



Texas Tree Farm Program FORI

The Texas Tree Farm Committee has discussed the Forests of Recognized Importance (FORI) as it relates to the American Forest Foundation's (AFF) 2021 Standards of Sustainability.

Standard 5: Fish, Wildlife, Biodiversity and Forest Health

Performance Measure 5.4

Where present, forest management activities should maintain or enhance forests of recognized importance.

GUIDANCE

Forests of recognized importance (FORI) represent globally, regionally and nationally significant large landscape areas of exceptional ecological, social, cultural or biological values. These forests are evaluated at the landscape level, rather than the stand level and are recognized for a combination of unique values, rather than a single attribute. FORIs may include but are not limited to landscapes with exceptionally high concentrations of one or more of the following:

- protected, rare, sensitive or representative forest ecosystems such as riparian areas and wetland biotopes
- areas containing endemic species and critical habitats of multiple threatened or endangered plant and animal species, as identified under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) or other recognized listings
- recognized large-scale cultural or archeological sites including sites of human habitation, cities, burial grounds and in situ artifacts
- areas containing identified and protected water resources upon which large metropolitan populations are dependent
- areas containing identified unique or geologic features including geysers, waterfalls, lava beds, caves, or craters

FORI's in the United States have generally been identified and protected by federal or state governments or are under conservation easement by an environmental nonprofit organization. There is currently no state or federal agency that regulates FORIs on private forest lands in the United States. Several conservation organizations have identified areas that they believe are of exceptional status yet there remains no single central clearinghouse of information regarding such forested landscapes.

Based on this guidance as given by AFF for the Tree Farm Program, the Texas Tree Farm Committee has identified several FORI in Texas that meet the criteria for large landscape areas of "exceptional ecological, social, cultural or biological values." The Committee considers the following to be Forests of Recognized Importance (FORI) in Texas:

- Angelina National Forest, containing 153,179 acres located in Angelina, Nacogdoches, San Augustine and Jasper counties
- Davy Crockett National Forest, containing 160,000 acres in Houston and Trinity counties
- Sabine National Forest, containing 160,873 acres in five counties: Sabine, Shelby, San Augustine, Newton, and Jasper
- Sam Houston National Forest, containing 161,508 acres in Montgomery, San Jacinto and Walker counties
- Big Thicket National Preserve, which protects 113,114 acres of land and water spread over seven counties in southeast Texas: Hardin, Jefferson, Orange, Tyler, Jasper, Polk, Liberty
- W. Goodrich Jones State Forest, containing 1,722 acres in Montgomery County
- I.D. Fairchild State Forest, containing 2,750 acres in Cherokee County
- E.O. Siecke State Forest, containing 1,722 acres in Newton County
- John Henry Kirby Memorial State Forest, containing 630 in Tyler County
- Masterson State Forest, containing 560 acres in Jasper County
- Large properties under known conservation easements, such as Boggy Slough Conservation Area in Houston and Trinity Counties. The following online resources are available in locating land and water in conservation easements in Texas:
The Conservation Fund, <https://www.conservationfund.org/where-we-work/texas>;
The Nature Conservancy, <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/texas/>;
Texas Land Conservancy, <https://www.texaslandconservancy.org/our-work>
- Areas within the Lost Pines ecosystem, 75,000+ acres primarily in Bastrop and Caldwell Counties of Central, Texas <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/bastrop/nature>

Additional Resource: The Texas SFI Implementation Committee defines Forests With Exceptional Conservation Value (FECV) as critically imperiled and imperiled species and ecological communities, within their wood and fiber supply area(s). A forest designated as FECV by SFI meets the requirements to be designated FORI.

https://www.texasforestry.org/images/uploads/TexasSIC_FECVAssessment_012023_for_WEB.pdf

Although there are other small areas with single important species, social, cultural or other values they do not meet the landscape level that is necessary to be called a FORI. These more local forests may be consistent with what the AFF considers a Special Site and in some instances might warrant management considerations by nearby Tree Farms

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