

Prescribed Burning Demonstration in Angelina County

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Longleaf Taskforce provided a demonstration of forest prescribed burning for area landowners on March 3. About 30 persons gathered to see how to plan and execute an understory burn beneath 100 acres of mature loblolly pine on the Winston Ranch. The burning trainer, Robert (Bob) Baker (TPWD Biologist) provided an extensive pre-burn briefing which set assignments and expectations for the burn. Bob included training information and tips so that attendees could understand expected changes in humidity, temperature, and wind speed throughout the day, and their expected effects on fuels. Several “first timers” were paired with experienced burn crew members who guided their use of drip torches, fire rakes and flappers.

Supporting the burn demo from the Winston Ranch was Simon Winston and Paul Wood. These men conduct several hundred acres of burns each year on the land and were eager to share their expertise in burning. They have a passion for prescribed burning, knowing how it provides many benefits to the land. Frequently burned lands are much easier to burn since accumulating fuels (i.e. pine straw, dead falls, yaupon) are consumed in the burns. Reducing fuels in a controlled burn prevents an unplanned ignition from causing mortality to timber holdings. Winston also burns for wildlife benefits. He is enthusiastic about the robust habitat improvements which benefit many species such as quail, turkey, and deer. Burning also keeps the understory open and develops a diverse and beautiful herbaceous cover in their forests. Simon Winston is choosing to reforest some of the land to longleaf pine as the loblolly matures and is harvested. Longleaf provides multiple wildlife benefits and is well adapted to frequent burning. Burn day participants were able to see Winston’s restoration projects of maturing longleaf stands and native grasses.

The Texas Longleaf Taskforce consists of 14 conservation organizations that provide funding and training for the restoration of longleaf to its historic range in east Texas. Story by Kent Evans, Coordinator of the Texas Longleaf Taskforce. For information: txlongleaf.org.