

NORTHEAST TEXAS

Conservation Delivery Network

September 27, 2016

TPWD Nature Center, Tyler Texas

The Northeast Texas Conservation Delivery Network (NETX CDN) held its fall meeting on 27 September 2016 at the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department Nature Center in Tyler. Forty-two conservation delivery professionals attended the meeting. Agencies and organizations represented were the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Caddo Lake Institute, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts office, The Nature Conservancy, National Wild Turkey Federation, USDA Natural Resources

Conservation Service, Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture, Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M Forest Service, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Caddo Lake Bio Control Alliance, Northeast Texas Municipal Water District, Teaming With Wildlife, and the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture.



The meeting agenda is included with this summary.

NE TX CDN Priority Area Working Group Reports

Sabine River Basin Working Group

Chair: Larry LeBeau (larry.lebeau@tpwd.texas.gov)

- Sabine River Working Group agreed to expand focus area to include the upper end of Toledo Bend Reservoir in Panola and Shelby Counties.
- Sabine River Focus area is now defined as the watershed between Lake Tawakoni, Lake Fork and Toledo Bend.
- Ready for Working Group to identify conservation projects with detailed proposals and action plans within Focus Area.
- Identify funding sources to contribute to CDN Focus Area "Envelope of Money"

Sulphur River Basin Working Group

Chair: Penny Wilkerson (penny.wilkerson@tpwd.texas.gov)

- Sulphur River Priority Area Working Group set boundaries to include all 2.1 million acres in the Sulphur River watershed in the Northeast Texas Conservation Delivery Network area from Fannin County east to the Texas/Arkansas state line.
- The Sulphur River Priority Area Working Group identified seven conservation needs in the area including: prescribed fire on the landscape, outreach & training, riparian habitat improvement, upland forestry & grassland/prairie management, improve water quality, control invasive species, conservation of species of greatest conservation need and their habitats.
- The Sulphur River Priority Area Working Group has also created tentative ideas for projects within the focal area including:
 1. Conservation program flyer on NRCS, TPWD, USFWS and TFS cost-share programs.
 2. US Army Corp of Engineers & TPWD Eastern Wild Turkey habitat improvement project with potential future restocking.
 3. Create and fund an interagency cooperative Rx burn incentive program
 4. Create a shared position for White Oak Creek/Cooper WMAs
 5. Urban outreach workshops in Mt. Pleasant & Texarkana

Neches River Basin Working Group

Chair: Rusty Wood (rusty.wood@tpwd.texas.gov)

Projects from this group include:

- Prescribed burning 1,400 acres (completed)
- Shortleaf pine restoration on 340 acres (Underway).
- Endangered species habitat enhancement on 82 acres (Underway).
- Control of invasive species and enhancement of native habitats on 564 acres (Completed).
- 34 Acres cut and prepped for shortleaf planting this fall
- 240 acres of endangered Spp. habitat work (RCW)- mid-story removal and mulching through a cooperative agreement between TFS and NWTF will be sprayed with herbicide and maintained with prescribed fire (underway) (
- In August, USFWS conducted mussel surveys along a stretch of the Neches River on private lands within the focal area

Cypress Basin Working Group

Chair: Robert Speight (rspeightnetmwd@aol.com)

Our working group members are: Tim Bister, TPWD; Vanessa Neace, TPWD; Wendy Ledbetter, TNC; Jim Neal, CLI; Jeffrey Reid, USFWS; Ron Deroche, USFWS; Eric

Duerkop, USFWS; Brad Dreyer, Hancock Properties;, Russel Lykins, TFS; Justin Kendall, TFS; Ryan Walser, NRCS; Robert Speight, NETMWD

The Cypress is the 2nd smallest basin in Texas, covers all or part of 9 Counties in NE Texas. Has 10 reservoirs of at least 300 acres in the Basin, all waters flow into Caddo Lake except Black Bayou which flows into Louisiana from extreme eastern Cass County.

The working group has held 3 meetings in 2016, have elected a chair (Robert Speight) and defined their area of interest as the entire basin. They have also identified Water Quality/Quantity, Bottom Land Hardwoods and endangered/threatened species as the main conservation targets in the basin.

The main threats to these targets were determined to be: Fragmentation of the land, invasive species and lack of prescribed fire.

The group's main strategies for abatement of these threats include increasing education/outreach, prescribed fire, herbicidal treatments and the use of biological control agents on invasive species where possible.

The Cypress Basin has had and continues to have many conservation projects with most being tied to the health and well-being of Caddo Lake. Caddo has been designated a Ramsar Wetland of International importance, (one of only 38 such sites in the United States and the only one in Texas) and has a Nation Wildlife Refuge, State Wildlife Management Area and a State Park along its shores. Projects by USFWS, TPWD, NWTF, CLI, USACE, NETMWD, USGS, and TNC have ranged from Baseline surveys for fish and mussels to invasive species control to restoration of the paddlefish to the river system below Lake O' the Pines. One project between USFWS and Hancock Properties resulted in getting just over 1100 acres of prescribed fire management done in the Black Cypress sub watershed.

Several projects are in the planning stages, these include two USFWS/Private partnership endeavors to restore some segments of oxbows to increase their use as fish habitat and passages. Other projects include building and installing fish attractants in Lake O' the Pines in areas devoid of natural cover and a project to install vegetation booms around boat ramps at Caddo Lake to slow the spread of Giant Salvinia to other lakes.

Red River Basin Working Group

Chair: Ragan White (ragan.white@tpwd.texas.gov)

The working group area covers approximately 938,033 acres along the South side of the Red River. Counties that are included are: Fannin, Lamar, Red River, and Bowie. The public areas are Pat Mayse WMA and COE land around Pat Mayse Lake and the Bois de Arc Unit of the Caddo National Grasslands WMA. At our meeting in

May we had representation from TPWD, LMVJV, TFS, OPJV, USFWS. We have six main concerns for habitat enhancement: Bottomland Hardwoods, Upland Forest, Native Grasslands, Water/ Stream Quality, Invasive/ Exotic species, and Endemic/ Rare Plant communities. Under each of these headings are a list of management concerns/practices that the working group would like to address. We are trying to be more strategic in our project planning moving away from the shotgun technique and moving towards a larger landscape level solution. I have analyzed some practices that are already being performed from local cooperators this past year. Approximately 3,000 acres of prescribed fire, 2,000 acres of native grass management, and 1,300 acres of Timber enhancement between 42 landowners. Currently our group is looking for a solution to the small landowner holdings to be able to coordinate landscape level management. In our area this poses to be a challenge, and as a working group we are seeking ideas on how to entice more landowners into a cooperative system. The group agreed to utilize current NRCS EQUIP rates as models for project cost in the future unless this proves to be too inaccurate with real cost. Currently there is no funding available for our area that the group is aware of, as project funding will be an issue moving into the future.

Open Pine Working Group

Chair Mike Oliver (mike.oliver@tx.usda.gov)

The Open Pine Working Group of the NE TX CDN is planning a field tour in November 2016 to tour several sites with older stands of shortleaf pine. Hopefully, this will be a two day event that includes foresters, biologists, CDN members, NRCS soil scientists, and other interested parties. The purpose of this tour is to get a feel for the diversity of sites where shortleaf pine occurs and to allow interaction between the different disciplines to better understand soil-site relationships of the shortleaf ecosystem. Mike Oliver will be sending out a Doodle Poll for everyone's response. We hope to have our shortleaf mapping effort finalized by the end of the year so that we can use it to establish priority counties for NRCS field offices to use with the shortleaf initiative.

Working Dogs for Conservation invasive species project

Chair Laura Speight (laura.speight@tpwd.texas.gov)

The NETX CDN brought Working Dogs for Conservation (WD4C) to Texas for an invasive species outreach and education project thanks to a grant through the USFWS aquatic invasive program.

Capitalizing on a working dogs ability to attract a crowd we held demonstrations on the use of trained conservation dogs to find zebra mussels hidden on boats and ash wood hidden in piles of hardwood firewood. Our outreach events were held at NETX CDN area fishing tournaments, state park campground and boat ramps and several

other venues. Fishermen, landowners, Boy Scout troops, a group of high school honors math, science and engineering students, Texas master naturalists, and elementary through high school students were among the groups we targeted. Our final event was at the Texas Toyota Bass Classic where in three days hundreds of people from all walks of life saw the WD4C demos and heard firsthand why we urge people to clean, drain and dry your boat and to buy your firewood where you burn it!

Local and statewide media did stories on our project. TFS and TPWD created informational videos showcasing the dogs which are easily accessed through social media and YouTube. A feature article on WD4C with a segment dedicated to the NETX CDN outreach and education project appeared in the American Forests Magazine which has a nation-wide subscription base.

WD4C will return in 2017 to further a study on the use of conservation dogs to detect zebra mussel veligers which cannot be seen by the naked eye. This microscopic life stage poses a huge threat when boats move from infested to uninfested waters. This project will include partners not only from Texas, but from California, Montana, Oregon and Alberta Canada. The zebra mussel infested lakes will supply researchers with ample supplies of the various life stages needed for this project. Results from this project will be reported in both white and peer reviewed papers.

LMVJV

Jeff Raasch presented the following letter of appreciation to the NETX CDN on behalf of himself and the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture Board of Directors.

Conservation Delivery Network Partners

I am writing on behalf of the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture Management Board (Board) to express our appreciation for your efforts, and to encourage your feedback to the Board regarding how we may provide additional support to the CDN.

We have followed with great interest and support, over the past several years, the initiation and continued growth of your Conservation Delivery Network (CDN). CDNs are bearing fruit toward achieving numerous shared conservation objectives in the region, from multi-partner collaboration and support of MRBI, to the establishment of multiple joint Working Groups that support outreach, development of CSP Enhancements recommendations and collaboration on multiple Tri-C targets (such as WRE forest management in the MAV of Arkansas, Louisiana & Mississippi), to the Little Boggy Ridgetop to River Bottom Project in NE Texas, to critical review and refinement recommendations for the LMVJV's Open Pine Decision Support Tool by the Arkansas & Louisiana West Gulf Coastal Plain CDN partners. Given these and the litany of positive outcomes and tangible deliverables which are emanating from CDN activities, it is clear that the hopes of the initial crafters of this concept are being met with great success. Each CDN member owns a

share in this success, and the Board heartily thanks you and hopes you will continue in these and future such efforts.

In that vein, we also encourage CDNs to identify and communicate ways in which the LMVJV Board can help remove roadblocks, facilitate progress, provide useful information/tools, and otherwise assist in the great work that you are doing. The success of LMVJV CDNs is increasingly recognized across the southeast by conservation partners as worthy of support and duplication, and we want to ensure optimal opportunity for ongoing and future success.

Thank you for your dedication to this partnership and the resources that depend on our work together!

Sincerely,
Jeff Raasch
Chair, LMVJV Management Board

EAB Update

Allen Smith gave a presentation on the emerald ash borer beetle touching on the topics below

- EAB Biology and Ecology
- EAB Texas Confirmation
- TDA/APHIS Quarantine on ash and hardwood firewood out of Harrison County
- New trapping techniques
- New sex pheromone for trapping (3z-Lactone)
- Cerceris wasps for biosurveillance
- Trap trees for EAB population removals
- Drones for EAB id in trees
- Outreach and Education

Alternative Funding/Blue Ribbon Panel

Rob Denkhaus Director; Teaming With Wildlife: True to Texas

America is in a state of conservation crisis due to a variety of issues that can largely be traced back to a lack of sufficient funding for wildlife and habitat conservation. To that end, the Blue Ribbon Panel, comprised of national business and conservation leaders, was convened to evaluate and recommend a new funding

mechanism to support state fish & wildlife conservation of all species. After evaluating a variety of potential solutions, the Panel recommended that congress dedicate \$1.3 billion annually in existing revenue from the the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and waters to the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program.

These recommendations were introduced to the House of Representatives as House bill H.R. 5650 by Congressman Don Young (R-AK) and Congresswoman Debbie Dingell (D-MI). The bill calls for funds to be distributed to the state wildlife agencies in order to implement State Wildlife Action Plans and promote conservation of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. If this bill is to pass, TPWD stands to gain ~\$60 million in additional funding every year from the federal government plus a 25% match from the state. This could result in new jobs, increased funding for research, additional pass-through grants, land acquisition, etc. Additional updates on the current status of H.R. 5650 and the Blue Ribbon Panel can be found on the Teaming With Wildlife: True To Texas website (www.teamingtxwildlife.com) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/TexasTeamingWithWildlife).

Chronic Wasting Disease Update

Bob Ditmar DVM

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a chronic, progressive and fatal disease of some cervid species. It is one of a group of diseases known as Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs). This group also includes scrapie in sheep, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) of cattle and Creutzfeldt-Jakob (CJD) of humans. Cervid species that are known to be susceptible include white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, red deer, moose, sika deer and reindeer.

CWD is believed to be caused by an abnormal form of a normal protein called a prion. Accumulations of these abnormal proteins in the brain lead to a loss of the normal structure and the "spongiform" lesions. Prions are shed in bodily secretions like urine, saliva and feces and congregate in various body tissues especially nervous tissue, lymphoid tissue, retina and spleen but can be present in any tissue. Prions are very difficult to destroy and can persist in the environment for extended periods. Transmission is either directly from animal to animal or indirectly to an animal from a contaminated environment.

Symptoms may not occur for 16 months to 4 years after infection and include weight loss, lethargy, dull hair coat, drooling, saw-horse stance, lowered head and behavioral changes. Death usually occurs soon after the presence of symptoms but research shows that infected animals are also more likely to die from other causes like car collisions, predators or hunters than uninfected animals. Infected animals will shed prions before symptoms occur.

Surveillance for CWD began in Texas in 2002 and through 2014 over 30,000 free ranging deer have been sampled. An additional 19,000 captive deer were also tested. In 2012 CWD was discovered in a free ranging mule deer in West Texas. Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. (TPWD) initiated a management plan that included creation of management zones in that area with increased surveillance through mandatory sampling of hunter harvested animals and restrictions on unnatural deer movement. Since 2012 a total of eight positive animals have been found, all located in the Hueco Mt. area of West Texas.

In June, 2015 a captive white-tailed deer tested positive in a breeder facility. Since then three other breeder facilities have had positive animals. Two of the positive facilities have been depopulated and postmortem and ante-mortem testing is ongoing in the other two. At this time 25 deer have tested positive from these four facilities. Also in 2015 a positive free-ranging mule deer was detected in a new area in the Panhandle of Texas. Increased state wide surveillance in 2015-16 resulted in over 10,500 samples collected from hunter harvested and road killed deer.

With the discovery of CWD in the State's captive deer herd, Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission instituted emergency, then interim and then final rules to increase the testing requirements for permitted deer movements. Also the Commission adopted new rules to establish management zones in the Panhandle, and the area around the positive captive facilities along with modifying the existing zones in West Texas. These rules include restrictions on movement allowed under permitted activities, mandatory sampling of hunter harvested deer and restrictions on the movement of certain carcass parts from CWD Zones in the State and entry into the State from other states know to have CWD.

Wrap Up

Several ideas were suggested for consideration by the general membership including; a presentation at a future NETX CDN meeting briefing the membership on programs/funding sources available for landowners in the CDN area. For the CDN to sponsor a workshop on how to write grants/proposals to secure funding and for the membership to consider forming a Prescribe burn working group.

AGENDA

NETX CDN General Membership meeting
TPWD Nature Center
September 27, 2016 9:00 am

9:00 – 9:15	Welcome	Wes Moorehead
9:15 – 10:30	Delivery Priority Tool Working Group reports <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neches River working group• Cypress Basin working group• Sulphur River working group• Open Pine	Jared Laing Rusty Wood Robert Speight Penny Wilkerson Mike Oliver
10:30-10:45	Break	
10:45-11:30	Working group reports continued <ul style="list-style-type: none">• WD4C working group• Red River working group• Sabine working group	Laura Speight Ragan White Larry LeBeau Jeff Raasch
11:30-12:00	LMVJV	
12:00– 1:30	LUNCH on site	
1:30 – 2:00	EAB Update	Allen Smith
2:00 – 3:00	Alternative funding/Blue Ribbon Panel	Rob Denkhaus
3:00 – 3:30	Chronic Wasting Disease Update	Bob Dittmar, DVM
3:30 – 3:45	Wrap - up	Laura Speight