

ALABAMA'S

TREASURED FORESTS

A Publication of the Alabama Forestry Commission



Volume XLI No. 1 - 2022



**ALABAMA
FOREST**

I'D RATHER BE IN THE WOODS

Alabama TREASURE Forest Association

TIMBER, RECREATION, ENVIRONMENT, AESTHETICS, SUSTAINABLE, USABLE, RESOURCE

The Alabama TREASURE Forest Association is dedicated to promoting good forest stewardship, educating others about responsible forest management and improving the forests of our state and nation. These lands are managed for many resources, including wildlife habitat, pine and hardwood timber, clean water, recreation opportunities and beautiful scenery. When utilizing a multiple-use management strategy, all of the benefits a forest provides are enhanced.

We are passionate about making our land better for the next generation. In a very real way, the future of Alabama's forests rests in the hands of landowners and like-minded individuals who support good forest stewardship. You can be a part of that effort. Purchase an "I'd rather be in the woods!" tag and support education and outreach efforts to raise awareness about the wonderful possibilities of sustainable land management.



TREASUREForest.org

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On the Cover:
Curtis Gulf waterfall on Loblolly Farm (featured on page 5)
Photo by Coleen Vansant

This publication is provided at no charge to the forest landowners of Alabama, with a circulation of approximately 14,000. Published four times each year, the magazine is filled with forestry information and technical assistance designed to assist landowners in making informed decisions about the management practices they apply to their land. Articles and photographs are contributed by AFC employees and other forestry or natural resources professionals.

Alabama's TREASURED Forests magazine is also available on-line! www.forestry.alabama.gov



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Message from the *STATE FORESTER*

A small fire in Shelby County was recently reported to our dispatch center. With the wind and low humidity that day, it rapidly grew into a major fire that threatened many homes in the Stonegate neighborhood outside of Birmingham. Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) personnel were dispatched to the fire at about 3:00 p.m. that afternoon. They quickly realized the potential for this fire to spread and cause significant damage. More AFC crews were called in, along with several volunteer fire departments.

The terrain in this part of Shelby County is rough, steep, and rocky. It is not conducive to our traditional wildland firefighting methods. To operate our heavy AFC equipment, it would take a skilled operator, one who could safely negotiate the mountainside. An expert from Chambers County was brought in to help create fire lines in this difficult environment. Our incident commander knew, however, that there were some places where that strategy would not work so he requested additional resources to put in hand lines around the fire. We don't typically use this technique in Alabama. It is more common in western states, but proved to be very beneficial in this case.

We also were using a new system that gave us a more accurate way to forecast fire behavior. This method enabled us to monitor and predict how the fire would respond as the weather changed. Using this tool, we could ensure we had the necessary resources on hand and were prepared for the expected wind event on Wednesday of that week.

We could not have succeeded in stopping this wildfire without our partners. Two that I want to mention are the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) and local VFDs. ALEA was called in promptly to assist us with aerial water drops. This is another firefighting technique we don't often use in Alabama, but it was vital in this case. Without their ability to drop water in carefully targeted locations to cool the blaze, our fire lines might not have contained it. Several houses would have been lost without their assistance.

It goes without saying that our greatest partners in fighting wildfires are the volunteer fire departments. There were several Shelby County fire departments on the scene who were crucial to our efforts. I don't want to name any specifically because I will end up missing someone, so suffice it to say we could not have controlled this fire without the volunteers in Shelby County. They assisted in many ways and were greatly appreciated.

This wildfire took four days to get fully under control. We moved resources from across the state, bringing about 30 people (almost 20 percent of our firefighters) to Shelby County to combat this fire. In total, it burned approximately 740 acres. Together with our partners we were able to get it under control without losing any homes, or more importantly, without sustaining any injuries. It shows what can be accomplished when we work together. So, from the AFC, let me say a big THANK YOU to the volunteer fire departments who stood shoulder to shoulder with us on this fire, and the many others we battle across the state daily! Hopefully as the woods green up in the next few weeks, our spring fire season will come to an end.



*Rick Oates,
State Forester*

Rick Oates

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The Alabama Forestry Commission supports the Alabama Natural Resources Council's TREASURE Forest program. *Alabama's TREASURED Forests* magazine, published by the Alabama Forestry Commission, is intended to further encourage participation in and acceptance of this program by landowners in the state, offering valuable insight on forest management according to TREASURE Forest principles. TREASURE is an acronym that stands for **T**imber, **R**ecreation, **E**nvironment, and **A**esthetics for a **S**ustained **U**sable **R**esource.

REVISITING “LOBLOLLY FARM”

The Winston County Oasis of Bill and Jeanie Snoddy

The lake on Loblolly Farm provides the Snoddy family and guests multiple recreational opportunities.

*Story and photos by Coleen Vansant
Public Information Manager | Alabama Forestry Commission*

TREASURE Forests are special, or they wouldn't be called TREASURE Forests. It's not the land, the wildlife, or the creeks and streams that run through them that make them special. Those things are just the blank canvas. What makes a TREASURE Forest special is the vision of the people who are its caretakers and the patience they have in seeing that vision become a reality. They are the very best example of multiple-use forest management in the state of Alabama, and Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award winners are the “Crown Jewels” of the best our state has to offer in forest management.

Bill and Jeanie Snoddy received the prestigious Helene Mosley Award in 1995, and I made my first visit to their Winston County farm at that time to interview them for a feature article in the magazine. When I visited the couple again recently for this story, the transformation that had taken place in the last 26 years was unbelievable!

Preserving Family History

The Snoddy's “Loblolly Farm” has a rich family history. Bill's great-grandfather, William R. Bonds, took title to one tract of land in the 1870s by declaring homestead. James S. Snoddy, Sr. (Bonds' son-in-law) homesteaded the property next to it, deeded from President Grover Cleveland to Snoddy on July 9, 1894. The two properties were joined at the death of Mr. Bonds. Dr. James S. Snoddy, Jr., Bill's father, acquired the original parcel of land in 1948, and throughout the years each generation has added additional acres to the original homestead. Bill inherited the property from his father in 1964.

Bill's ancestors first cleared the tract of trees in an attempt to farm and graze livestock. However, the property was too poor to be used as farmland so eventually most of it was converted to pasture. According to Bill, his father had begun to plant trees on the pastures in the 1950s and continued until his death in 1964. Bill continued having trees planted into the 1970s. Timber harvesting on some of the existing stands was conducted during the 1950s and '60s.

Today Loblolly Farm consists of approximately 735 acres total with approximately 400 in pine and 300 in hardwood or hardwood/pine mixed stands. The remaining 35 acres consists of roads, a lake, scenic vistas, wildlife openings, and wildflower gardens. Bill and Jeanie say there are several areas on the property they call ‘pocket wildernesses’ that will be left in their natural state and never be cut.

(Continued on page 6)



Photo by Bill Snoddy



Jeanie and Bill Snoddy enjoy a quiet moment beside their five-acre lake.

Making the Plans

With Bill and Jeanie living in Huntsville where he worked at Marshall Space Flight Center, very little was done to the land for several years. Around 1979 the couple took a greater interest in managing their property and obtained the services of a local consulting forester, the late Bill Bustin. He developed a comprehensive forest management plan and after several years of work, the couple was nominated for and earned TREASURE Forest status in 1984. Their TREASURE Forest certificate number is 280. There are currently more than 2,100 certified TREASURE Forests in the state, which means the Snoddys embraced the program in its very early years.

Although timber and wildlife are the Snoddy's primary management objectives under their plan, preserving the natural beauty of their farm and nurturing a place for their family and friends to enjoy and grow are the most important. Loblolly Farm is nestled in the beautiful rolling hills of Winston County just north of Double Springs and adjacent to the Bankhead National Forest. The show-stopper attraction on the property is the beautiful and unique Curtis Gulf (on the cover) which is a small canyon that runs through the property. A crystal-clear stream dissects the canyon floor, and the rushing of a wet weather waterfall drowns out all other sounds. Water from the falls and creek helps form a small natural wading pool before it meanders on down the canyon. Atop one of the ancient cliff walls is where the couple chose to place their cabin, which provides a spectacular view of the falls and craggy rock walls. Hemlock is abundant around the cabin and Gulf, and the crisp clean smell of the native tree can be intoxicating.

According to local lore, the high cliffs, crevices, and cave shelters of Curtis Gulf helped hide and gave protection to the sons of Winston County who did not wish to be drafted into the Southern army during the Civil War. Winston County's neutrality during the conflict is what earned them the name "Free State of Winston."

Taking it a Step Further

As I mentioned earlier, the primary goal for the Snoddys was to provide a natural haven of rest, relaxation, and recreation for their family and friends. Below is an excerpt from the initial feature story I did on the farm for the Fall 1995 issue of this magazine.

"A major vision of the couple and their two children is to investigate the possibilities of part of their property being used for retreats. The retreat foremost in their mind would be a nature center

dedicated to the encouragement of the musical arts by providing an environment to enhance creative and learning processes.

"Recognizing a need for a master plan to provide focus and motivation is important to them. During the Thanksgiving holidays several years ago, family members had a 'brainstorming session' on possible elements to incorporate into a plan. One guideline is that the elements should require limited resources to both develop and maintain.

"Here are just a few of their ideas: more trails and wildflowers; a lake (currently under construction); a chapel; wildlife food plots; 'ancient' astronomical observatory; orienteering course; a play area; development of scenic views; golf cart trails; Spanish and Japanese area (to be done by adding cultural accents); gravity-driven fountains; a Monet water lily garden; and a replica of Thoreau's Walden cabin."

I'm sure over three decades ago that bucket list seemed almost unimaginable for the family, but through the years they have been able to achieve most of their wishes as well as add in many other aesthetic features to the property. It started in 1994 when they retained landscape architect Geoff Rausch to develop an environmental enhancement plan for selected areas on the farm. Rausch is the landscape architect who designed the Huntsville Botanical Gardens.

When I visited the farm more than 26 years ago, trees were being cut to accommodate a five-acre lake. Years later, the lake provides many recreational opportunities for family and visitors including a sandy beach swimming area, pavilion, a footbridge, and a walking trail around it. For those who want to just sit and enjoy the atmosphere, there's an island with a Japanese Zen Garden.



This beautiful and peaceful Japanese Zen Garden is on a small island in the lake on Loblolly Farm.

In another section of the property, if you didn't know better you would think you had magically time-traveled to Salisbury, England. The couple has created their own version of Stonehenge on a rolling rise. Large granite slabs, the tallest at 13 feet, were meticulously and strategically placed to create a mini version of the iconic ancient landmark. The outside surplus slabs were given to Bill by a granite company in Elberton, Georgia, if he would come and get them. Bill hauled them to the farm on a borrowed



The Snoddys created their own version of Stonehenge.

truck and set them himself with his farm tractor and the help of a contractor friend. Adjacent to their Stonehenge is an astronomy observation deck, complete with a sundial, where you can get the best views of astrological events in the inky black sky of Winston County nights.

One of the highlights of the farm is a chapel that has been constructed on another small hill on Loblolly Farm. This open-air chapel was designed by Bill himself with his inspiration for the structure taken from “Thorncrown Chapel” located in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. If you look closely at the open steel and wooden beams that form the roof, you’ll notice that Bill intentionally designed each uniquely. Over the years the chapel has been a favorite site of family and guests including many weddings and even a performance by a concert pianist.

Jeanie’s touch is also evident around the family cabin, along walking trails, and throughout the farm. Being a wildflower enthusiast, she has carefully tended and nurtured many wildflower gardens, transplanting native flowers, trees, and ferns and adding details and art for cultural and architectural enhancement. A beautiful grove of mature crepe myrtles welcomes guests just before they arrive at the cabin.

Other accomplishments the family has reached from their initial wish list of features are additional walking and golf cart trails, a children’s play area, scenic views, a campfire area complete with



Preserving the beauty of the natural hardwood forests is a priority of Bill and Jeanie.

stone fire ring and benches. The farm is dotted with metal and stone visual ornaments including a 17-foot metal tree overlooking the lake, which is decorated with many different colored bottles that reflect in the sun.

Build it and They Will Come

Although a replica of Thoreau’s Walden cabin was on the wish list, the Snoddys had to go much bigger in size to accommodate all the guests that frequent the farm. In 1996, they built an additional guest house because of all the visitors they welcomed.

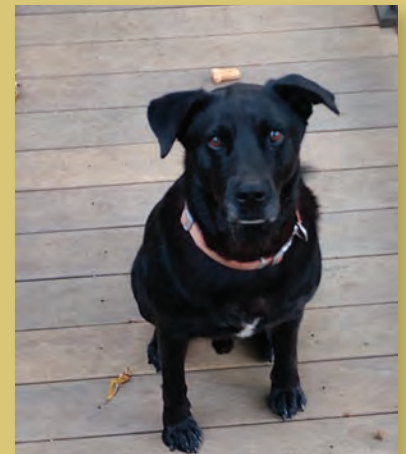
Friends, family, church, and school groups and many day-visitors frequent the farm, and the couple notes there is rarely a weekend that they don’t have guests. Years ago, approximately 70 teenagers from a Christian volunteer group in Birmingham used the farm as the site of their organization’s orientation and retreat.

The Snoddys have hosted numerous landowner tours, school programs, and forestry judging contests over the years. They recently welcomed a group of local boy scouts who worked on their hiking merit badge.

Bill and Jeanie say that one of the greatest perks of having so many visitors is that many of them come to work. They add that most of the maintenance and cleanup on the farm is done by guests who volunteer during their stay.

The couple is quick to credit their farm caretaker, Paul Hunter. According to them, Paul only lives a few miles from the farm and

takes care of most things the volunteer guests don’t accomplish. Paul removes fallen trees and limbs after storms, hauls off Jeanie’s many pruning piles, helps maintain the recreational areas and cabin sites, and troubleshoots other problems that may arise in the couple’s absence. According to Bill, Paul’s most important job is taking care of “Batman,” the abandoned dog who adopted the farm as his home several years ago.



Batman, the faithful farm dog

Preserving a TREASURE for the future

Bill and Jeannie have dedicated the past 40-plus years to building an oasis for their family and friends, and their plans are one day to hand off this TREASURE to awaiting generations. Several years ago, their son David built a home on the property. He lives and works in New York City, and his family uses it as a retreat. David’s two children, along with their late daughter’s two teenage daughters, all enjoy visiting and working on the farm and plan to spend more time there in the future. 🏡

Editor’s Note: The original story about the Snoddy’s Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award winning farm was published in the Fall 1995 issue of *Alabama’s TREASURED Forests* magazine.

THE ASSOCIATION OF CONSULTING FORESTERS OF AMERICA

PARTNER WITH A PROFESSIONAL

By Billy Rye

Alabama Chapter Chair, ACF President | Forest Management Specialist, Inc.

Owning land is an American dream. From the institutional investor who wants to maximize the return on investment of his holdings, to the landowner who wishes to hunt turkey on his own piece of heaven, the reasons for ownership are as varied as the species of trees which occur in Alabama.

These diverse objectives and the complexities of owning land often force the landowner to partner with a professional to reach his or her land management goals. This is where the Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF) can help. ACF consulting foresters are independent professionals who manage forests and market forest products for private woodland owners. Members use their education, experience, and expertise to partner with the landowner to advance the forest landowner's goals.

The ACF was formed in 1948 to provide landowners with a means of locating consulting foresters of proven ability and character in every part of the country. The mission of the ACF is to advance the practice of professional consulting forestry. This mission is expressed in the core values, policies, and Code of Ethics to which each member is required to adhere. For instance, ACF members are not allowed to purchase standing timber. This standard allows landowners to partner with a professional consultant who has their best interest in mind.

ACF foresters are also required to have a college degree in forestry or a natural resource related field, as well as five years of practical forestry experience. Additionally, they must meet continuing educational requirements to stay current on issues that affect their clients' ownership and enjoyment of the land.



ACF Member J. Pat Autrey (right) of Muscle Creek Forest Services conducts a site preparation burn to improve the tree planting conditions for one of his clients.



ACF Member Billy Rye of Forest Management Specialists, Inc. Inspects the quality of a white oak log to make sure his client receives the most for her timber sale.

ACF foresters partner with private landowners, attorneys, real estate agents, accountants, financial institutions, and many others. Working with an ACF Forester gives the landowner the assurance that his land is being sustainably managed in compliance with ever-changing local, state, and federal regulations. Along with helping the landowner develop a plan to achieve his vision, ACF foresters can provide keen insight to explore the land's potential in economically viable ways.

Some of the services that ACF provides to landowners include:

- *Developing and writing a forest management plan*
- *Coordinating reforestation*
- *Planning and overseeing a timber harvest*
- *Appraising timber value and estimating volume*
- *Assessing forest health (disease and insect) conditions*
- *Recommending stand improvement practices*
- *Prescribed burning*
- *Controlling undesirable vegetation or invasive plants*
- *Marking boundary lines*
- *Establishing and maintaining wildlife habitat and food plots.*

Partnering with an ACF member provides many benefits to the landowner. One member of the ACF helped his client to obtain a price for his timber that was three times more than the landowner was able to secure on his own. Other ACF members have helped landowners during reforestation to prescribe professional specifications for the practices and to reserve seedlings

that are difficult to procure. Partnering with an ACF member has helped countless Alabama landowners avoid costly mistakes while conducting timber sales and forest management practices. The best way for a landowner to reach the goals for their property is to partner with an ACF member.

Below are a few testimonials for Alabama Chapter ACF Members (reprinted with permission). Please note: the ACF logo is substituted for the name and/or company of the ACF member:

“I highly recommend 🌲. I have always been a do-it-yourself type. I learned my lesson the hard way and hired 🌲 to fix the problems I created. I was deploying shortly and had to have someone I could trust in my absence. 🌲 came through for me when it counted most. Since that time, 🌲 has advised me on a land purchase, managed a timber sale, and managed a re-planting and spraying. 🌲 is only a phone call away and always willing to help.” — Corey Calhoun

“I have used 🌲 on several occasions in the past five years. From timber cruising, timber sales, and planting trees I value their expertise in making these decisions. Timber sales - 🌲 cruised the timber and handled the bids for the sale. I feel I got top dollar for each tract of timber sold. 🌲 was on site during the logging operations and made sure everything ran smoothly. Planting pines - 🌲 lined up contractors for site prep, planting, and chemical application. 🌲 does audits each year on my young pines. Bottom line, good folks that you can trust and you will enjoy doing business with them.” — Brown Nolen

“🌲 helped guide our family with a very personal, hands-on approach to our land. The result was a good return on the initial cutting and a replanted tract that will pay dividends in the future. 🌲 made it easy by delivering solid and timely advice that allowed us to make wise choices.” — Fred Monk 🌲

To learn more about the ACF or to contact a member in your area, please visit the following:

- ***National ACF Website:*** <https://www.acf-foresters.org>
- ***Alabama Chapter Website:*** <https://alabamaacf.com>
- ***Alabama Chapter Contact:***
(256) 852-4050 (mobile) | tclark@FWForestry.com
- ***Alabama Chapter Facebook:***
<https://www.facebook.com/AlabamaACFChapter>



The Importance of **Stream Crossings**

Utilizing Alabama's Best Management Practices for Forestry

By Carey Potter

BMP Coordinator/Registered Forester | Alabama Forestry Commission

At some point, whether you are a landowner, timber buyer, logger, or avid hunter, you will find yourself having to cross a stream to gain access to property where you are harvesting timber or trying to get back to that 'honey hole' to hunt a big buck. The biggest question is, "What type of stream crossing should I use?"

In this article, we are going to discuss two types of stream crossings, permanent and temporary. These two crossings each have their own time and place, based on the intended use of the crossing. Permanent crossings are commonly used where you have a main access road that crosses a perennial or intermittent stream. Temporary crossings are typically used with timber harvesting to obtain access to parts of the property that are otherwise inaccessible. Just remember, the best type of crossing is the one that you don't have to install. If there is another way to access the other side of a major stream, use it! This could be another road on the other side of the property or an easement through your neighbor's property.

One of the most important things to consider with any stream crossing is protecting water quality and the aquatic species that live in these streams. Having a proper plan is essential before you ever put in a stream crossing. An aerial or topographic map is extremely beneficial in knowing where to install the crossing.

Permanent Crossings

The most favored crossings by landowners or timber companies are permanent crossings, and there are several different types that can be utilized effectively. A culvert is one of the most

popular methods. Culverts should be properly sized to reduce the possibility of any washout from occurring. In *Alabama's Best Management Practices for Forestry* manual (under the Manage/Water Quality section on the Alabama Forestry Commission website: www.forestry.alabama.gov), you can find the recommended diameters for culverts on page 7. Just remember, one large diameter culvert is better than using several smaller culverts or pipes. When installing the culvert, make sure it extends at least 1-2 feet past the fill on the ends. Also, it is best to cover the culvert with at least 2-3 feet of fill dirt. After the culvert is installed, stabilize the sides with rip-rap stones, gravel, sandbags, or concrete.

Fords are another type of crossing that can be used as a permanent crossing given the right circumstances. This type of crossing is typically used where the stream is shallow and has a firm bed. It is always best to use rock to stabilize the approaches to fords and the stream bed.

Another type of permanent crossing would be a bridge. Although one of the more expensive crossings, a bridge creates the least disruption to water flow. This type of crossing is generally used where there are deeper streams with high banks. It is important to note that the span of the bridge should be installed in a way to allow for high water flow. As with any crossing, the approaches to the bridge should be stabilized to prevent erosion.

Culverts, fords, and bridges are three of the types of permanent crossings that are used in most situations. The most important thing to remember with these types of permanent crossings is to stabilize the approaches and allow for water to pass freely through the crossing.

Temporary Crossings

Temporary crossings are most often used when you need to gain short-term access to sections of a property for an activity such as timber harvesting. This type of crossing is typically utilized where you have a stream that transects a section of the property and there is no access point on the other side of the stream.

A log crossing is one type of temporary crossing. It is made by placing cut-up logs into the stream and then laying a mat or skid bridge across the top of the logs. These types of crossings can be put in with a skidder and are easy to remove when you are done. Never place limbs, slash, or dirt into the stream to create a temporary crossing! This impedes the flow of water, puts sediment into the stream, and is a nightmare to remove.

The second type of temporary crossing, which I highly recommend, is a portable bridge. This type of crossing can be expensive in the beginning but pays for itself over time. Portable bridges are easy to install and remove with a skidder, and they cause very little disruption to the stream banks.

Finally, culverts can be utilized as a temporary crossing in cases where you have a very narrow stream. When using culverts, make sure that they are anchored in with small logs and no fill is put on top of them.

Whichever type of temporary crossing you decide to use, always remember to properly remove the crossing when the work has been completed. This means removing any debris or logging slash from the stream and stabilizing the approaches so that sediment cannot enter the stream.



Best Management Practices and Stream Crossings

Best management practices (BMPs) and stream crossings are crucial in Alabama to protect the water quality and aquatic species that live within these streams. Alabama has more than 132,000 miles of creeks, streams, and rivers. Approximately 33.5 trillion gallons of water are withdrawn annually from streams, rivers, and reservoirs accounting for 56 percent of our drinking water. (*Alabama Rivers Alliance - alabamarivers.org*)

More freshwater biodiversity exists in the streams and waterways of Alabama than any other state. There are many aquatic species that are only found in Alabama. The best word of advice when it comes to best management practices and stream crossings is to avoid crossing streams by roads, skid trails, or fire-breaks if possible. If it is unavoidable to cross a stream, use the fewest number of crossings possible, cross at right angles to the stream, and overall, cross the streamside management zone (SMZ)/stream in the least disruptive manner possible to minimize the amount of sediment and pollutants entering the stream. It is very important to stabilize the approaches to any type of stream crossing to keep sediment from entering the stream.

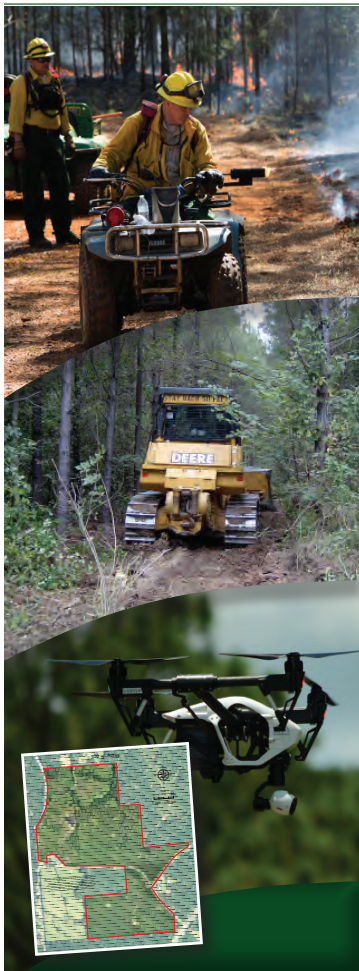
Whichever type of crossing that you may choose, always allow for the passage of water and aquatic animals in the channel of the stream. Utilize this information when it comes to timber harvesting, forest and wildlife management, and any other type of land management. Keep in mind that these are the forests, streams, rivers, ponds, and reservoirs that we leave behind to our children and grandchildren. Let's do our best to protect them while we are here! 🌲

New TREASURE Forest Certifications

Created in 1974 by the Alabama Forestry Commission under the vision of former State Forester Bill Moody, TREASURE Forest designation is earned by private forest landowners who affirm the principles of multiple-use forest management. It is this forest landowner recognition program that inspired the national Forest Stewardship Program which began in 1991. TREASURE is an acronym for Timber, Recreation, Environment, and Aesthetics for a Sustained Usable Resource.

Congratulations to these landowners who recently earned their TREASURE Forest certifications! 🌲

Landowner	County
Ken Buce	Macon
Brad Butler	Escambia
Patricia Gillis	Lauderdale
Mathew Green	Russell
Doug Isaacson	Bullock
Tony Torbert	Barbour
Michael Weddingotn	Colbert
Total Acres 9,459	



Landowner Services



PRESCRIBED BURNING

Prescribed burning not only provides benefits for both your timber and wildlife, but also protects you and your neighbor from devastating wildfire. The Alabama Forestry Commission's professional team of Certified Prescribed Burn Managers can safely and efficiently conduct either a site preparation or understory burn on your property. For more information or specific pricing, contact your local AFC office.

FIRELANE CONSTRUCTION

In an effort to maintain, enhance, and/or protect the timber on your property, the Alabama Forestry Commission offers affordable dozer work by experienced operators to assist you with construction of fire lanes and creation of small wildlife openings (less than five acres). For more information or specific pricing, contact your local AFC office.

AERIAL IMAGING & MAPPING

Whether it's a single photo, live imaging, video, or a complete map of your property, the AFC offers a full line of drone aerial services. Available items include an aerial map of your property with markups, as well as a digital copy that can be used in your management plan, a copy of all captured images, and video footage upon request. If you have questions or need more information, contact your local AFC office.

Visit us at www.forestry.alabama.gov



BIRD CALLS

Birding as a Hobby in Alabama

By Alex Horn

Forester | Alabama Forestry Commission



Over the course of that semester, I really started to enjoy waking up and trying to see and hear something new each day, and it is a hobby that I still partake in even today. Alabama is a perfect place to start birding with nearly 300 birding sites around the state. These sites are composed of trails and stations to observe over 400 species of birds thanks to Alabama's nearly unmatched habitat diversity. Our state's biodiversity is second only to Florida in the Eastern U.S. in total number of plant and animal species. Alabama's habitat ranges from the mountainous regions in the north, to the Gulf coast in the south, each containing different species to get out and observe.

A couple tools of the trade that you'll want to begin birding are a pair of binoculars, and an application I use personally called 'Merlin Bird I.D.' This app will use the GPS capability on your phone to determine the species of birds that are most likely to be in your area. It also has recordings of the different calls and sounds you could potentially hear while you are out, which could help you identify the species of bird you are after.

So, if you're looking for a family-friendly hobby that'll help get the kids off the couch (or maybe even you off the couch)... lace up your boots, grab some binoculars, take that restricting face mask off, and just go hiking in the woods with the family. Perhaps even make it a competition to see who can identify the most species. You may be like I was at first and think that it will be a colossal waste of time, but you never know. You, or a family member, may just discover a hobby that will stick with them for the rest of their lives. 🙏



When I signed up for a class at Mississippi State University called "ornithology," honestly, I really didn't even know what it was. All I knew at the time was I needed another wildlife elective course to be one step closer to graduation, so that's what I selected. Come to find out, ornithology would not only be one of the most interesting and fun classes I took in school, but it would also come to be one of my favorite hobbies. By definition, ornithology is simply: "the scientific study of birds," and scientifically study birds is exactly what we did. We learned about circulatory systems, different types and uses for feathers, scientific names, and a list of many other things. All the classroom learning we did was interesting for sure, but let's be honest, sitting in a classroom taking notes isn't really what most people would label as fun.

The lab portion of ornithology was scheduled for 6:30 a.m. on Thursdays, and I know what you're thinking, "this guy is crazy, studying birds and being in class at 6:30 in the morning? I thought he said this was fun." Well, I can promise you, that is exactly what I was thinking at the time as well, but to my surprise, the early morning ornithology labs were fun. They consisted of things such as catching different species of birds with tools called 'mist nets,' learning how to properly handle birds that we caught, walking different portions of the campus with binoculars in hand, spying different species that were present on campus, all while trying to memorize what these different species looked and sounded like. It was a lot to take in at the time, but in the process I developed a sense of competition with myself while I was out 'birding,' as our professor called it. I remember thinking, "I wonder if I'll see a bird I haven't seen yet this morning, or will I hear the call of a bird I haven't heard yet?"

Photos by Joe Watts

DOWN TO EARTH

Alabama Agriculture Groups Kick Off Campaign in Pike Road

Alabama farm and forestry organizations debuted a year-long public education campaign — **Down to Earth: Agriculture Sustains Alabama** — during a chock-filled celebration on March 31st in Pike Road. At an afternoon press conference, Gov. Kay Ivey proclaimed March 31 **Down to Earth Day**. Ivey, whose rural roots run deep, lauded the collaborative campaign, which will showcase sustainable, high-tech, and efficient techniques farmers and forest landowners have followed for decades.

“It’s an absolute pleasure to kick off the Down to Earth campaign with so many friends from the agriculture and forestry communities. Make no mistake about it — our farmers and forest landowners are the backbone of Alabama’s economy,” said Ivey, a Wilcox County native whose father raised cattle and timber in Monroe County. “For agriculture and forestry to continue to thrive, it is imperative that we continue to be good stewards of the land and practice sustainable methods to keep our forests full and our soil fertile. That’s what Down to Earth Day is all about — encouraging sustainable methods so our land remains Alabama the Beautiful for generations to come.”

Ivey’s remarks followed a fun-filled field trip for Pike Road School System fourth graders at the Pike Road Agriculture, Recreation, and Performing Arts Center (ARPAC). Through hands-on activities at a dozen stations, more than 200 students learned about Down to Earth’s Big 6 topics: carbon emissions; animal and plant efficiency; data and technology; conserving natural resources; smart land use; and sustaining for the future.

A team of farmer-spokespeople representing diverse commodities and counties will spread the Down to Earth message through social media, interviews with traditional media, and features in partner publications through March 2023. Spokespeople

include Drew Wendland and Jane Russell, who both spoke during the press conference. Wendland and Russell noted their different backgrounds but united approach to caring for the land.

“My two sons love the farm and the life it offers. My job is to make sure they have the same opportunity that I was given by my dad,” said fifth-generation farmer Wendland, whose family raises row crops, cattle, and timber in Autaugaville in Autauga



*Governor Kay Ivey,
a Forest Landowner*

County. “Every day, I try to make decisions that steward our natural resources to leave the land better than I found it, just like my dad did for me, and his dad did for him, and his dad did for him. To me, that’s what sustainability is all about. It’s about sustaining businesses, sustaining livelihoods, sustaining families, and making sure that anybody who wants to in the future has a better chance at it than we did.”

Farm families such as the Wendlands care for Alabama’s more than 40,500 farms covering 8.6 million acres. Alabama is home to an additional 23 million acres of highly productive forestland, a figure Russell said ranks third in the contiguous U.S.

“Alabama forests are the jewel of nature, and the forestry business is so valuable in the state — we have 23.1 million acres of forestland, 16.3 billion live trees and 93.2 percent are privately owned,” said Russell, a timberland owner and cattle farmer in Ada in south Montgomery County. “Thomas Jefferson once said ‘Let the farmer forevermore be honored in his calling for they who labor in the Earth are the chosen people of God.’ It is a privilege to be a farmer.”



Jane Russell, Forest Landowner & AFC Commissioner



Down to Earth co-chair Kayla Greer said her group’s goal is to reach at least 1 million consumers with Down to Earth messages. “At the end of the day, we want people to know sustainability isn’t about the size of the farm or the commodity produced,” said Greer, who serves as campaign co-chair along with Caleb Hicks. “It’s about using the land in smart ways and protecting our natural resources so we can produce food, timber, and fiber for people now and long into the future.”

Following the field trip and press conference, hundreds of locals flocked to the Pike Road ARPAC. A bevy of booths educated the public about sustainability, farm life, Alabama forestland and efficient, high-tech farm practices. Meanwhile, five teams of media personalities participated in a competition featuring common agricultural tasks. The contest included a rural relay, where participants roped a calf, donned a poultry biosecurity suit, and measured feed; raking a fire break to slow a forest-

fire; and 'Rural Jeopardy!' featuring questions about Down to Earth’s Big 6 topics.

Down to Earth partners include the Alabama Agribusiness Council, Alabama Association of RC&D Councils, Alabama Cattlemen’s Association, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries, Alabama Farmers Federation, Alabama Forestry Commission, Alabama Poultry & Egg Association, and Sweet Grown Alabama. Over the year, the Down to Earth message will be shared online at DownToEarthAL.com as well as through social media ads, events, and bimonthly press releases. FFA groups, 4-H clubs, and civic organizations will help share Down to Earth’s sustainability message. Down to Earth was also Alabama Farm-City’s 2021 theme. Interact with [@DowntoEarthAL](https://www.facebook.com/DowntoEarthAL) on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. 📱




Learn more at
DowntoEarthAL.com



Watching Bluebirds While 'Setting a Spell'

By Ray Metzler

Certified Wildlife Biologist, Threatened & Endangered Species Specialist
Alabama Forestry Commission



Working three part-time jobs since retiring from full-time employment six years ago keeps me busy, but for the most part, workdays are now only 5-6 hours as opposed to 8 hours or longer. These shorter workdays allow my wife and me to enjoy our porch time a little more often. One of our favorite pastimes during the spring and summer months is to 'set a spell' and watch bluebirds. We have one nest box each in the front and back yards within good eyesight to monitor activity. Typically, only one of the two nest boxes is used at any one time, and occupancy generally determines which porch we favor during the nesting season.

Status & Description

The Eastern bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) is a member of the thrush family and is commonly found throughout Alabama during the entire year. It is the most widespread of the three bluebird species found in the U.S. and occupies most of the continental United States from the East Coast across the entire country to a line drawn from western North Dakota south to western Texas. Mountain bluebirds (*Sialia currucoides*) and Western bluebirds (*Sialia mexicana*) occupy much of the remainder of the continental United States.

The male's bright blue wings and tail, along with its rust-colored breast, are easily identifiable. The female is a much paler blue than the male. Both sexes have a white lower belly and underparts. Most literature accounts indicate they form a lifetime bond, pairing for as long as both individuals are alive.

Eastern bluebirds prefer semi-open to open grasslands with scattered trees. They often occupy open pine woods, farm country, orchards, golf courses, and suburbs with extensive lawns and good nest sites. They feed primarily on insects, worms, grubs, and small fruits or berries. They may often be seen perching on limbs, powerlines, fence rows, and other items in search of prey before fluttering down to the ground to catch the next meal. Bluebirds don't readily utilize bird feeders with seeds but will feast at feeders adapted to provide mealworms purchased at local pet stores.

Photo courtesy of David Thompson

During the mid-1900s, Eastern bluebird populations declined for a variety of reasons including habitat loss, urban development, competition from invasive species (primarily house sparrows), and pesticide use. The Eastern bluebird is a cavity-nesting bird that benefitted greatly from efforts throughout the nation to provide artificial nest box structures. Many organizations across the country have developed ‘bluebird trails’ comprised of a series of nest boxes that are maintained and monitored by volunteers. My hometown of Prattville has a trail of bluebird boxes along its creek walk that are monitored by citizens. Bluebirds are territorial and it is important to place boxes no closer than 100 yards from each other to provide the birds enough space to gather food and other essentials. During a recent trip to Colorado, my wife and I traveled a highway through a large ranch on which there was a bluebird box about every 100-150 yards for several miles. I suspect this effort was to benefit mountain or western bluebirds. I am not sure how many boxes were present, but it was quite an investment in lumber alone!



Photo by Kim Metzler

Nesting

Plans for bluebird nest boxes are available online from a variety of sources including the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the North American Bluebird Society, and the National Audubon Society. Boxes can be mounted on a pole at various heights, but most folks prefer them to be about 4–5 feet above the ground to make for easier installation and monitoring. Predator guards are not required but will make it more difficult for various mammalian and reptilian predators to prey on nestlings and adults. The entrance hole of nest boxes along woodland edges should be oriented to face the surrounding grasslands and open habitat. Prevailing wind direction should also be considered to minimize the impacts of blowing wind and rain. Most storms approach from the south or west at my residence, so my wife and I have one box that faces north and another that faces east.

Nest boxes should be cleaned out during the winter months (December – January) as breeding may begin as early as February or March in Alabama. Females alone build the nest from available grass, hay, pine needles, and other soft materials. Some

literature reports indicate it takes up to 10 days to construct a nest but my observations at home indicate it is usually about 3-5 days. This shorter time may be due to the availability of longleaf pine needles in close proximity to both of our nest boxes.

Four to six powder blue eggs are laid – typically one egg per day. Most nests at our residence for the past several years have contained five eggs. The female incubates the eggs (13-14 days) while the male protects the territory and brings food to the female during the incubation process. After hatching, both the male and female will bring food items to the young. A tremendous number of bugs are caught daily and brought back to the nestlings. Approximately 17-20 days after hatching, nestlings fledge and become part of the family group.

Check your bluebird boxes at least once or twice a week during the nesting season, until chicks are close to fledging. Do not open the box after nestlings are 12–13 days old. At this age, nestlings are typically fully feathered and moving around the nest easily. Opening the box after day 12-13 could result in the nestlings falling from the box before they are able to fly, greatly reducing their chance of survival.

Renesting occurs throughout the spring and summer with up to four broods being possible (but highly unlikely) if nesting occurs into late summer and early fall. Pair bonds at our residence typically raise two broods annually. The female may add additional material to the nest for renesting attempts, especially if there are unhatched eggs in the nest. Most literature regarding nest box monitoring recommends cleaning out the old nest material and bird poop shortly after fledglings leave and prior to any renesting activity.

Go Ahead & Set a Spell

I feel certain that almost every Alabamian enjoys ‘setting a spell’ on their porch, especially if they have a view of our vast and highly diverse forest and wildlife resources. Life is short and it is good for the soul to take a little time to find something that allows you to mellow. Constructing and installing a few bluebird nest boxes has added another dimension to the level of enjoyment my wife and I receive from ‘setting a spell.’ 🏡



Photo courtesy of Joe Jacobs

A large, ancient-looking yellow-poplar tree stands as the central focus in a forest. Its trunk is thick and textured, with a hollowed-out section at the base. A group of seven people, including men, women, and children, are posing for a photo at the base of the tree. The forest around them is dense with various types of trees, some with bare branches and others with green foliage. The ground is covered in fallen leaves and logs.

ALABAMA CHAMPION TREES

*"The Big Tree"
Champion yellow-poplar in the
Sipsey Wilderness:
Circumference 263" | Height 172'*

By Katie Wiswall

Urban & Community Forestry Partnership Coordinator | Alabama Forestry Commission

One of the best kept secrets of an Alabama Forestry Commission employee's life is that we have the best jobs in the entire world. While some days may involve too much paperwork or too many hornets, most of us can usually say we are amazed we get paid to do this – whatever our particular 'this' may be. As the Urban & Community Forestry Partnership Coordinator for the Commission, I spend a lot of time working on Arbor Day events and Arbor Day Foundation-sponsored activities. But during the summer, Arbor Day things slow down, and I get to spend time on the Alabama Champion Tree program.

This program has been administered by the Forestry Commission since 1970 and recognizes the largest tree of each species in Alabama, regardless of the tree's age or form. Trees can be nominated by anyone via the Commission website, and we have added a calculator to the site so a nominator can see how their prospect measures up against the current champion on record. You can find the Champion Tree landing page by looking under the 'Educate' tab at www.forestry.alabama.gov.

Nominees are measured and scored according to the same standards used by American Forests in their National Champion Tree program. A tree's score is a sum of its circumference, height, and 25 percent of its average crown spread. When a tree is declared a champion, its owner and nominator each receive a frameable certificate of recognition. Additionally, the owner receives a small sign on a post that they may insert in the ground near the champion tree. In some cases, proud owners erect more elaborate signage to recognize their tree's achievement.

While earlier iterations of the program accepted all species, we limit new recognitions to 197 native Alabama species plus crapemyrtle. Of those 198 acceptable species, 132 are found on the 2021 list. Of these, 23 are newly crowned Champion Trees. Starting in 2022, we also require that new nominees measure in excess of 15 inches circumference (approximately 5 inches diameter at 4.5 feet above the ground); however, I am sure this change will not reduce the number of viable candidates even in the small tree category. An interesting thing about the program

(Continued on page 20)

HERE ARE SOME INTERESTING HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2021 LIST:

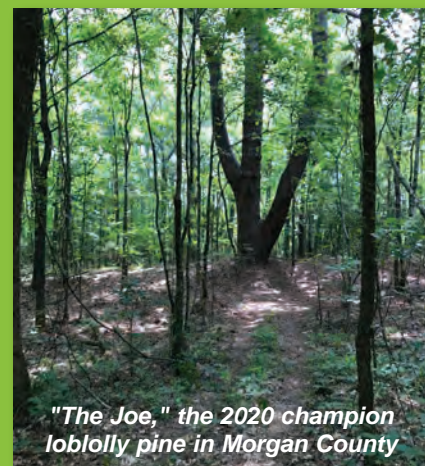
- ◆ The longest-reigning Alabama Champion Tree is the yellow-poplar in the Sipsey Wilderness, known to hikers (and on the Sipsey website) as the "Big Tree." Crowned in 1974, we re-measured this tree in March 2021. Its circumference was 263 inches, and its height was 172 feet. This represented an additional 11 inches of girth and 19 feet of height put on in the 10 years since it was last measured. I guess when you are growing in a ravine, getting taller is the only way to ensure you get your fair share of sunlight!
- ◆ One of the 15 newest champions is also the smallest – a yaupon in Sumter County that scored a total of 27 points with a circumference of 12 inches and a height of 13 feet.
- ◆ Another new champion is a southern magnolia at the site of a Civil War-era field hospital in Colbert County. Judging from the presence of a soldier and his grave marker amongst its roots, that tree must have shaded more than a few of the wounded or attending personnel in its early years.
- ◆ The largest current champion is a live oak in Mobile County. It scores 479 points, most of which is contributed by its 363-inch circumference. In fact, just the circumference of that tree is larger than the entire score of 90 percent of the trees on the roster.
- ◆ Two of our champion trees have been named by their owners. One is a loblolly pine crowned in 2020 named "The Joe" by its owner in honor of his father-in-law. The other is the new 2021 champion American sycamore named "Oscar" by its owner in a bid to promote its 'personality' in a wooded oasis amidst land being developed in the city of Huntsville. While any owner is welcome to name their tree, please know that a tree's name will not get placed on its commemorative sign. That would make things far too complicated on a plaque that already includes the common and scientific names of the tree, along with the names of the owner and nominator!



2021 champion southern magnolia in Colbert County



"Oscar," the 2021 champion American sycamore in Madison County



"The Joe," the 2020 champion loblolly pine in Morgan County



Magnolia tree in the old Trussville cemetery

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is that a tree could be crowned one year and replaced the next when a new nominee is submitted. That demonstrates the volume of interest in the Alabama Champion Tree Program across the state.

Getting to see these large old trees and interact with their owners can be a treat. It is interesting, too, to see how many nominations are submitted by the same people. Several individuals in this state are passionate about trees and about finding champions. With nominations coming in year-round and a quinquennial [recurring every five years] re-measurement standard, keeping up with Champion Trees can be challenging. Local AFC staff are invaluable to the program as many visit and measure trees in their county, fitting it around their other work. Having their assistance is critical to me because, with the volume of nominations we receive and the re-measurements needed, there is no way I can get to every single tree submitted.

Even trees that do not measure out as champions can have fascinating stories attached to them. There is the magnolia

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behind a house in Blount County that is featured in a wedding photo from the late 1800s and the one in the old Trussville cemetery that has notable citizens within its root zone. Then there is the yellow-poplar on the banks of the Warrior River that grew up by a stone marker reputed to have been set by Desoto's navigator as he marked their journey across the Southern U.S. While these may not be the largest in the state, they are still cool trees and beloved by their owners.

Of all the fantastic things I get paid to do, seeing big trees that their owners love is one of the best. Please be sure to visit the Alabama Forestry Commission website and check out the 2021 roster of Champion Trees. It is named *Alabama Champion Trees* and can be found under the heading "Educate/AFC Programs" at the bottom of the Champion Tree landing page (scan QR code below). You may be surprised by how many are found in your home county! 🙏



HACK & SQUIRT

NOW IS A GOOD TIME

By Terry Ezzell

Northwest Regional Forester | Alabama Forestry Commission

Note: This article is adapted from an article written by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service State Staff Forester Tim Albritton and published in the 2011 Fall/Winter issue of Alabama's TREASURED Forests magazine.

In these uncertain financial times, everyone is looking for a way to save some money. However, ignoring the needs of your timber stand could cost you money in the future. The effects that undesirable trees and invasives plants have on the growth and health of a landowner's preferred tree species is well documented. 'Hack and squirt' or 'frill' method is a cheap and effective way to control undesirable hardwoods, Chinese privet, chinaberry, tallowtree, mimosa, paulownia, etc.

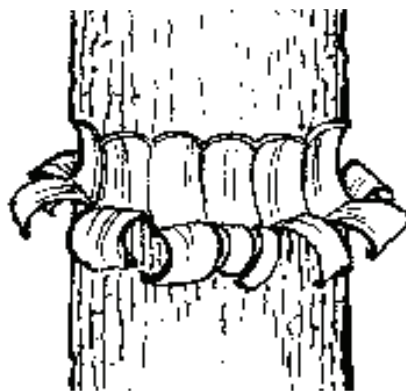
All you need is a hatchet, some gloves, a spray bottle full of herbicide, and a good eye for identifying unwanted or low-value trees. That's it! Assistance from a son, daughter, or spouse in working on the land is always a bonus. Passing along good stewardship values to your children and grandchildren is truly invaluable. It really is important to enjoy getting outside, working the land, and practicing good stewardship.

The hack and squirt method is best suited to trees at least 4 to 5 inches in diameter. The bark on larger trees is often too thick for most water-soluble sprays to penetrate, therefore it is necessary to provide a direct pathway for herbicide entry into the plant's vascular system. Use a hatchet to make a series of downward cuts in the bark around the entire circumference of the tree trunk. For most species, it takes about one cut for every 2 inches of trunk diameter. 'Frill' cuts are overlapping cuts in the tree bark around the stem.

Immediately apply the selected herbicide into the cuts. Avoid application during heavy upward sap flow in the spring, when sap flowing out of the wound will prevent good absorption. Apply herbicides registered for this purpose undiluted or in dilu-



tion ratios from one-half to one-quarter strength. Read the product label to determine the appropriate dilution. Amine formulations of Garlon, Grazon, and 2,4-D are generally more effective than esters. Roundup undiluted or half-strength is excellent for hack and squirt applications.



The hack-and-squirt or frill treatment method is a great way to:

- 1) Concentrate growth of the best possible trees on your stand*
- 2) Reduce negative impact from invasive species*
- 3) Improve wildlife habitat*



Good in-depth articles about controlling invasives and other undesirable plants can be found on the Alabama Forestry Commission website (www.forestry.alabama.gov) and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System website (www.aces.edu). You may also want to check with your local USDA Service Center about the possibility of cost-share funds for this practice. ♻️

ELLICOTT'S STONE

A Piece of Alabama History

By David M. Kelley

State Lands Forester | Alabama Forestry Commission



When traveling to a tract of state-owned timberland that I manage near Mount Vernon in northern Mobile County, I've regularly passed a historical marker on the north-bound side of busy U.S. Hwy 43, several miles north of Creola. One day I decided to pull over and read the sign that tells the story about "Ellicott's Stone."

Back in the 1790s, Spain still owned what is present-day Florida and portions of present-day Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, known then as Spanish West Florida. However, the exact boundary between the United States and Spanish West Florida was in dispute. In 1795, the Treaty of San Lorenzo, also known as Pinckney's Treaty, set the boundary as the 31-degree line of north latitude [31st parallel north].

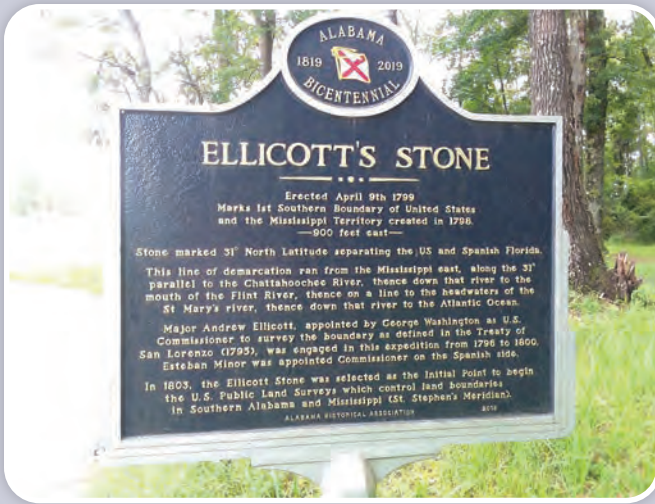
Beginning in 1798, American surveyor Major Andrew Ellicott led a joint U.S.-Spanish Survey Commission on a two-year project to place monuments along the boundary, as was called for in the Treaty. He started at the 31-degree line of latitude at the western end of the Mississippi Territory, which was about 13 miles south of Clarksville on the Mississippi River, and proceeded east through the Territory to the Chattahoochee River.

In April of 1799 as the surveying party proceeded east, a stone was set near the bank of the Mobile River to denote the boundary. With the exception of this stone, the only other monuments along the boundary were mounds of dirt constructed by the joint survey crews. This stone marker still exists to this day and is known as "Ellicott's Stone." A ferruginous [iron bearing] sandstone block about two feet high and eight inches thick, the stone

sits near the west bank of the Mobile River. On the northern side of the stone (facing U.S. lands) is an inscription stating, "U.S. Lat. 31, 1799." The inscription on the southern side (facing then-Spanish lands) reads, "Dominio de S.M. Carlos IV, Lat. 31, 1799" (Domain of His Majesty King Charles IV, Lat. 31, 1799).

In 1803, this stone became the initial point for all U.S. Public Land Surveys in the southern regions of Alabama and Mississippi. It is the point of intersection of what is known today as the St. Stephens meridian and the St. Stephens baseline. All townships in the area are numbered from the stone.





In 1917, a parcel of land around it was deeded to the City of Mobile to preserve this important historical marker. Today, that parcel is surrounded by lands owned by Alabama Power at its Barry Steam Plant near Axis, Alabama, north of Creola on U.S. Hwy 43. Just north of the south gate to the power plant, on the east side of the highway, is the historical marker with a turn-off lane where you can pull over and park. The actual stone, now surrounded by an iron fence to protect it, is located approximately 900 feet east from the highway down a wooded walking path, a path which will take you back in time. 🏠

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ALABAMA FARM CREDIT

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SCAN ME

Volunteer Firefighter Saves Man's Life

Submitted By Oak Bowery Fire Department



stabilized Chupp and transported him to a landing zone where a helicopter with medical personnel arrived approximately 20 minutes later. They airlifted him to UAB hospital in Birmingham where the hospital's trauma team took over. Following surgery on his arm, Michael spent several days at UAB, returned home, and is now back at work doing light duty.

On December 30, the day after the accident, Tina, Michael's wife, posted her appreciation and thoughts about the accident on Facebook: "As some have heard Michael had an accident at work yesterday. To say that our God is faithful is an understatement! Of all the days for this to happen, Jeremy, a young man that works on their equipment, just happened to be there. He is Chief of the Oak Bowery Fire Department and paramedic too, and when that treetop went through that loader cab and almost took Michael's arm off, he was there and knew exactly what to do. So here he is sitting up finally eating and what they thought would take three surgeries turned into one. We just want to thank each and every person that has prayed, called, or texted and thought about us in this scary time. To Jeremy and Clay County ambulance and rescue squad and to the flight nurse and pilots that got him to the hospital in time and the doctors, nurses and anyone that had anything to do with getting my honey where he is right now, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. He will be on the mend for a few weeks and we would appreciate your continued prayers. We love you all!" – Michael Chupp and Tina Ayers Chupp

When Jeremy Robinson was asked how he knew what actions were needed to save Michael's life, he answered that his training as a volunteer firefighter was helpful. As Fire Chief at Oak Bowery Fire & Rescue, Robinson has received training in all phases of firefighting, accident response, and natural disaster response, such as the 2019 tornado near Beauregard and Smiths Station. He led Oak Bowery Fire & Rescue's work in that event. Other volunteer first responders who know and work with Robinson at Oak Bowery describe him as an outstanding leader and hard worker who remains calm under pressure and handles difficult situations correctly. Those qualities saved Michael Chupp's life on December 29, 2020.

In talking with Robinson, he strongly emphasized the need for more people to be involved in all volunteer fire departments in our area. He added this about volunteer first responders everywhere . . . "We are all volunteers who serve without pay to provide some level of fire protection and response to emergencies in the rural areas where we live. We need more help."

Robinson attributes the actions that saved Chupp's life to the free training and experience he received over the years as a volunteer firefighter and the quick teamwork of all the first responders involved in the effort. His training has included first aid, navigation, and extrication of personnel from wrecks. He says

Michael Chupp's life was saved by the quick thinking and action of Jeremy Robinson on December 29, 2020. Robinson, who owns and operates Robinson Equipment Service, also volunteers as the Fire Chief of Oak Bowery Fire and Rescue near Lafayette. He was repairing equipment on Chupp's logging job in Clay County when a log penetrated the cab of the loader that Chupp was operating. It ripped and partially severed part of Chupp's arm, trapping him inside the loader with severe bleeding from a ruptured artery.

Robinson saw the accident, recognized the urgency of the situation, and took immediate action. He removed his belt and used it as a tourniquet to stop the loss of blood, called 911, requested a helicopter air lift, and used the GPS coordinates on his cell phone to direct the ambulance to the logging site. The ambulance crew

Alabama's Rural Communities Continue to Experience Critical Shortage in Volunteer Firefighters

By Coleen Vansant
Public Information Manager
Alabama Forestry Commission



A log penetrated the cab of the loader that Michael Chupp was operating.

that many of the logging sites that his company regularly visits are hard to find and on rainy days even harder to get to. Loggers need to be able to communicate their location to 911 dispatch using landmarks or GPS



*Jeremy Robinson
Fire Chief of Oak Bowery Fire & Rescue*

coordinates in situations where they do not have a physical address. One easy method is sharing their location with a pin drop from the maps on their phone. Emergency crews need to have access to four-wheel drive when responding to a logging accident. Robinson was able to keep calm, contact 911, and provide first aid because of his volunteer training and recommends it for everyone. 🛡️

In 2020, I wrote a series of three articles regarding the critical shortage of volunteer firefighters and medical personnel in rural areas of our state. The adjacent story regarding the heroic and life-saving efforts of Oak Bowery Fire & Rescue Chief Jeremy Robinson on an equipment accident he happened upon in Clay County demonstrates the critical need for adequately trained and staffed rural fire departments in Alabama.

This story provides a sterling example of the value of trained rural firefighters and medical personnel in rural areas of our state. For more than 85 percent of Alabamians, local volunteer firemen are the first lifeline for emergency care. They are the lifeblood in communities where paramedics and emergency rooms are many minutes, sometimes even hours away. Rural firefighters and medical personnel are vital to the health and well-being of residents on a day-to-day basis, as well as in catastrophic conditions where they are the first to respond.

Having well-equipped, staffed, and trained rural fire departments for most of the state is the first link in the chain of community safety for the majority of Alabama residents. 🛡️

ADAPTING FOR THE FUTURE

OGDEN MANAGEMENT COMPANY AND BEAVER CREEK POLE & TIMBER

By Karl Byrd

Northwest Region Fire Specialist | Alabama Forestry Commission

Ogden Management Company (OMC) has been in operation in the small town of Sulligent, Alabama, for more than a half century. Its roots actually go back to 1906 when W.W. Ogden moved his family to Sulligent and opened a cotton gin, during a time when “Cotton was King.”

At the turn of the century, farmers grew everything their family needed on the farm. Anything extra for the family was purchased when the few acres of cotton harvested were carried to market in the fall. The Ogden family gin also provided an avenue for local farmers to get their product to market. It was a way of life for the Ogden family, providing for their family by providing a service to their community.

As the markets changed due to various external factors, individuals began to look for ways to make a living rather than growing cotton. Many farms were sold, as individuals moved away looking for jobs in other areas of the state and country. Some farms were just abandoned.

The Ogden family also had to look for ways to adapt. They purchased adjoining farms and timberland. They opened a general store in Sulligent alongside the cotton gin and continued serving the area. Later they opened a planer mill and began to tap into other natural resources in the area.



“It’s always been about stewardship. It’s about enjoying what we have. It’s about friends and family and the community where we live.”



The timber industry had started to come online in the South. With companies such as the Kentucky Railroad and others reaching further into rural areas, landowners were able to get more of their products to market. Land that was once viewed as non-productive because it wasn’t suitable to be row-cropped was now considered for timber products.

In the early ‘60s, Billy Ogden had recently returned home from the Korean War. Heir to the family business, he took the reins of the company. Billy – along with one of the faithful employees of the family cotton gin, E.H. (Junior) Rasbury – decided they should come up with a comprehensive plan for the Ogden’s land holdings.

Junior was a self-taught land surveyor and a pioneer in the field of forest management. He was known to pay great attention



The Ogdens

to detail. Junior realized that the markets were moving towards southern yellow pine. Management was directed towards converting low-quality upland hardwood stands to more profitable loblolly pine stands. Those sites on the property were converted as lower quality timber was removed for pulpwood or firewood.

Pulpwood was growing in value, and partnerships were created to adapt to the market. It was soon being purchased from local loggers to be delivered to OMC's woodyard located in Sulligent at the site of the family cotton gin. This pulpwood from the surrounding area was loaded alongside wood harvested from the OMC property onto railcars and shipped to Alabama River Woodlands.

Tennessee River Company, another timber business operating in Alabama at the time, was growing loblolly pine seedlings for replanting. These seedlings were a great improvement over sowing seeds and hoping for the best. Some of the first tree seedlings planted on the Ogden property are still growing out near Sulligent Lake close to the Ogden family lodge.

Pulpwood prices have bottomed out over the past 20 years, and they no longer ship railcar loads to mills across the south. Junior Rasbury no longer marks the property boundaries. Sadly, Billy Ogden passed away in 2021 at the age of 92. Sulligent lost a pillar of the community with his passing. One of the very early TREASURE forest landowners and a true advocate of forest stewardship, Mr. Ogden was well known for his business dealings and support of the forestry community.

Today OMC has a different forester at the helm, a young man that was inspired as a youth to become a steward of the forest. Growing up he was very active in scouting. Later he decided to enroll in Mississippi State University (MSU) and major in forestry. After graduating from MSU and a short stint with the U.S. Forest Service, he found himself at a familiar location, discussing

employment. Matthew Gilmore now manages Ogden Management Company. He operates all the daily activities which include leasing OMC's land for row cropping; operating the small cattle operation; as well as buying, selling, and managing their timberland. In running the company's timber harvesting operation, Matt has brought many innovative ideas to the table such as using a track harvester to merchandise timber more efficiently. He has seen how times have changed and realized that changing times call for adaptive measures.

Their latest venture came as an idea to better market the standing timber. Matt, in collaboration with Joel Knight, a local businessman with more than 30 years of experience in the forest industry, decided there should be a market for poles and pilings from the many years of pines planted in the area. As pulpwood prices remain low, Ogden Management Company, along with the local landowners, could benefit from marketing the higher quality poles grown on their property. Again, they find themselves adapting to keep the farm profitable. About five years ago, they began to put the idea in motion coming to an area where exploration of ideas meets the resources. Beaver Creek Pole & Timber, LLC was born, taking the best quality trees from Lamar County and surrounding counties and turning them into quality utility poles.

Matt believes that their idea can help landowners ride out the peaks and valleys in a current economy helping landowners keep their land profitable. He says that the new company is just in its

(Continued on page 28)





ADAPTING FOR THE FUTURE

(Continued from page 27)

infant stage. They are slowly growing and building a stable relationship with current customers and reaching out for new business opportunities. Matt says they can see the need for new infrastructure in businesses such as high-speed internet fiber. From seeds to seedlings to super trees, managed pine plantations produce a better grade of poles. Some produce up to 20 percent poles by volume of the stand, greatly increasing the stumpage paid to the landowner upon harvesting their timber. Beaver Creek Pole & Timber helps local landowners by providing a market to get their products delivered to utility companies across the nation.

Over the years Billy Ogden and his wife, Pat, operated a very successful family operation, buying and selling timber products and managing the family farm. Today the family still owns a 13,000-acre TREASURE Forest in Lamar County, with TREASURE Forest certificate #54 proudly displayed on the conference room wall at the headquarters of Ogden Management Company and Beaver Creek Pole & Timber in Sulligent. Pat noted that they were ‘stewards of the land,’ but she credited a lot of people with assisting in the management of the property. In addition to several full-time employees running the operation, many hunting clubs helped in taking care of the land that they leased, planting food plots, policing the areas from poachers, and deterring litter. She said, “It’s always been about stewardship. It’s about enjoying what we have. It’s about friends and family and the community where we live.”

Ogden Management Company, along with Beaver Creek Pole & Timber, are adapting for the future. 🌲



Pat & Billy Ogden

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TIMBER TAX TIPS

CAN HELP FOREST OWNERS REALIZE POTENTIAL TAX BENEFITS

By Kathryn Sosbe

Office of Communication | USDA Forest Service

Family forests provide many valuable goods and services that extend beyond their boundaries, including clean air and water, wildlife habitat, and carbon sequestration.

Although owners of forested land usually don't get paid directly for those benefits, there are tax incentives that can be associated with management activities. Landowners often do not know that reforestation, timber sales, or loss due to disasters can affect their taxes. To help, Forest Service experts and their colleagues provide information about federal taxes through annual 'Timber Tax Tips' (found at www.timbertax.org, or scan QR code below).

"Tax provisions are among the few ways that state and federal government incentivizes maintenance and sound management of privately-owned forests," said Greg Frey, a research forester who co-wrote the tax tips and specializes in forest taxation, non-timber forest products, and common property. "*Tax Tips* highlights relevant provisions in the tax law. Many of these are beneficial for family forest owners. But not all landowners – or foresters or even tax preparers – know about them or know how to use them."

Frey said that beneficial incentives include that most sales of standing timber can qualify for the lower capital gains tax rates and that there is a special deduction for reforestation expenditures. In both cases, and others, forest landowners and their advisers should be aware of the requirements and application to their situation.

The 2021 Timber Tax Tips tax publication helps to provide that information. The publication also walks the user through calculation steps, such as this example on conservation-oriented cost-sharing payments.

In 2019, Joe harvested 50 acres of timber on his investment property in Georgia and received \$75,000 from the buyer. This was his only income from the property in the past three years. In 2021, he reforested the land at a cost of \$12,500 and received a \$5,000 cost-sharing payment from a qualified program. His tax advisor used the Farm Credit System Bank interest rate for the area (5.25 percent) released by the IRS as the discount rate to calculate how much of the cost-sharing payment he could exclude from his 2021 gross income. A statement is attached to his tax return to describe the qualified cost-sharing program and the exclusion calculation. Joe can exclude the entire \$5,000 of cost-sharing payment from his gross income.

Step 1: (10% of 3-Year Average) = $10\% \times (\$75,000 \div 3) = \$2,500$

Step 2: ($\$2.50 \times$ Number of Affected Acres) = $\$2.50 \times 50 = \125


Step 3: \$2,500 from Step 1 is the larger number; calculate $\$2,500 \div 5.25\% = \$47,619$

Step 4: \$47,619 is larger than \$5,000. Joe can exclude the entire \$5,000 of cost-sharing payment from his gross income.

The lead author is Yanshu Li, assistant professor of Forest Economics and Taxation at the Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources at the University of Georgia. She said the key to the publication is that the tax tips answer a variety of issues that can confound landowners.

"The 2017 tax overhaul generated some confusion for landowners and their tax advisors about tax treatment of certain forest-related expenses, property taxes, and casualty losses," she said. "Some forest landowners have also been wondering if they could take advantage of the new tax deduction for small businesses. *Tax Tips* addresses these issues."

She added that "forest landowners who suffered timber losses from natural disasters in 2021 may recoup some of their losses by claiming federal income tax deductions."

The key to taking advantage of tax incentives is advance planning. *Timber Tax Tips* can help explain the basics of how federal income taxes relate to forestry, but experts suggest that landowners consider current or future income and costs related to their forest land and speak to a tax adviser about the implications. In addition, individual states have property and income tax incentives, and landowners can speak to their tax adviser, local tax assessor, or forester to learn about programs available in their state. Although the details vary, every state in the U.S. has a property tax program that lowers taxes for forest landowners. 

The AFC Mailbox



5 October 2021

To the Editor:

I love this magazine...it is beautiful and very informative. I feel very lucky to have seen the gorgeous Spring 2021 issue at my local O'Neal Library in Mountain Brook. That is the first time I had seen or heard of the magazine. I am a tree lover from my earliest childhood and I still love the woods in my 7th decade. I am so sad at the destruction of our natural world... more every day.

Anne Maura
Mountain Brook, Alabama

21 January 2022

To Rick Oates, State Forester:

Hi Rick, I just received the Fall issue of *Treasured Forests*, and, like all issues, it is a very informative and well written magazine. I always look forward to getting it in the mail.

Kudos too to your staff who did an excellent job with a prescribed burn on my place last year. Brad and Ryan Dunham are very professional gentlemen and a pleasure to work with.

Buddy Adamson
Montgomery, Alabama

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Winged Elm



By Greyson Matthews
FIA Forester | Alabama Forestry Commission



Winged elm (*Ulmus alata*) is one of the most common elms found in Alabama, along with American elm (*Ulmus americana*) and slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*). Winged elm gets its name from the corky outgrowths that occur on the twigs of the tree that resemble wings, and the scientific name literally means winged (*alata*) elm tree (*Ulmus*). Winged elm ranges across the entire state and is capable of thriving on an assortment of sites. It is not uncommon to find winged elm on streambanks, or in low, wet areas accompanied by sugary, green ash, red maple, and blackgum. The adaptability of winged elm also makes it well suited to dry, upland, rocky sites where it grows in areas dominated by oaks and hickories or hardwood/pine forests. Winged elm is a very common understory tree in pine plantations as well.

Winged elm can grow to 80 feet tall and 24 inches in diameter. At maturity, this tree has an open crown with fine, swooping branches which makes it a suitable candidate for planting in urban settings. The leaves are typically 1½ to 3 inches long and serrated around the leaf margin. As mentioned before, the twigs of winged elm are very recognizable by the ‘winged,’ corky outgrowths. Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) is another tree species that can have winged branches, but winged elm and sweetgum can be easily distinguished by the leaves, buds, and other features. The buds are 1/8 inch long and considered small when compared to other elms. The flowers grow in clusters called racemes, and the fruit is a flat samara with white pubescence around the edge. The bark is grayish to light brown and can feel soft and spongy to the touch, especially when young.

The wood of winged elm is very hard and has twisted, interlocking grain which makes it resistant to splitting. This feature makes the wood a popular choice for making hockey sticks and rocking chairs. The wood is also used for fuel and for furniture making. Winged elm is a nesting site for a variety of birds in Alabama, and it also attracts some species of butterflies. The seeds are not commonly eaten by deer, but they are a source of nutrition for smaller mammals, rodents, and birds. Deer will often browse on winged elm seedlings and the lower branches of larger trees. Winged elm is not particularly susceptible to a wide range of insects and diseases, although it is susceptible to Dutch Elm Disease which can cause the tree to wilt and die.

The Alabama State Champion winged elm, located in Wilcox County, was crowned in 1997. When re-measured in 2018, it had a height of 85 feet, a circumference of 142 inches (45.2-inch diameter), and a crown spread of 74 feet. 🏆