

## Passing of a Leader

Angus Mims, long time chairman of the Rusk County SWCD, passed away on March 19, 2013. He served many years on the state woodland clinic committee, and was part of the original leadership that led to the development of the East Texas Plant Materials Center (ETPMC). Mr. Mims and the first members of the ETPMC board of directors were honored at the ETPMC field day in 2011. Names of the first board members were framed in hand carved, native woods by local artist, Bruce Cunningham, and were presented to Mr. Mims during the keynote address. The plaque now hangs in the seed lab at the ETPMC as a tribute to their hard work and dedication. It was an honor having Mr. Mims present at the 2011 Field Day, and to showcase the center's growth since its inception. Thank you Mr. Mims and family for the dedication and service you provided to the ETPMC throughout the years.



Chairman of the Board of Directors, Worth Whitehead (L), and Texas State Conservationist, Salvador Salinas (R), present the plaque commemorating the ETPMC's first board of Directors to Mr. Angus Mims at the ETPMC 2011 Field Day.

## Seed Cooler

On February 14, a new 15' x 35' seed cooler was installed to replace the ETPMC's aging cooler. The new cooler has double the capacity to better meet the growing needs of recent field expansions. It has a seamless, fiberglass design with 6 inches of foam insulation, an integrated dehumidifier, and meets the new USDA energy standards for efficient energy use. The cooler is protected by a steel girder frame with metal roof and will serve the ETPMC and our partners for many years.



An 85 ton crane lifts the new cooler and sets it into position at the ETPMC

## Longleaf Pine and Understory Species Work

Longleaf pine and the associated understory habitat is a topic gaining momentum in portions of the ETPMC service area. The ETPMC recently participated in the Longleaf Alliance's Field Day and has



Longleaf pine ecosystem of mature trees and grassland understory at Boykin Springs, photo courtesy of Ike McWhorter, USFS

partnered with this group and TPWD to develop improved planting methods for longleaf pine and aid in the production of key understory species. Current work includes determining the effect of partridge pea, *Chamaecrista fasciculata*, on longleaf pine establishment by varying seeding rates of two releases, Lark selection and 'Comanche' with warm-season grass mixtures and monitoring tree growth and survival. The ETPMC, with the aid of NRCS State Forester Rick Williams and NRCS Zone 4 Forester Mary Webb-Marek, is also looking at the use of polyacrylamide hydrogels to aid in the

establishment of longleaf seedlings by comparing survival between seedlings without treatment and those planted with hydrogels in crystalline and gel form. Ike McWhorter of the USFS has asked the ETPMC for help cleaning seed of pinehill bluestem, *Andropogon scoparius* var. *divergens*, they collected from existing natives stands, and to grow out these collections for use as seed increase plots for future restoration work on sites being converted back to longleaf pine and restoration work within existing long leaf pine sites.

## Irrigation Installation



Completed irrigation on the 10 acre field with installation seen in the inset photo

The ETPMC has made continued improvements to the additional acreage provided by the US Forest Service. Precision grading of the 40 acres was completed in 2012 and permanent, hard line irrigation has been recently completed on a ten acre section of the field area. The irrigation lines divide the field into half acre plots, and are individually controlled via a valve at the head of each line. Special thanks to NRCS Irrigation Engineer, Cleon Namken, for designing the system, Civil Engineer Hank Wiederhold for help with field grades

and slopes, ETPMC technician Mike Woody, and WAE Max McCormick for the installation. This summer the ETPMC staff will begin moving seed production of releases and large technology development studies to the newly irrigated 10 acres.

## Native warm Season Grass Demonstration Study

Planting of cultivar releases of native, warm- season, perennial grasses scheduled for evaluation in 2012 was delayed because weather set back precision grading on new fields and it was not completed in time to plant the study. The basis for the study is to evaluate cultivar releases from Plant Materials Centers in the southeastern United States for adaptation to the ETPMC's service area. The goal is to provide information to update the eFOTG conservation practice standards on cultivars acceptable for use within the ETPMC service area. It is also intended to increase efficiency in release development at the ETPMC by reducing duplication of releases and allowing the center to focus on



A healthy stand of 'Osage' Indiangrass, one of the cultivars to be tested this summer at the ETPMC

species that do not have adapted cultivars for the ETPMC service area. Plants will be monitored for survival, health, seed production, biomass production, and forage quality. The study is scheduled to be planted in early April. It will also serve as a demonstration site for staff, partners, landowners, contractors, etc.; allowing them to see the performance of each cultivar first hand. Future work will conduct a similar study of cultivar forb and legume releases from the southeastern United States.

## Outreach

The ETPMC is continuing its work with the Green Schools Garden Program in 2013 by providing seed and seedlings of native wildflowers to Tamberly Conway, Conservation Education Specialist for the USFS. The wildflowers are distributed by Tamberly and her partners to schools participating in the Project Learning Tree GreenSchools! Program.



Wildflower seedlings being grown to transplant at local, participating schools

In December 2012, the ETPMC also hosted the third annual Wheelin' Sportsman event organized by the USFS, National Forest and Grasslands in Texas, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and local National Wild Turkey Federation chapters. The event posed a great opportunity for interagency networking while providing recreation for individuals with disabilities. It gained national attention in 2011 by winning the national award for Wheelin' Sportsman event of the year. The ETPMC has been



Participants of the 3rd annual Wheelin' Sportsman Event at Winston Tree Farm

asked to participate each year due to the proximity of the center to the Stephen F. Austin Experimental Forest and its handicapped accessible facilities.

## Featured Plant – Illinois Bundleflower (*Desmanthus illinoensis*)



Typical foliage and blooms of Illinois bundleflower



Distribution of Illinois Bundleflower, courtesy of Plants Database

Illinois bundleflower is a widely distributed, perennial, native legume, and is considered by some sources to be our most important native legume. It may reach approximately 4 feet in height under ideal conditions, and can be identified by its lush, bi-pinnate leaves and white puff ball shaped flowers. Seed pods form a twisted, “bundle”, giving the plant its common name. It is

associated with depressions or low spots that retain higher soil moisture levels in prairie, prairie remnants or other open habitats. Its presence is a good habitat and range indicator. It is highly palatable to livestock and game, and will not persist in areas that are over grazed or browsed. It is a prolific seed producer, attracting many species of pollinating insects to its numerous white blooms. Birds and small mammals utilize the seed, which has also been researched for use as a food and oil source for human consumption.

## Who we are

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) collects, selects, and develops plant technology and plant releases to address our nation’s most critical soil and water problems through the agency’s Plant Materials Program. The East Texas Plant Materials Center in Nacogdoches, Texas serves east Texas, western Louisiana, southwest Arkansas and southeastern Oklahoma. The Plant Materials Center is a partnership between the NRCS, US Forest Service, Stephen F. Austin State University, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts in east Texas and western Louisiana.

ETPMC Address: 6598 FM 2782, Nacogdoches, Texas 75964 Phone: (936) 564-4873

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD)."

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.