

# Ecological Restoration Brief

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## Good Folks Doing Good Work! The Ongoing Reforestation of the Lost Pines in Bastrop County

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Labor day weekend 2011 in Bastrop County forever changed many Texans' lives, beginning a month long assault of wildfire, now known as the Bastrop Complex Fire (BCF). The fire was declared 100% contained on October 10, 2011 and had burned more than 34,000 acres and consumed more than 1,600 homes and took two lives (NPR, 2012). The two factors that made the BCF so detrimental were extreme drought and high winds from Tropical Storm Lee. This is the most destructive wildfire in Texas on record to date.

TreeFolks is a central Texas non-profit organization focused on urban forestry. When Tree Folks was approached by the Lost Pines Recovery team, the Texas A&M Forest Service and Bastrop County, Executive Director Thaïs Perkins knew that the only appropriate response in light of this catastrophic event was action. As a result, TreeFolks has become the face of reforestation in Bastrop County, working one-on-one with landowners to discuss their individual needs with regard to their property, walking the property and then creating a plan that details these needs as discussed. The recovery plan for a landowner's property involves multiple site visits and a replanting event using TreeFolks staff and a corporate sponsor. The corporate sponsor supplies the volunteers and the landowner is on-site the day of planting.



**Volunteers reforest the Lost Pines.**  
**Photo credit: TreeFolks Staff**

The Loblolly Pines (*Pinus taeda*) located in the Lost Pines region of Texas are ecologically and genetically distinct from the east Texas Loblolly pine trees as well as the eastern US Loblolly pine trees (Al-Rabab'ah and Williams, 2003). It was important to establish the seed stock to begin the nursery for what would become a two million tree planting goal. To date, more than 1.7 million trees have been planted. Because Texas had never before experienced a wildfire of that magnitude, the BCF received much publicity and outpouring of community support.

Although TreeFolks has been operating for 25 years, the reforestation of Bastrop County is only funded for a 5 year term. To continue to grow the next generation of stewards, funding must also continue. In addition to the BFC reforestation effort, TreeFolks offers other programs for education, enhancement and restoration.



**Author, Leslie Dietz, assists TreeFolks Reforestation Manager, Matt Mears, with planting.  
Photo credit: TreeFolks Staff**

The mission of TreeFolks is to empower Central Texans to build stronger communities through planting and caring for trees. Educational programs are central to TreeFolks mission. In partnership with the Texas A&M Forest Service, A Certified Arborist Prep Course is offered to provide foundational knowledge in arboriculture. Another program offered by TreeFolks (through partnership with the Austin Parks and Recreation Department and the National Wildlife Foundation), is the Urban Forest Steward & Habitat Steward Training which educates about Austin's wildlife, urban forests and teaches stewardship. Best of all, TreeFolks has a citizen scientist program that teaches tree identification and mapping using scientific keys and GPS units.

Like the Bastrop reforestation program, a response to disaster relief, a similar program, the Blanco River Reforestation Program, was recently started to revegetate areas devastated by historic flooding events. This program that coordinates with local community partners and volunteers to plant trees on public lands, in parks and on right-of-ways.

Information on upcoming events, TreeFolks' class offering, opportunities to donate, as well as a program to receive free fruit and ornamental trees from TreeFolks, can be found on their website at [www.treefolks.org](http://www.treefolks.org)

Literature Cited:

Al-Rabab'ah, Mohammad and Williams, Claire. An ancient bottleneck in the Lost Pines of Central Texas. Department of Forensic Science, Texas A&M University. 2004 Blackwell Publishing Ltd., Molecular Ecology, 13, 1075-1084.

State Impact Texas. National Public Radio (NPR). KUT Austin, TX, Aired 4 Sept. 2012.  
<https://stateimpact.npr.org/texas/tag/forged-in-flames/> Accessed 10 February 2016.



**New seedling takes hold in the shadow of the old.  
Photo credit: TreeFolks Staff**

**The Society for Ecological Restoration, Texas Chapter promotes ecological restoration as a means of sustaining the diversity of life on Earth and re-establishing an ecologically healthy relationship between nature and culture.**

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