



Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities



Stewardship Week
April 25 – May 2, 2021

When you look at trees and a forest, what comes to mind? Perhaps you remember your old childhood treehouse, or the time that you went camping in the woods and enjoyed an afternoon nap in the comfort of the shade. Possibly your mind goes straight to the abundance of wildlife that resides in wooded areas. But have you ever considered a forest as agriculture? Likewise, have you ever thought about how a forest is properly managed?

Forest landowners are an important part of Texas agriculture and the stewards of this resource. They work closely with their local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) district office to implement conservation practices that promote the health and sustainability of forests and forest ecosystems. These privately-owned forests contribute significantly to the Texas economy and provide numerous environmental and social benefits.

If recent events have taught us anything, it is that forests are extremely important. From the unprecedented shortages of daily supplies like toilet paper, to the health benefits of being around trees and nature during stressful times, forests improve our quality of life and our communities.

To truly have a healthy forest, proper management and conservation is needed. Thankfully, many forest landowners in Texas are implementing beneficial conservation practices such as strategic tree plantings, prescribed burning, brush management to remove diseased trees and invasive species, native grass management, wildlife management, and even bee propagation to stimulate pollination. In certain instances, livestock can be included as part of a prescribed grazing plan to strategically manage the leaf litter, soil, and underbrush in a forested area, which can ultimately assist in preventing wildfires. Without these sustainable management practices, problems such as soil erosion, insect and disease outbreaks, invasive species encroachment, declines in biodiversity, and even catastrophic wildfires can occur.

Trees filter air, reduce ambient temperatures, absorb carbon dioxide, and produce oxygen. They help conserve energy by casting summer shade and blocking winter winds. Tree roots hold the soil in place and fight erosion. Trees absorb and store rainwater, reducing runoff and sediments after storms, which also helps recharge groundwater supply and prevent flooding.

Essential products made from trees include paper products and lumber. Trees also offer habitat and food to birds, insects, lichen, fungi, mammals, and reptiles. Finally, trees increase our quality of life through a relaxing effect, reducing stress.

With proper management and the implementation of conservation practices, Texas forest landowners are improving and sustaining healthy forests. These forests not only provide healthy trees for production agriculture but allow for healthy communities of organisms in the soils, healthy communities of wildlife, and in some cases, provides healthy livestock for your own community. Your local SWCD and TFS district office have been assisting forest landowners and agricultural producers with conservation practices for almost 85 and 100 years, respectively. Contact the SWCD in your community and let them help you to develop a conservation plan for your land that is based on your goals and objectives.

HEALTHY TREES = HEALTHY FARMS, RANCHES, AND COMMUNITIES



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