

# Texas Wildfire Mitigation Project

## Reducing the Risk of Wildfires Caused by Power Lines

### *Meeting Chair*

**Representative John Otto**

District 18

### *Co-Hosts*

**Representative Donna Howard**

District 48

**Representative Kyle Kacal**

District 12

**Representative Tim Kleinschmidt**

District 17

**Representative John Raney**

District 14

**Senator Kel Seliger**

District 31

More than 4,000 powerline-caused wildfires have occurred in Texas in the past three and a half years, costing the state and its citizens hundreds of millions of dollars. In response, the legislature has appropriated funds to demonstrate new technologies to mitigate wildfire risks and losses. A project initiation meeting will be held Thursday, December 12, 2013, at PUC headquarters in Austin.

The Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station (TEES) has developed powerline-monitoring technologies to detect downed powerlines, failing line apparatus, and arcing equipment that can cause fires. Preliminary work has shown that this technology, in concert with Texas A&M Forest Service fire-risk predictive models, can prevent many wildfires and provide more timely awareness of fires as they occur, facilitating rapid response. These two Texas owned and developed technologies have the potential to improve public safety, save lives, and significantly reduce wildfire-related property losses.

The Texas legislature has authorized and funded a two-year TEES project to demonstrate the effectiveness of its technology in selected high-risk fire areas. The success of the project will depend upon cooperation from many stakeholders: utility companies, local fire-response teams, and state agencies, including Emergency Management and the Public Utility Commission.

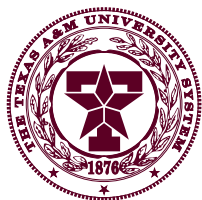
### **Benefit to the State / Results:**

- Fewer wildfires caused by power line incidents
- Reduced economic and property losses from fires
- Increased public safety
- Increased safety for firemen and first responders
- Significant reduction in fire suppression cost
- Improved power system operation
  - Fewer outages
  - Improved reliability and power quality
  - Improved operational efficiency

### *Meeting Sponsors:*



**TEXAS A&M ENGINEERING  
EXPERIMENT STATION**



For additional technical information

**Representative John Otto**

Chair, Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Council

<http://WildfireMitigation.tees.tamus.edu>

**Dr. B. Don Russell, P.E.**

Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station

979.845.7912

[bdrussell@tamu.edu](mailto:bdrussell@tamu.edu)

**Carl L. Benner, P.E.**

Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station

979.845.6224

[carl.benner@tamu.edu](mailto:carl.benner@tamu.edu)

# Texas Wildfire Mitigation Project

## Reducing the Risk of Wildfires Caused by Power Lines

### Project Meeting Agenda Thursday, December 12, 2013, Austin TX

- 10:00 - 10:10 a.m. **Welcome and Introductions**  
Representative John Otto
- 10:10 - 10:20 a.m. **State Emergency Management Perspective**  
Nim Kidd, Chief  
Texas Division of Emergency Management
- 10:20 - 10:30 a.m. **The Problem and the Opportunity**  
Dr. B. Don Russell, Regents Professor  
Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station (TEES)
- 10:30 - 10:45 a.m. **TFS Wildfire Risk Assessment Overview**  
Tom Boggus, Director  
Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS)
- 10:45 - 11:10 a.m. **TEES Powerline Monitoring Technology Overview**  
Carl L. Benner, Assistant Director  
Power System Automation Laboratory, TEES
- 11:10 - 11:20 a.m. **Project Methodology and Discussion of Utility Participation**  
Dr. B. Don Russell
- 11:20 - 11:50 a.m. **Q&A and Discussion**  
Dr. B. Don Russell
- 11:50 - 12:00 p.m. **Next Steps**  
Dr. B. Don Russell
- 12:00 p.m. **Adjourn**

Public Utility Commission of Texas  
1701 N. Congress Avenue  
7th Floor  
Austin, TX 78701

Parking Available at  
Capitol Visitors Parking Garage  
1201 San Jacinto  
located between Trinity and  
San Jacinto at 12th and 13th street

For additional technical information

**Representative John Otto**  
Chair, Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Council  
<http://WildfireMitigation.tees.tamu.edu>

**Dr. B. Don Russell, P.E.**  
Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station  
979.845.7912  
bdrussell@tamu.edu

**Carl L. Benner, P.E.**  
Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station  
979.845.6224  
carl.benner@tamu.edu

## **Texas Wildfire Mitigation Project**

December 12, 2013

List of Speakers

### **State Representative John Otto**

Representative Otto has served in the Texas House of Representatives since the November 2004 election representing Liberty, San Jacinto, and Walker counties. Most recently he served as chair of the Education Sub-Committee, on the House Appropriations Committee, and the state budget conference committee. Representative Otto is widely respected having been named “One of the Ten Best Legislators in Texas” by Texas Monthly. He is a certified public accountant with a 40-year career in the private sector.

### **W. Nim Kidd, Chief, Texas Division of Emergency Management**

Chief Kidd directs the activities of the Texas Division of Emergency Management. He previously served as Homeland Security Director and Emergency Manager for the city of San Antonio. This followed a distinguished career as a firefighter and district fire chief. Since 1997, Chief Kidd has served as a member of Texas Task Force 1 Urban Search and Rescue Team responding to many disasters including the World Trade Center in 2001. His considerable experience in emergency management served Texas well during the significant wildfires Texas experienced in the last three years.

### **B. Don Russell, Regents Professor, Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station (TEES)**

Dr. Don Russell is Distinguished Professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Texas A&M and serves as principal investigator for TEES. He directs the research activities of the Power System Automation Laboratory. Dr. Russell is past president of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers Power and Energy Society. He is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and is a Fellow of five technical societies. Dr. Russell currently serves as vice president of the 85 country International Council on Large Electric Systems (CIGRE).

Email: [bdrussell@tamu.edu](mailto:bdrussell@tamu.edu) Phone: 979-845-7912

### **Tom Boggus, Director, Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS)**

Tom Boggus has served as Director of the Texas A&M Forest Service since 2008 and also serves as State Forester of Texas. He has been with the agency for 43 years. In his capacity as Director he is charged with executing the mission of TFS – “to provide statewide leadership to assure the trees, forest, and related natural resources of Texas are protected and sustained for the benefit of all.” The Texas A&M Forest Service is the lead agency in the State of Texas for wildfire response.

Email: [tboggus@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:tboggus@tfs.tamu.edu) Phone: 979-458-6606

### **Carl Benner, Assistant Director, Power Systems Automation Laboratory, TEES**

Carl Benner serves as Senior Research Engineer with the Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station. He serves as principal investigator and chief design engineer for the Texas Wildfire Mitigation Project. Mr. Benner is a Fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers and is the recipient of several research awards. He holds ten U.S. patents in power system protection and control.

Email: [Carl.Benner@tamu.edu](mailto:Carl.Benner@tamu.edu) Phone: 979-845-6224