

Notes

NETX CDN General Membership Virtual Meeting September 15, 2020

The Northeast Texas Conservation Delivery Network (NETX CDN), formed in 2011, was the first CDN established by the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture in the West Gulf Coastal Plain region. The NETX CDN was organized in an effort to more strategically meet the wildlife and landscape restoration and management needs identified by numerous conservation organizations that have a 10-year record of collaborative work in the Service Area. Recent years have witnessed an expanded delivery of wildlife habitat improvements on both private and public lands across the Piney Woods Region. Chair Lee Andersen (TFS) and Vice-Chair Annie Farrell (NWTF) lead an 8-member Steering Committee, working to ensure conservation continues into the future.

Presentations/handouts will be posted on the LMJV website – <https://www.lmvjv.org/ne-texas-cdn>. Go to **FULL CDN MEETING SUMMARIES & NOTES** – look for September 2020 CDN Meeting to review all presentations and the final meeting notes. The NETX CDN met 9-12 noon, with attendance of approximately 60 people (see attached). Business Review – Lee Andersen and Annie Farrell provided an overview of 2017-2020 HIP Summary, and 2020 HIP Projects and Management. The Recent RFP resulted in these allocations:

	Complete	In Progress
Total (Both HIP)		
# of Projects	34	26
Acres	10,844	6,684
Cost Share	\$538,641.14	\$277,451.00
Standard		
# of Projects	25	19
Acres	7,525	4,876
Cost Share	\$391,141.04	\$205,323.00
Neches River		
# of Projects	9	7
Acres	3,319	1,808
Cost Share	\$147,500.10	\$72,128.00

Working Groups: Progress and News – Discussed Fire – expressed an interest for finding a new chair (probably TWD); Open Pine (Jamie Hooker new chair), Neches, Trinity River; CDN work groups have some member holes to fill, and new leadership is always welcome. “Open Discussion” identified a few Questions with Answers. Request was made for annual adjustment in working groups – after discussion, we agreed to keep this dialogue going, but will not adjust website until next summer/fall meeting is held (review and amend working groups on annual basis).

Chair & Vice-Chair reviewed steps in the RFP process and discussed ways to improve project proposal success; suggested that everyone review the score sheet from the RFP to see how points are allotted.

TLIT & GRIP working together; described maps with overlapping counties (see new NETX/TLIT Flyer).

Rx Fire Opportunity – TFS (Lee Andersen and Andy McCrady) – Expect a prescribed fire workshop at McMillan Forest near Overton (similar to recent Alazan workshop). The prescribed fire working group will finish the planning of this workshop and information will be forthcoming. Andy McCrady provided an overview of TFS-led prescribed fire accomplishment and opportunities. The “one-pager” attachment describes all the TFS programs statewide – the remainder of the presentation included highlights of the East Texas (43 counties) programs and opportunities germane to the NETX CDN.

NOTE – 100% cost share does not include firebreaks (only cost of Rx Fire).

<https://txlongleaf.org/media/1226/tfs-rx-fire-web-links-flyer.pdf>

Grant Funds 2021-2025 – Annie Farrell reiterated current status; Jeff Raasch provided forecast for HIP funds (Stamp, PR & TPWD Foundation) that appear to be in-line with previous years, with potential for additional funds, possibly \$30,000 in FY21, so be prepared in case of a quick RFP. Bartush discussed option for USDA – NRCS proposal through regional Conservation Partnership Program, which could supplement our HIP program and secure funds for smaller landowners who seek forestry-related intermediate stand treatments.

Q&A – Round Table Chat Room - Open Forum response from Leadership: Bill Bartush, Reuben Gay, Lee Andersen, Annie Farrell, Jamie Hooker) *See CHAT summary below.*

Continuing Education – NETX and TLIT ZOOM, You Tube and Video Options (Jamie Hooker)

CDN Opportunities for Training

October 2, 2020 (1-5 pm) TWS Conference Workshop Title: How to Speak (Understand) Forestry for Wildlife Biologists (<https://wildlife.org/2020-conference/>) Cost: Membership \$150 + \$30 registration.

October 7, 2020 (9:00 am - 3:30 pm) Prescribed fire to manage glades for quail and plant communities.

<https://oakfirescience.com/events/glades-quail-and-prescribed-fire-workshop-in-arkansas/>
<https://oakfirescience.com/download/2020-newsletters/July-2020.pdf>

Registration required, attendance is limited to the first 100 registrants. [CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

October 20-23, 2020: 13th Biennial Longleaf Conference Virtual / online for more information.

November 19, 2020 (12 – 1:30 pm) EST Pairing Historical Fire Regimes with Silviculture

<https://oakfirescience.com/download/2020-newsletters/July-2020.pdf>

December 8, 2020 – Webinar - Litter to glitter: releasing the herbaceous ground-layer potential stored in oak forest floors <https://oakfirescience.com/events>

Open Pine Trainings/Field Days – Areas of Consideration and Discussion

1. **Open Pine in the Southeast US:** NWTF Foresters and partnering agencies talk about silvicultural practices for open pine forests in southeastern states. Look at the challenges of different sites and soils, restoration efforts, prescribed fire. Discuss effects of open pine management on endangered, threatened, and declining species in each region.
2. **East TX Open Pine Tour:** Hear management strategies for open pine in ETX. Discuss herbicide use, prescribed fire regimes, natural regen on National Forests, and optimal basal area/canopy coverage for the desired understory. Potential “showcase” spots: Fox Hunter’s Hill (Sabine NF), FRC land in Newton County, Scrappin Valley properties, Boykin Springs (Angelina NF).
3. **Ecologic and Economic Impacts of Open Pine:** Discuss how timber and wildlife management can both benefit from open pine management strategies (thinning, prescribed fire, herbicide). Compare the economic and ecologic costs/benefits for “typical” pine plantations vs open pine stands. Travel to private properties where landowners are actively managing for both wildlife and timber production (up for suggestions, I only know for sure the Winston’s).
4. **Open Pine vs Pine Plantation Structure from Establishment to Harvest:** Discuss the different management strategies used in pine plantation management vs open pine management. Look at the differences in understory structure, plant diversity, and wildlife diversity as the stands age. Involve Cliff Shackelford, Rusty Wood, Dan Saenz, etc., with discussions on wildlife use in each type of stand at the different age classes.

Funding and Future Partnership Opportunities RCPP Piney Woods – (Bill Bartush and Will Newman)

- NFWF and RCPP – expanding opportunity for farm bill funding priority practices <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/rcpp/>

Texas Longleaf Implementation Team (TLIT) Jenny Sanders reviewed NFWF funds. The TLIT website was improved, with readily available access to summary material. Included is an “On-Line Dashboard of Accomplishment,” enabling accomplishments to be seen in detail for ease of developing reports and for comparisons between-among years, or practices. [Longleaf Accomplishment Dashboard](#)

The TLIT conservation philosophy is about more than just “pine.” To emphasize a broader approach, with elements of a landscape-scale philosophy and intricate longleaf ecosystem, TLIT has added items to the website for both information and education purposes. Both the fire-maintained longleaf plant community, as well as the avian wildlife diversity, are illustrated in the development of these items: [Groundcover Resource Page](#) and [Birds of the Longleaf Forest Page](#) on website.

River Access Conservation Areas (RACA) Program (Marcos DeJesus & John Bothos) Active river basin and waterway conservation program with possible impact of NETX areas such as Caddo-Cypress Basin and the Neches River. Since inception, RACA has logged 18 leased access fishing sites. Access to ~200 river miles. Improved access or habitat conservation project at 9 sites. RACA anticipates adding 20-25 new RACA sites over the next 3-4 years and is lacking sites in East Texas. Conservation Delivery opportunity is also an element offered, and could be a good connection with NETX projects. Both native riparian vegetation planting and native seed source for restoration are possible actions.

OPJV, Fire Coordination and connection NETX/TLIT – Thomas Janke introduced himself to the east Texas partners and expressed sincere interest in future involvement. There have been a number of changes in recent months on our JV team. Thomas’ role will be to promote fire, with emphasis on wildlife habitat restoration in the OPJV and throughout Texas.

Q&A for CDN Members – CHAT BOX comments and responses

Question – Refresh my memory on the minimum acreage needed for the turkey reintroduction?

- From Jason Hardin: 10,000 acres for an eastern turkey restocking and within focal areas.

Question – Is a kml or shapefile of the priority areas available so that we can check out project closeness to the priority areas for HIP?

- The KMLs are always sent out with the announcement email, and several have mentioned that this process helped. If anyone does need the PA shapefile, let Annie Farrell know and she can email it; the areas of concern and the known project requests improve planning.
- We were given the shapefiles for the Turkey Priority Area, but that file did not include the known turkey areas within. Can that be added? Great Idea – this will be added.

Question – Is there a website/list or some type of clearinghouse site of known cost sharing or grant opportunities to refer to?

- There is a partial list specifically for Longleaf (see link below). Then you add in known NRCS EQIP on their website, and CDN HIP rates are provided each year with RFP.
<https://txlongleaf.org/landowner-assistance/resources/cost-share-opportunities/>

Questions – How is a NETX- HIP project scored and ranked? Could or should we consider each working group area having one or more projects funded regardless of cost? Could we consider

holding a min of 1 guaranteed proposal to get approved per Working Group area? They value the ranking system that is in place; however, they think it would promote/encourage members more if we could at least have one project approved per working group area. Is there a cost per acre that would guarantee approval for projects? What does a project have to score to get funded?

- First – not every working group submits a project; some working groups submit many. A project should stand on its own merit regardless of area of origin; the score sheet we reviewed has clear ranking factors – it was suggested a program manager rough score their project before submission, and if possible figure out avenues for increasing value. Some of those projects had a very high cost per acre – that becomes a tie breaker when several project have similar scores. High costs per acre involve high cost practice requests. Mechanical treatments are expensive – consider more RX fire acres in combination with a “mulching treatment” to make the proposal more cost-effective.

Question – If someone from the review committee could meet with the Trinity group and assist with advice on improvements to submissions, that could help too. We understand high cost practices like mulching are virtually a deal killer, but how can we try to encourage folks to not request the whole 'wish list.' Suggest a meeting for work groups requesting assistance to walk through step-by-step request in phases of work.

- Good idea – larger groups may not be possible now, but we could host a ZOOM.

Question – to TFS Staff: Will you offer private landowners the service of installing firebreaks for training purposes for your staff? Or is this a myth?

- Yes, TFS does provide this service but, as usual, delivery of this program varies from district to district. For instance, Henderson District provides this service, but charges an hourly rate of \$70 per dozer hour; some districts have high workload, so they don't advertise, as they don't have time to provide this service. Those districts that do not have land to manage utilize this program more often than others, and use this effort to maintain hours on their dozers, train their operators, and provide a valuable service to landowners. Best to check with appropriate TFS District office; there is also a Firebreak Form that provides some explanation and costs as well.

Question – From Jason Villwock to Everyone: 10:28 AM

What is the long-term trend in funding amounts available each year in these programs?

- The Habitat Incentive Program (HIP) was started in 2017 as a means to support landowner incentives not being served by existing options. For instance, TIMO and other AGI issues preclude farm bill funding, so many forestry “producers” (especially intermediate treatments) go unfunded; USFWS PFW could not fund RX Fire, etc. The HIP program was another opportunity to strategically place incentives in the highest priority areas. Funding has come from a number of sources, and has been relatively stable for 5 (five) years, with interest in growing the pool. Farm Bill programs are the primary target for landowners; the NETX CDN efforts through HIP are geared to move more landowners towards those options, and support NRCS in better funding of those conservation priorities of the CDN.

Question – Has anyone had contractors saying they won't burn an area because of concern of crown fire and request site prep such as mastication be implemented first, or are you usually able to burn safely by limiting the weather conditions and fuel moistures?

- No one is aware of contractors who have registered this concern – developing a prescribed burn plan for any site should define the parameters and requirements for a safe burn.

Question – Any update on the DSC grant for outreach activities?

- Not at the time of the ZOOM meeting; however, the very next day (9/16) Laura Ashley Overdyke received a letter from Dallas Safari Club regretfully informing NETX that they did not receive the grant; the NETX leadership will discuss future options.

Question – We would like someone to develop training videos or field days; how can we improve communication and discuss relevant issues as a group?

- Laura Speight Couch Mountain in Camp Co is open to host field days.
- Don Dietz, FRC, would be willing to show our tracts of longleaf on Longleaf Ridge.
- Jenny Sanders: these are great ideas! TLIT can help with access – I'm always hearing that cooperators would love to be used as tour sites. We may also have funds that could help with developing digital resources if needed.
- Andy McCrady: I suggest you pair up with Jenny and TLIT on the field tours in longleaf regions.
- Laura-Ashley Overdyke: Editorial Roundtable with relevant news sources – since Fire and Forest Management are such hot topics right now, use that to be virtually available to major news outlets about the options. I have some contacts in the region and could help set it up, but the gov't experts would need to have clearance to talk to media.