SUMMER / FALL 2014 WEB EDITION

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The Forest Stewards' VOICE

The Newsletter of Oklahoma's Forest Stewardship Program

Conserving, enhancing and protecting the forest resources of Oklahoma for present and future generations.

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Cross Timbers: Gateway from Forest to Prairie

Take pride in our natural diversity - Oklahoma has one of the largest areas of remaining ancient Cross Timbers.

The Cross Timbers ecoregion, located primarily in central Texas and Oklahoma, is one of the last remaining "virgin" forests in the Southeastern US, primarily because settlers considered the area to have low commercial value. These woodlands of central Oklahoma are the transition from our eastern forests to our western prairies. The Cross Timbers is a mosaic of thick forest, open woodlands and prairie patches. Significant intact forests remain; however, the rapidly expanding urban areas in this region are fragmenting the ecosystem and threatening water resources and biodiversity. Fire exclusion, juniper encroachment, pesticide application, conversion to pasture, and oil/gas exploration have also impacted this region.

What can you do? Think about the values provided by the Cross Timbers. Once a forest is removed, it could take more than a lifetime to replace. As a landowner, you can manage your woodlands intentionally to improve and restore forest health and resiliency:

- Cross Timbers forests are fire-adapted; prescribed burning is an important management tool, where feasible and if applied carefully.
- Monitor and take action on insect and disease outbreaks, particularly during times of drought or tree stress.
- Thin crowded stands to improve tree health and encourage oak regeneration, favoring post oak.
- Learn to identify and control invasive species.
- Avoid changing the slope of your soil and disturbing mature tree roots.

These are just a few actions you can take to improve your woodlands. If in doubt, contact a professional for advice.

www.forestry.ok.gov/contact-us

Using USDA Forest Service federal grant funds, Oklahoma Forestry Services teamed up with the Oklahoma Biological Survey to develop a Cross Timbers educational poster and brochure. A free poster and brochure are included with this edition of the newsletter. More are available upon request; contact Oklahoma Forestry Services' State Office at 405-522-6158.

Featured Forest Stewardship Landowners

Ken and Lois Stern, Featured Forest Stewardship Landowners

Ken and Lois Stern of Mayes County were recognized as Forest Stewards in June for all the hard work they have put into their property. The Sterns have addressed health issues on their property by performing a sanitation cut and have sought advice on a number of topics including Firewise landscaping and erosion control. In addition, the Sterns have contracted with OFS to perform a prescribed burn on a section of the forested portion of their property.

They really enjoy the outdoors and love providing an opportunity for youth to connect with nature. They host two, 2-week sessions of Aaron's Camp on their property during the summer months and Page Belcher (pictured with the Sterns), OFS District Forester delivers a forestry lesson at each camp.

Aaron's Camp is funded by the Aaron K. Stern Foundation which was established in memory of the Stern's son, Aaron who was killed by a drunk driver in 2007. The foundation and camp "provide opportunities for inner city youth to enhance their self-confidence and cultivate creativity while learning to appreciate scientific exploration in a relaxed, natural environment."

Oklahoma Forestry Services appreciates all the work the Sterns and all forest landowners put into caring for Oklahoma's forests. Thank you!!!

Forest Regeneration Center Upgrades Irrigation System

The Forest Regeneration Center in Goldsby completed major renovations to its seedling irrigation system in August, thanks to capital funding support from Secretary of Agriculture Jim Reese and the State Office of Management and Enterprise Services. The aging 215,000-gallon water storage tank and original irrigation pump, constructed in 1957, were replaced with a new tank of similar size (see photo) and two modern pumps. These major system improvements will allow the nursery to continue to meet the needs of private and public landowners for a wide variety of the highest quality conservation seedlings available in the region for decades to come.

Seedlings will be available for purchase starting in September and can be shipped or picked up between December and March. For more details, call 405-288-2385 or visit http://www.forestry.ok.gov/order-seedlings.

Shortleaf Pine: An Imperiled Ecosystem

Although shortleaf pine is one of eastern Oklahoma's most important native species, most landowners today favor loblolly pine because of its faster growth rates and greater productivity. However, it is attracting renewed attention from those interested in restoring and maintaining historical native pine ecosystems. Shortleaf pine is not suitable for all management goals, but landowners should consider shortleaf pine for their upland sites. To get started in managing for shortleaf pine, contact Oklahoma Forestry Services or your County Extension Agent. Oklahoma Forestry Services recently developed three educational brochures with the help of Oklahoma State University – NREM which include a Land Manager's Guide for Natural Regeneration of Shortleaf Pine, a Shortleaf Pine Overview, and Shortleaf Pine Management Tips for Landowners in Oklahoma. Learn more at: http://www.forestry.ok.gov/shortleaf-pine.

Walk in the Forest and Learn More About the Cross Timbers

Join us for a Walk in the Forest at the Keystone Ancient Forest on Saturday October 18, 2014 from 8 a.m to 1 p.m. The Oklahoma Division of the Ouachita Society of American Foresters in partnership with Oklahoma Forestry Services, Oklahoma State University – NREM, Oklahoma Division SAF Student Chapter and City of Sand Springs Parks and Recreation Department will be hosting this event to promote the importance of the Cross Timbers forest. On the trail, educational stations and interpretive signs will help you learn about trees, the forest ecosystem, and how professional foresters care for the forest. There will also be some great giveaways. Don't miss this event! For more information, contact Erin Johnson at 405-640-9492.

Walk in the Forest
Society of American Foresters
American Forest Foundation

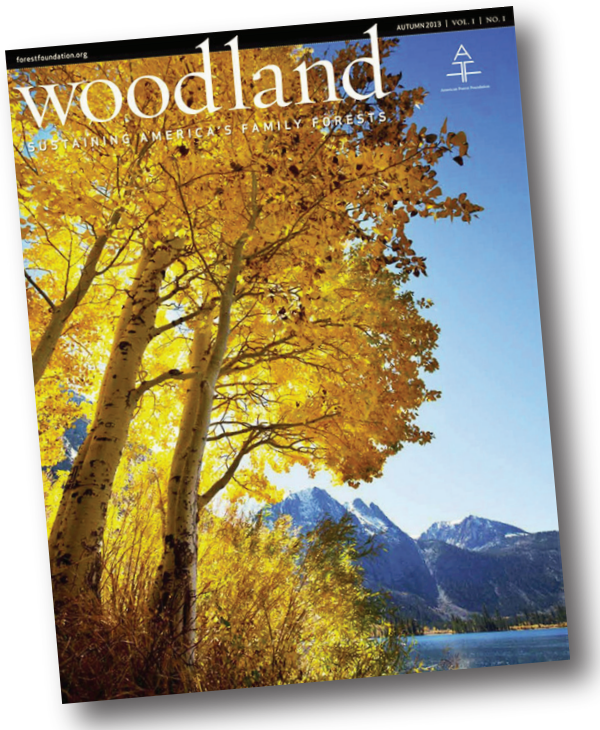
OFS Appreciates the Continued Support From Our Partners!

Oklahoma Forestry Services' Forest Tree Improvement Center recently purchased new equipment that is designed to mix the ingredients and then fill the individual cells for our container seedlings.

This specialized equipment will significantly reduce the time required to fill containers and help us expand production to meet demands. The purchase would not have been possible without donations from our generous partners including: Ed Hurliman – Hurliman Forestry, Don Herron – Herron Industries, Melody Martin - OG&E Corporation and other donations from private landowners.

We truly appreciate the support! Thank you!

New Forest Magazine Launched!



Looking for more information and inspiration about forests? The American Forest Foundation--a national nonprofit organization devoted to the stewardship of private forest land--is excited to announce the availability of its new flagship publication, *Woodland*. This full-color, quarterly magazine is packed with engaging stories, beautiful photos, and practical tips for getting the most out of your woodland.

The first issues have included articles about how to create a trail network on your land, tips for aiding nesting birds, advice on protecting your family and your property from wildfires, a primer on combating tree pests and disease, and much more. In addition to pieces filled with practical advice, each issue of *Woodland* also features compelling profiles of woodland owners across the country and stunning photos of forests--including images submitted by readers.

When you make a donation of $25 or more, you will receive a yearlong subscription to the magazine. Go to www.woodlandmagazine.org/subscribe to sign up!

OSU Extension Forester

OSU Natural Resource Ecology and Management's forestry program has undergone numerous changes in recent years and faculty retirements have raised questions about the future of the program. Dr. Craig McKinley retired June 2013 and his vacancy has not been filled. The loss of this position, regardless of whether it is short-term or long-term, severely limits the ability of OSU and other agencies to provide forestry information and outreach to forest landowners in the state. If you want to have a say and help stress the importance of hiring an Extension Forester at OSU, please contact Dr. Keith Owens, NREM Dept. Head or Dr. Thomas A. Coon DASNR VP, Dean and Director at 405-744-2474.

WOTUS Rulemaking

EPA's proposed rules defining "Waters of the United States" (WOTUS) that will be subject to jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act are in the public comment period. Controversy over the rules led EPA to extend the comment period until October 20. The rules were discussed extensively by the Water Resources Committee at the Southern Group of State Foresters meeting in May. The Water Committee prepared a draft response letter for the Southern Group, which has since been shared with the National Association of State Foresters. In effect, SGSF does not support the rule as proposed. Even though EPA included the long-running silvicultural exemption, the rule includes several definitions and their interpretation that appear to significantly expand the reach of federal oversight. The U.S. House Agriculture Committee on Conservation, Energy and Forestry held a hearing on the rule on June 19, primarily to explore concerns raised by the agricultural community on the perceived increase in federal regulation. At the hearing, there was little support for the rule and some members called for the agencies to repeal the proposed rule and start over.

Threatened Bat Species

It is expected that the Northern Long-Eared Bat will be listed as an endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by April 2, 2015. The bat's range includes parts of 39 states, including eastern Oklahoma. Listing is due in part to White-Nosed Syndrome which has decimated bat species across the northeastern states and is spreading this way. If listed, Federal regulations are being considered that could affect forest management activities in eastern Oklahoma, including timing and extent of timber harvesting, prescribed burning and other land disturbance. There are opportunities for landowners to engage in habitat conservation plans and practices that may reduce their susceptibility to federal rules and regulations in the future.

Prescribed Burning Program

Oklahoma Forestry Services encourages the use of prescribed burning where it is consistent with good forest resource management principles and practices. OFS currently offers the following services on a fee basis to individuals and communities East of I-35 with an approved forest management plan: fireline construction, full service prescribed burning and Wildland Urban Interface hazard mitigation burning. For more information, visit www.forestry.ok.gov/rxfire-ofs-assistance or contact Drew Daily at 405-522-3890.

A Message From Your State Forester

There is a lot of activity in Oklahoma's forests and woodlands lately. Forest industry is slowly increasing production due to the improving housing market, more people are in the woods as families are getting out before schools are back in session and hunters are getting ready for the fall seasons. The recent rains have quieted the wildfires and allowed many of us with OFS to return to our "normal" duties. This includes providing technical assistance to landowners across the state, working with cities and towns on issues related to managing their urban forests and how to prepare for wildland fire, and educating our public on the forests of our state and nation.

This issue of the Forest Stewards' Voice highlights activities occurring around Oklahoma and some of the issues impacting our forests. I encourage each of you to take the time to share your interests in our state's woodlands with friends and neighbors, and visit with our OFS personnel at the OKC State Fair, OK Wildlife Expo and the "Walk in the Forest" being held at Keystone Ancient Forest near Sand Springs. We appreciate all of your input and support.

George L. Geissler, CF
Director, Oklahoma Forestry Services

2014 Farm Bill

The 2014 Farm Bill, signed into law in February, stands as the strongest yet for forests. To learn more about what was included, read the report:

Forestry Provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill:

http://nationalaglawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads//assets/crs/R43431.pdf

Did You Know?

The OFS Forest Regeneration Center grows over 30 different tree and shrub species.

Order trees starting in September!!

www.forestry.ok.gov

Upcoming Events

SEPTEMBER 2014

Sept. 11-21, 2014	Oklahoma State Fair www.okstatefair.com Come visit Oklahoma Forestry Services' booth in the Made in Oklahoma Building
Sept. 18, 2014	Oklahoma Forestry Association Annual Banquet 6 p.m. at Museum of the Red River in Idabel, OK
Sept. 26-28, 2014	ODWC Wildlife Expo at Lazy E Arena wildlifedepartmentexpo.com Make sure to stop by Oklahoma Forestry Services' exhibit

OCTOBER 2014

Oct. 7, 2014	Annual Field Day at Pushmataha Wildlife Management Area
Oct. 18, 2014	Walk in the Forest at Keystone Ancient Forest 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Come & Go event

Get involved with Oklahoma's Forestry Community. Be Heard! Join an Association Today!

- Oklahoma Forestry Association, Dues: $25/year. Contact Dan Lewia, President (580) 298-7672 or E-mail: dblewia@gmail.com
- Oklahoma Woodland Owners Association, Dues: $25/year. Contact Craig McKinley (405) 612-8320 or E-mail: craig.mckinley1@aol.com
- Forest Heritage Association, Dues: $25, $100, or $500/year. Contact Doug Zook (580) 494-6497 or E-mail: doug.zook@ag.ok.gov

Editor:
Erin Johnson, Staff Forester, OFS

Editorial Committee:
Kurt Atkinson, Assistant Director, OFS

Distribution of this newsletter is provided free of charge to forest stewardship landowners, professional foresters, state and federal agency professionals, 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 www.forestry.ok.gov/stewardsvoice.

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