health staff provide oversight and comment to policy regarding pest regulation to ensure those policies are pragmatic and have achievable outcome-based results. During FY 2023 TAMFS continued to monitor for new and existing pests such as emerald ash borer, redbay ambrosia beetle, spongy moth, spotted lanternfly, Asian longhorned beetle and a variety of native bark beetles, all of which are impacting or have the potential to impact Texas trees and forests. TAMFS continues providing financial assistance to landowners to assist in minimizing the threat of southern pine beetle establishment in East Texas and slowing the spread of oak wilt in Central and North Texas. To date, in cooperation with USFS-FHP, TAMFS has provided almost $7 million to more than 1,900 landowners in East Texas to thin more than 146,000 acres of overly dense pine stands improving stand health and vigor while minimizing the threat of SPB attacks. Also, to slow the spread of oak wilt in Central and North Texas, TAMFS to date has provided almost $3 million in funding to assist landowners install more than 780 miles of trenching. During FY 2023 TAMFS staff provided 2,594 forest health technical assists, hosted 26 landowner workshops, provided forest health training to over 1,100 individuals, and deployed more than 1,000 detection traps across Texas for identifying new or existing forest pests both native and non-native. The agency also continues to expand the use of the TreeMD web application which is an online diagnostic tool for identifying common tree pests in Texas.

Forest Legacy

The agency continues to promote the Forest Legacy program and currently has a total of 7 funded projects protecting more than 30,000 acres of forestland within high priority areas. The State Stewardship Coordinating Committee Forest Legacy Program Subcommittee continues to develop new partners.

Forest Stewardship

Through the Forest Stewardship Program, TAMFS emphasizes the management and sustainability of resource priority areas throughout the state as identified by the Texas Forest Action Plan. Using this plan as a guide, TAMFS directs educational and technical resources to these identified priority areas. Program delivery is tailored to address the known resource concerns and threats as well as assist Texans in maintaining healthy forests, trees and woodlands. A variety of tools are used to help educate Texans on stewardship and how they can become better stewards of their forests and trees. These tools include quarterly newsletters, social media posts, mobile and web applications and most importantly one on one assistance from TAMFS staff. During FY 2023 TAMFS staff aided almost 60,000 landowners, educated more than 21,000 landowners and developed 1,264 forest management plans on over 150,000 acres of which 95% were located within identified priority areas. The TAMFS Tree Improvement Program and Idalou Nursery, a component of the FSP in Texas, produced over 63,000 seedlings for a variety of conservation plantings across Texas. Working in cooperation with Prairie View A&M University, Texas A&M University and US Endowment for Forestry, TAMFS is helping to deliver the Sustainable Forestry & African American Land Retention Program. Through this effort TAMFS and partners will provide forestry assistance, education and resources to African American landowners in East Texas. Lastly, The Texas A&M Forest Service Leadership Institute graduated 21 participants in its third cohort and the fourth cohort began in fall of 2023 including 25 members. The institute will rally existing and emerging leaders within the fields of natural resources and increase their capacity and ability to enact meaningful change throughout the state of Texas.

Landowner Assistance

Texas A&M Forest Service assists landowners across the state through a number of activities through support of USFS State and Private Forestry programs. Through these programs TAMFS staff are able to provide Texans assistance regarding a wide range of natural resource issues. In addition to Forest Stewardship activities, landowners receive help with land, timber and tree management issues and

needs. Landowners and homeowners receive expert advice on things such as reforestation, tax valuation, ecosystem restoration as well as forest and tree health threats. TAMFS strives to meet the needs of all Texans throughout the diverse state. This includes windbreak needs in the High Plains, insect and disease issues for rural and urban trees, brush control issues in Central and West Texas, water related issues across the state, forestland habitat fragmentation, and protection and sustainability of the commercial forests of East Texas. TAMFS annually provides more than 100,000 assists across the state through both on-site and off-site assistance. During FY 23 TAMFS staff made 2,594 on the ground assists to landowners on more than 134,537 acres of privately owned forests and woodlands. TAMFS, provided 128 education events with over 8,200 Texans receiving formal education on natural resource related topics. TAMFS staff developed more than 1,200 forest management plans on almost 154,000 acres. Lastly, through the Texas Forest Information portal, an additional 24,000 landowners and natural resource managers were assisted though our online resources such as Map My Property, Plan My Land Operation, TreeMD, Timber Supply Analysis, and others.

Landscape Scale Restoration

Texas A&M Forest Service continues to collaborate with federal, state, and NGO partners to identify and develop landscape initiatives to address forest and woodland health, improve water quality, and identify barriers to landowners in managing forests and woodlands across the state. Agency staff serve integral roles on various restoration teams including the Texas Longleaf Implementation Team, Northeast Texas Conservation Delivery Network, and the State Technical Advisory Committee hosted by NRCS. TAMFS continues to support the restoration of longleaf pine, shortleaf pine, ponderosa pine and native grass restoration as part of restoring historical ecosystem types in Texas. During FY 23 TAMFS continued efforts to restore ponderosa pine in the Davis Mountain region, identify deteriorated windbreaks in the High Plains for restoration purposes, and continue grow native grass for restoration projects. Also, TAMFS continued to grow the Texas Forests and Drinking Water campaign which works to develop a connection between water utilities and forest landowners in hopes of providing monetary support for managing priority watersheds. Through the Good Neighbor Authority TAMFS is assisting Texas National Forests in addressing forest health issues and mitigating hazards to both the local ecosystem and general public. Lastly, during FY 23 TAMFS continued to expand its role with National Forest System in Texas through the Good Neighbor Authority by completing and managing several large timber sales conducted on National Forest lands in Texas.

Urban and Community Forestry

The Urban and Community Forestry Program continues to provide educational and technical assistance to communities and residents across the state, focusing on arboriculture principles and practices, ordinances, inventories, urban planning, and strategic management plans for greenspaces and trees. Staff work with six regional urban forestry councils and numerous NGOs to educate citizens about the benefit and value of trees in the landscape, developing a variety of formats to meet the needs of the diverse Texas population, including traditional, virtual live and self-directed, and Spanish language. Over 19,000 seat hours of formal education and training were delivered to Texans. Additionally, program staff promote the Healthy Trees, Healthy Lives initiative, facilitating on-the-ground place-making to increase environmental equity and accessibility; expand selection and reach of climate ready, urban hardy trees from the Urban Tree Improvement Program; coordinate the Texas Tree Conference, providing scholarships to over 50 municipal employees; and develop innovative applications to aid communities in the management of their trees, including My Tree ID, Trees Count inventory app, and the Tree Risk mobile app.

Contact Information

Texas A & M Forest Service

Al Davis
Director
200 Technology Way, Suite 1281
College Station, TX 77845-3424
979-458-6605
Alphonse.Davis@tfs.tamu.edu

US Forest Service
Southern Region

Edward Hunter
Deputy Regional Forester - State, Private, and Tribal Forestry
USDA Forest Service
1720 Peachtree Street, Suite 760S
Atlanta, GA 30309
404-660-7391
edward.hunter@usda.gov