

**Meeting Notes – NETX Steering Meeting  
3/22/2022 TPWD Conference Room – ZOOM**

**Summary of Tasks and Actions**

- RFP will be open May 1 - May 31/2022, with \$246,000 available for projects.
- Project proposals will utilize one format with reduced practices available.
- Steering Committee Meeting scheduled 6/14/2022 to review and approve proposals.
- June 14 SC Meeting will revisit 2022 calendar, SC and Work Group membership.

**Notes – Northeast Texas Steering Committee March 22, 2022**

There were 21 participants at the meeting: Seven Steering Committee members, plus two alternates from NRCS and TFS (all nine SC members were represented), along with 12 participants from working groups, delivery team members (including Taylor Garrison, who represented efforts in west Trinity River counties - Freestone, Navarro, Ellis, Dallas and Limestone), and other partners.

The existing CDN roles and responsibilities – chair, vice-chair, and the Watershed Working groups – were discussed and reviewed. The Steering Committee guides the direction of the CDN, while the working group Leads focus on the delivery of priority conservation actions within each watershed group.

- Desired Forest Conditions Wildlife in WGCP Bottomland Hardwoods;  
Question – what is potential for a wetland/BHWD group? If BHWD or wetland funding opportunities arise (TX by Nature, Industry, Texas Water Action Coalition), our priority map is still valid, but future review/adjustment may be warranted.
- Expand CDN Geography (full county areas along the Trinity River – future consideration for revising priority area map to include NETX and GRIP).  
Discussion of the Trinity River working group included expansion to encompass the entire counties on the West side of the Trinity River that would contain a number of GRIP counties. Needs further discussion at June meeting – will not impact the upcoming RFP.
- Review watershed **work group Leads** – geographies (maps/names)
  - Noted the Sabine River working group is still seeking a group Lead.
  - Discussed changes for fire and Shortleaf Pine groups:
    - Transition from fire to a wildlife coop work group (Jason Hardin).
    - Develop open pine group to include shortleaf and longleaf pine opportunity.

A question was raised as to the need for **adding more steering committee members** so that all organizations and agencies within our geography are represented. Suggestions included the consideration of Oaks and Prairie Joint Venture and Texas Longleaf Team as members of the Steering Committee to aid in coordination, cooperative projects, and communication with the NETX CDN.



**RFP** – Additional TPWD funds, from both federal aid and state upland game bird stamps, are available to help us initiate an RFP this Spring. A total of \$246,000 is available from TPWD in 2022: Upland Game Bird Stamp funds (\$85k), and TPWD Federal Aid (\$161k PR) funds. Because there is no specific geography for these funds (all funds are appropriate in any CDN county), the RFP is proposed to be CDN-wide. With only one application format required per proposal, there will be no second format (Neches River) proposal process. Because of additional federal aid requirements, it has been requested that we expedite the RFP. In order to complete the environmental review (endangered species and archeology, specifically), we should initiate the RFP as soon as is practical. Watershed working group leads and leadership recommend that we conduct the RFP from May 1 - May 31; the Steering Committee will meet in mid-June (June 14 chosen by consensus) to review recommendations and make final decisions on 2022 projects.

Earlier this year, there was some discussion regarding a web-based process (similar to TFS fuels project proposals, submitted via website and with direct download to a spreadsheet for review). It would be impractical for us to develop, test, and refine that method this year; however, we will be testing a new fillable proposal process; proposals will be made through a simplified drop-down template that should allow applicants to complete their proposals easier and more consistently. To ensure its readiness, the watershed working group leads and leadership will test this drop-down format before the initiation of an RFP. In addition to the drop-down fillable format proposal template, adjustments have been made in agreements to allow easier multi-year flexibility for recurring landowner cooperators – making amendments or modifications to add funds and practices, should resources become available.

**Possible New Funding Opportunities** were also discussed, with a potential for matching funds on the Trinity River (Texas Water Action Committee), NFWF, NWTF (W4W), and the NRCS CIC program (a new 5-year program focused on working forestlands for LL and SL Pine). Agency representatives and JV contacts will keep the SC up to date on these future opportunities. There was mention of Restoring America's Wildlife Act (RAWA), and its potential to impact our HIP opportunities was discussed.

**Partner News** (Steering Committee Members) – There was open dialogue and exchange of information among all Steering Committee members, with good discussion from Fisheries, NRCS, and TPWD on the potential for future funding opportunities. Mention was made to increase **landowner recognition**; using available signs for landowner participation in conservation projects was re-iterated from last Fall (2021), with signage available for successfully completed HIP projects. There was discussion about the inability of NRCS being unable to expend all LLP and SLP funds, in contrast to TFS and HIP having many more applicants than funds for similar projects. A question was posed to group: What do you think is the reason for interest in the TX A&M Forest Service fuels or HIP programs that have more applicants than funding available, versus funds remaining from unspent via farm bill process? It was agreed that project managers would support better outreach to applicants and landowners of the NRCS CIC program opportunity.

