



Shared Stewardship in Texas

The State of Texas' Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), along with the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Forest Service (FS), have enjoyed a storied partnership to further the conservation and sustainability of forests within the State. For over a century, the FS has supported State-delivered resource management and protection programs across 63 million acres of public and private forests and woodlands.

In 1933, with adoption of Texas Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 73, State political leadership agreed to the Federal purchase of private lands for the purpose of creating the National Forests for the recovery, development, and growth of State and local economies. In 2009, the Texas Forestry Council (the Council) was created to establish a foundation and a platform for public organizations to address shared forest resource issues in the State, regardless of ownership. In addition to the State Forester, TFS, and the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas (NFGT) Supervisor, membership includes academic deans from Stephen F. Austin State University and Texas A&M University forestry schools; as well as senior leadership from NRCS, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Parks Service (NPS), Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (TAEX), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and TPWD. The mission of the Council is, **"Public agencies working together to sustain and enhance the forest resources of Texas."**

Council Operations

The Council will continue to operate as a forum for identifying shared priorities and generating sustainable cross boundary natural resource management solutions at the appropriate scale, as outlined below.

- Membership – determined by the public agency representatives on the Council and limited to government agency employees.
- Proxies – members are authorized to designate proxies on an ad hoc basis to attend meetings and to vote on proposed actions of the Council.
- Voting – for all matters of business, a simple majority approval of the Council membership shall govern the action of the Council.
- Meetings – regular meetings of the Council are held biannually or as deemed necessary by the members. Meeting locations will rotate among the agencies represented on the Council.
- Committees – standing committees and/or special committees will form on an as needed basis for a specific duration. The duties of all committees will be described at the time of their appointment.

Today, while the NFGT remain a relatively small component of our commercial forests, the impact of Federal land management is felt throughout the private forestry community (92 percent of all forest lands) – especially where forest health, resilience, and sustainability issues are concerned. Therefore, it is

imperative that State and Federal natural resource organizations proactively collaborate to provide sound technical assistance to Texas forest landowners while demonstrating good forest stewardship of our publicly owned resources.

The NFGT, TPWD, NRCS-Texas, and the TFS will strive to:

- Encourage strong, long-term continuity of forest management programs
- Promote the application of sound, scientific silvicultural practices across all landscapes
- Provide a forum to address shared natural resource concerns
- Align, as appropriate, NFGT land management activities with State Forest Action Plan and Texas Conservation Action Plan objectives to meet common goals
- Continue to strengthen partnerships within the forestry community to ensure forest management decisions and actions are meeting the needs of constituents and the public
- Collaborate on mutually agreed upon projects to establish, enhance, and protect forest economies
- Collaborate with the Council to articulate mutual priorities and objectives for resource management at a landscape scale
- Utilize existing Council operating procedures to govern the parties' activities, including the establishment of meeting dates, determining who may participate in meetings and who has decision making authority, and the manner of communication between the parties
- Cooperate utilizing various programs, such as Good Neighbor Authority, Cooperative Forestry, Landscape Scale Restoration Grants and other State and Private forestry initiatives to implement priority activities across landscapes
- Assess the impacts of environmental laws and regulations on forest and woodland management on all ownership classifications
- Analyze and evaluate the impacts of decisions on private landowners
- Provide input, as applicable, during the development and implementation of NFGT Land Management Plans
- Engage the public in environmental stewardship and education activities

The leadership of public forestry in the State will strive to support and implement these Guiding Principles to achieve the ambitions and goals of Shared Stewardship in Texas.

In witness whereof, and representing State and Federal forestry leadership, the parties hereto have executed this Statement of Mutual Cooperation (SMC), to be in effect for a period of five years, unless terminated earlier by any party, beginning as of the last date written below.

Provisions

This SMC creates no right, benefit, or trust responsibility, substantive or procedural, enforceable by law or equity. The parties shall manage their respective resources and activities in a separate, coordinated and mutually beneficial manner to meet the purpose(s) of this SMC. Nothing in this SMC authorizes any of the parties to obligate or transfer anything of value.

Specific prospective projects or activities that involve the transfer of funds, services, property, and/or anything of value to a party requires the execution of separate agreements and are contingent upon numerous factors including, as applicable, but not limited to: federal agency availability of appropriated funds and other resources; state agency availability of funds and other resources; federal and state agency administrative and legal requirements (including agency authorization by statute); etc. This SMC neither provides nor meets these criteria. If the parties elect to enter into an obligation agreement that involves the transfer of funds, services, property, and/or anything of value to a party, then the applicable criteria must be met.

Nothing in this SMC is intended to alter, limit, or expand the agencies' statutory and regulatory authority.

United States Department of Agriculture

Date: July 16, 2020 By: Sonny Perdue
Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture

State of Texas

Date: July 16 2020 By: Greg Abbott
Greg Abbott
Governor