

TEXAS: EXPIDITED PROCESS IMPROVES FOREST



Gay Ippolito, US Forest Service

A windstorm hit the Sabine, Angelina, and Sam Houston National Forests in east Texas on February 10th, 1998

The storm damaged 297 million board feet of timber, 10,700 of which lay within the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker Habitat Management Area.

Need For Immediate Action

The time period needed for a traditional NEPA analysis would have left the forest susceptible to further damage from fire and insects. The Council on Environmental Quality agreed that the forest conditions qualified as an emergency situation.

March 1998-Alternative Arrangements Granted.

March 1998-NEPA scoping and public notice took place.

June 1998- The decision notice is signed.

September 1998 –Removal of dead and dying trees on 29,245 acres is completed in 163 days. Reforestation begins on 32,750 acres of windstorm-damaged forest to help restore Red Cockaded Woodpecker habitat. (see recovered forest below, 7 years later)

The ability to use alternative arrangements allowed activities to begin months sooner than would have been possible under the normal NEPA process. This meant faster recovery time for the forest and endangered species, as well as reduced risk of wildfires and insect infestation.



Danny Dructor