

**State & Private Forestry Grant Proposal  
Changing Roles Professional Development Program &  
Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Training**

**Contact information:** Texas Forest Service  
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***Project Name:***  
Changing Roles Professional Development Program & Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment

***Project Leaders:***  
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***Abstract:***  
The Changing Roles Professional Development Program was developed jointly by the Southern Center for Wildland-Urban Interface Research and Information and the University of Florida at the request of the Southern Group of State Foresters in 2006. Its purpose is to prepare natural resource professionals to address the challenges they face in the rapidly changing wildland-urban interface. Through this professional development opportunity, natural resource professionals discover how to effectively manage for sustainability in the interface by meeting the needs of interface landowners and remaining relevant into the future.

The Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment (SWRA) is a GIS-based system designed to ordinate wildland fire risk across the thirteen southern states. To increase the use and application of the SWRA, it is necessary to deliver it into the hands of land and fire management personnel. SWRA training will provide increased capability for natural resource professionals to identify areas of wildland fire risk and begin mitigating that risk where possible.

Both programs require providing much needed technical information into the hands of natural resource professionals. In an effort to promote integrated program delivery, the Texas Forest Service is coordinating between departments to deliver both messages to the necessary agencies and groups.

***Location:*** Texas

***Partnering Agencies and Groups:***  
USDA Forest Service, Southern Group of State Foresters, Southern Center for Wildland-Urban Interface Research and Information, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Park Service, Association of Consulting Foresters – Texas Chapter, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas Parks and Wildlife and Texas Master Naturalist.

***Expected Completion Quarter:***  
Q4 2010

<b><i>Total Federal Funding Requested:</i></b>		
1-Year	Salaries	\$30,000
	Travel	\$15,000
	<u>Programming/Materials/Services</u>	<u>\$55,000</u>
	Sub-total	\$100,000
	<b>Total for 3 years:</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>

***Total Proposed Budget:*** \$600,000

## **Project Description:**

In the past there were two major sociopolitical boundaries in America; urban and rural. The boundary lines were clear and had trained natural resource professionals to manage each environment for the sustainable highest and best use of its natural resources for the benefit of all. Today, a third environment is emerging called the wildland-urban interface or interface. Interface is defined as any place where population density meets agricultural or wildland. Since the interface is influenced in large by the values of the people who live there, it cannot be limited to a specific geographic location, but instead is considered a situation. Changes that are occurring in the interface include rapid urbanization, urban sprawl due to development patterns, parcelization and fragmentation and land ownership value changes. As a result, there are increased risks associated with these changes to natural resources and to the people who live there such catastrophic floods and intense wildfires. Education is a key component to reducing these risks to environmental quality and human quality of life and it begins with training the natural resource professionals who work there. The Changing Roles Professional Development program and Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment (SWRA) was created to build skills and provide tools needed for natural resource professionals to tackle interface challenges in the South.

The Changing Roles curriculum is categorized into four modules. Module 1 is entitled interface issues and connections, module 2 is managing interface forests, module 3 is land-use planning and policy and module 4 is communicating with interface residents and leaders. The materials are flexible and can be adapted to meet the needs of any organization who works with interface landowners. Materials are provided in PowerPoint presentations, group exercises, case

## **Evaluation Criteria:**

### ***National and Regional Relevance:***

Texas' population is increasing at an incredible rate with 23 million people, making it the second most populous state in the nation. Currently, Florida leads the nation with 14 of the fastest-growing counties and close behind is Texas with 12. Average tract sizes have decreased from 100 to 17 acres. The need for education and programs that reach interface natural resource professionals and landowners is great in Texas.

Identifying areas of wildland fire risk has been determined to be a regional and national priority. The Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment (SWRA) was developed in response to this need.

The Changing Roles curriculum was developed to prepare natural resource personnel with the skills and tools necessary to conserve, protect and enhance natural resources in the interface where fragmentation, parcelization and urban sprawl are affecting forest health and fuels, water quality and quantity and wildlife habitat. Training individuals on Changing Roles and how to use SWRA will have a positive impact on each of the redesign themes. Since these same issues are occurring all over the US, it can easily be adapted to meet the needs of other states.

### ***Prioritization:***

The changes Texas is currently experiencing with population growth, increased fragmentation in rural areas, loss of open space to development, catastrophic wildfire events and changing landowner demographics and values show no sign of decreasing and therefore educating natural resource professionals on how to deal with these issues and finding collaborative opportunities between agencies and groups is a high priority.

### ***Meaningful Scale:***

The program was created for the Southern Region and in Texas it has already crossed state lines by training consultants in Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana. It is also crossing natural resource professions. By promoting an integrated approach to program delivery through coordination between departments with Changing Roles and SWRA, the Texas Forest Service is able to maximize the number of people reached for a common goal.

### ***Collaboration:***

Individuals coming from Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Cooperative Extension, Lower Colorado River Authority and Texas Master Naturalist are registered to attend the November conference to involve a diverse collaborative effort. Personnel from Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Cooperative Extension and NRCS have assisted in planning the November conference.

The Changing Roles curriculum and SWRA provides a tool or guideline, but it is those who attend the professional development program that will make the greatest impact. Changing Roles/SWRA provide the opportunity to come together and share ideas, build upon each others strengths and create a plan for a concerted effort in addressing the challenges occurring in the interface.

### ***Outcomes:***

Outcomes will be measured by the number of conferences and attendees, but most importantly are the outcomes that occur through programs provided for landowners and the impacts on forest health and sustainability as a result of the Changing Roles/SWRA conferences. For example, the Texas Forest Expo is a two-day event developed to provide hands-on guidelines for landowners and homeowners near Houston to manage their property and make development decisions that are responsible and sustainable. This event is a direct result of the December 2006 Changing Roles conference.

The objective of the SWRA training is a trained, multi-agency workforce focused on achieving measurable results in the higher levels of wildfire risk across the state, as identified and corroborated by the SWRA.

***Technology:***

It is not practical to report on the work done through the Changing Roles Professional Development Program through geospatial technology. The use of online technology may be employed for the informational clearing house.

The SWRA training meets redesign goals of incorporating geospatial technology into the business model.

***Integrated Delivery:***

Texas Forest Service is partnering with other state, federal and private organizations to improve delivery of public information and programs. The November conference has scheduled an hour on the agenda to bring agencies together by region to network, discuss specializations and determine how work can take place together to provide programs to the public. The annual stewardship meeting will be used as a conduit for future work with state, federal and private organizations.

The SWRA training will encourage an integrated and collaborative approach with the Changing Roles professional development program to find solutions to the wildland fire risk concerns within the state. Partnerships and teamwork will be emphasized in both programs.

***Leverage:***

The grant request will be leveraged by matching it with in-kind contributions.

***Influence Positive Change:***

The Changing Roles and SWRA conferences are outcomes oriented programs where the conferences serve as a foundation for the work done between agencies. Interface South has provided a trainer’s corner, [www.interfacesouth.org/products/training/corner.html](http://www.interfacesouth.org/products/training/corner.html), so the program may provide adaptations, suggestions, agendas and evaluation resources to trainers. Influence on positive change will come from creating a trained cadre of individuals with the skills and tools necessary to start tackling the states interface issues, including wildfire risk, with meaningful and measurable results.

***Timeliness:***

This project is expected to be completed with the delivery of trained multi-agency natural resource professionals within a three year period.

Below is a projected budget for natural resource professional development training in Texas over the next three years.

	<b>Yr 1</b>	<b>Yr 2</b>	<b>Yr 3</b>
Salaries	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Travel	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
<u>Programming/Materials/Services</u>	<u>\$55,000</u>	<u>\$55,000</u>	<u>\$55,000</u>
Sub-total	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>		