THE BURNS FORESTRY NEWSLETTER— WINTER 2025-26

SOUTHEAST US TIMBER MARKET

The recent meeting in Buena Vista, Georgia titled "Market Loss Reactions and Adaptions for Operational Pine Plantation Growers in the Southeast US" included speakers from the Forest Landowners Association and Auburn University, as well as several forestry and nursery companies that addressed ongoing challenges to the timber market. Pine sawtimber stumpage prices across the Southeast have declined from about $48 per ton in 1994 to $24 per ton in 2025. Pine pulpwood prices have also fallen - below $8 per ton in some markets as a result of oversupply, mill closures, and industry consolidation. Pine pulpwood stumpage prices have also been negatively affected by environmental regulations, global competition, and restructuring in the pulpwood and paper sector.

TEXAS TIMBER MARKET

Southern softwood lumber mill capacity exceeds 28 billion board feet in 2025, a 35% increase since 2017. The forest sector in Texas adds $41.6 billion to the state's economy and supports about 172,000 jobs. The East Texas region not only supports domestic markets, but also contributes to export markets. While prices for pine sawtimber and pine and hardwood pulpwood decreased in the third quarter of 2025, hardwood prices increased.

FOREST REGULATION

In an article in 'Forest Landowner Magazine,' Pete Williams states that the biggest change he has seen in his 50+ years of life is the growth of bureaucracy, administration, and regulation in all aspects of life which have cancelled out time and cost savings with technological advancement. For example, he cites universities having more administrators than professors and college basketball teams having more coaches and administrators on the bench than players. His complaint is that the top priority of bureaucrats in the federal government is not do anything that doesn't fit into their existing procedural box. They have more power than elected officials since they do not face reelection or term-limits. He said they don't have to make money or adhere to a budget and don't have to worry about losing their jobs.

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PINEYWOODS LAW

NEW TAMU CLT BUILDING

Texas A&M University is preparing construction on a 212,000 square foot cross-laminated timber (CLT) campus building that will serve as a visitor center, event space, food science facilities, winemaking and fermentation labs, as well as student run retail and restaurant operations. CLT is an engineered wood product made from layers of lumber bonded at right angles. CLT is becoming a major contributor to sustainable construction, providing a new market for surplus timber. The wood for the new building will entirely sourced from Texas.

DRAFT ANIMAL LOGGING

A recent timber harvest study in *Forest Science* examined the soil and residual tree impacts of logging with draft animals in the Southeast. The case study was a mule-logged timber harvest that utilized a skid steer to load logs. The study indicated that only about 6% of the area had soil disturbance. The mule skidding contributed 3.3% and the other 2.8% was caused by the skid steer used in the operation. The mule skidding increased soil bulk density by only 3.4% which was not statistically significant. The skid steer, however, produced a statistically significant 13.4% increase in soil bulk density.

Most current timber harvesting operations in the South are highly mechanized logging systems that can negatively affect the site. Draft animal logging is a relatively low-impact timber harvesting system that results in less soil and residual tree damage. Because of its lower productivity, however, it may be limited to small-volumes.

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STRATIFICATION OF TIMBER INVENTORIES

Stratification in timber estimates is the process of breaking the estimated timbered area into smaller component parts, sampling each component according to the necessary sampling percentage and then combining the component estimates to arrive at an estimate of the total timbered area. Stratification makes the sampling more efficient and more useful. You not only get the estimate from the whole area, but you also have the individual estimates for each component. In addition the stratification will produce a more precise estimate for the total area as well as the component parts.

MONARCH BUTTERFLY

While there has been much concern regarding the population decline of the monarch butterfly, most of the research has focused on the habitat loss in the breeding ground of the Midwest. Since there is limited information on how environment changes in Texas and Mexico have affected monarch survival during their fall and spring migration, researchers from several universities recently studied land use changes, climate changes, milkweed populations, as well as reductions in other nectar-producing plants to find their influences on monarch population declines.

The researchers examined 30 years of satellite data to determine changes in temperature, rainfall, and plant growth on the migration route. Despite increased urbanization along I-35, landscape changes were minimal compared to the Mid-West and the study concluded that habitat loss in Texas and Mexico was not a major influence on the decline of the butterfly. Nevertheless, planting native milkweed is still recommended to benefit the migration route of the monarch butterfly.

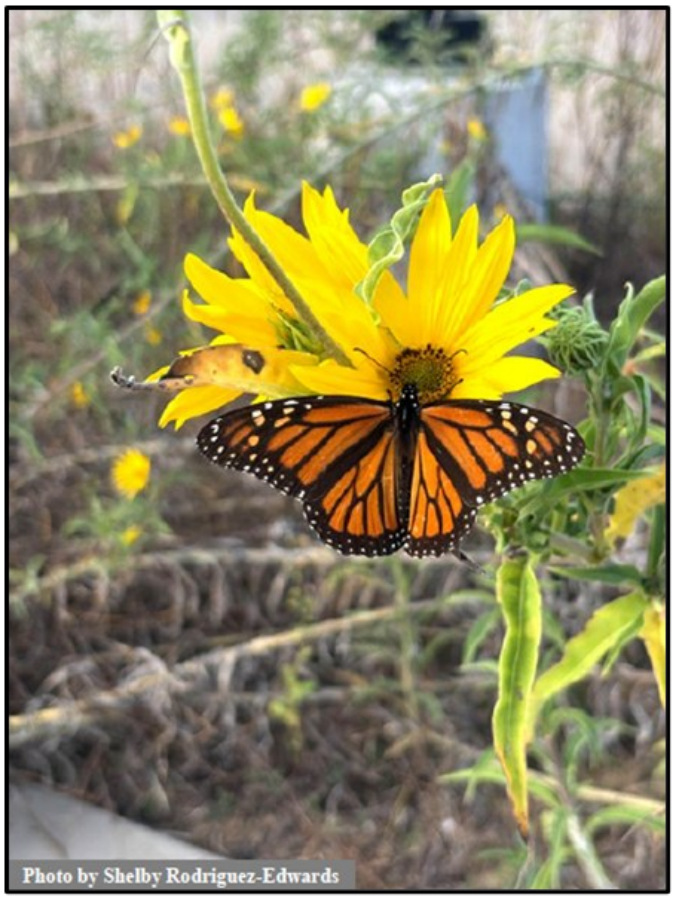
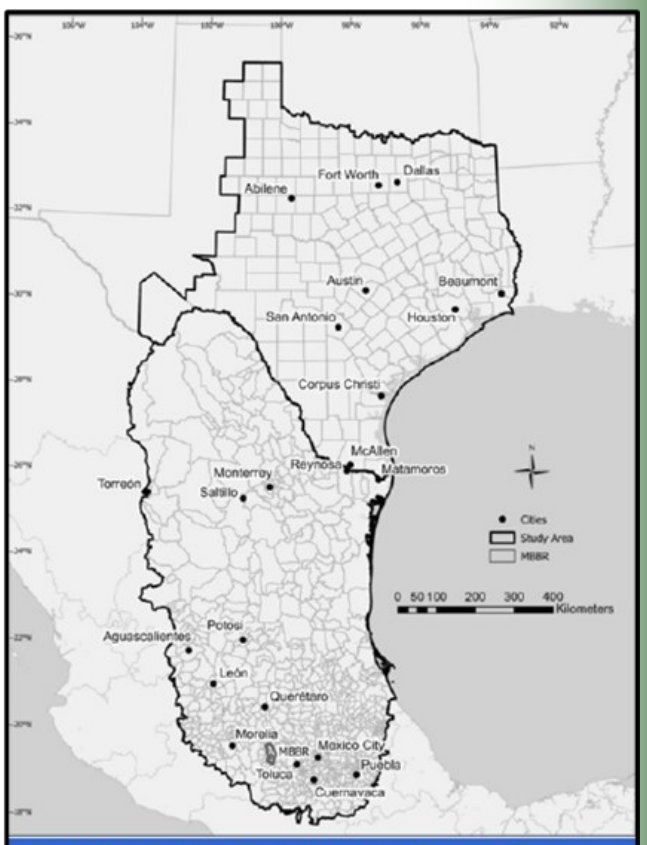


Photo by Shelby Rodriguez-Edwards



Map of the study area and the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve (general monarch wintering area).

TEXAS FOREST SERVICE ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR 2026 SOUTHERN PINE BEETLE PREVENTION PROGRAM (SPB)

Texas A&M Forest Service is offering landowners financial and technical assistance through the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program. Applications for this cost-share program are open now and will close on Jan. 31, 2026, at mid-night.

Eligible landowners (both individual and partnership/trust ownerships) can receive technical and financial assistance to reduce the threat of future Southern Pine Beetle infestations and outbreaks by stand thinning.
Eligible landowners will receive $50 per acre with a 100-acre maximum to assist with their first forest thinning. They may also receive $5 per acre to offset the cost of using a professional consulting forester.

Landowners may receive no more than $5,000 in total for assistance for thinning and/or consulting.
"The Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program helps landowners reduce the risk that southern pine beetles pose to Texas forests through stand thinning while also promoting overall stand vigor, growth and health", said Allen Smith, Texas A&M Forest Service Forest Health Program Leader. For more information contact your Texas A&M Forest Ser-vice office or Allen Smith at (903) 297-5094 or lasmith@tfs.tamu.edu.

Eligible applicants must own a minimum of 10 contiguous acres composed of at least 70% pine trees; tree stands must start with a minimum of 120 square-feet per acre basal area; tree stands must be thinned to 80 square-feet per acre basal area or less; and thinning of stands must be completed within 14 months.

This program is designed to only assist first-time pine stand thinning operations.
Funding priority will be given to eligible applications within Angelina, Cass, Cherokee, Hardin, Harrison, Houston, Jas-per, Liberty, Marion, Nacogdoches, Newton, Panola, Polk, Rusk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, Tyler, and Walker counties.

Applications should be submitted through landowners' local Texas A&M Forest Service office.

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