

# East Texas Family Forest Landowners 2011-2013

Texas A&M Forest Service

## National Woodland Owner Survey

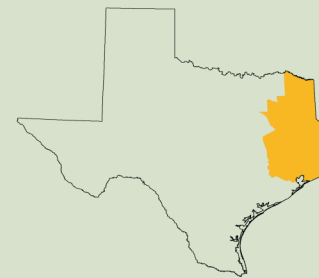


# TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

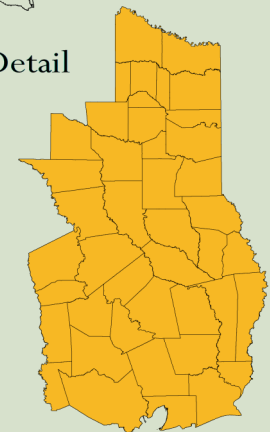
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### Region



### Area of Detail



### Key Findings *[Family forest ownerships having 10+ acres of forestland]*

Characteristics	Number (thousand)	Area (million acres)
Total ownerships	92	6.2
Single-owner ownerships	24	1.6
Ownerships with absentee owners	34	3.1
Ownerships whose primary owner is retired	49	3.2
Ownerships having owners with a higher education degree	41	3.7
Ownerships whose primary owner is 55+ years old	72	5.0
Ownerships with at least 25 years of land tenure	33	3.0
Ownerships having a written management plan	12	1.7
Ownerships acquired by purchase	55	4.2
Ownerships where cost-share programs aren't known about	67	3.1
Ownerships where high property taxes are the primary issue	66	5.0
Ownerships where timber production is the main objective	30	3.3

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*The term “forestland” in this report includes land with at least 10% cover by live trees with an area of more than 1 acre.*

*Estimates in this report are based on information obtained from randomly selected survey respondents and are therefore subject to sampling error.*

*The size of forestland influences landowners’ motivations. Those with large acreage of forestland generally prefer to manage their property actively for timber production.*

## Overview

Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) works in partnership with the United States (U.S.) Forest Service to provide current information about the state’s forest resources and forestland owners. This joint effort is known as Forest Inventory and Analysis or FIA. This report presents key findings of FIA’s National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS) for 2011-2013 and includes information on demographics, ownership status, management objectives, and other characteristics of family forest landowners in East Texas. Family forest landowners are a diverse group that includes families and individuals. Private forest landowners not included in the family forest landowners category are non-family partnerships, private companies, land conservation groups, non-governmental organizations, and clubs. Estimates in this report are for family forest landowners who own at least 10 acres of forestland, unless otherwise stated.



## Total Area and Ownerships

There are 12.1 million acres of forestland in East Texas, of which 10.9 million acres (90.3%) are privately-owned. There are 92,000 family forest ownerships in the region. These family forest ownerships collectively account for 6.2 million acres, which is about 57% of all private forestland in the region. Individual family forest ownership area varies, ranging from small tracts of forestland to large holdings consisting of thousands of acres. About 70% of family forest ownerships own less than 50 acres (Figure 1). About 14,000 ownerships own 100 or more acres of forestland accounting for a total of 3.9 million acres.

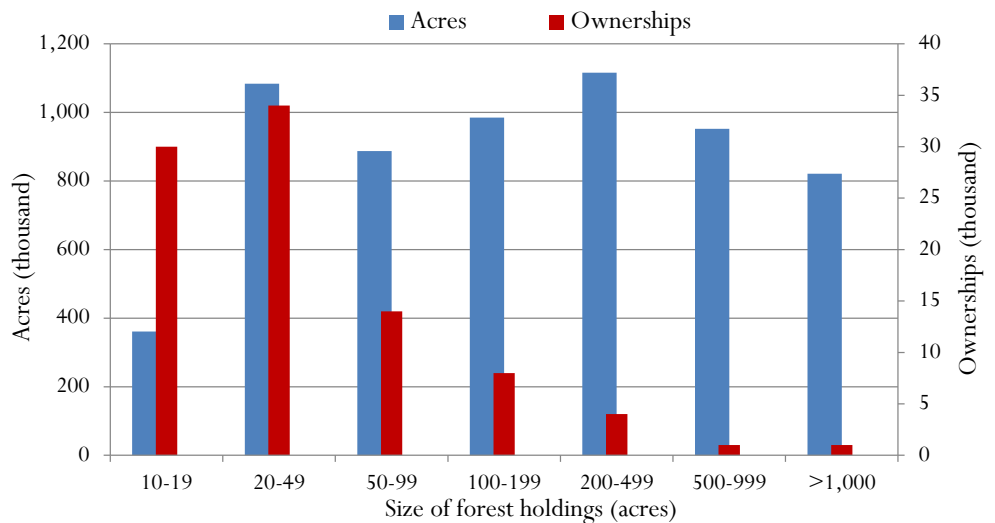


Figure 1. Area and number of family forest ownerships by size of holdings.

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*An ownership is a legal entity that is composed of one or more individual owners.*

*An aging landowner population can be a challenge for sustainable forest resource management. Elderly landowners tend to become less interested in forest management activities such as reforestation, site preparation, thinning, and timber harvesting.*

### Number of Owners

About 53% of family forest ownerships in East Texas are a joint ownership of two owners, holding 2.4 million acres of forestland (Figure 2). About 16,000 ownerships accounting for 1.8 million acres are composed of more than two owners. In East Texas, about 7,000 trust or estate ownerships exist, covering 558,000 acres of forestland.

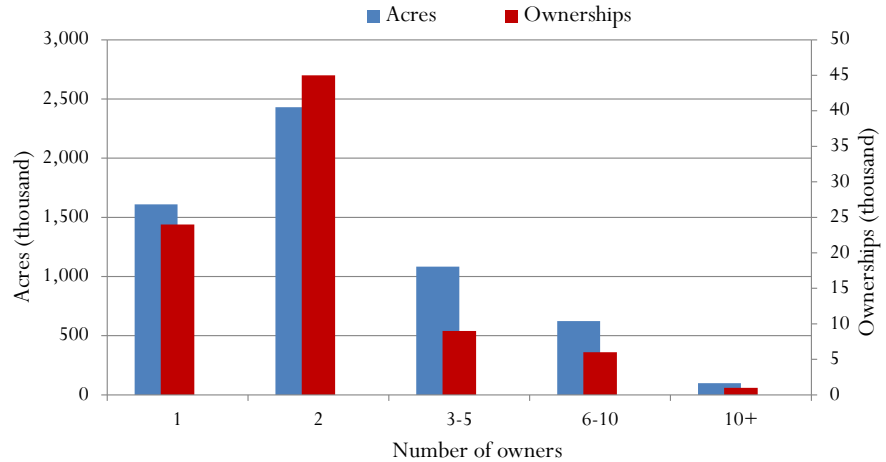


Figure 2. Number of owners.

### Demographic Information

More than 85% of family forest ownerships in East Texas have primary owners who are 55 years of age or older (Figure 3). About three-fourths of primary owners are male and one-quarter female. One-half of family forest ownerships have primary owners with a higher education degree (i.e. Associate, Bachelor, or Advanced). Another quarter have some college. The balance, approximately one-quarter of the total, has a high school degree or less.

About 55% of ownerships have annual household income between \$50,000 and \$99,999 (Figure 3). About 58% of ownerships have retired primary owners and most (84%) of the ownerships do not rely on forestland for their household income.

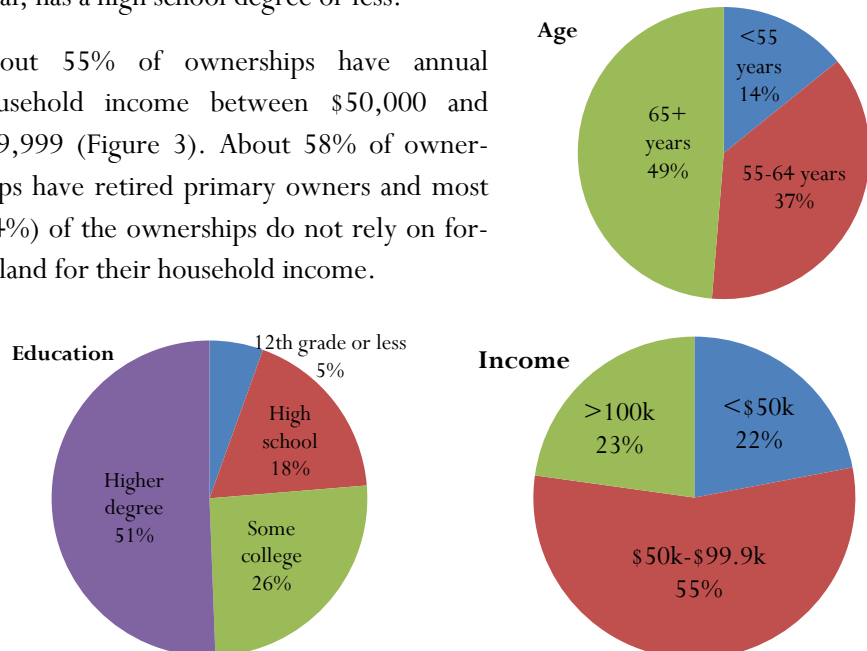


Figure 3. Age, education, and income distribution of primary owners.

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*The categories in Figure 4 are not mutually exclusive. This means the same ownership can acquire land through more than one method.*

*The results in Figure 5 include ownerships that rated a reason as very important or important on a five-point Likert scale.*

### Land Acquisition

Most family forest ownerships in East Texas either purchased or inherited their forestland. About 55,000 (60%) family forest ownerships accounting for 4.2 million acres purchased their forestland, and 43,000 ownerships having 2.9 million acres inherited their land (Figure 4). About 45% of forest ownerships acquired forestland from their parents and/or spouse's parents.

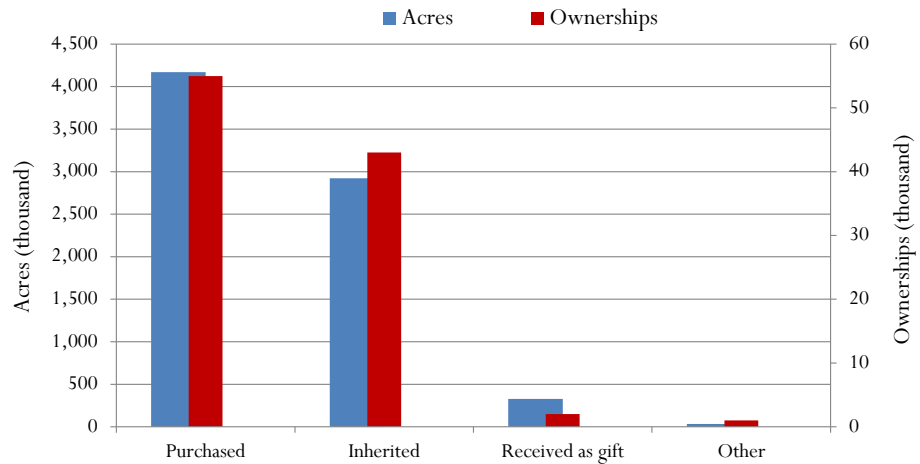


Figure 4. Mode of family forest acquisition.

### Reasons for Owning

Family forest landowners in East Texas own forestland for a variety of reasons. Non-timber related objectives rank highly. Enjoying the scenery and beauty of the forestland is rated as the top primary reason for 69,000 family forest ownerships accounting for 4.4 million acres (Figure 5). Other main reasons for owning forestland include to pass on to heirs, to protect nature or biological diversity, and to protect or improve wildlife habitat. About one-third of ownerships (30,000) own forestland for timber products. About 50,000 ownerships accounting for 3.9 million acres considered forestland as a land investment opportunity.

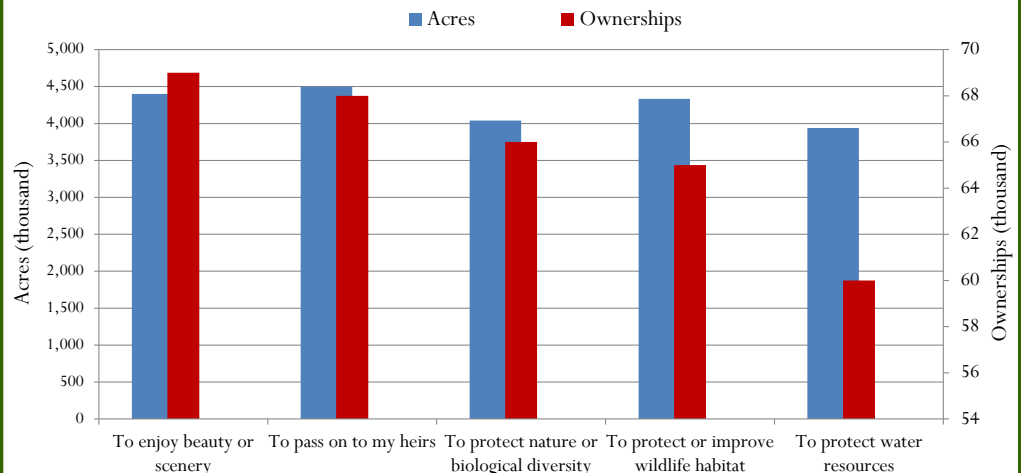


Figure 5. Top five reasons for owning forestland.

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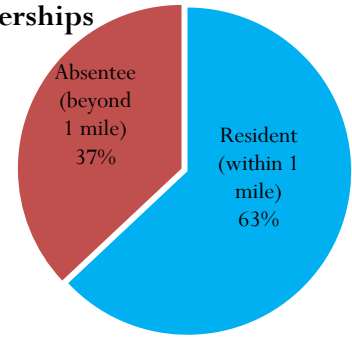
*Absentee landowners may be more difficult to reach with forest management information or assistance than resident landowners. Moreover, forestlands managed by this group may be more susceptible to timber theft.*

*Ownership changes may result in changes in forest management objectives. Frequent ownership changes often create challenges in educational/service efforts of natural resource management agencies.*

### Absentee Status

About 57,000 (63%) family forest ownerships in East Texas accounting for 3.0 million acres have owners whose primary residence is within one mile of their forestland (Figure 6). Landowners residing within one mile of their forestland are defined as resident owners. The balance of ownerships (37%) have owners who reside more than one mile from their forestland, a class where the term absentee is usually applied. However, absentee family forest ownerships are estimated to hold more forestland than resident owners in East Texas. Nationwide statistics suggest that two out of every five acres of family forestlands are under absentee ownerships.

#### Ownerships



#### Acres

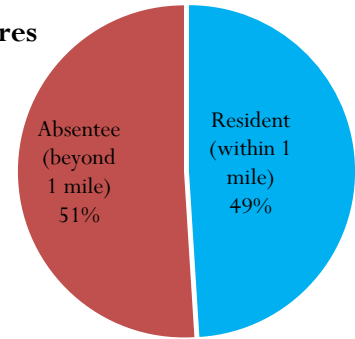


Figure 6. Resident and absentee ownerships in East Texas.

### Length of Ownership

About 50,000 family forest ownerships in East Texas owning 2.6 million acres have tenure of 24 years or less (Figure 7). About 40% of ownerships having 3.0 million acres of forestland have tenure of 25 years and longer. Only 7,000 ownerships held their forestland more than 50 years. Results suggests that owners of larger holdings generally own their land for relatively longer periods of time and manage their forestland actively.

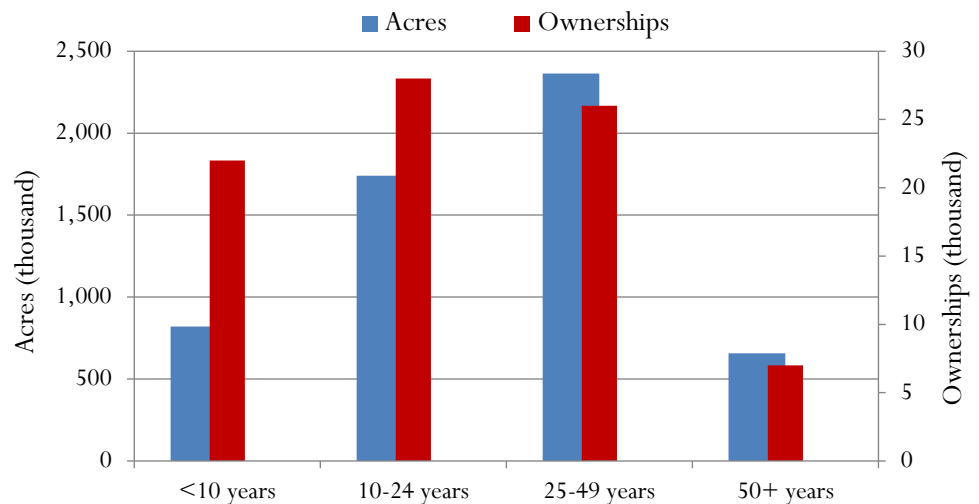


Figure 7. Forestland tenure in East Texas.

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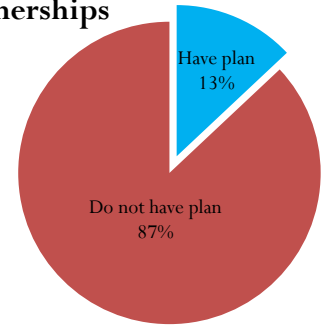
*A written management plan can provide forest management, estate planning, and timber tax related benefits to landowners. TFS can assist forest landowners by preparing a stewardship forest management plan.*

*Professional foresters can provide technical advice on timber marketing, appraisals, management plans, and other forestry activities.*

### Written Management Plan

Only 12,000 (13%) family forest ownerships accounting for 1.71 million acres have a written forest management plan (Figure 8). Of the 6.2 million acres of family forestland in East Texas, only 28% is held by ownerships with a written plan. About 58% of ownerships reported that they do not want/need a management plan. Among ownerships with a written plan, 62% reported their plan was prepared by consulting foresters. More than 10% of ownerships have a management plan written by their owners, while TFS foresters prepared plans for 6% of ownerships. Moreover, only 8,000 ownerships accounting for 1.4 million acres have implemented the management plan.

#### Ownerships



#### Acres

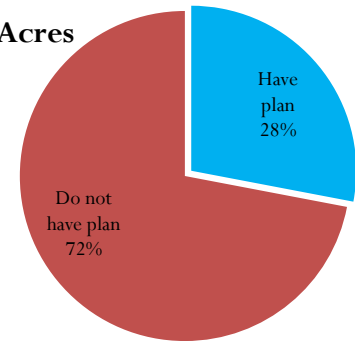


Figure 8. Ownerships having a written management plan.

### Management Advice

Only 20,000 (22%) family forest ownerships in East Texas having about 2.6 million acres of forestland received some form of forest management advice in the past five years (Figure 9). The most common sources of advice were consulting foresters and TFS foresters. TFS served 7,000 family forest ownerships representing 1.1 million acres. Consulting foresters provided forest management advice to 10,000 ownerships having 1.7 million acres. Major topics of management advice were timber production, wildlife habitat, fire safety, and land conservation. A majority (64%) of ownerships received management advice through a personal communication with someone (i.e. forester or another landowner) knowledgeable on the subject.

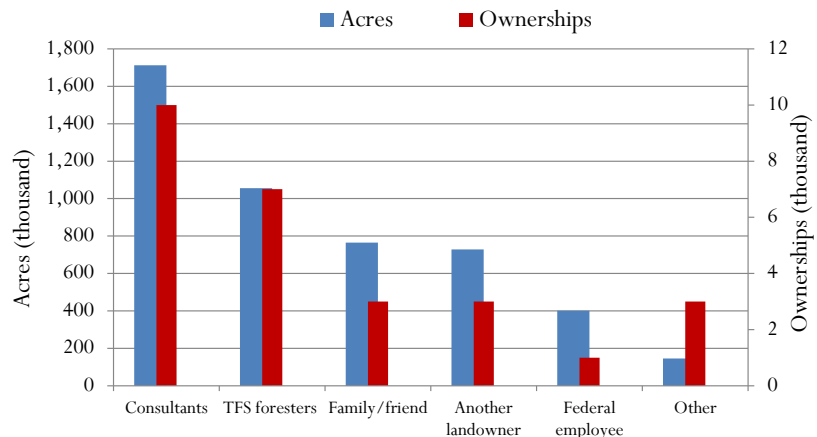


Figure 9. Sources of forest management advice.

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*Natural resources agencies provide several cost-share assistance programs to family forest landowners.*

*Some common federal and state cost-share programs include: Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and Texas Landowner Incentive Program (LIP).*

*Family forest landowners are a diverse group. Educational outreach programs should focus on the appropriate needs and interests of landowners.*

### Participation in Cost-Share Programs

In East Texas about 95% of family forest ownerships have never participated in any state or federal cost-share programs. In the past five years, only 1.5% of ownerships accounting for 683,000 acres of forestland participated in such programs. An estimated 67,000 (78%) ownerships accounting for 3.1 million acres of forestland were not at all familiar with cost-share programs (Figure 10). Results suggests that landowners should be informed about federal and state cost-share programs through effective extension and outreach methods.

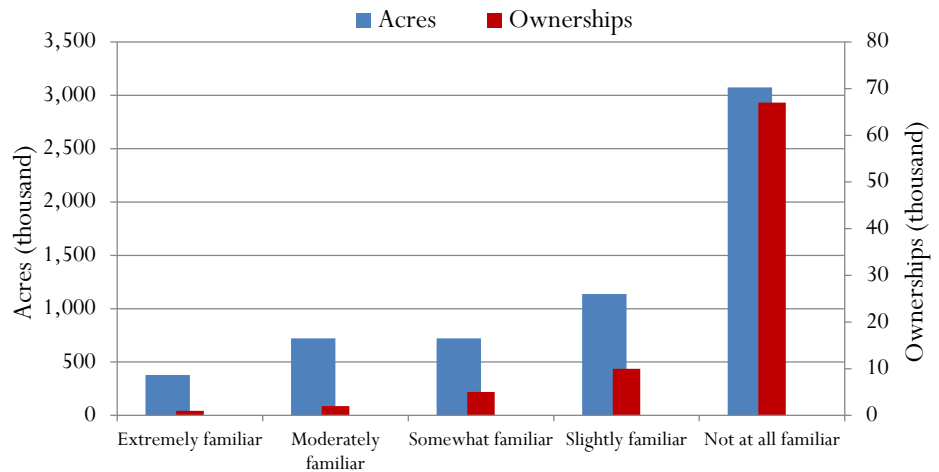


Figure 10. Landowners' level of familiarity with cost-share programs.

### Preferred Outreach Methods

In East Texas, about 47,000 family forest ownerships accounting for 3.5 million acres of forestland stated that written materials, such as brochures or publications, is their preferred method to receive forest management information (Figure 11). About 31% of family forest ownerships reported that talking with someone (e.g. forester or neighboring landowner) is their preferred way to receive forest management information. Only 16% of ownerships listed conference or workshop as their preferred method.

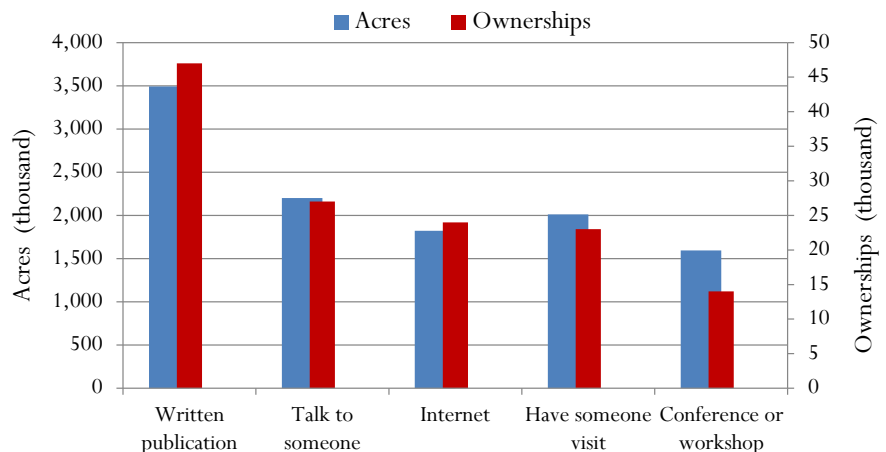


Figure 11. Preferred methods to receive forest management advice.



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*TFS provides educational information to help increase landowners' knowledge and understanding on issues related to timber tax, estate, and successional planning.*

*Landowners having qualified timberland for productivity appraisal could obtain about 90% local property tax discount each year. For more information: <http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/ForestTaxation/> or contact the local County Appraisal District office.*

**For More Information**

This report was prepared by Rajan Parajuli and Chris Edgar from Texas A&M Forest Service. Please feel free to contact us about information in this report or general information about forest landowners in Texas. We may be reached by phone at 979-458-6630 or by e-mail at [rparajuli@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:rparajuli@tfs.tamu.edu) and [cedgar@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:cedgar@tfs.tamu.edu).

**Landowners' Concerns**

About 67,000 family forest ownerships having 4.9 million acres of forestland expressed concerns about keeping land intact for future generations. Other major concerns of owners include high property taxes, dumping or misuse of forestland, and trespassing or poaching. On almost one-third of ownerships, owners expressed concerns about global climate change impacts.

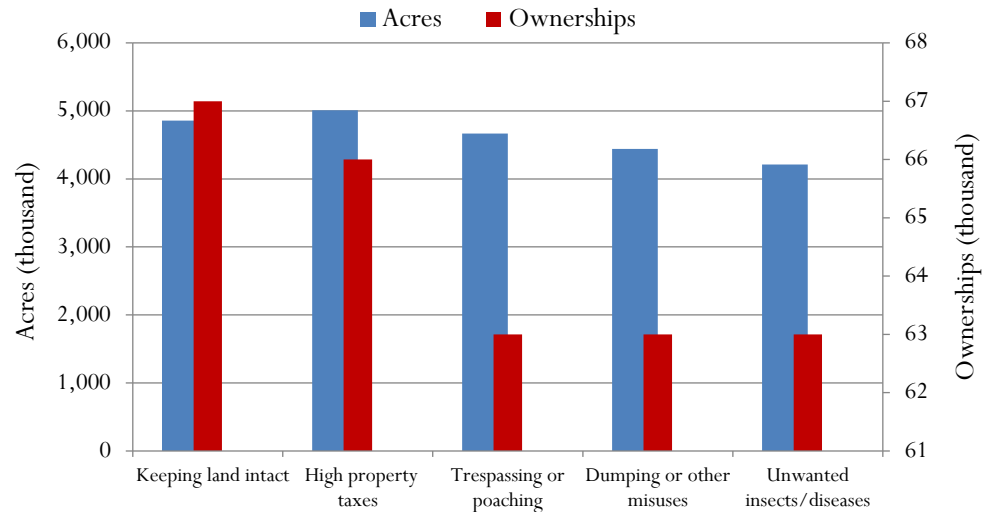


Figure 12. Five major concerns of forest landowners.

**Property Tax Programs**

Only 13,000 (15%) of family forest ownerships in East Texas are currently enrolled in forestry-related property tax programs. About 74% of ownerships accounting for 3.2 million acres of forestland are not at all familiar with any forestry-related property tax programs in East Texas (Figure 13). Survey results reveal that on only 3% of ownerships were owners extremely familiar with property tax programs.

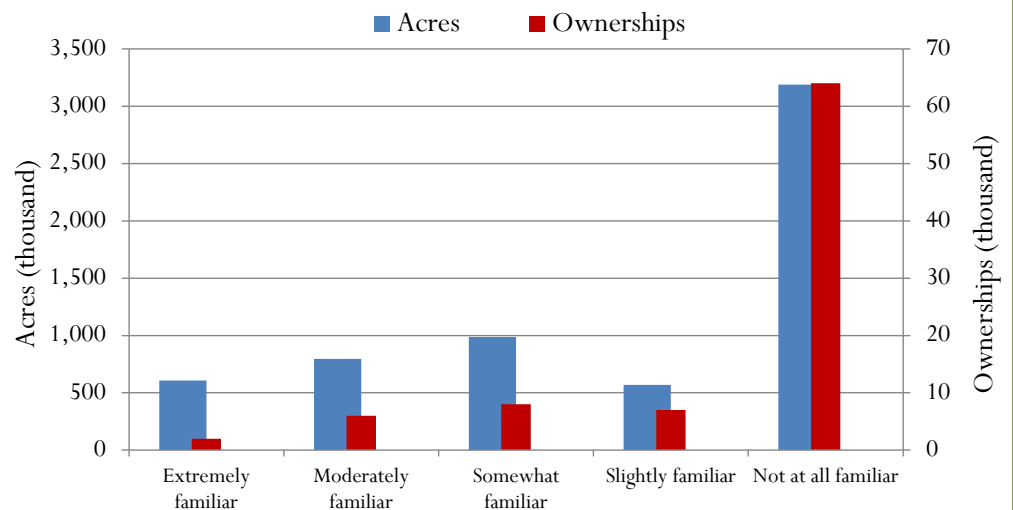


Figure 13. Landowners' familiarity with forestry-related property tax programs.