

PROTECTION OF SPECIAL SITES IN TEXAS

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) program (www.sfiprogram.org) recognizes that forest owners are important stewards of our landscape and culture. SFI encourages participants to protect special sites on their own lands and to assist private owners with identification and management during harvesting and other forest management activities on their lands. Special sites are areas that are ecologically, geologically or culturally important.

Most landowners recognize the ecological importance of protecting threatened and endangered species and their habitats. (See SPECIES AND COMMUNITIES OF CONCERN IN TEXAS insert) In addition to these specific species or communities, landowners may encounter other areas of ecological importance such as natural springs, wading bird rookeries, ponds or lakes on migration flyways, old-growth bottomland hardwood areas and prairies for example. Managing unique areas such as these in a manner appropriate to their features helps ensure a healthy and flourishing environment.



Photo: US Army Corps of Engineers

Mention geological importance to many Texas landowners and their first thoughts may be of oil or gas opportunities. If you aren't lucky enough to strike oil, you may still be blessed with special geologic features such as sinkholes, river bluffs, cliffs, limestone outcroppings, large ravines or oxbow lakes to name a few. Not only are these unique to our landscape, but they are also of importance to wildlife and often our history. It is rumored that one East Texas cave was a hide out for Sam Houston and Davy Crockett. The following website from the SFA Geology Department is a good place to start looking for additional geology resources: www.geology.sfasu.edu/TexasGeology.html.

Sam Houston or Davy Crockett may have not slept in your forest, but that doesn't mean there still isn't a rich history to discover and protect. Over 50,000 historic cemeteries are estimated to exist in Texas with the location of many of these unknown. These cemeteries provide insight to the people who settled the land.

Take a step back further in time and that strange mound on your property may be a Native American burial mound. Possibly there was an old ghost town or sawmill that has yet to be discovered.

The Texas Historical Commission (THC), an agency dedicated to preserving the history of Texas, maintains an atlas of over 300,000 sites that can be searched by keyword, county, historic name or address (www.atlas.thc.state.tx.us/). The THC works closely with the County Historical Commissions that can be found in each county and may have more intimate knowledge of the local area. Your local County Historical Commission can be found at www.thc.state.tx.us/ctycommissions/CountyContacts.aspx.

The Texas Archeological Society (www.txarch.org) is dedicated to the preservation of prehistoric aspects of Texas and would be a good starting point for researching possible Native American locations. Additionally, the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) at the University of Texas (www.utexas.edu/research/tarl/) maintains an atlas of recorded archaeological sites that may help directly locate a known site or provide clues to something you observe on your property.