

# FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

Timber ◇ Wildlife ◇ Water ◇ Soil ◇ Best Management Practices ◇ Forest Health ◇ Recreation ◇ Aesthetics

## CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the signup periods for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the CRP Grasslands in 2021. **Signup for general CRP will be open from January 4, 2021, to February 12, 2021;** and **signup for CRP Grasslands runs from March 15, 2021, to April 23, 2021.** Both programs are competitive and provide annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

### Enrollment Options

**CRP - General Signup:** Through CRP, farmers and ranchers establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Farmers and ranchers who participate in CRP help provide numerous benefits to the nation's environment and economy.

CRP general signup is held annually. The general signup includes increased opportunities for enrollment of wildlife habitat through the State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Initiative.

**Grasslands Signup:** CRP Grasslands helps landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, pastureland, and certain other lands while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. Protecting grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations, and improves environmental quality. A separate CRP Grasslands signup is offered each year following general signup.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation pro-

grams in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits. The program marked its 35-year anniversary December 2020.

Program successes include:

- Preventing more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, which is enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks;
- Reducing nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95 and 85%, respectively;
- Sequestering an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking 9 million cars off the road;
- Creating more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, which is enough to go around the world seven times; and
- Benefiting bees and other pollinators and increasing populations of ducks, pheasants, turkey, bobwhite quail, prairie chickens, grasshopper sparrows, and many other birds.

Data shows the Conservation Reserve Program continues to have high value in Texas, with more than three million acres in the state enrolled. CRP enrollment in Texas is highest in the Panhandle.

About 22 million acres are enrolled in CRP nationally. Enrollment is the highest in Texas, Colorado, Kansas and Iowa.

*from USDA Farm Service Agency News Release dated November 12, 2020; and Texas Farm Bureau "Texas Agriculture Minute" post, published November 19, 2020*

- <http://bit.ly/CRPsign-up>
- <http://bit.ly/CRP-popular-in-Texas>
- <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/index>
- <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

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## PLANTS FOR CONSERVATION

from NRCS News Release dated Oct. 28, 2020

For more information:

- <http://bit.ly/ProvenPlants>
- <https://www.blm.gov/programs/natural-resources/native-plant-communities/national-seed-strategy>
- [www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/plantmaterials/technical/cp/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/plantmaterials/technical/cp/)
- <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/plantmaterials/home/>
- <https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/java/>

USDA NRCS Plant Materials Centers (PMCs) have a long and successful history of selecting and releasing conservation plants to support soil stabilization, improve pollinator and wildlife habitat, provide livestock forage, and increase the diversity in plantings. All PMC plant releases support NRCS natural resource conservation activities on private lands as well as the National Seed Strategy, a Federal inter-agency effort to select appropriate plants for restoration and conservation on both public and private lands.

This year, the Plant Materials Program announces the release of six new conservation plants to the public; five are listed below. They join the 572 active and commercially available conservation plant releases developed by the Plant Materials Program over the past 80 years.

**West Bay Germplasm gulf cordgrass** (*Spartina spartinae*) was released by the Golden Meadow PMC (Galliano, Louisiana). West Bay Germplasm is a native, perennial grass recommended for use in coastal stabilization and restoration projects in coastal marshes and coastal saline prairies of the north central Gulf of Mexico basin.

**Fuego Germplasm Indian blanket** (*Gaillardia pulchella*) was released by the Kika de la Garza PMC (Kingsville, Texas) in cooperation with the Texas Natives Seeds program. Fuego Germplasm is a native wildflower recommended for pollinator habitat plantings, upland wildlife

plantings, highway right-of-way revegetation, reclamation plantings, and for inclusion in range seeding mixes in the southern and coastal plains of Texas.

**Guadalupe Germplasm white tridens** (*Tridens albescens*) is a warm season perennial grass recommended for critical area revegetation, erosion control, right-of-way plantings, range seed mixes, and wildlife plantings throughout the southern, coastal plain, central Texas, west Texas, and southern New Mexico regions.

**Menard Germplasm purple threeawn** (*Aristida purpurea*) is a perennial bunchgrass recommended for upland wildlife plantings, critical site revegetation, right-of-way plantings, and inclusion in range seeding mixes throughout the southern, coastal plain, and central Texas regions.

**Pineywoods Germplasm thickspike gayfeather** (*Liatris pycnostachya*) was released by the East Texas PMC (Nacogdoches, Texas). Pineywoods Germplasm is a native, long lived perennial wildflower recommended for wildlife and pollinator habitat and other native plantings in eastern Texas, northern Louisiana, and southern Arkansas.

For additional information on specific species of plants mentioned, see the USDA PLANTS database. Technical information and guidance on the use of conservation plants to address resource concerns can be found on the Plant Materials Program website.

## ONLINE TOOL - AVENZA PDF MAPS

PDF Maps is a powerful, award-winning offline map viewer with a connected iTunes-like map store to find, purchase and download new professionally created maps for a wide variety of uses.

Downloaded maps are stored on your device and are always available even when not connected to the Internet. Maps don't need network coverage to be viewed,

which helps you avoid data roaming charges when traveling.

There are thousands of free specialty maps for offline use available through the in-app Avenza Map Store. Browse and purchase maps for camping, hiking, nautical and marine navigation (including NOAA and FAA charts for North America and other regions of the world), and topography.

From Southern Regional Extension Forestry site

For more information:

- <https://sref.info/resources/mobile-apps/avenza-pdf-maps>

## DRONES REPLANTING FORESTS?!

The United States has had its most devastating wildfire season on record, with more than 8 million acres of land burned across the country this past year. Regenerating the forests that sat on much of that land would ordinarily take years and involve hundreds of people manually replanting seedlings grown in nurseries.

Seattle-based DroneSeed has what it says is a much faster and more effective solution. As the company's name suggests, it uses fleets of drones to reforest areas that have burned down, dropping what it calls "seed vessels" into areas where they have the best chance of growing back. The specially designed packets consist of a combination of fertilizers, nutrients, and pest deterrents that help the seeds take root more effectively — without having to be physically buried in the ground.

The eight-foot drones, up to five at a time flying on pre-programmed routes, can cover up to 50 acres a day and each carry as much as 57 pounds of seed vessels.

DroneSeed received exemptions from the Federal Aviation Administration earlier this year that allow it to use the drone swarms to replant burned forests.

The company is already restoring forests impacted by the August Complex Fire in California and Oregon's Holiday Farm Fire, and is examining other fire-stricken areas up and down the West coast.

Drones aren't the only technology the company uses to make replanting more effective. It also deploys Lidar, the sensing technology used by self-driving cars to map the world around them, to create a 3D model of the terrain. That's coupled with sensors that measure different wavelengths of light to tell the difference between areas of gravel and places where healthy soil may be better suited for trees to grow.

DroneSeed claims it can grow upwards of 140 trees per acre based on trials in New Zealand and Washington state.

*from CNN Business news story dated Dec. 3, 2020*

- [www.cnn.com/2020/12/03/tech/droneseed-wildfire-california-oregon/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2020/12/03/tech/droneseed-wildfire-california-oregon/index.html)

## LONGLEAF PINE STEWARDSHIP FUNDS

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and 10 partner organizations announced the 2020 round of funding for Longleaf Stewardship Fund projects. Twenty-three new forest conservation grants totaling \$5.6 million were awarded.

The Longleaf Stewardship Fund is a landmark public-private partnership that expands, enhances, and accelerates longleaf pine conservation across the ecosystem's historical range. The fund supports projects that advance the longleaf pine ecosystem through collaborative and result-oriented actions that contribute to the restoration goals of the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative.

One of these grants was awarded to East Texas for "Advancing Longleaf Pine Restoration and Management in East Texas." Texas A&M Forest Service, working with the Texas Longleaf Implementation Team

(TLIT), was the grantee. The grant amount of \$181,971 paired with \$183,865 in matching funds will be used to engage private landowners through education, outreach, and technical and financial assistance to restore, enhance, and conserve 1,000 acres of longleaf pine and bottomland hardwood forest in East Texas. The project will reach landowners through workshops and county landowner association meetings, as well as promote stewardship planning, prescribed burning, and other forest management practices, benefiting northern bobwhite, Swainson's warbler, and game species such as wild turkey.

Private landowners looking for cost-share assistance in maintaining, improving, or restoring longleaf pine should check the TLIT webpage: <https://txlongleaf.org/landowner-assistance/resources/cost-share-opportunities>.

*from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) news release dated August 26, 2020*

- <http://bit.ly/NFWFgrant>
- <https://txlongleaf.org/>
- <http://www.americaslongleaf.org/>

Distribution of this newsletter is provided free of charge to professional foresters, state and federal agency professionals, county judges and commissioners, 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 [tfsweb.tamu.edu/StewardshipPublications](https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/StewardshipPublications). If you would rather receive this newsletter electronically (by e-mail), contact us at the address, phone number, or e-mail address above.**

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**Editorial Advisor:**

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## TIMBER TAX WORKSHOP

**Virtual Texas Timber Income and Property Tax Workshop**

*February 9, 2021; 1:00-5:30*

This half-day online workshop is designed for forest landowners, consulting foresters, accountants, attorneys, and others who work with forest landowners in matters pertaining to timber taxes.

The workshop will provide basic information about timber taxation and the latest changes to tax laws and rules for 2020 tax return preparations. Topics will focus on federal timber income tax issues for private forest owners with a refresher on local timberland property taxes.

Hosted by Texas A&M Forest Service, Oregon State University Extension Services, and Texas Forestry Association, this year's workshop will feature guest speakers, Dr. Tamara Cushing, Mr. Joe Holcomb, and accountants with Axley & Rode, LLP.

Continuing education credits will be available and there is no fee for attending.

To register, visit <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/TaxWorkshop/> or contact Melissa Yeldell at 979-458-6632 or [melissa.yeldell@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:melissa.yeldell@tfs.tamu.edu) for more information.



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