



Posted on October 19, 2023

Forecast 2024: Navigating a Tricky Economic Terrain

By [PHILLIP PERRY](#)

Abstract: High interest rates and slower economic growth will put increasing pressure on business profits in 2024. The good news is that economists expect the Federal Reserve to lower inflation to desired levels by the end of the year. Robust housing activity, high employment and optimistic consumers will help the nation sidestep a recession.

Fasten your seat belts and enjoy the ride. Like airline travelers bracing for expected turbulence, business owners are preparing for a tricky operating environment in 2024. On the upside, the economy will continue to grow, although at a slower pace. Consumers and businesses are both feeling optimistic, unemployment remains low, capital investments are plugging along at a healthy pace, and the all-important housing market is burgeoning.

Throwing cold water on the good times, though, is a significant downer that no one can control: Higher

interest rates established by the Federal Reserve to control inflation are putting a damper on business activity. Economists are taking note by lowering expectations for the next 12 months.

“We expect real GDP to grow 1.4% in 2024,” said Bernard Yaros, Jr., Assistant Director and Economist at Moody’s Analytics (economy.com). That’s slower than the 2.1% increase expected when 2023 numbers are finally tallied, and below the 2.0%-3.0% considered emblematic of normal business growth. (Gross Domestic Product, the total value of the nation’s goods and services, is the most commonly accepted measurement of economic growth. “Real” GDP adjusts for inflation.)

Slowing commercial activity will affect the bottom line. Moody’s Analytics expects a decline of 4.5% in corporate profits for 2023 and forecasts only a modest recovery of 0.3% in 2024.

(See BUSINESS, Page 4)



COVERING YOUR FIELD IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

THAT'S 100% REINKE CERTIFIED.

From ReinCloud® precision ag technology to the Reinke Navigator® GPS system to factory-trained service professionals, count on Reinke for innovative solutions to maximize your fields' productivity season after season. All backed by your local Reinke irrigation dealer.

LEARN MORE AT
REINKECERTIFIED.COM

ABM Irrigation Inc.

www.abmirrigation.com

9211 Main Street
Needville, TX 77461

(979) 793-4600
(800) 848-3959

Call or stop by for more
information or help with your
irrigation needs.





THE PALLET

Produced by
TURFGRASS
PRODUCERS OF TEXAS

BRENT BATCHELOR
Executive Director

P. O. Box 3010
Glen Rose, Texas 76043

Phone: 979 533-9750
Email: brent@texasgrass.com

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

www.texasgrass.com

facebook.com/Turfgrass-Producers-of-Texas



twitter.com/turfgrassgreen

ADVERTISING RATES:

If you would like to become a sponsor for Turfgrass Producers of Texas and advertise your company in future issues of *The Pallet*, contact Brent Batchelor at the above mentioned phone or email.

Advertising is preferred on disk in Illustrator CS6 ai., Photoshop JPEG or Acrobat PDF. If you need an ad produced for you, please contact R & R Printing, 979-543-9498.

AD SIZES

FULL PAGE – 7.50" x 10"
\$400 B&W • \$600 Full Color

HALF PAGE – 7.50" x 4.85"
\$250. B&W • \$450 Full Color

1/4 PAGE – 7.50" x 2.65" or
3.625" x 4.75"
\$150 B&W • \$350 Full Color

Call for rates on full color ads.

Fake Turf!

Experts issue warning to halt installation of popular landscaping trend: '[It] should be the last resort.'

Story by SARA KLIMEK

In the United States, California has made an effort to ban it. © Provided by The Cool Down



Trends, like those in fashion and pop culture, come and go. But one particular trend in Australia is sparking legitimate concerns and public comment from environmental groups.

What happened?

Artificial grass installation has reached new heights in the country. The Guardian reports that in New South Wales (NSW), there has been a sixfold increase in the number of artificial turfs installed within the last five years alone.

The material, which is often made of polypropylene fibers from tires and plastics, has started to show up in waterways and ecosystems in the region.

Total Environment Centre and its Australian Microplastics Assessment Project research results promoted the recommendation to halt the installation of new turf fields in NSW until proper remediation has occurred.

Why is it important?

The residual environmental impacts of the turf grass is nothing short of problematic. Results from the preliminary stormwater testing revealed 70,000 particles of rubber crumb and more than 50,000 particles of synthetic grass in a single trap. Researchers note that there is no way to contain this plastic runoff from the turf.

Plus, when the turf is exposed to sunlight, the plastic breaks down and releases toxic chemicals and heavy metals into the ecosystem. "During rain events, [particles] are washed off and they get into environments where they can make aquatic ecosystems sick," said Dr. Shima Ziajahromi from the Griffith University's Australian Rivers Institute.

The release of these toxic chemicals has also had negative impacts on human health. The turf was linked to instances of brain cancer among baseball players. The turf also has to be watered to reduce the risk of burns from sliding on it.

What's being done about it?

The European Union and several countries have moved to [ban the use](#) of crumb rubber in the construction of artificial turf, The Guardian reports. In the United States, California has made an effort to ban artificial turf containing "forever chemicals" like PFAs.

"We find it ridiculous that the government is still placing funds of money on a plastic surface material that clearly pollutes, as indicated by the [NSW] chief scientist's report," [said](#) Garnet Brownbill, spokesperson for the Natural Turf Alliance. "Synthetic turf should be the last resort, not the first choice."

Business Decline A Result of Interest Rates

(Continued from Page 1)

Battling inflation

Reports from the field confirm the economists' readings. "Our members are experiencing a business slowdown, due largely to the effect of increasing interest rates," said Tom Palisin, Executive Director of The Manufacturers' Association, a York, Pa., -based regional employers' group with more than 370 member companies (mascpa.org). While businesses understand the need for higher interest rates, they nevertheless hope for early relief. "If inflation does not continue to drop, interest rates will have to be increased further, which will be a big problem," said Palisin.

So, are the Federal Reserve's efforts paying off? There's some good news here, as well as a sunny forecast. Moody's Analytics expects year-over-year consumer price inflation to average 3.2% when 2023 numbers are finally tallied, down from over 6% a year earlier. Moreover, the number should continue to drop until it reaches the Fed's target rate of 2% late in 2024. (These figures represent the "core personal consumption expenditure deflator (PCED)," which strips out food and energy prices and is the Federal Reserve's preferred measure of inflation).

Indeed, Moody's Analytics believes the Fed will start to lower interest rates around June of 2024, although more slowly than previously anticipated because of persistent inflation and ongoing labor market tightness. Cuts of about 25 basis points per quarter are expected over the next few years until the Federal Funds Rate reaches 2.75% by the fourth quarter of 2026 and 2.5% in 2027.

Indeed, Moody's Analytics believes the Fed will start to lower interest rates around June of 2024, although more slowly than previously anticipated because of persistent inflation and ongoing labor market tightness. Cuts of about 25 basis points per quarter are expected over the next few years until the Federal Funds Rate reaches 2.75% by the fourth quarter of 2026 and 2.5% in 2027.

Feeling good

The public mood is a strong driver of the economy.

And here the news is good. "Consumer confidence has been trending higher, and I think prospects are good for it to improve next year," said Scott Hoyt, Senior Director of Consumer Economics for Moody's Analytics (economy.com). "Things should normalize as the economy continues to grow and gas prices stabilize."

One major driver of consumer confidence is a healthy job market. "The unemployment rate has been very low, bouncing around between 3.5% and 3.8% for some time," said Hoyt. A slowdown in job growth orchestrated by the Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes should moderate things. "We think unemployment will trend upward a bit, ending 2023 around 3.9% and 2024 around 4.2%." (Many economists peg an unemployment rate of 3.5% to 4.5% as the "sweet spot" that balances the risks of wage escalation and economic recession.)

Low unemployment may fuel happy sentiments among citizens, but it presents employers with two

(See SALARY, Page 6)

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
RESEARCH | EXTENSION

SAVE
THE
DATE

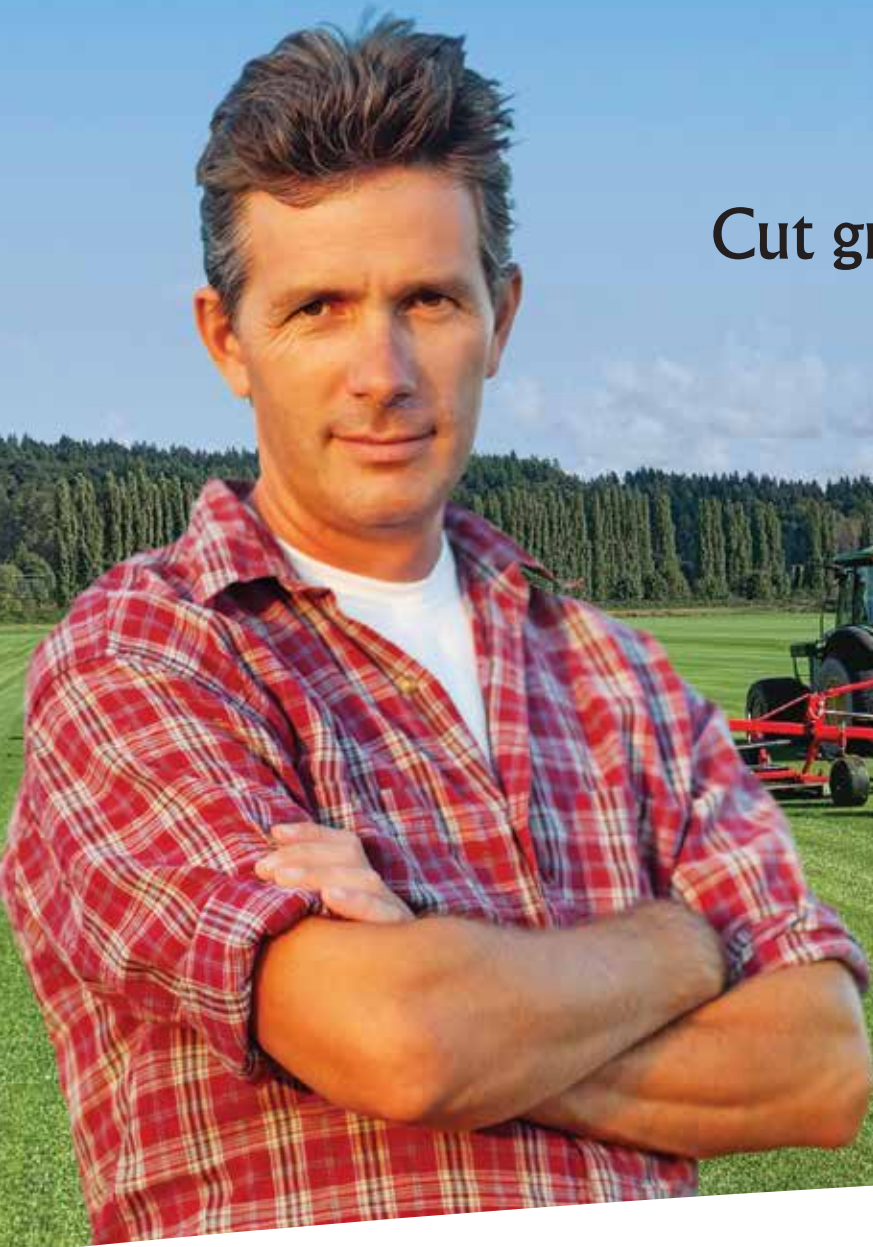
College Station, TX

TURFGRASS
SHORT
COURSES

FEBRUARY
2024

English 19-22
Spanish 26-27

Cut grass, not your profits



Pro-Max 36™ shown



TD-92™



TDR-30™



TDR-26™



TDR-22™

With all the things that could go wrong with your natural grass crop, isn't it nice to know that a Progressive Turf Equipment™ mower isn't the biggest part of your headache? In fact, we at Progressive have worked hard over the past 30 years to bring to the market a Quality built product that just happens to cut grass second to none. These low-maintenance mowers coupled with inventory parts that interchange, provide instant cost savings that will affect your bottom-line year after year.

Feel free to go on-line or call your Progressive Dealer now to find out how Progressive mowers will add to your bottom line AND why a Progressive Turf mower will help you cut grass and not profits.

WWW.PROGRESSIVETURFEQUIP.COM



The Better Built Choice.™

800.668.8873



Quality built in North America and supported by a world-wide Dealer network.

Salary Increases Expect To Increase 5%

(Continued from Page 4)

practical challenges. The first is the need to raise wages to attract sufficient workers. “Wage and salary income growth has been strong, fueled by a tight labor market,” said Hoyt. “We’re expecting it to increase just a shade over 5% both for 2023 and 2024.” In 2022 the growth was a little over 8%.

Reinforcing the estimates of the economists, Palisin said his members have had to hike their compensation to remain competitive among themselves and other economic sectors. The group’s entry level hourly wages increased an eye-popping 8% to 10% in both 2022 and 2023, far higher than the historic average of 2.5% to 3.0%.

Problem No. 2 is a scarcity of workers. Inability to hire enough people—particularly of the skilled variety—can affect the bottom line. Two problems contributing to a labor shortage are the retirement of baby boomers and a post-pandemic reordering many people are making of their life goals. “Demographic structural changes in the US mean we just don’t have, in many cases, the number of workers needed in manufacturing to meet demand,” said Palisin. “That’s not going to change.”

The situation has become a bit nuanced as the recent economic deceleration resulted in a hiring slowdown. “The labor market is still tight, but it’s not as bad as it was a couple of years ago,” said Bill Conerly, Principal of his own consulting firm in Lake Oswego, Oregon (conerlyconsulting.com). “While we still have more job openings than unemployed people, the margin is not as large, and we don’t have all the quiet quitting that we had before.”

While employers never like having to raise wages, putting a cap on paychecks has taken a back seat to a more urgent concern: keeping valuable talent from jumping ship. “The big question now is not so much who can pay the most for entry-level and skilled jobs, but what can they do to retain these folks within their companies,” said Palisin. “Manufacturing in the US over the last year has continued to hire pretty significantly, and we’re not seeing a lot of layoffs, so that tells you that companies are hoarding talent.” Employers are fine tooling their operations in the areas of workplace flexibility, benefits, and culture changes.

Housing markets

Given the generally upbeat consumer sentiment, prospects are good for the housing sector, an important driver of the overall economy. “New home sales are running at the top end of the range set in the decade

preceding the pandemic,” said Yaros. “One reason is that a lack of existing inventory is pushing buyers to consider new homes. The construction industry is stepping in to close the gap, and housing starts have exceeded expectations.”

The construction of new homes is being fueled by a cold hard fact: There aren’t enough existing homes to meet demand. “The 3.1 months’ supply of existing homes remains well below the four to six months of inventory that is considered a balanced housing market,” noted Yaros. Strong demand caused a 10.3% increase in the median price for existing homes in 2022, and a 0.6% increase in 2023. A correction of 1.1% is expected in 2024.

For an explanation of the scarcity, look no further than the run-up in mortgage rates. The ultra-low interest rates of existing mortgages amount to a strong financial incentive for existing homeowners to stay put. “Current homeowners had refinanced their investments at 3% or 4%,” noted Conerly. “Replacing what they had with better homes would require walking away from those mortgages to take on new ones at 7%. I think we’ll see this trend continue for another year, but I think we’ll also see a lot of strength in remodeling, and that will be financed probably with home equity lending or second mortgages.”

Business confidence

High interest rates, an inflationary environment, and rising worker wages: a trilogy of challenges that in normal times would dampen business confidence. And there are other threats to corporate well-being, such as high energy costs resulting from the Russia-Ukraine war and an appreciation in the U.S. dollar that hampers export activity.

Despite all this, companies don’t seem to be planning any dramatic adjustments to their operations, in marked contrast to their cautious attitude of a year earlier. “While our members have moderated their expectations for the future, they are still feeling slightly positive,” said Palisin. “One reason is that we seem to have avoided the recession that many were predicting.” Moody’s Analytics believes that the nation will avoid a recession in 2024, attributing its forecast of a soft landing to resilience in labor markets and consumer confidence.

Another driver of optimism is a recent brightening of the supply chain picture. “There has definitely been a shift in the awareness of the risks of doing

(See CHINESE, Page 10)

BROUWER kesmac

RoboMax^{JD}

AUTOMATIC SERIES



BRIGANCE 500 FARMS
GREENVILLE, TEXAS

REQUIRES ONLY

2.2

GALLONS PER HOUR

MAXIMIZE YOUR HARVEST

Ready to Harvest in less than 30 seconds, the intuitive RoboMax JD powered by a John Deere 6130M is one of the most economical harvesters on the market. Requiring only 2.2 gallons of fuel per hour the RoboMax JD harnesses over 50 years of innovation, unleashed to maximize your harvest.

ABM
Irrigation Systems

(979) 793-4600
9211 MAIN STREET, NEEDVILLE
TEXAS, 77461

@BROUWERKESMAC
WWW.BROUWERKESMAC.COM

Do water restrictions actually work in Texas?

KUT 90.5 | By [MAYA FAWAZ](#)

Kim Algoe's lawn in San Marcos is dried up and crunchy. She has lived in the neighborhood for about a year and a half now, but she said this is the driest she has seen it.

"I'm hoping it comes back when we get some rain," Algoe said. "Maybe that's hopeful, I don't know."

Central Texas did get some **much-needed** rain last week, but the region is still seeing some of the **most intense** drought in Texas. This has led cities and counties to issue water restrictions as a way to combat high demand and low supply.

These calls for conservation include specific schedules for when residents can use outdoor sprinkler systems, water by hand and use decorative water features like fountains.

Algoe said she hasn't watered her lawn at all this summer, but she's worried others aren't doing the same. Her next-door neighbor's house has a lush, green lawn. She thinks they're watering when they're not supposed to be.

"I don't know what he's thinking," Algoe said. "Like he doesn't have to play by the same rules or something."

Getting people to listen

Jan De La Cruz, conservation coordinator for San Marcos, said local water sources reached historic lows

this summer. Her department has been trying to educate people and get residents to follow the rules.

"We send out a lot of information by direct mail, by email, we use social media, newspapers," De La Cruz said. "We just try to get the word out however much we can."

The City of San Marcos entered drought

restrictions in March of last year and escalated to Stage 4 in late August of this year for the first time in nearly a decade.

Under these restrictions, the city needs to decrease its water use by more than half, but De La Cruz said meeting water reduction goals can be hard.

"That's not

necessarily achievable, especially because the population is growing so rapidly in our area," she said.

The city's focus isn't actually enforcement — it's education, according to De La Cruz. And although the department wants compliance, she said nobody benefits from fines.

"We have issued some fines in the past, but we definitely try not to," she said.

The nearby City of Kyle is also struggling with water. Jerry Hendrix, Kyle's assistant city manager, said its water department has a similar approach: educating people rather than punishing them. But, he said, they've given residents more than enough time to be informed and are ramping up enforcement.

"We are doing random water patrols at various times throughout the day and night, but we find ourselves leaving the same door hanger on the same



Cities around Texas have different strategies for getting residents to conserve water, from raising awareness on social media to issuing citations to enforcing criminal penalties.

(See *WATER*, Page 22)

Need parts **fast?**

NEW!

Regional Parts Warehouse



Now staffed full-time!

We're stocked with parts for all FireFly harvesters and mowers to keep you up and running. Please stop by and meet David Boudreaux.



FireFly Parts Warehouse

6115 FM 762
Richmond, TX 77469
Hours: M-F 8-5



For local parts pickup:

(801) 335-6933
david.boudreaux@fireflyautomatix.com

FIREFLY[™]
AUTOMATIX

Chinese Supply Chains Risks Benefit U.S.

(Continued from Page 6)

business in China,” said Palisin. “This has resulted in a reorganizing of supply chains into nations such as Vietnam, Philippines, India, Mexico and the U.S. The jury is still out as to what nations will benefit most.”

Indeed, many businesses are acting on their good feelings. “The commercial sector looks very strong to me,” said Conerly. “Given the current level of interest rates, I’ve been surprised to see the healthy level of capital spending.” Conerly said that manufacturing facilities seem to be the biggest gainers in non-residential construction, with new semiconductor facilities especially benefiting from the CHIPS Act. Suburban office construction has been doing surprisingly well, despite vacancy rates in urban centers. So have suburban neighborhood strip centers, which had been neglected for too long because of fears that Amazon would capture all of the retail business.

Conerly identifies three forces propping up equipment purchases. The first is the CHIPS Act and the construction of semiconductor facilities. The second is the automation being installed by companies nervous about being able to hire people. And the third

is the trend toward reshoring by companies that are trying to shorten their supply chains.

Businesses looking to borrow funds to fuel capital investments, though, had best prepare for a tougher negotiating environment. “The banking sector is in retrenchment and lenders are becoming more risk averse,” said Anirban Basu, Chairman and CEO of Sage Policy Group (sagepolicy.com). “As a result, developers are having more difficulty lining up financing.” Fueling the concern among financial institutions is a recent spate of loan delinquencies and bankruptcies. Banks are looking at their portfolios and seeing where they can tighten up. Companies holding inexpensive pre-pandemic loans will see earnings hit when they need to refinance at six or seven percent.

In the opening months of 2024, economists are advising businesses to keep an eye on some key statistics to get an idea of how the year will turn out. Among them:

Inflation. “If progress in core disinflation stalls out, that would likely mean the Fed will keep interest rates at their current level for longer than we are currently assuming,” said Yaros.

(See *EMPLOYMENT*, Page 21)

Nichols Enterprises, Inc.

Complete Design, Installation, and
Service of Irrigation Systems
El Campo, TX 866-543-4833

Your plastic pipe headquarters

- Hancor brand Drainage Products
- Kroy PVC Irrigation Pipe
- Fresno Valves

Irrigation systems

- T-L Continuous Move Linears & Center Pivots
- Lake Wheel Lines



X-Series Roller Mowers

Designed for tractors with 50 to 150 PTO HP, the all-new X Series of roller mowers is designed to meet — and exceed — the requirements of maintaining vast areas of grass for contractors, turf farms, and local authorities. Visit any of our 5 south Texas locations for a demo!



17405 HWY 90 A
East Bernard, TX 77435
(979) 335-7528

3230 W Business 598
El Campo, TX 77437
(979) 549-3301

7105 US HWY 59N
Victoria, TX 77903
(361) 541-6100

418 Kirkpatrick
Taft, TX 78390
(361) 628-2654

2075 US HWY 90
Noma, TX 77629
(409) 263-2244

TRIMAX KNOWS TURF.

WHEN PRODUCTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE ARE KEY, YOU CAN TRUST TRIMAX MOWING SYSTEMS WITH YOUR TURF.



TRIMAX PEGASUS 722
24' ROLLER MOWER



TRIMAX X-WAM
34' ROLLER MOWER



TRIMAX VULCAN
24' CASTER WHEEL MOWER

Scan here to learn more about the Trimax turf range!

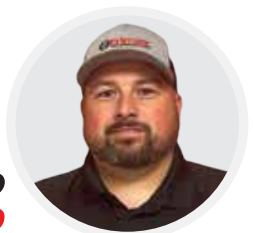


 **trimax**™ // **POWERING PERFORMANCE.**
MOWING SYSTEMS

P +1 770 412 8402 // info@trimaxmowers.com
310 Etowah Trace, Fayetteville GA 30214, US

f t i d v // TRIMAXMOWERS.COM


FOR A FREE DEMO
CALL MATT 512 755 0159



TPT Members take to the Water and



FIRST PLACE TEAM Sponsor: Prime Sod – Justin Thomas, Levi Thomas, Tom Peterson



SECOND PLACE Sponsor: Prime Sod – Felipe Solis, Ben Bitnee, Alesio Solis



THIRD PLACE Sponsor: Horizon Turf – William Gavranovic Jr. Aaron Weaver, Seth Weaver



Heaviest Red
Sponsor: Legacy Turf – Demi Cox

Most Spots Fish
Sponsor: Prime Sod – Doyle Anderton
Blackjack Trout Levi Thomas



Heavy Personal Trio
Sponsor: Horizon Turf – Sandra Hanzik



Blackjack Trout
Sponsor: Prime Sod – Levi Thomas



Heaviest Trout
Sponsor: ABM Irrigation – Blaine Sulak



Heavy Flounder
Sponsor: Horizon Turf – Sandra Hanzik

Special Thanks to the TPT Fishing Tournament Sponsors

DOOR PRIZE SPONSORS: El Campo Repair Services, Hanka Sod, A-1 Grass, APF, Shoppa's Farm Supply, McDonalds Services, Sun Coast Resources, Brazos Valley Grass, TriTex Grass, ABM Irrigation, Simplot, Nutrien, NAPA South Texas Farm & Auto

AWARD SPONSORS: Red's Turf Farms 1st Team; ABM 1st Team, Flounder, door prize; Legacy Turf, Flounder; Hlavinka, Red; David Zaskoda 1st Team; All Seasons, Flounder; Horizon Turf, 1st Team, Flounder, Most Spots Texas Sod, Blackjack Trout; Firefly, Trout; Van Vanlandingham Viatrac, 3rd Team, Trout; All Seasons, Most Spots Triangle Turf, 1st Team Coolers.

and the Greens for Fun Competition

Fishing Tournament Results

The fishing tournament has continued to grow in participation and sponsorship! We welcomed 30 boats for the 2023 event and sponsorships where at an all-time high, check out the article on the results page.

The day turned out to be great for fishing and the folks fishing! Weigh-in proved to be a popular place with a record number of fish weighed.



FIRST PLACE TEAM *Popek Turf*

Golf Results

The weather chased the TPT Golf Tournament into November! But it paid off as the temperature was nice and the sun was shining most of the day. Ten teams participated in the 4-person scramble and all had a great day. Thanks to our plaque sponsor Capital Farm Credit.

The Golf tournament had an increase in teams entered but rainy weather caused us to reschedule and not all the teams could make the date work. We were able to play later in the month and everyone enjoyed the day. The course at Rio Colorado played great, the competition was strong, and a fun and competitive atmosphere prevailed.



SECOND PLACE TEAM *Triangle Turf*

THIRD PLACE TEAM: *Red's Grass Farm*



Closest to the Pin-1st
Sponsor *Triangle Turf*
Winner: *Johnn Romine*



Closest to the Pin-2nd
Sponsor: *Thomas Turf*
Winner: *Seth Thomas*



Longest Putt
Sponsor *Red's Turf.*
Winner:
Clarence Piwonka

Special Thanks to the TPT Golf Tournament Sponsors

**A big Thank You to Capital Farm Credit
for sponsoring our Plaques for both events!**

Sponsors: Hanka Sod, Legacy Turf, Brower Kesmac, Viatrac, Rod Grass Farm, Red's Turf Farms', All Seasons Turf Grass,

LCRA seeks water supply options amid drought, population boom in Central Texas

By **KATY MCAFEE**

The [Lower Colorado River Authority](#) has a [new goal](#) to secure future water supplies for Central Texas' fastest growing areas. The LCRA wants to provide an additional 60,000 acre-feet of water to the areas between [Highland Lakes](#) and Bastrop County by the end of 2040. That's enough water to flood 60,000 football fields 1 foot deep.

"It's not just a matter of having the water available—it's also a matter of where it's available," said John Hofmann, LCRA executive vice president of water, in a news release. "Our work now will help us be ready for the future and the region's continued growth."



Lake Travis is one of the lakes in the Highland Lakes system, which provides water for over 1.4 million people. (Falcon Sky Photography/Community Impact)

the [Water Supply Resources Report](#)—a long-term plan on securing water to Central Texans until 2080—to prepare for worsening [drought conditions](#) and higher demand for water as Central Texas' population rises.

The group is exploring several options to increase the region's water supply, including groundwater wells, building new pipelines, direct potable reuse—distributing treated wastewater into potable water systems—and aquifer storage and recovery, wherein excess water is stored underground during

wet times to be used during dry times.

LCRA's updated Water Supply Resources Report is expected to be released at the end of 2024.

"Many of our municipal and industrial customers contract for water they expect to need in the future, as well as what they need today," Hofmann said.

(See [RESERVOIR](#), Page 18))

The details

The LCRA is also working on updating



Texas Housing Insight

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Texas Real Estate
Research Center

October 2023 Summary

DAYS ON MARKET
▼ 52 days

ACTIVE LISTINGS
▲ 4.1% MOM

MEDIAN HOME PRICE
▼ 1.9% MOM

HOME PRICE INDEX
▬ 0.1% MOM

High mortgage rates continue to put downward pressure on the housing market, with Texas home sales decreasing 5.9 percent year-over-year (YOY). The average price fell alongside sales, with homes costing around \$6,000 less than in September. Demand for new construction increased despite the high entry barrier into the housing market. Homes continue to sit on the market longer, increasing by a week since the start of the year.

All measurements are calculated using seasonally adjusted data, and percentage changes are calculated month over month, unless stated otherwise.

INTRODUCING THE NEW

PEGASUS // S5

RELEASED JULY 2023



**STRONGER.
SMARTER.
SAFER.
SECOND TO NONE.**



After over 20 years in production, the **Trimax Pegasus** is once again bringing mowing innovation to your turf with its latest series, the **Trimax Pegasus S5**.

NOW FEATURES:

- › QuikLIFT as standard
- › Auto-Belt Tensioning System
- › Trimax Titan Maintenance-Free Roller Bearings
- › Turf Tires & optional turf mudguards
- › Stronger Chassis
- › Narrower Transport Design
- › Stand on Covers



Scan here to learn more
about the Trimax Pegasus S5!

 **trimax** // **POWERING PERFORMANCE.**
MOWING SYSTEMS™

P +1 770 412 8402 // info@trimaxmowers.com
310 Etowah Trace, Fayetteville GA 30214, US

f X IG Y in V // **TRIMAXMOWERS.COM**

How to attract the next generation of employees

A panel of current and recently graduated horticulture students from the HortScholar program offer an inside look into the minds of the next generation of employees.

By KATIE M^CDANIEL

To continue business growth, it is important to attract the next generation of employees. At Cultivate'23, a panel of horticulture students from AmericanHort's HortScholar program explained what they look for in a company when applying for jobs and the best ways to reach their generation.

Healthy company culture

A healthy company culture is important to the younger generation. When students meet recruiters at job fairs, they are evaluating that employee – Are they positive? Are they friendly? Do they listen? Are they helpful? Kaitlin Swiantek, a horticulture master's student at the University of Georgia, explains that she looks for current employees who feel appreciated and encouraged from all levels of employment, whether that's the CEO, a manager or someone working in the lab.

One way a company can communicate its culture to applicants is by having current employees express the company's culture in their own words. A company can list quotes somewhere on the website, on the application or give the applicant the chance to talk directly to a current employee.

Brandan Shur, a master's student at North Carolina State University, shares that he values a company with an open-door policy. "If someone is interested in your company, let them come behind the scenes and shadow someone, so they can really understand what your company is like and see what the workers are doing," Shur says. "This is a good way to understand a company's culture."

Technology and tools

A company that takes advantage of new technology and tools will attract the younger generation.

Taylor DeLand, a second-year student at Ohio State Agricultural Technical Institute, explains that she looks for companies that have automation.

"Automation definitely helps with time, especially on these hot summer days when you're running around like a chicken with your head cut off trying to water everything," DeLand says. "Booms help, and automated watering systems that can sensor. If you're running short on time, it's nice to have a boom that you can just set off and water in 10 minutes. If you're doing it by hand, it could take 40 minutes."

"I'm a really big fan of sensors that pair with your phone, and this doesn't have to be a really large infrastructure," Shur says. "It's nice to have when it's 10 at night, and if I'm head grower, I can make sure my plants are okay, whether that's temperature, lighting and see, at least environmentally, that my plants are fine. I think some small sensors go a long way."

Social media and websites

The younger generation uses social media regularly, and they often look for jobs through platforms such as LinkedIn, Indeed, Facebook and Instagram. Armando Villa-Ignacio, a graduate student in the horticulture and landscape architecture department at Colorado State University, explains that the Meta algorithm will suggest other accounts to follow based on the accounts the user is already following and interacting with. So, even if a person isn't following your company's account, there's a chance your company's account will be suggested into the user's feed if that user already follows and interacts with accounts similar to yours.

"Honestly, some of us might still use Facebook, but most of us use Instagram," Villa-Ignacio says. "If your company posts consistently, posts great content and posts 'Hey, we're looking to hire,' you'd be surprised at the amount of people that will see that and apply."

"It's like Facebook reads your mind," DeLand says. "If you like one plant thing or company, it will give you 20."

DeLand grew up in a small town, and from her

(See INTERNET, Page 21)

Executive Director's Message

One of my favorite job responsibilities is coordinating our two get togethers, the fishing and golf events.

The fishing tournament has continued to grow in participation and sponsorship! We welcomed 30 boats for the 2023 event and sponsorships where at an all-time high, check out the article on the results page.

The Golf tournament had an increase in teams entered but rainy weather caused us to reschedule and not all the teams could make the date work. We were able to play later in the month and everyone enjoyed the day. The course at Rio Colorado played great, the competition was strong, and a fun and competitive atmosphere prevailed.

As 2023 starts to wind down and 2024 looms on



the horizon it's time to start planning to attend our 2024 annual meeting and trade show. We will be in College Station at the Scotts Turf facility on January 15th and 16th. We will have the CEU Conference on the first day 1:00-4:00 pm followed by the meet and greet reception at 4:00 pm and the annual meeting at 6:30. The 16th will kick off at 9:00 am with an update from TPI's Casey Reynolds. Following Casey will be updates from researchers and industry folks. After lunch we will turn our attention to inputs and pricing to finish out the conference. We hope to have a tour of the field research at the facility weather permitting.

Kelli and I want to wish all of you well in 2024 and let you know we appreciate your support throughout the year.



TERRY GIBSON
SALES MANAGER

P.O. Box 590858 • Houston, Texas 77259

281 - 221 - 5666

Fax: 866 - 440 - 2116

www.dixequip.com terrygibson007@yahoo.com



"DONKEY" TRUCK CARRIED FORKLIFTS:

3000 Lbs To 5000 Lbs Capacity / Easy To Operate
Extremely Low Operating Weight / More "Payload"
Ideal For Single Axle Trucks
Faster Mounting / Dismounting + Removable Mount Kit
"On - Demand" Three Wheel Drive
Optional Extended Scissor Reach + Many Other Options
"Zero Down" Financing Available / Lease or Purchase

TPT Has New Caps



Golf style unstructured
Colors: Driftwood, Charcoal,
Columbia Blue, Navy

Trucker style Richardson 112
Colors: Heather Grey/Birch Mesh
and Army Olive Visor, Army Olive w/
Tan Mesh, Heather Grey w/ Black
Mesh



All caps have the TPT logo and texasgrass.com on the side.

Caps are \$15.00 each and we will ship them for an additional fee.

Caps will be available at all events or you can contact Brent to order. brent@texasgrass.com



Reservoir—

(Continued from Page 14)

“That makes sense if you’re contracting for a growing population. Because of that, the amount of water customers actually use is significantly below the total amount committed for future use.”

What else?

The LCRA is nearing the end of building the Arbuckle Reservoir—its first major new reservoir in decades—in Wharton County outside Houston. The reservoir can store up to 40,000 acre-feet of water at a time, which is more than Lake Austin, Lady Bird Lake and Lake Marble Falls combined, and will help reduce the amount of water released from the Highland Lakes to downtown customers. The reservoir will come online in 2024.

What’s next

The LCRA will seek public input on its future projects; however, specific details haven’t been announced.



When you grow, we all grow

Since 2006, we’ve returned almost \$2 billion in combined cash and allocated equities to our members through our cooperative returns program, so when you’re ready to expand, try a partnership that really pays.

BAY CITY 979.245.4828
🏠 NMLS493828 | capitalfarmcredit.com

EQUIPMENT THAT'S UP FOR ANY TASK.

FARMALL UTILITY A SERIES

Need a versatile tractor to tackle any task in your operation—without breaking the bank? Get standout power and performance with easy operation to maximize productivity with the Farmall Utility A Series. Experience all-day-long comfort with plenty of room in the cab and easy-to-reach controls. Check out the Farmall Utility A Series at your local Hlavinka Equipment Company location and bring the whole package to your operation.

CASE IH
AGRICULTURE

EAST BERNARD - EL CAMPO
NOME - VICTORIA
www.hlavinka.com

Analytics-Driven Marketing

By STACIE ZINN ROBERTS

Right Message

It's that time of year again. Time to plan your advertising budget for next year. Assuming you have a written advertising budget, review your spreadsheet or list to recall what ad tactics generated sales in 2023. Was it that Google Ad campaign? Your email newsletter? Your ad in a local magazine or newspaper? If you can track your sales spikes and match those up with marketing campaigns, then you can identify which marketing tactics work best for your farm.

If you're still unsure what the most impactful form of advertising this past year was, don't beat yourself up. Pinning down exactly what works and what doesn't in advertising has always been a challenge. However, with the advent of digital marketing, a means of measuring an ad's effectiveness is now more readily available.

Website Analytics

Your website is more than just a postcard on the internet to tell people about your company. The backend of your website should also include a robust set of tools that monitor, record, and report traffic to your website. While most websites have at least a rudimentary toolbox of tracking software, many websites utilize Google Analytics for this information. Google Analytics provides insights such as demographics (gender, age, location) of your site visitors. Most importantly for planning your ad expenditures, it can track the source of your web traffic which can tell you which ads worked and which didn't.

Links, QR Codes, Discount Codes & Coupons

Gone are the days when we had to rely on customers cutting a coupon out of a newspaper for us to be able to gauge an ad's effectiveness. A QR Code, (that black and white box that looks sort of like a jigsaw puzzle), when scanned by a smartphone, leads customers directly to a designated page on your website. QR codes can be used as part of the overall design on print ads, billboards, flyers and trade show handouts, business cards, and even TV commercials, to drive and track traffic to your site.



On digital ads in online magazines and on social media posts, live links connecting your written out domain (your .com address) to your website can also be tracked.

If your website has an e-commerce component, meaning your site lets you conduct online sales of sod, fertilizer, and other products, discount codes specific to certain advertising efforts also tell you how a customer found out about your farm and offerings.

The same is true for email marketing software programs such as MailChimp and Constant Contact. Once an email or digital newsletter is sent, these programs easily create reports showing who opened your email, when, and if they clicked on a link to your website or social account.

How to Use This Information

When you compare sales trend information with website traffic, you can determine which of your advertising efforts converted to sales. As an example, let's say in February you ran a print ad in your local newspaper or turf industry journal. If you have a QR code on that print ad, anyone who scans the code will be directed to your website, and the fact that they used the QR code to get there will be recorded. A significant jump in website traffic could mean your ad generated interest in your farm among potential customers. A large jump in sales could mean your ad reached qualified potential customers who were ready to buy. You'd want to repeat an ad like that, right?

Websites with e-commerce capabilities can take it a step further and tell you exactly how much revenue an ad generated based on resulting sales.

If you aren't yet utilizing analytics, QR codes, or live links in your current strategy, you still have time to include them in your ads for the coming sales season. Start now so you can set yourself up to plan your future ad budgets based on data. The benefit is when you know what works for your farm, you can make future advertising decisions backed by solid information. Spend your money on ad tactics that work. Cut from your budget ads that don't. Use data to determine the difference.



The Cost of Non-Compliance

The federal [H-2A](#) and [H-2B](#) programs require employers to adhere to certain guidelines in order to be eligible. These guidelines are put in place to ensure fair treatment for both U.S and foreign workers.

While the vast majority of H-2A and H-2B employers follow the guidelines and stay compliant, there are instances that serve as a reminder of why these guidelines are put into place.

In a 2023 [investigation](#) by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division, a Cortland, New York facility was found to be in violation of H-2B guidelines when they fired U.S. workers so H-2B workers could take their place. They did not advertise the availability of housing to U.S. workers, potentially discouraging them from applying for the jobs, and failed to pay H-2B workers for meals and lodging expenses incurred during their travel to the U.S.

The Cortland, New York facility paid \$277, 315 to resolve their violations, along with \$20,000 to the U.S. Department of Labor for civil penalties and was banned from utilizing the H-2B program for three years. The employer was also debarred from the H-2B program for three years as a result of its violations.

In June 2023, a [federal court sentenced](#) a South Carolina H-2A labor contractor to 40 months in federal prison and three years of court-ordered supervision following his term of imprisonment after a U.S. Department of Labor and multi-agency investigation found the employers subjected migrant farmworkers to exploitative labor practices, confiscated passports and housed workers in unsafe and unhealthy conditions.

In addition, the court also ordered the labor contractor to pay \$508,125 in restitution to 55 affected workers and forfeit more than \$32,000 in business

funds. The business is also subject to three years of probation.

Specifically, it was determined the labor contractor violated federal laws by:

(See LABOR, Page 23)

ELITE
MATERIAL HANDLING

FORKLIFT SALES | RENTALS | SERVICE | PARTS | & MORE!

- ✓ Truck-Mounted Forklifts
- ✓ 3000-5500 lb. Capacities
- ✓ The lightest, fastest, most versatile forklift in America
- ✓ Made in the USA

WWW.ELITEMH.COM

Call Your Local Sales Rep Today! **817-595-5995**
900 PORT AMERICA PL., GRAPEVINE, TX 76051

Internet Aids In Employee Search

(Continued from Page 16)

experience it's hard to find small- to medium-sized nursery and greenhouse companies that are hiring because most companies that size are not on the internet. "It would be nice if some of those smaller and medium sized companies could get their information out on Indeed and LinkedIn because I know they're hiring. It's just too hard to find."

Seed Your Future is another platform students are using to find jobs. Students are already going to the website to find scholarships and other programs, so companies will have good exposure targeting the next generation of employees.

"I would definitely recommend that website to every company because the school systems are really trying to partner with Seed Your Future," Shur says. "There's not a month that goes by that I don't hear about Seed Your Future. They're doing a good job visiting schools, and it's a good place to put out applications and find students."

The students on the panel also expressed that they value meeting members of a company in person, and often after making that in-person connection, students will visit the company's website and social media channels to learn more and reach out about job openings.

"If your company visits ag institutes or universities and gives an hour-long lecture, there are 30-50 students that are going to fall in love with you and really want to learn more about your company," Shur says.

Pay transparency and benefits

Another important factor is pay transparency. Villa-Ignacio explains that most of the people in his generation will not apply or even look at an application if the pay range isn't listed.

"When I'm looking at an application online, I like to see pay transparency," says Hamilton Crockett, a master's student pursuing a degree in plant pathology at Louisiana State University. "Most companies and employers already have the idea of the range they're willing to pay for the position, and providing a range for that person looking at the application will not only save them time but also save the employer's time."

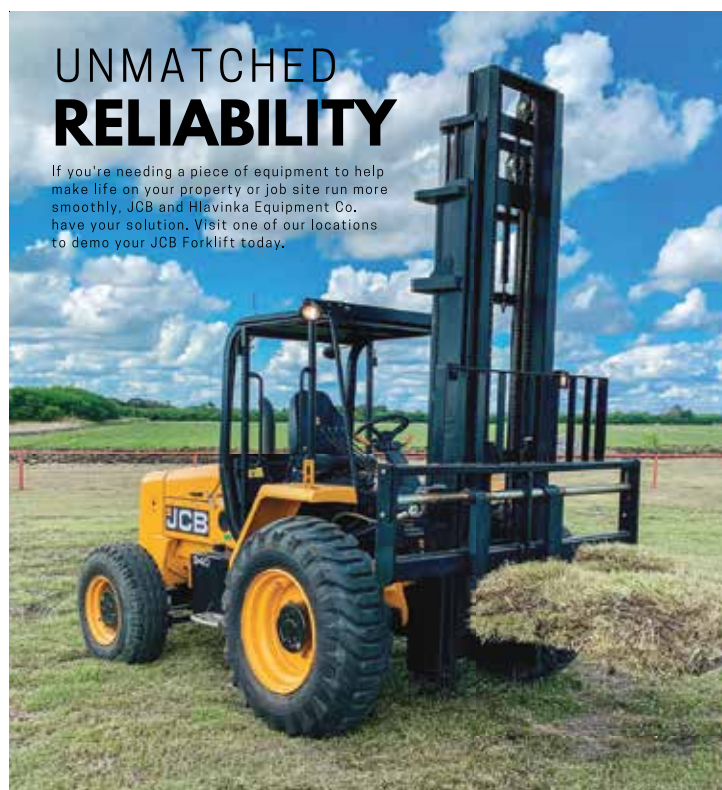
It's important for companies to showcase its benefits

that go beyond the standard healthcare, dental, vision and 401(k). Most companies will have those standard benefits, so what does your company offer that makes it stand out from others? Crockett explains that she will most likely work in a lab, so she looks for benefits such as stand-up desks or an area to walk and stretch her legs.

Invests in their employees

Regan Draeger, a recent graduate of The Ohio State University, where she obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in sustainable plant systems with a specialization in horticulture, explains that her generation is constantly looking for a company that's going to invest in their employees, whether that's paying for them to go to conferences, educational workshops or developing a program that funds further education degrees.

"We're looking for something that shows the company is truly interested in developing us as a person," Draeger says.



UNMATCHED RELIABILITY

If you're needing a piece of equipment to help make life on your property or job site run more smoothly, JCB and Hlavinka Equipment Co. have your solution. Visit one of our locations to demo your JCB Forklift today.

17405 HWY 90 A
East Bernard, TX 77435
(979) 335-7528

7105 US HWY 59N
Victoria, TX 77903
(361) 541-6100

418 Kirkpatrick
Taft, Tx 78390
(361) 528-2554



www.hlavinka.com

(See STUBBY-ROOT, Page 21)

Water Demands Force Creative Alternatives

(Continued from Page 8)

door multiple times," he said. "That's when we start looking at citations."

Kyle water patrols have recorded 542 violations this year and more than 20 violations have been sent to the municipal court, according to the city. But even with citations, Kyle has been struggling to keep up with water demand and has had to buy more from San Marcos.

What does work?

The City of El Paso has been working to answer this question since the 1950s, when a seven-year, statewide drought changed the city's relationship to water. Since then, El Paso has prioritized conservation.

"We're pretty dry out here," said Jennifer Barr, conservation manager for El Paso Water. "We're in kind of the northern end of the Chihuahuan Desert, and we only get about eight inches of rainfall on average per year."

Even though El Paso is dryer than Central Texas cities, Barr said they have plenty of water. The city also has a long history of offering money to help people save water through rebate programs.

"We did toilet rebates, grass removal rebates or turf replacement rebates," she said. "We did washer rebates and we replaced millions of square feet of turf with xeric landscaping."

The city isn't under drought restrictions. Instead, it has a year-round ordinance with conservation rules residents have to follow. Barr said it's strictly enforced. Neighbors are constantly calling in when they see violations, and Barr said it usually takes only one warning for people to start complying.

"If you violate our water conservation ordinance, there is a criminal penalty," she said. "It's a misdemeanor."

That means water violations can show up on your record, a penalty that has been effective at discouraging water waste, Barr said. Now, the city is looking to switch to citations to keep people in line.

"We do have repeat violators wasting water consistently," she said. "[With citations,] we would be able to not have to wait for months to get them into

municipal court and we'd be able to fine them."

Barr said the enforcement process would be much quicker, but the culture of conservation has already been in place for decades.

Barr's biggest piece of advice for Central Texas: Start water education as early as possible.

"We start young," she said. "We have a water resources learning center where kids come in of all ages and learn about water conservation and their water resources."

Barr said kids come out for field trips and learn about the flora and fauna of the Chihuahuan Desert from the department's mascot, Willie the Waterdrop.

"They learn what kinds of adaptations those animals and plants have done to live in the desert," she said. "Then they find out what kind of adaptations humans have made and maybe should make to live in the desert."

Willie teaches kids to take shorter showers and turn off the water while brushing their teeth, lessons Barr hopes they'll take into adulthood — and maybe even back home to their parents.

Employment—

(Continued from Page 10)

Employment. "Total employment in the country is a good measure of current conditions," said Conerly. "And any increase in initial claims for unemployment insurance could foreshadow a slowdown."

The yield curve. "A reversion in which short term interest rates exceed long term ones could foreshadow a coming economic slowdown," said Conerly.

Whatever the condition of the tea leaves, businesses in general will encounter a tougher operating environment in 2024, characterized by a need to finesse a tight labor market and reluctant lenders. "In the coming year we will face uncertainty about inflation and interest rates, shortages of labor, higher energy costs, a slowdown in China's economy, and recurring threats of a federal government shutdown," said Palisin. "There are a lot of spinning plates in the air, and some of them may fall and crack."

Labor Violators Paying A Toll

(Continued from Page 20)

- Not meeting job orders' requirements by omitting terms and conditions, including additional worksites.
- Intimidating and discriminating against workers with threats to call immigration services if the workers left their jobs. The employer also withheld some workers' passports and visas.
- Not paying workers based on the adverse effect wage rate and making them work for more hours than the job order stated.
- Requiring workers to purchase gloves and knives needed for their tasks.
- Not reimbursing workers for inbound and outbound transportation to and from their place of residence. The employer also failed to reimburse workers for their visa costs at a price of \$190 each.
- Failing to meet the three-quarters guarantee for work hours because workers left the jobs due to exploitation. The employer also paid seasonal workers less than H-2A workers for the same work.
- Charging workers \$100 per week for meals, a cost not disclosed in the job contract.
- Failing to provide housing that met safety and health requirements.

H-2A businesses that utilize services provided by labor contractors may be liable for violations as well, therefore, it is important to understand and comply with all the requirements of the H-2A program. The Federation of Employers and Workers of America (FEWA) provides its members with the tools necessary to stay current on compliance guidelines.



Members receive access to compliance training videos, webinars and legal assistance, if needed, at no additional cost.

“FEWA members have the unique benefit of joining one association to file the H-2A or H-2B paperwork, process workers abroad, advocate in DC, educate on Compliance, and have access to legal resources,” explained Arnulfo Hinojosa, Vice President of FEWA. “We take pride in working with respectable employers that are willing and capable of following the rules.”

For additional information regarding FEWA and the H-2A and H-2B programs, visit www.fewaglobal.org or call 877-422-3392.



**Save the
DATE!**

**Turfgrass Producers of Texas
Texas Annual Meeting & Trade Show
January 15 & 16, 2024
Scott's Turf Facility • College Station, TX**

979-533-9750 • brent@texasgrass.com

More information - visit our website at www.texasgrass.com.

TURFGRASS PRODUCERS OF TEXAS

BRENT BATCHELOR, *Executive Director*

P.O. BOX 3010
GLEN ROSE, TEXAS 76043
Phone: 979.533-9750

email:brent@texasgrass.com

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

www.texasgrass.com



Please notify Brent Batchelor at 979-533-9750 if you wish to be removed from the Turfgrass Producers of Texas Mailing List.