

ALABAMA'S

TREASURED FORESTS

A Publication of the Alabama Forestry Commission

Summer 2017

Message from the STATE FORESTER

With the arrival of cooler weather, one thing we can look forward to is the many forest landowner tours. In all 67 Alabama counties, landowners have spent the summer working with their forestry planning committees, consultants, as well as employees from the Alabama Forestry Commission, Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, and other agencies to make their land look its best.

Trees, for both timber crops and mast production, have been planted. Food plots are ready. Prescribed burning has been carried out to reduce fuel loads and competition. Roads have been maintained to allow access to the property for both protection and enjoyment. Rights-of-way and property entrances have been mowed; gates painted and repaired. Old TREASURE Forest and Tree Farm signs have been replaced. In the great Southern tradition, it's now time to invite our neighbors over to see the beauty of Alabama. Landowners are ready to show their peers the land they TREASURE!

A unique thing I have witnessed during my 25-year involvement with Alabama's forest landowners is their willingness to share knowledge with the 'competition.' We are all trying to sell our 40 acres of trees to the same limited markets; we are all trying to attract the same prize buck to our property. Everyone competes for the attention of the best consulting forester or logger; everyone wants to be a Helene Mosley Award Winner. We all compete to make our property the best it can be, in whatever category we choose to compete: Timber, Recreation, Environment, or Aesthetics.

Yet, despite this 'competition,' landowners generously share land management secrets with their neighbors. A common goal unites us . . . we all want to help make Alabama's forests better.

Across the state there are landowner tours every week this fall. I urge you to take advantage of as many of them as possible. Additionally, there are multiple opportunities for landowner education from organizations such as the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association, the Alabama Forestry Association, the Alabama Forest Owners Association, and many others. Jump in and take advantage of these offerings. They will help you become better caretakers of the land entrusted to your care.

I urge you to get out and enjoy fall in the South. Football, hunting, great weather, changing leaves, beautiful scenery, a walk in the woods . . . it's all here if you choose to look for it!



Rick Oates, State Forester

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Michael Kyser

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
Kelvin Daniels

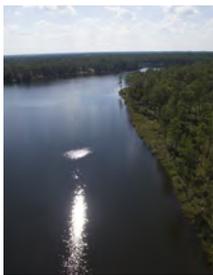
The Alabama Forestry Commission supports the Alabama Natural Resources Council's TREASURE Forest program. *Alabama's TREASURED Forests* magazine, published by the Alabama Forestry Commission, is intended to further encourage participation in and acceptance of this program by landowners in the state, 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.



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On the Cover:
Late summer sun shimmers on Geneva State Forest lake in south Alabama, captured aerially by the AFC drone.



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The publication of a story or article in this magazine does not constitute the Alabama Forestry Commission's endorsement of that particular practice, product, or company, but is an effort to provide forest landowners of Alabama with information and technical assistance to make informed decisions about the management practices they apply to their land.
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Rewarding Beyond All Expectations

By Elishia Ballentine, Editor

His love for the land began with his first deer hunt in the early 1960s. Jimmy Jimmerson says he went deer hunting on a tract of land owned by his future father-in-law in Cleburne County, because there were no deer in Cherokee County where he lived at that time.

Later on, having hunted in the area for several years, he and wife Sue began to look for land to buy in northern Cleburne County. They wanted a little place of their own, mostly to hunt or just ramble in the woods. In 1991, they found and purchased 120 acres, not knowing the journey that lay ahead of them, certainly never expecting they would end up living there one day. Now Jimmy says, "This has been the most wonderful and rewarding experience we could have ever dreamed, truly a blessing from God."

As often happens with new forestland owners after buying property, the shock set in of not knowing what to do with it. Covered in undergrowth so thick that one could hardly walk through it in most areas, the land was not in good condition. Cutting most of the timber in the late 1970s, the previous owner had done nothing following the harvest.

However, the optimistic Jimmersons did have a vision as to how the land should look; it was a question of where to start. Their initial call for assistance was to the Cleburne County office of the Alabama Forestry Commission where a young forester named Jeff Thurmond worked. With his professional guidance, they were about to begin their new journey.

When Thurmond came out and met with Jimmy and Sue on the property, he explained that they basically had two choices to clean it up. One option was to hire someone with a dozer, but this was expensive. The other way was to learn to burn and begin a prescribed fire program. Providing brochures about controlled burning, he talked with them about firebreaks and food plots for wildlife. This information afforded the Jimmersons with the welcomed opportunity they needed.

Additionally, Thurmond advised that if they completed all of the suggested forest management practices, the property might be certified as a TREASURE Forest. Although Jimmy had never heard of a 'TREASURE Forest' at the time, he thought it sounded like a great idea!

Fortunately, carrying out Thurmond's recom-



mentations actually ended up achieving Jimmy and Sue's ideals of how their property should look. After a lot of hard work and accomplishment of several projects in the forest management plan, the Jimmerson family achieved TREASURE Forest certification (#1028) in June of 1994.

Then in 1995, they started building a log house so that they could live on the property. The logs for the outside walls were constructed of yellow pine, purchased from a nearby mill. Much of the framing came from recycled stadium lumber. Eventually moving into their new home in 2000, improvements to the property continued.

Timber – the Primary Management Objective

Eventually Jimmy and Sue purchased 5 acres from a neighbor, then another 17 acres from another source. The last particular stand had been clear-cut a few years earlier and was replanted with loblolly pines. A cost-share opportunity arose in 2011 to establish longleaf, so they planted 8 acres in longleaf pines. The Jimmersons also received Tree Farm certification that same year. Today, makeup of the total 142 acres is approximately 70-80 percent pine and 20-30 percent hardwood.

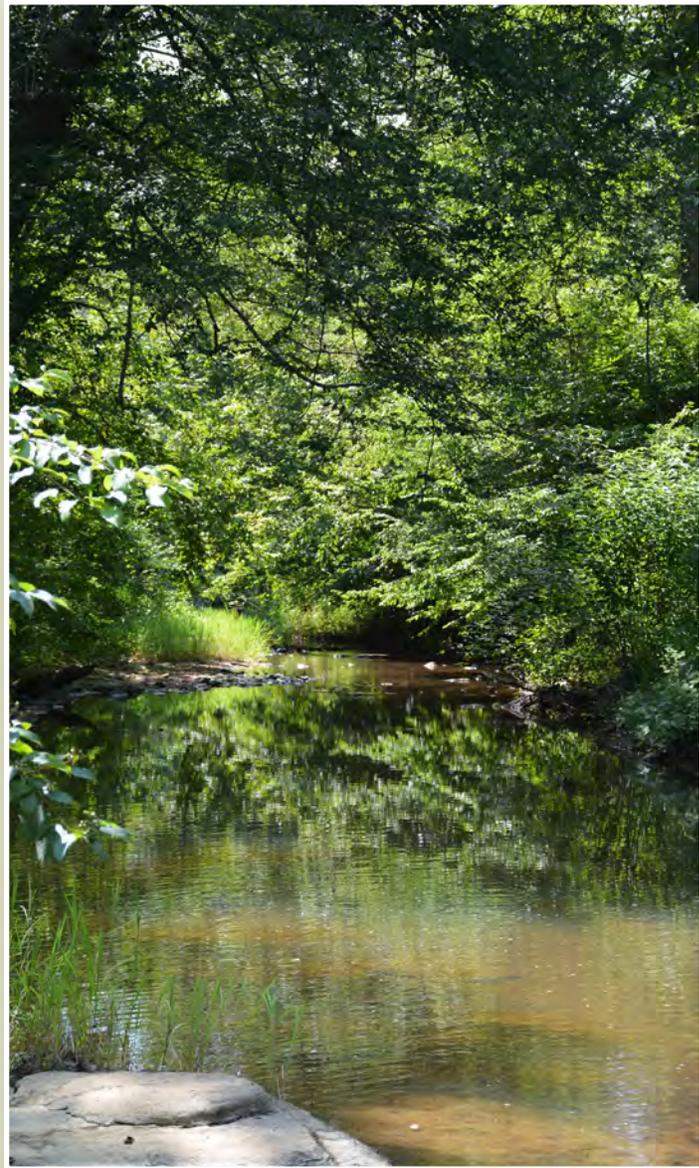
When Jimmy and Sue began making plans to harvest some timber, they utilized the services of a registered forester to cruise the timber and make recommendations on the type of harvest. Some of the options included clear cutting, thinning and harvesting pine timber, as well as thinning hardwood areas. The timber had been growing since the purchase of the property on uneven-aged stands of mostly loblolly and mixed uneven-aged hardwoods. A few pine stands contained trees that are approximately 35-40 years old, with many of the hardwoods being much older. Because of all the different ages and sizes, they decided to do 'select harvest' on both pine and hardwoods. As part of the preparation, a stream crossing was installed to enable harvesting trees across Wallace Creek.

The prescribed burn rotation program they began in 1991 has continued up to the present, successfully burning approximately 40 to 50, even 60 acres each year. Jimmy became a Certified Burn Manager in 2006. This practice not only lowers the risk of

damage from wildfires, but also improves wildlife habitat.

Wildlife – A Secondary Management Objective

To facilitate the family's interest in hunting, four large wildlife openings were installed and 4'x 6' shooting houses were built back in 1993. These openings are maintained and planted with both cool (wheat, oats, winter peas) and warm (soybeans and corn) season mixes. Numerous bird houses



es and wood duck boxes have also been erected around the property.

With a growing family and the joy of the great outdoors obviously being passed along to the next generations, their oldest son helped build approximately 12 tree stands across the property. "My youngest grandson killed his first deer here, and another young boy killed his first turkey," commented Jimmy. "It's very rewarding to watch the kids take such delight in harvesting wild game."

In 2007, enough timber was harvested from widening fire-breaks and storm-damaged timber to build a 32' x 64' shop/hunting house. Appropriately named the 'Man Cave' by their oldest grandson, the walls of the lodge are of course adorned with lots of whitetail deer, turkey, and fish trophies . . . even a couple bobcats and foxes.

In 2002, they built a 1-½ acre fish pond, stocked with bream and catfish, supposedly for the grandchildren to enjoy. However, it's quite a treat to watch Sue feed the fish, talking to them and calling them her babies! As she rides up in the Mule, her 'pets' eagerly swim to the bank awaiting the delicious treats she tosses out into the water.

(Continued on page 6)





Educational Activities Abound

Jimmy and Sue believe that it is very important to educate the public about the benefits of the forest. To that end, they generously give of their time hosting events to teach both children and adults. Since 2003, they have hosted an annual 'Classroom in the Forest' for fifth graders from across Cleburne County, with approximately 50 students attending each year. This event is a collaboration between the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil & Water Conservation District, Cleburne County Extension Agent, and the Alabama Forestry Commission. They have also hosted the Cleburne County Forestry judging FFA Teams a number of times.

Over the years, they have hosted numerous landowner tours which included county, district, state and federal agency personnel. Jimmy always advises new forest landowners to actively seek assistance from all available these natural resource agencies. The Jimmersons hosted a Soil & Water Conservation Forestry and Wildlife subcommittee meeting as well for planning of the 2013 Forestry and Wildlife School for Landowners.



Jimmy is very active in a number of forestry-related organizations. He served as a director on the state board of Alabama TREASURE Forest Association (ATFA) and as president for 2010-2011, playing a vital part in the merger of ATFA and ALFA in 2013. He represented ATFA on the Alabama Natural Resources Council for 2012-13, and serves on the TREASURE Forest certification sub-committee for the Council. He also serves on the Cleburne County Farmers Federation Board as commodity chairman for Forestry and Wildlife. In addition to serving as a supervisor for the Cleburne County Soil & Water Conservation District, Jimmy also serves as Area II Vice President of the Alabama Association of Conservation Districts and vice chairman of the AACD Forestry and Wildlife Sub-Committee. In his spare time, Jimmy manages an 800-acre hunting club!

Reaping Rewards

For all their perseverance, hard work, and commitment to promoting the multiple-use philosophy that serves as the foundation of the TREASURE Forest program, Jimmy and Sue Jimmerson received the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association's Bill Moody award in 2013, a life-time achievement. Then in 2015, they were recipients of the prestigious Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest award. Jimmy sums up their success by saying that they believe in and adhere to the TREASURE Forest motto, "Taking the land God loaned us and making Him proud He did."

As Sue says very simply, their dreams have come to pass. ☸

History Rocks Here!

Standing along the creek and admiring the sheer beauty now found on the heavily-wooded steep hills, it's difficult to envision what Jimmy describes as the 'scrubby-looking' 120 acres it once was. Another very unique feature is the Native American history of the location. Jimmy noted that the historical boundary between the Cherokee Indian Nation and the Creek Indian Nation lay only a couple miles north. Aside from their vast collection of discovered artifacts that are always a big hit with students attending 'Classroom in the Forest' events, there is a notable rock overhanging the side of a bluff which has generated quite a bit of interest.

The Jimmersons hosted archeology students and instructors from the Alabama Archaeological Society in 2012. Additionally, the State Archaeologist from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service completed a cultural review which was required for the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification process. In this study, the rock shelter was estimated to have been occupied as far back as 7,000 BC.





ALABAMA NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL

*Join us at the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association
2017 annual meeting in Florence, Alabama on Friday,
October 27th as we recognize this year's Helene Mosley
Memorial TREASURE Forest Award winners,
Kelly Mosley Award recipient, Outstanding County Forestry
Planning Committees, Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year,
and Outstanding Tree Farm Inspector of the Year.*

Alabama TREASURE Forest Association 2017 Annual Meeting



October 26-28 | Florence

**Registration closes soon!
For more information, visit TREASUREForest.org.**

or call (334) 612-5235

THURSDAY

- 1:30 p.m. Optional Tour – Historic Music Venues of the Shoals
- 7:30 p.m. Welcome Reception (silent auction opens)

FRIDAY

- 8:00 a.m. Tour Colbert County TREASURE Forest
- 12:00 p.m. Alabama TREASURE Forest Association Lunch
- 1:30 p.m. Educational Sessions begin
- 4:45 p.m. Educational Sessions end
- 5:00 p.m. Silent Auction closes
- 6:00 p.m. Awards Banquet
 - Bill Moody Award
 - Helene Mosley Award
 - Gov. Kay Ivey, speaker

SATURDAY

- 8:00 a.m. Devotional Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. Conference concludes



What's the Difference between

TREASURE Forest and Tree Farm?

By Tim Albritton, State Staff Forester,
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Created in 1974 by members of the Alabama Natural Resources Council, TREASURE Forest designation is earned by private forest landowners who affirm the principles of multiple-use forest management. It is the forest landowner recognition program that inspired the national Stewardship program which began in 1991. With its rich history, the TREASURE Forest program has certified over 2,300 landowners across the state, totaling more than 1.9 million acres. TREASURE is an acronym for Timber, Recreation, Environment, and Aesthetics for a Sustained Usable Resource.



Because TREASURE Forest does not offer or conduct 'third party' audits or reviews, the program is not recognized by the international systems of forest certification. TREASURE Forest was never intended to be a 'certification' program following the international rules that govern such programs. TREASURE Forest was – and is – a 'recognition' program endorsed by the 19 member agencies of the Alabama Natural Resources Council.

The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) began on June 12, 1941, when the nation's first 'tree farm' was dedicated near Montesano, Washington. Owned by the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company, the 120,000-acre Clemons Tree Farm launched a nationwide movement. The program's purpose is to educate non-industrial forest landowners about best practices for economic, environmental, and social considerations, and to recognize landowners that adopt these best practices. Today, over 100,000 individual and family-owned forests encompassing over 25 million acres are third-party certified as sustainable. This certification is internationally recognized by customer brands such as large fast food chains and big-box home improvement chains, etc. These customers want to protect their brand and depend on certification as proof that they are using sustainable materials in their products.

What does all of this mean for a landowner? Similar to TREASURE Forest recognition, participation in Tree Farm provides education through print and electronic communications, a field visit from a professional forester, invitations to landowner field days, and acknowledgment of participation through a sign that can be displayed on the farm. In contrast to TREASURE Forest, ATFS is internationally recognized by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), which may provide market access where mills have a target goal for certified wood, and in some cases may provide a price premium. Usually, supply and demand determines a mill preference and/or premium for certified wood, so this possibility is not something anyone should expect.

One major distinction between TREASURE Forest and Tree Farm is that TREASURE Forest recognition requires review and approval from both a forester and a wildlife biologist.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that TREASURE Forest and Tree Farm are not in competition. In fact, many landowners across the state maintain certification in both programs and proudly display their signs at the entrance to their property. The Alabama Natural Resources Council and the Alabama State Tree Farm Committee encourage landowners to consider both programs and are pleased when landowners obtain both.



Arising from differing needs, the two programs began decades ago; however, they have developed over time to become very similar in that they both promote multiple uses of our natural resources.♣

Family Forest Owners of Alabama: Reasons & Objectives for Owning Timberland

By Adam O. Maggard and Rebecca J. Barlow

Auburn University School of Forestry & Wildlife Sciences and Alabama Cooperative Extension System

There are approximately 23 million acres of timberland in Alabama, which makes up 71 percent of the state's total land area. Alabama ranks second in the 48 contiguous states in private timberland coverage as approximately 94 percent of the timberland in the state is privately owned. The majority of that private timberland (88 percent) is owned by non-industrial private forest (NIPF) landowners. Of the NIPF landowners in Alabama, approximately 70 percent are family forest owners that make up approximately 60 percent (13.7 million acres) of the total timberland. Family forest landowners are defined as a forest ownership type that includes families, individuals, trusts, and estates. Family forest landowners are unique in that they have diverse backgrounds, experiences, a wide range of management objectives, and a variety of reasons for owning their land. This article will discuss how family forest landowners in Alabama feel about forest management and how they compare to family forest landowners in the Southeast and the United States as a whole.

In general, it has been found that forest landowners with fewer than 10 acres of land often use it for residential or developmental purposes, while forest landowners with greater than 500 acres are more likely to have goals and objectives driven by timber production. In Alabama, family forest landowners who own between 10 and 500 acres make up 98 percent of the total

family forest ownerships. A study conducted by the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences at Auburn University in 2009 found that family forest landowners in Alabama who own between 10 and 500 acres do so for a variety of reasons and not for economic motivation alone. Specifically, the top three most important reasons statewide for owning forestland were non-timber related, consisting of passing the land on to heirs ('legacy'), enjoying the beauty and scenery, and hunting and fishing (including protecting and/or improving wildlife habitat).

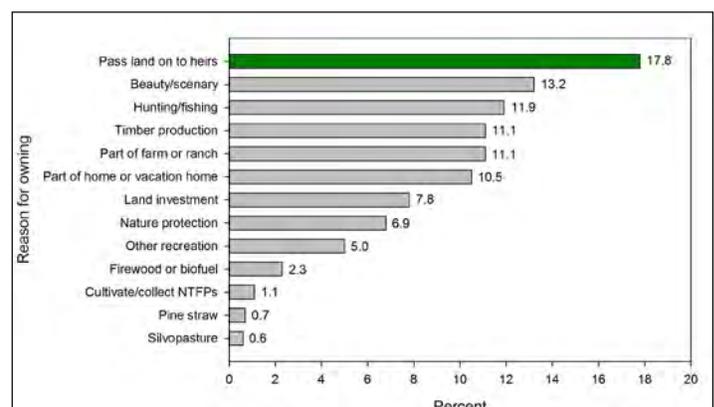


Figure 1. Statewide reasons for owning Alabama timberland as reported by Zhou (2010).

When examining why family forest landowners own land in different regions of the state there were noteworthy differences based on location. Reasons for owning timberland in the northern region of the state were similar to those found statewide, with legacy and enjoying the beauty/scenery of the land as the two most important. However, the third most important reason in the north was that the timberland is part of their farm or ranch. In the central region of the state, legacy and hunting/fishing were the top two reasons, with timber production being the third most important. The three most important reasons for owning timberland in the southern region of the state were similar but in a different order. Legacy topped the list, but timber production ranked second just ahead of hunting/fishing.



Figure 2. Regional map of Alabama

Landowners in the northern region of the state were more likely to enjoy non-timber activities, while those in the southern region focused more on timber motives. This is likely due to past land-use practices, the location of predominant farming and forestry communities, site productivity, and local timber markets. Farming and timber production have historically been the predominant industries in the southern region of the state.

Further, it was found that the amount of acreage per ownership plays a role in landowners' objectives. Family forest landowners that owned between 10 and 100 acres of timberland were found to be more likely to enjoy owning their land for non-timber or amenity-related activities such as legacy, beauty/scenery, and wildlife. In fact, the top three reasons for owning timberland as reported by these smaller scale landowners across the state were legacy, enjoying the beauty and scenery of the land, and the timberland being part of their farm or ranch.

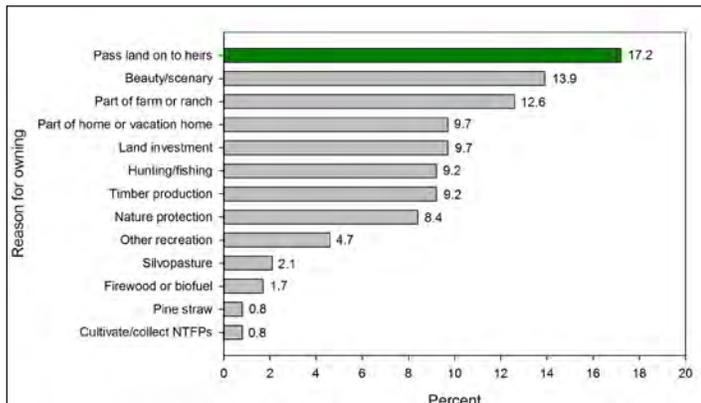


Figure 3. Reasons for owning Alabama timberland (tract size between 10 – 100 acres) as reported by Zhou (2010).

Reasons for owning timberland changed when reported by family forest landowners with 101- to 500-acre tracts. For these Alabama landowners, timber production is the most important reason, followed by hunting and fishing, and legacy. They were found to have more timber-oriented objectives along with hunting, fishing, and habitat improvement. In general, non-financial objectives are more common than financially-driven objectives overall for Alabama family forest landowners that own between 10 and 500 acres of timberland, but the specifics of these objectives depend on location within the state and tract size. However, legacy and enjoying the beauty and scenery were consistently rated as highly important.

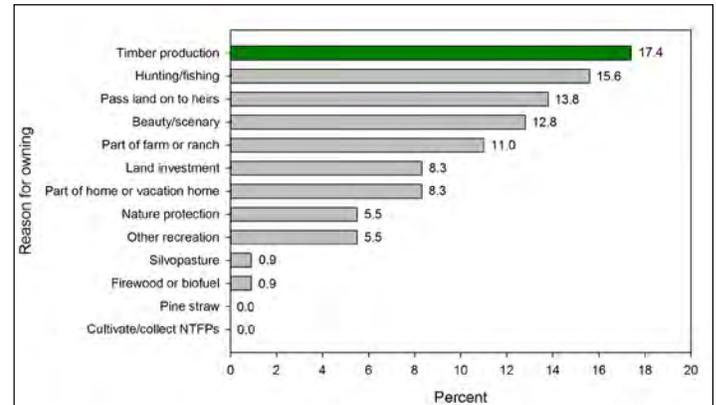
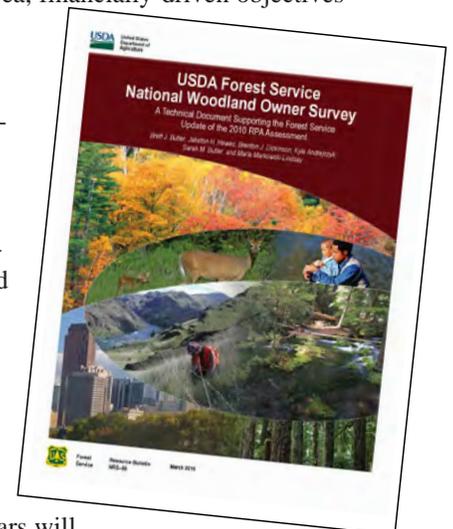


Figure 4. Reasons for owning Alabama timberland (tract size between 101 – 500 acres) as reported by Zhou (2010).

More recently the National Woodland Owners Survey (NWOS) found similar results for family forest landowners in Alabama. The NWOS is a national survey of private forest landowners in the United States conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service. The main purpose of the survey is to find out who owns America's private forests, why they own them, and what their past and future objectives are for their forestland. For landowners with greater than 10 acres of timberland, non-financial objectives such as legacy, beauty, and wildlife were found rated as important or very important. In terms of area, financially-driven objectives increased with acreage owned, but overall they were rated much lower than non-financial objectives in terms of importance. The most commonly reported financially-driven objectives were related to land investment and timber production.

According to the NWOS, the greatest change in activities from the previous five years to the next five years will be a decrease in the number of ownerships across the state that harvest trees for sale. However, harvesting is expected to remain



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Reasons & Objectives for Owning Timberland

(Continued from page 11)

as one of the more common activities. Activities expected to increase include protecting and/or improving wildlife habitat, fuels reduction, and managing unwanted insects and diseases. This indicates that more activities to improve forest health will be implemented in the coming years.

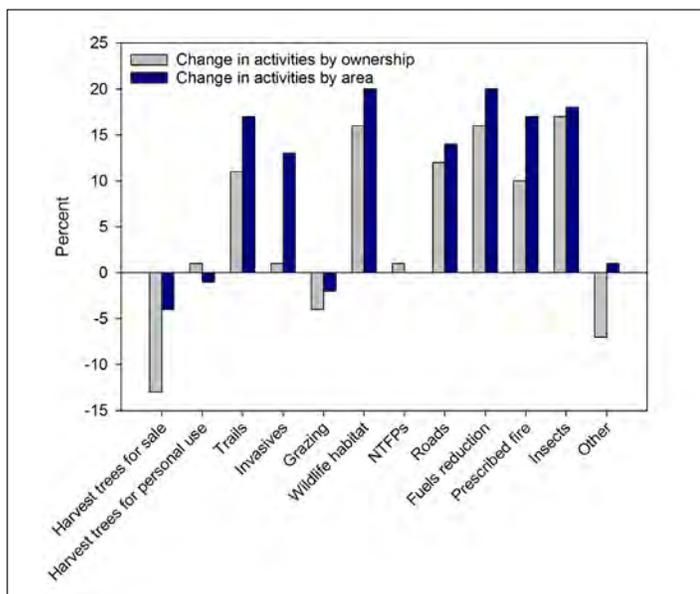


Figure 5. Percent change in activities by ownership and by area (acreage) from the five years prior to 2013 and five years following 2013, based on data from the National Woodland Owners Survey.

The NWOS reports similar results for the southeastern United States and for the entire country. Family forest owners make up approximately 58 percent of all forest owners in the Southeast and 43 percent of all forest owners in the United States. For both the Southeast and the United States, the top reasons for owning their land include legacy, beauty and scenery, and wildlife, with the top future activities expected to include protecting and/or improving wildlife habitat, harvesting trees for their own use (i.e., firewood), controlling invasive species, and fuels reduction for wildfire. The only real difference found between the Southeast and the United States as a whole was that legacy was the most important reason family forest landowners owned their land in the Southeast, while enjoying the beauty and scenery was the most important across the entire United States.

In conclusion, family forest landowners in Alabama own timberland for a variety of reasons. Acreage owned makes a difference in the landowners' attitude towards their objectives and managing their land. However, the importance of legacy, beauty, and protecting and/or improving wildlife habitat is shared by ownerships of all tract sizes. These landowners have a high interest in forest management, but a combination of lack of knowledge, ability, and fear of damage or doing wrong is preventing action. Statewide, it is reported that only 14 percent of family forest landowners (45 percent of family forest acres) have received management advice, and only 12 percent (32 percent of family forest acres) have a written management plan. Forestry and other natural resource professionals must understand the landowners' values, objectives, and concerns in order to effectively engage, educate, and motivate them about the importance of managing their land and taking the steps to do so. 🌲

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Clearing the Heir . . . Problems with Heir Property

By Brad Lang, Work Unit Manager,
Alabama Forestry Commission

Owning land is a dream for so many. Whether purchasing land outright or acquiring heir property, there are some particulars you need to be aware of that could stave off problems later in life. In today's market, owning large amounts of property usually consists of two or more owners or multiple heirs in waiting.

I have found that in life, owning anything of significant investment requires a lot of forethought. For instance, if you own land or structural real estate, you need to think about where and what happens to it when you are gone. Who will you leave it to? How are you going to leave it? What if it's jointly owned? Who are the heirs to the heirs? These are all questions that need to be handled now.

First, let's define the meaning of heir and heir property. An heir is a person or persons who inherit land, without purchasing it, from deceased landowners. Heir property is defined as real property owned by two or more people that was inherited, rather than purchased, or passed down from generation to generation. Usually, heir property is acquired when the landowner dies and did not develop a will, or the property was not filed correctly with the state. Once you become an heir to property, each share is undivided and has no defined boundary.

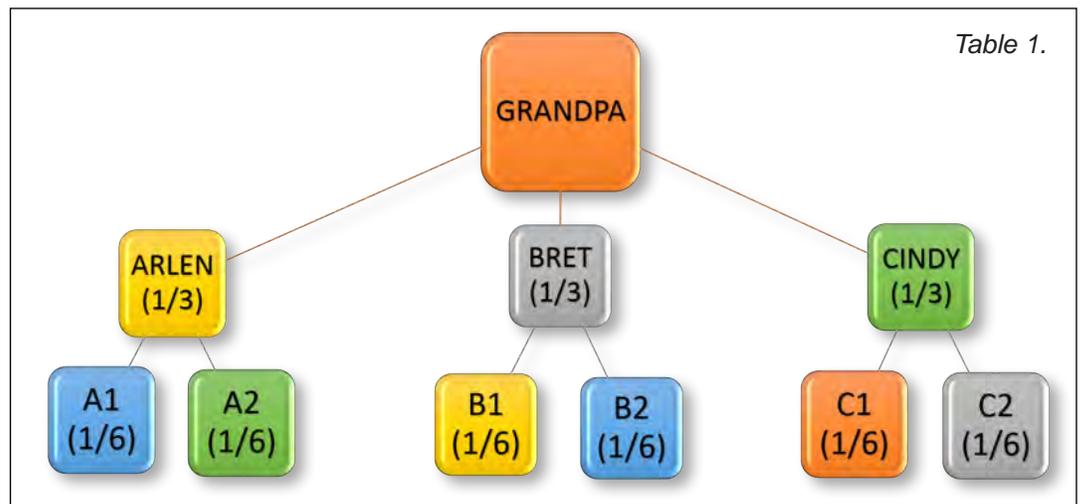
Let's look at one example. Grandpa passed away and owned 300 acres. After his passing, he either didn't have a will, or did have a will but decided to simply leave his land

to his three children, undivided. Either way, the children will end up with the 300 acres as a whole. This would mean that each child has equal ownership of the 300 acres, or you could say they own a third of the 300 acres. This 'third' ownership means each heir owns a third of everything on the property. There is no defined 100 acres owned by each heir. They each own a third of each tree, each leaf, and each area of ground across the entire 300 acres. To further complicate the matter, let's say each child also has two children each. Do you see where I'm going with this?

Now, in a perfect world, siblings or family members agree on everything and there would never be an issue with this type of ownership. However, it's not a perfect world and this is a rare event. But even if the heirs do get along, there are still issues with heir property that need to be discussed.

Here is what I call an Heir Family Tree. I'm going to use this year's hurricane names as examples.

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Clearing the Heir

(Continued from page 13)

For this example, I kept it to an even number of grandchildren. But you can probably imagine the confusion once the heirs have different numbers of children. In this simple example, property ownership went from a single person to six different owners over a period of time and will continue the trend until something is changed.

So, in this imperfect world, what are some of the facts concerning heir property? All heir property owners:

- Are responsible for taking care of the land.
- Must protect the land.
- Must do repairs and maintenance.
- Share profit gains and expenses.
- Must pay property taxes. If one heir pays taxes, that person must be reimbursed by all other heirs. All taxes must be paid between September and 1st week of January.
- Are percentage interest owners. (Example: \$100 profit = \$10 on 1/10 interest share)
- Do not own defined number of acres.
- May not be aware they own a percentage. (It can be difficult to track owners who are 'absentee'.)
- Have common interest conflicts.

Next, let's look at this same scenario from a forest management standpoint and how it can create issues. The first concern to pop up is that there is no one 'real' ownership, no clear title. Just as all original heir parties own a third, all decisions are based on a third as well. The more heirs, the smaller the share gets per heir. All heir owners must agree on land use and management decisions.

In my experience, one of the biggest issues in this situation is everyone reaching agreement on forest management objectives. Regardless of the number of heirs, it is rare for everyone to have the same opinion and agree to the same objectives. Having dealt with such issues, I have come to understand that not everyone likes to cut timber. Landowners can have very different opinions on management objectives, and some people just simply do not agree with decisions made by other family members. Have you ever had a family member that thought you were always out to get them, no matter how honest you were being? Not having outright, defined ownerships makes solving these issues difficult and it can get quite ugly between family members.

Another major issue we often see is heir owners seeking cost-share assistance. When applying for cost share, it's not easy to get government assistance because again, there isn't clear ownership of the property. For example, if a property is passed down to five children, then all five must be present to sign the required documentation to apply for cost share. Plus, all heirs must agree upon which management cost share to apply. If it is decided to elect one party to handle the administrative sign-up, then that party will be responsible for paying the up-front costs, receiving full reimbursement, receiving the IRS 1099, and paying the taxes on the money reimbursed. Then it will be on that one party to seek all necessary reimbursement from the other heirs. This can get real tricky and cause an 'administrative' slow down on progress, versus having a clearly defined ownership.

So, you think, what can you do if you are one of these heir property owners? Some ways to maintain an heir setting is to 1) confirm all heir owners, 2) ensure clear title, not having disputes, 3) create an heir family tree, and 4) clear up unwanted ownership from heirs that do not have any interest.

Here are some ways you can better structure the property ownership:

1. Land Trust. Basically, a trust is developed when deeded owners donate their heir interest to the trust. At this point, one person serves as a trustee and all others are beneficiaries of the trust. The trust holds the title to the property; the property is now no longer divided because it belongs to the trust. A trust is often used to create privacy for the landowners. Records will only show ownership in the trust name, not the landowners. A disadvantage to trusts is that the beneficiaries hold all liability to the property.

2. Limited Liability Company (LLC). An LLC is an ownership of partnership structure that has members rather than actual partners or shareholders. It must have a set of terms agreed upon about how the LLC conducts business. This is where you set all the rules for



future direction. A major advantage is liability protection to the owners and is listed as its own entity. One disadvantage is that it cannot live forever like a trust, but rather dies with the members. New members must be set to receive an LLC as needed. Jointly, a land trust and an LLC can co-exist to provide privacy and protection to its members.

- 3. Tenancy-In-Common Agreements.** These agreements will set ownership rights of all owners as well as set specific parts of the property owners can use. They also set right of first refusal. These agreements can help settle muddy water upon initial ownership.

This information is very basic and not case-by-case specific. I hope it gives you something to think about when it comes time to decide how your property can be better organized, and how it will be left once you are gone. A couple issues I didn't discuss but are important to mention . . . what if one of the heirs doesn't agree on the methods of cutting timber, or what if one of the heirs would rather sell their portion and take real money? In either of these situations, it is imperative to seek professional advice. Always consult with a registered forester before selling or cutting timber. Having a forest management plan completed on the property would aid in discussions between heirs. Finally, talk with a real estate lawyer or a certified public accountant who have had experience in similar situations to help you decide how to develop and implement a plan.

The important thing to remember is to avoid ownership disputes now and for future generations. Obtain a management plan for your property. Sometimes by listening to all parties' interests and tailoring a plan to fit the property, an unbiased party can help settle disputes and encourage the heir owners to get defined ownership control. This way, the management of the land and timber is sustained for today as well as for future property owners. An essential goal for any group of landowners is to first . . . clear the heir!



What You Need To Know About Heir Property

What is "Heir Property?"

- Heir property refers to land that has been passed down informally from generation-to-generation. In most cases, it involves landowners who died without a will.
- Heirs' property is land owned "in common" by all of the heirs, regardless of whether they live on the land, pay the taxes, or have ever set foot on the land.

Things you should know

- When a landowner dies without a will, the state decides who inherits the land. Overtime, when land is passed down through several generations without a will, distant relatives who do not know each other could be co-owners of the same property.
- Heir property is the leading cause of Black involuntary land loss. According to the Census Bureau, 80 percent of land owned by Blacks has been lost since 1910 due to heir property.

Common Problems

- Decisions regarding use of the land, such as harvesting timber or leasing for agricultural purposes, must be agreed upon by everyone entitled to the land. Some owners may want to sell the land, while others want to live on it or farm it.
- Some will pay their share of taxes and maintenance, while others will not.
- It is hard to get loans, grants, and Government assistance based on property ownership because there is no clear title.
- Lack of clear title also means that the property is less marketable for sale or lease.
- One owner could force a court-ordered sale of the entire property so that all of the descendants can "cash out."
- Some owners are unable to receive a home loan to complete badly needed home repairs.

What you should do

- Try to work out family disagreements before they become legal battles. Get a will and encourage other heirs to make a will to prevent more people from becoming heir owners.
- Make a family tree to identify every heir. Maintain a list of all of the heirs with their current addresses. Create a plan to take care of the property. You may need to have meetings once or twice a year.

Center for Minority Land and Community Security • Tuskegee University
100 Campbell Hall • Tuskegee, AL 36088 • Phone: (334) 727-8333
Contact Person: Jess Gilbert





Forest Inventory Data: a Valuable Public Resource

*By Dan Chappell,
Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) Coordinator,
Alabama Forestry Commission*

As you walk around your property, drive down the highway into town, or visit an expanding city, have you ever stopped to wonder about how the forest resource of this state is expanding or contracting? In fact, the Alabama Forestry Commission has a team of dedicated foresters who travel out to the field every day to take a series of measurements that make it possible to answer that very question, plus a whole lot more.

The program that performs this service is known as Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA). Some of you may have received a letter and a visit from us in the past, as our 'office' covers the entire state. In fact, there is a grid of over 5,600 points evenly spaced across Alabama. We work hard to visit each of these points on a seven-year cycle. To get a statistically accurate sample, we check all of the points, no matter where they fall. Whether in an agricultural setting, an industrial site, a neighborhood, or any other type of land use that is not a forest, we still endeavor to set eyes on the point to confirm its continuation as a non-forest land use. Many of you may be aware of or have even participated in the Conservation Reserve Program, whereby money is made available to favor the conversion of certain agricultural land into forest. Even if we are pretty certain that we know a given point is non-forest, we still take the time to be sure, because the landscape is always changing.

Because the majority of land in Alabama is owned by private individuals, most plots in the state fall on private landowners. Although it is the right of a landowner to deny us access to their property, it is primarily through partnering with our landowners that we are able to provide the truly representative data that makes this survey such a valuable tool. We thank all of our landowners who permit us to take our survey on their property. Although we cannot offer any direct benefit to landowners in exchange for permission to survey on their property, we want them to know that they are providing a great benefit to Alabama by way of their participation.

What is it we are looking for when we visit one of these random points? We carry with us an aerial photograph, a direction sheet left by the last crew who measured the point, and a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit. Unlike in the old days, when the only way to locate a spot on the ground was to start from a known point such as a gatepost or power pole then use a compass and measuring tape to precisely follow a course to plot, today we are able to type the coordinate into a GPS and take ‘the path of least resistance’ through the woods. This is a great aid to efficiency. Once the GPS puts us close to our point, we can use distance and compass azimuth directions from specific trees to triangulate, or ‘cross up’ on a very small patch of ground. After a few moments of kicking away the leaf litter, we locate a small metal pin that is stuck in the ground, marking the center point of the ‘plot.’ This can be challenging in bottomland forests during seasons of heavy rain! Anyone who doesn’t like wading in water from time to time might not enjoy this line of work.

Once we have found the center pin, it is time to get to work. We have all sorts of questions that need to be answered. What is the owner class – corporate, individual, national forest, Department of Defense? How dense is the crown cover? Has the property seen any disturbances (fire, insect, weather) or been treated (clear cut, site preparation, artificial or natural regeneration) since the last survey taken seven years previous? Is there any water on the plot? What is the physiographic class (floodplain, rolling upland, dry slope)? Is the plot impacted by invasive exotic species such as Chinese privet or Japanese climbing fern or kudzu, and if so, to what extent? After we have done our best to answer these questions, it is time to begin measuring trees.

From that center point which we relocated, we will measure all trees that fall within 24 feet of the center that are 5.0 inches [or more] in diameter, at a location 4½ feet off the ground. If you are not familiar with diameter sizes, take your two hands, and touch your thumbs together and your middle fingers together. The circle you have made is about equivalent to a 5-inch diameter.

Using a compass and starting from due north (000 degrees), we capture each tree that meets the minimum diameter. We record the species, the compass azimuth and distance (so that we can be sure to measure this exact same tree in the future), a precise diameter, and whether the tree, from a lumber point of view, is a growing stock or a rough cull. We record where the tree’s crown is in relation to the other crowns (dominant, intermediate, overtopped), as well as the ratio of the tree’s live crown, which is a clue as to the tree’s potential for further growth. Does the tree have any rotten or missing sections? Is it suffering from any damage agents or have a broken top? For larger trees that have the potential to be saw logs, we assign a grade based on how well the tree is overgrowing its limb knots. Lastly, we measure the length of the tree to the nearest foot. Once we have done all that, we move on to Tree Number Two, and so on, until we reach 360 degrees of the compass, which is all the way around.

There is a separate protocol we use to capture information on the smaller sapling trees and the young seedling-size trees. Once that is complete, we can say we have completed Subplot One.

From our original center point, we travel 120 feet north, 120 feet southeast, and finally 120 feet southwest to repeat the process at Subplots Two, Three, and Four. Four of these subplots equal one complete plot.

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Forest Inventory

(Continued from page 17)

On a good workday, two complete plot locations can be fully surveyed; but long walks to access plots, high tree tally, thick underbrush, or inclement weather can limit a day to one fully surveyed plot.

And now the question that must be answered, “Why?” To be honest, I once talked with a landowner to secure permission to measure a plot on his property, and he answered, “Sure, I don’t mind, but this is the stupidest thing I have ever heard of.” I have to disagree, although when it is over 98 degrees and you happen to be in a very recently replanted stand with no shade, you wonder if he wasn’t on to something. Seriously, though, there are a lot of good reasons why we do what we do.

To begin, this survey was authorized back in 1928 as a response to some of the poor land-use practices that had prevailed and damaged the landscape. It has been performed in the lower 48 states since 1930. What a wealth of information this survey provides! When forest industry is looking to expand and bring jobs to a region, they need to know if the species they want – in the sizes they need, at the quantities they will demand – are available within economic hauling distances. Before you make such multi-million dollar decisions, you have to be sure. That makes this data, which is not only free and available to all, but also consistent across state lines, invaluable.

Also, consider major destruction from natural disasters such as hurricanes and wildfires. Since you know what you had before the event, you can go back in and re-measure after the event, and get a very accurate damage assessment over a large area. I assisted in doing large-scale storm damage assessments in Mississippi in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. A large contingent of us re-measured all the plots in the affected counties at the same time, and took special additional measurements on all of the downed trees.

The academic world, as well, relies upon this work. There is no better tool to track the spread of tree diseases and destructive invasive species nationwide. The survey provides policy makers with the hard data needed to make management decisions that, hopefully, are in the best interests of the land and the people who are dependent upon it.

I hope this article about Forest Inventory & Analysis has been informative. When you work in the field, it is always rewarding to run into people who are aware of what you do and appreciative that you do it. Here in Alabama, we are blessed with a great crew of dedicated professionals who travel to points spread out everywhere, bringing in this accurate data in a timely fashion that is so important to such a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

Working in the office now, I answer requests for data and data analysis. If you have specific questions, anything from, “About how many water oaks are there in Shelby County?” to complex multi-county wood basket analyses, please give me a call or email. My office number is (334) 240-9370, and my email address is james.chappell@forestry.alabama.gov. ☞

Alabama Scores High in the Nation’s ‘Tree Census’

By Dan Chappell, Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) Coordinator, Alabama Forestry Commission

The Alabama Forestry Commission’s dedicated staff of full-time Forest Inventory & Analysis (‘FIA’) crew leaders, and their assistants who come from the agency’s county offices around the state, are to be commended for the outstanding service they are providing to the people of Alabama and the wider network of stakeholders in the fields of forest industry, research science, and beyond. Not only are our FIA crews exceeding expectations by setting new state plot production records, we are outperforming all other states in the Southeast. This is truly a group effort, one in which all participants should take a great deal of pride.

From January 1 through June 30, 2017, Alabama FIA can claim 527 plots completed. If this pace is maintained through the latter half of the year, over 1,000 plots could be measured, which will far exceed the levels that we have been able to achieve in years past. Even then, Alabama was one of the region’s premier programs. In comparison, Georgia FIA is on pace to complete just over 900 plots by year’s end, Florida 780, and Tennessee just 680. If you look at funding levels, all three should be producing at a higher level than Alabama. It goes to prove that it’s the people who really make the difference!

The data from Forest Inventory & Analysis is used in countless ways. When researching a site for a new forest products mill, FIA data is crucial in showing potential investors that the species they seek are available in the size classes they need, in the abundance they require, in the quality they demand, and within hauling distances that are economical. Existing mills also consult the data to track long-term trends that might affect their wood procurement strategies into the future. In Alabama, digital access to FIA data goes back to 1972, making it possible to follow land-use trends over a long time frame. Researchers tracking forest health threats such as red bay ambrosia beetle and emerald ash borer can analyze the spread and impact of these pests using FIA data. Likewise, the spread of invasive plants can be tracked, such as Japanese climbing fern and cogongrass. When emerald ash borer was first detected in Alabama, the FIA data was consulted to assess the potential impact to the state’s ash resource and to help shape the state’s response.

The international focus on carbon emissions and carbon sequestration is another vital area where FIA data proves its worth. Where once upon a time the survey was more strictly a timber inventory, today it could accurately be called a carbon inventory. Through our work, estimates are made for the carbon stored in living trees, standing dead trees, downed and dead trees, fine woody material on the forest floor, and even the carbon stored in the organic layer of the soil. With international trading partners placing an emphasis upon carbon neutral practices and being able to prove the sustainability of their wood sourcing, it has never been more important to provide the hard data that backs up Alabama’s claim to having a sustainable, renewable resource that, whether as unprocessed logs or as finished products, is available for export around the world. ☞



Gopher Tortoises: 'Digging In' at Geneva State Forest

By Ray Metzler, Wildlife Biologist,
Alabama Forestry Commission

Back in the 1920s, land that is now Geneva State Forest (GSF) was clear-cut by Jackson Lumber Company. At that time, it was common practice to clear-cut timber and not replant due to the availability of mature pine stands and the cost associated with replanting activities. Rather than paying taxes on property that had little value, Jackson Lumber Company chose to donate this 7,120 acres to the State of Alabama in the early 1930s. The area was then replanted by Civilian Conservation Corps workers during the Depression era.

In the present time, the acreage is managed primarily for timber as a source of revenue to fund Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) activities. AFC lands at Geneva State Forest have always been managed for native longleaf pine on a 75-year rotation. Active management during the past 20 years or so has included activities such as thinnings, prescribed fires, and final shelterwood harvests to naturally regenerate the longleaf ecosystem. The resulting habitat has been beneficial for the local population of gopher tortoises. Continuation of these management activities should bolster these local tortoise populations and decrease habitat fragmentation.

Geneva State Forest is home to approximately 400 tortoises, making it currently one of the densest populations on state or federal land in Alabama. Living as long as up to 80 years or so,

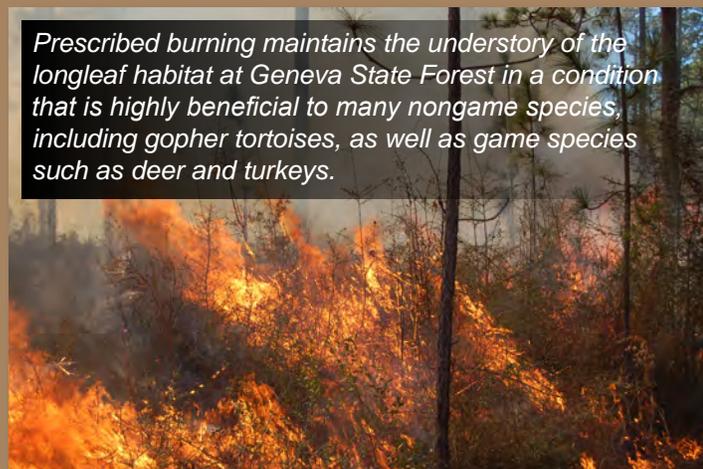


A burrow with a well-defined trail to a feeding area in typical gopher tortoise habitat.

gopher tortoises are dry-land turtles that are well adapted for their fossorial lifestyle. They have stubby, elephant-like hind feet and flattened front feet with large toenails for digging. Gopher tortoises favor dry, sandy ridges with open stands of pine (especially longleaf), turkey oak, and other scrub oaks. Where habitat is of low quality, they also frequent open areas around road shoulders, food plots, and rights-of-way with well-drained sandy soil.

The tortoises dig long sloping burrows up to 30 feet long, extending to 9 feet below the surface. Burrows typically have a characteristic 'D' shape, with a flat bottom and rounded arched top and sides – much like the gopher itself – and are typically only wide enough for the tortoise to turn around in. These burrows provide shelter not only for the gopher tortoise, but are also used by more than 360 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates which include gopher frogs, Eastern indigo snakes, diamondback rattlesnakes, and gopher crickets. While gopher tortoises tend to avoid sharing burrows with their own kind, they are known to readily cohabitate with many other animals. Several of these co-existing species are already listed as threatened/endangered or are proposed for listing for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

(Continued on page 20)



Prescribed burning maintains the understory of the longleaf habitat at Geneva State Forest in a condition that is highly beneficial to many nongame species, including gopher tortoises, as well as game species such as deer and turkeys.

Gopher Tortoises: Digging in at Geneva State Forest

(Continued from page 19)

This tortoise was marked with a 'V' just below its head on the edge of the carapace.



Gopher tortoises feed on grasses and other plant material near the ground. Feeding trails are often visible leading from the burrow's sandy apron to foraging areas. Eggs are laid in or near the burrow apron in May, June, and July, then hatch in about 80-100 days.

Young tortoises are about the size of silver dollars. The nest is very vulnerable to predation by crows, raccoons, opossums, foxes, skunks, and other animals.

A recent addition to the harvesting regime at Geneva State Forest is to exclude heavy equipment from being operated within 15 feet of a known tortoise burrow.

Research has indicated that heavy equipment may collapse a burrow, entombing any occupants. Unlike mature tortoises, young tortoises are incapable of digging out of a collapsed burrow, and as mentioned previously, these burrows are shared by several species which are listed as threatened or endangered. Therefore, known burrows are flagged prior to logging activities and operators are requested to notify GSF staff of any unmarked burrows that are discovered during the logging process. This minimally invasive requirement on logging activities should benefit tortoise populations, as well as other burrow dwelling species. It is just one example of potential management activities that may preclude the need to provide protection under the Endangered Species Act for the tortoise in the 'eastern range.'

Gopher tortoises west of the Mobile and Tombigbee rivers in Alabama were listed as a threatened species in 1987. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) released a work plan in 2016 for listing additional species for protection under the Endangered Species Act. This work plan reported fiscal year 2023 as the timeframe to either propose rules for listing the gopher tortoise in its eastern range as threatened/endangered or propose notice of a 'not warranted for listing' finding. Cooperation between public and private forest landowners with the Service in the 'eastern range' may allow them to obtain the best available scientific data regarding tortoise populations throughout the states of Alabama (east of the Mobile and Tombigbee rivers), Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Hopefully, current efforts to enhance the longleaf pine ecosystem in south Alabama and other coastal plain regions will pay dividends to tortoise populations and preclude the need to list the gopher tortoise as a threatened/endangered species in its eastern range.

To allow tortoises from another county to be moved to Geneva State Forest, a four-acre enclosure was constructed by personnel from the Alabama Forestry Commission and Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries Division (of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources). Although tortoises are not routinely translocated, development and loss of habitat had created a situation in which biologists believed the tortoises would have perished without this action. This enclosure was constructed in an area void of tortoises, but within suitable habitat. Constructing the enclosure was fairly labor intensive, costly, and required trenching the perimeter of the 'silt fence' to a depth of approximately 12-16 inches to keep tortoises from escaping. Research indicates that translocated tortoises have a much higher survival rate when initially placed in an enclosure for a period of at least six months. This soft release technique keeps them from immediately leaving the area and 'heading back home' which often results in some form of mortality.

Each tortoise was uniquely marked by filing a 'V' into the edge of the carapace in a known location and given an identification number. This allows GSF personnel and wildlife biologists involved in tortoise management to identify it if captured at a later date.

Alabama Forestry Commission and Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries personnel conducted a prescribed burn on January 30, 2017, in the unit containing the tortoise enclosure. The fencing material was burned up for the most part so as not to create a barrier to the tortoises when they emerged from the burrows in the spring. Hopefully, the tortoises will continue to live life in and around the area of the former enclosure. Prescribed burning on a two to three-year rotation minimizes woody species such as yaupon, and enhances herbaceous ground cover favored by gopher tortoises.

This cooperative effort between the Alabama Forestry Commission and Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries is a stellar example of the forestry and wildlife management communities working together for the benefit of a species that was once widely distributed throughout Alabama's lower coastal plain. Future forest management activities at Geneva State Forest will continue to include activities that are beneficial to gopher tortoises and many other species (some of which are also threatened or endangered) that utilize open pine stands and sandhill habitats. 🌲



Enclosure site immediately following a prescribed burn.

Southern Pine Beetles

Cause

WIDESPREAD DAMAGE

this Summer

From June 5, 2017 to September 1, 2017

2,124 SPOTS DETECTED

Forestry professionals' earlier predictions of a bad year for pine beetles is unfortunately coming to pass, especially for some counties in Alabama. Timber losses may be significant according to officials with the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC).

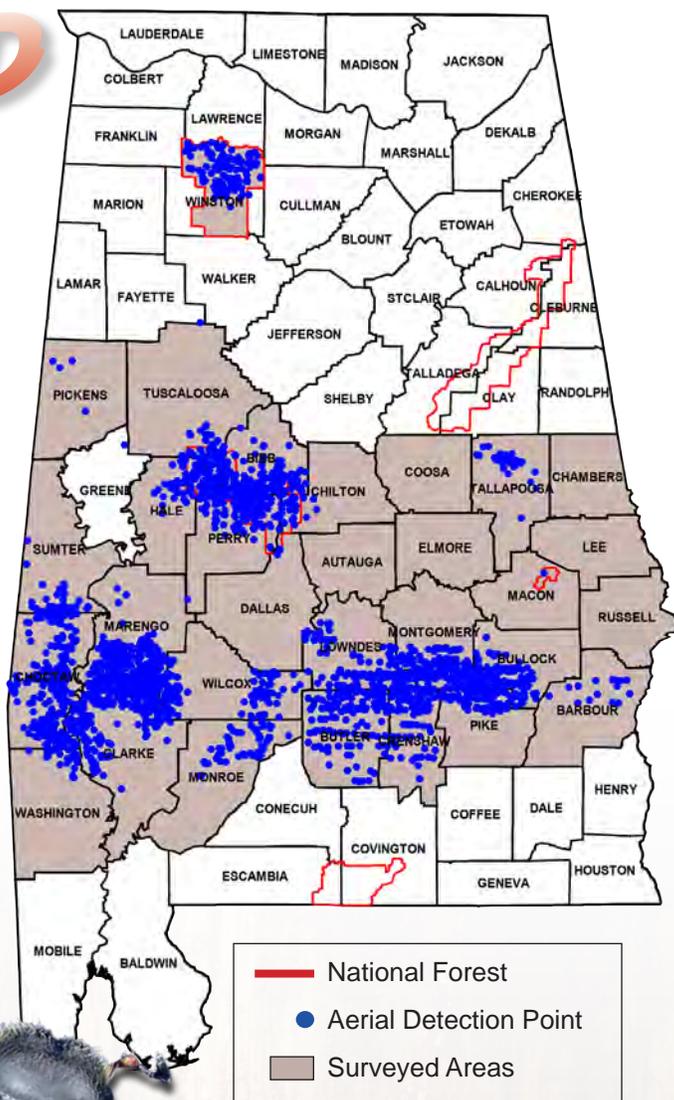
“When trees are drought-stressed as many are from last fall, their weakened state makes them more prone to insects and diseases,” commented AFC Forest Health Coordinator Dana Stone. “This summer, we have seen a large number of trees dying across our state’s pine forests, and the culprit is southern pine beetle. Statewide, AFC foresters have aerially detected a total of 2,124 beetle spots, compared to less than 700 last year. Affecting approximately 201,683 trees, the total value of pines destroyed is estimated to be \$1.7 million.”

In Montgomery County alone, over 100 beetle spots have been identified. When the number of beetle spots for a county exceeds one tenth of one percent of the pine-forested acres for that county, it qualifies as epidemic. Having fewer pine acres, Montgomery County has now reached that threshold.

The Alabama Forestry Commission conducts flights throughout the year for the purpose of detecting and marking beetle spots on a GPS or digital map. When spots are identified, local AFC foresters then send notification letters to forest landowners advising them that they have an infestation, along with suggested control measures.

According to Stone, “Southern pine beetles are the primary killer of pines in Alabama, with unmanaged and overcrowded stands of southern pines most susceptible to attack. Epidemic

*Beetle Map from Aerial Surveys
as of 9/1/17*



populations of this bark beetle occur periodically in the state, destroying hundreds of acres of pines. If not controlled, these expanding populations can devastate entire stands, causing millions of dollars in damage.”

“We encourage forest landowners to monitor their property for signs of damage, then contact their local AFC office or registered forester for management recommendations before taking any action,” said State Forester Rick Oates. “The Alabama Forestry Commission will continue to conduct both aerial surveys and ground checks to assess beetle activity across the state.”

Alabama's 'Tree City USA' Program:



Strengthening Our Community Forests

*By Will Liner, Urban & Community Forestry Partnership Coordinator,
Alabama Forestry Commission*

Trees grow all around us, hiding in plain sight, and providing numerous benefits often taken for granted. In addition to their beauty, trees clean our air, clean our water, reduce erosion, and make our wallets fatter from increased property values and reduced energy costs. Trees are the silent sentinels of our society, and proper management of this resource is vital to the health and longevity of our communities.

Community participation in a program such as 'Tree City USA' is important because like all high value assets, if not properly maintained, trees can be a potential hazard. In order to optimize their benefits, trees are planted near homes, businesses, roads, and sidewalks — places where structural failure of a tree could cause property damage or injury. These risks can be mitigated by proper management; but as long as there is a target below a suspended weight, there is an inherent level of risk. Weighing the benefits of trees against risk is one of the critical decisions faced in community forestry. This is a difficult balancing act, so municipalities need to seek professional guidance, carefully design their landscapes, and adhere to a long-term,

comprehensive tree plan. By doing the things necessary for Tree City USA recognition, your community will be better prepared to handle these risks.

Tree City USA is a free program available to Alabama communities wanting to properly care for their trees. This national recognition program is administered by the Arbor Day Foundation, and provides municipalities with the framework to achieve a basic level of urban forest management. Participation in the program is free, and once the necessary information is gathered, filling out the online application typically takes under an hour. Communities recognized as a Tree City USA receive street signs and a flag to proudly display their commitment to proper tree care. The municipality is also listed on the Arbor Day Foundation website and sent information about upcoming grant opportunities, potential pest and disease concerns, and educational events. The city or community is also networked with the Alabama Forestry Commission's Urban & Community Forestry (U&CF) program, where they have easy access to professional arborists and instruction on proper tree care. Community partici-

pation in the program also helps the State of Alabama, as enrollment numbers are used by the federal government to allocate funds.

If your community is not a Tree City USA, begin the certification process by asking a city official to contact the Alabama Forestry Commission's U&CF program. Contact information for the U&CF group is shown at the end of this article. Becoming a Tree City USA is simple; your community only needs to complete an annual application, and satisfy the following four requirements:

1. A tree board or department that meets at least once per year and is responsible for public trees;
2. A Tree Care ordinance;
3. At least \$2 per capita spent managing the community forest during the current year;
4. An annual Arbor Day proclamation and observance.

A 'tree board' or department is a group of citizens or a municipal department charged with caring for the community's trees. The tree board can be set up many ways, and it is up to the community to decide what will work best for them.

The next requirement is having a tree care ordinance. This standard may take the longest to complete the first time, because new ordinances often require approval by the city council or a similar governing authority. However, after the first year in the program, your community can satisfy the requirement by checking a box on the application to verify the ordinance is unchanged and still in effect. The ordinance can and should be tailored to the individual community, and there are many great examples available from the Alabama Forestry Commission's U&CF program or from other online sources. To meet the requirement, the ordinance must establish a tree board or department and lay out general provisions for community tree care.



The third requirement is spending at least \$2 per capita on community trees during the application year. The budget standard may seem daunting, but it is rarely a constraint. Many common expenditures can be counted as part of the \$2 per capita budget including: volunteer hours, salaries of tree care workers, utility line clearance, the purchase of tree related materials, etc.

Finally, the fourth standard is an annual celebration of Arbor Day with a proclamation. The celebration can be a parade, a tree planting, a student reading the proclamation to the city council, or anything in between as long as it celebrates Arbor Day and



can be documented with a picture, newspaper article, or event agenda on the application. As for the yearly proclamation, it is extremely flexible but must mention Arbor Day and the value of trees. Additionally, the proclamation must be current and dated for the same year as the submitted application.

Example ordinances, budgets, and proclamations are all available from the Alabama Forestry Commission or online at the Tree City USA website: www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa/.

For communities wanting to go the extra mile, they can apply for a Tree City USA Growth Award. To be eligible for a Growth Award, the community must have earned a Tree City USA designation for the previous two consecutive years, and conducted tree-related activities which go above and beyond the core standards of the program. On the Growth Award application, the Arbor Day Foundation provides ideas and examples of eligible activities to help municipalities take the next step in establishing a progressive tree management program.

In 2016 (the most current award year as of this writing), 82 communities in Alabama were recognized as a Tree City USA and four of these received Growth Awards. The program is designed to fit any size municipality, and participating communities range from Myrtlewood with a population of 130, to Birmingham with a population of 212,461. The Tree City USA program celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2016, and several Alabama communities have been involved in the program for over 30 years, including Mobile which has been recognized for 38 years.

To find out if your community is already a Tree City USA, or for more information about the program, please visit www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa/ or contact the Alabama Forestry Commission's Urban & Community Forestry program by emailing or calling Dale.Dickens@forestry.alabama.gov, (334) 240-9360; or Will.Liner@forestry.alabama.gov, (334) 240-9306.

Tree City USA applications for 2017 become available September 1. Help your community receive the recognition it deserves for being a good steward of its urban forest, become a Tree City USA today!🌳

(Continued on page 24)



TREE CITY USA®

BY THE NUMBERS

82

Tree City USA communities



38.45% of AL lives in a Tree City USA community

100%

Recertification Rate

Largest

Birmingham

POPULATION 212,437

Smallest

Myrtlewood

POPULATION 120



Alabama's longest-running active Tree City USA community:

Mobile

38 YEARS

\$17,586,821.90
spent on urban forestry management



\$9.41

average per capita

Growth Award

4

Growth Award recipients

Longest Active Growth Award

Foley · 20 years

Beyond Tree City USA

84.1% of communities completed online applications

13 Alabama Tree Campus Schools

0 New Tree Campus Schools

1 Tree Line Utility

Longest Running Tree Line USA Utility:

Alabama Power (16 years)





Oak Symposium

Sustaining Oak Forests in the 21st Century through Science-based Management

Significant progress has been made in research of oak management since the mid-20th century. In 1992, a symposium, 'Oak Regeneration: Serious Problems, Practical Recommendations' was held in Knoxville, Tennessee, to synthesize the state of the knowledge on problems and opportunities associated with securing oak regeneration in oak dominated forests. In 2002, a symposium, 'Upland Oak Ecology Symposium: History, Current Conditions, and Sustainability' was held in Fayetteville, Arkansas, to continue technology transfer efforts, and expanded the scope of topics to include oak decline, wildlife ecology, and forest health.

An upcoming third symposium will continue technology transfer on state-of-the-art management and research for sustainability of the oak resource in the Central Hardwood Region. The symposium will be hosted by the University of Tennessee (UT), Department of Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries. The 2.5 day symposium will feature invited speakers on prescribed fire, silviculture, economic markets, forest health, and climate change of upland oak forests. A poster session will provide an opportunity for participants to showcase their work. A field trip will feature collaborative research between the UT Forest Resources AgResearch and Education Center, the UT Tree Improvement Program, and the Southern Research Station.

Please visit the meeting website to find updates on schedules, calls for abstracts for poster submissions, and travel arrangements. SAF-CFE credits will be provided.

Knoxville, Tennessee • October 24-26, 2017

'Walls of Jericho' Trail Makes Reader's Digest Top 20

By David Rainer, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

When an iconic publication like *Reader's Digest* recognizes the natural beauty and recreational opportunities in Alabama's great outdoors, it provides confirmation of what we Alabamians have been saying for a long, long time. *Reader's Digest* named the trails at the Walls of Jericho (www.rd.com/culture/best-hikes-in-america) as one of the top 20 hikes in the nation.

The Forever Wild Land Trust's 'Walls of Jericho' in Jackson County consists of eight parcels that total 25,194 acres of widely diverse terrain, from rocky bluffs to upland hardwood forests and the headwaters of Paint Rock River, an ecologically sensitive waterway that holds rare species of mollusks, amphibians, and fish.

The area with the Walls of Jericho was once owned by the Carter family, whose patriarch was Texas oil man Harry Lee Carter. Before the Carters owned it, famous Tennessee frontiersman Davy Crockett was said to have hunted in the area.

The Walls of Jericho tracts form additions to the Skyline Wildlife Management Area

and link Skyline and Crow Creek Wildlife Management Areas along Coon Creek. The area is home to numerous species of wild creatures of greatest conservation need (GCN) in the state.

In 2003, The Nature Conservancy purchased 12,500 acres in Alabama that included the Walls of Jericho, and the land was later acquired by Forever Wild. According to The Nature Conservancy, the Paint Rock River is home to 100 species of fish and about 45 mussel species. Two of the mussel species, the pale lilliput and Alabama lampshell, are found nowhere else in the world. The sawfin shiner, blotchside logperch, and snail darter – a three globally imperiled fish species – occur in the Paint Rock River. One fish species, the palezone shiner, is found only in the Paint Rock River and one other stream in Kentucky.



“The area is in the longest hardwood forest plateau, the Cumberland, that extends into Alabama from the Appalachian Plateau,” said Doug Deaton, State Lands Manager with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources’ State Lands Division. “The Paint Rock River is home to several endangered and imperiled

species. The Walls of Jericho tracts play an important role in protecting the headwaters of those sensitive areas. It's one of the last free-flowing rivers in the Southeast. The area is definitely a biological hotspot."

For those who are looking for the recreational aspects of the Walls of Jericho, the main trail into the canyon is 6-plus miles, while the Bear Den Loop adds an additional 4.7 miles of trails. For those who prefer to travel by horseback, 12 miles of riding trails are available.

Brandon Hunnicutt, Land Stewardship Officer with the State Lands Division in north Alabama, has made numerous treks into the heavily eroded limestone canyon at the Walls of Jericho. "A few of the creeks (Turkey and Hurricane) have come together and gone underground and carved out the limestone rock into interesting formations," Hunnicutt said. "It has sheer rock walls, just straight up and down. Hence, the name of the place. There are a few caves, some so small that a person can't enter. What happens is the water goes underground and comes out of some of the holes in the side of the mountain. During certain times of the year, we have some nice waterfalls. It also has a swimming hole when there is enough rainfall."

Probably the most interesting feature of the Walls of Jericho for Hunnicutt is a natural amphitheater carved into the limestone bluffs. "There's a big overhang where evidently, thousands of years ago, water pooled and created what looks to be an amphitheater," he said. "Apparently, it was a circular area where the water ponded, and it carved out this almost perfect semi-circle in the side of the mountain. A lot of people like to see that.

"It does look like you've walked into something that would be more like the Smokies. It's definitely different. Most people are really excited about seeing it. When they get there, they don't expect this in Alabama. We have a lot of people come from out of state. They're really blown away by it. Everything I've heard has been positive."

However, Hunnicutt cautions that those who want to make the hike into the canyon need to be prepared for a workout. The hike, which descends 1,000 feet to the canyon floor, is rated moderate-to-strenuous into and out of the gorge. "It's a tough hike," he said. "It's almost 7 miles round-trip. Some folks are

overwhelmed, the folks who are not prepared for it. The ones who take their time and do their homework and pay attention to the signage and maps, they get a lot out of it."

Deaton adds, "The hike in is easy because it's essentially all downhill. But the hike out is what takes the time. The trail has several switchbacks, and you'll have to take several breaks coming back out."



The Walls of Jericho hiking trail treats hikers to a variety of terrain features, including sheer cliff walls, overhangs and caves. (Photos courtesy of State Lands Division)

Among its many honors, the Walls of Jericho carries the designation as a National Recreation Trail (NRT) under the National Trails System Act of 1968 that established recreation trails and scenic trails. In 1978, National Historic Trails were added to the program that is administered by The National Park Service and National Forest Service.

The NRT designation is an honor shared by numerous Alabama trails that traverse the entire state, from the Cumberland Plateau all the way to the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. Other Forever Wild trails that share the NRT designation include Coon Creek in Tallapoosa County, Shoal Creek in Lauderdale County, Coldwater Mountain in Calhoun County, Wehle in Bullock County, and Freedom Hills in Colbert County. Visit www.alabamaforeverwild.com to explore the wide variety of recreational activities available on Forever Wild property.

Hunnicutt said the Walls of Jericho is a popular spot for weekend outings by Boy Scout troops and hiking clubs. "The Boy Scouts pretty much cover up the campgrounds on the weekends," he said. "Overall, we have several thousand people who will hike the trail into the canyon every year."

Deaton said the *Reader's Digest* designation gives national exposure to one treasured aspect of Alabama's diverse geographical features. "The Walls of Jericho is a beautiful place, and it's an honor to be recognized by *Reader's Digest*," Deaton said. "It's a storied and widely distributed publication. I remember finding *Reader's Digests* as a kid at my grandmother's house. It has been in circulation for a long time. It's a trusted source of information that people depend on."

Visit www.alabamaforeverwild.com/walls-jericho for more information about the Walls of Jericho.📍

OVER THE TOP



By Dan Jackson, Retired Assistant State Forester

Look at my hard hat, and it tells a story. There are many memories associated with every scratch, nick, mark, and decal on it. While it serves as an important piece of safety gear (Personal Protective Equipment or PPE), it can also reveal a lot about a firefighter.

Of course it always starts out brand new, but along the way the hard hat picks up all the marks and stickers. It tells of numerous 'close calls' and it causes the wearer to reflect back on the bad fires. It may be remembered for having been used to scoop water or dirt to throw on a fire! Some guys have even used their hard hat for a pillow or a seat. Some have humorously used it to fend off yellow jackets. Every drop of sweat on the individual's head speaks of difficult but fulfilling work, and the hard hat was there, along for the ride.

There are those times we're really angry with the boss, or a policy, or 'the man,' and we haul off and toss it into the woods or a firebreak. However, we invariably go pick it up, because it's part of us.

The 'old timers' didn't use hard hats, and early versions were very simplistic. Today some firefighters go for the full brim or metal design. Although there are different styles and colors, for most of us, yellow is the standard; it's how we choose to be identified.

My hard hat brings to mind all the different groups of people I've worked with or spent time around over the years. . . the volunteer and paid firefighters, the landowners, the cooperators, the

federal firefighters, the non-profit organizations, and certainly my brothers and sisters that wear the Alabama Forestry Commission emblem (past, present, and those to come).

The stickers on a hard hat, if there are any, also indicate a lot about that firefighter and the things that are meaningful to that person. Whether it be organizations, football teams, interesting symbols, favorite schools, memorialized persons' names or initials, major fire incident names, position levels, or many other (sometimes peculiar) logos, it expresses what is important to that firefighter. Some would say the person that wears it is a walking billboard, and if that be true, those signs on the hard hat show the 'advertisements' that are special to him/her.

During a fire prevention program, some have placed the hat on the head of a grade school child. That student is just enamored that they were chosen to 'wear' the hard hat. It may seem like nothing much to the firefighter or instructor, but oh, to that kid, he or she is the top dog among his/her peers!

Underneath that hard hat are the incalculable hours of training, preparation, and experience that enables the wearer to go out, meet the fire, and deal with it. Not everyone is cut out to wear the hard hat and all that goes along with wearing it. However, those that do are the experts and professionals in the wildland firefighting business!

So, the hard hat. It states who I am. The yellow plastic shell may look innocuous, but there is so much more to it.👒

MEMORIALS

Walter Earl Cartwright 1952-2017

The Alabama Forestry Commission lost a valued coworker and friend when Walter Cartwright passed away from a heart attack on August 20, 2017. He was 64.

A native of Greenville, Walter earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Forest Management from Auburn University in 1974. Cartwright was a registered forester in the state of Alabama and a member of the Society of American Foresters.

Cartwright had over 28 years of service with the State of Alabama, the last 13 with the Alabama Forestry Commission. He served in various leadership positions within the agency, most recently as Forest Management Division Director. His first 15 years of state service were with the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations where he was dedicated to reclaiming abandoned mines and planting trees for reforestation of those sites. Prior to employment with state government, he had 14 years experience in forest industry in land and timber appraisals and acquisition, forestry management, and business management.

Walter was also a forest landowner who loved spending time in the country and working in the great outdoors. He and his wife were proud owners of 'Ponderosa II' in Butler County, which was certified as a Stewardship Forest, Tree Farm, and TREASURE Forest.

He will truly be missed.



Thomas Edward Jaworowski 1944-2017

TREASURE Forest landowner, Tom Jaworowski, passed away at his Wetumpka home on August 29, 2017, at the age of 73. His Elmore County property was certified as TREASURE Forest #2309 and he was very active with the Elmore County TREASURE Forest Landowner Association.



In Their Own Words . . .

Letters to the AFC

29 November 2016

To Benji Elmore
Brewton, Alabama:

I wanted to take the time to thank the Alabama Forestry Department for an outstanding job you did yesterday in Choctaw County on our property along Hwy. 84.

I know with the record drought that is in place in Alabama you guys have been working nonstop. But your guys yesterday along with the Silas Volunteer Fire Dept. did a great job containing this fire. As you know the wind was gusting all day 20+ mph. We were worried this fire would spread rapidly to other property and do much more damage. You had two guys on site, Jake Brown and Jonathan Heath, that did an excellent job in containing this fire.

I wanted to be sure and thank you and the Alabama Forestry Department for the work you do in the state of Alabama.

Sincerely,
Jeff Stokley
J. S. Land & Timber Co.
Saraland, Alabama

28 March 2017

To Steve McEachron
Lauderdale County AFC:

On behalf of the City, I sincerely appreciate all the hard work you and the Florence Tree Commission did to coordinate and host the 22nd Annual Urban Forestry and Horticulture Conference held on March 17, 2017, at Cross point Church of Christ. I understand it was a huge success! I realize that it took many, many hours to plan and you are to be highly commended for the time and effort you contributed. The Tree Commission is a tremendous asset to our City and we are grateful for all that you do to make Florence a better place in which to live.

Thank you for your willingness to serve!

Sincerely,
Steve Holt
Mayor, City of Florence
Florence, Alabama

August 2017

Thanks to our old friend Jerry Smith in Fort Payne, Alabama, who writes, "As you can see, even my dog enjoys Alabama's TREASURED Forests!"

22 June 2017

To Bethany Elliott
Montgomery, Alabama:

I received AFC's "Landowner Chat & Chew Session" invitation for Tuesday, June 27 at the Levee in Tuscaloosa and would like to attend the luncheon . . .

I've had an opportunity to meet with Ethan Barrett (Hale County Forestry Specialist) on several occasions at my Hale County property and been impressed with his presence and his knowledge regarding forestry and landowner issues. We look forward to his advice (and participation) as we develop our farm.

Recently Ethan and Will Liner (Urban & Community Partnership Coordinator) visited our farm to measure one of our post oaks . . . a tree that they believe may be a state champion or co-champion.

I have been receiving *Treasured [Forests]* . . . as a retired faculty member at UA who taught writing and publication design, *Treasured [Forests]* is an excellent magazine. The articles are informative and well written, photos and graphics excellent, and the design is good. *Treasured [Forests]* is a very nice publication that provides a wealth of information to its target audience and reflects positively on The Alabama Forestry Commission.

Thanks again. I look forward to meeting you Tuesday.

Alan Dennis
Tuscaloosa, Alabama

27 June 2017

To Rick Oates
Montgomery, Alabama:

On 23 June, I had a wonderful educational experience with one of your agents, Thomas Davis, in Escambia County. With his very professional assistance, he helped a small land/timber owner understand BMPs, and will help with the plan. Thanks!

Bernard Herbert Eichold II
Mobile, Alabama



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PASSION FLOWER

(*Passiflora incarnata*)

By Fred Nation, Environmental Services, Baldwin County

P*assiflora incarnata* is a non-woody native vine that climbs by means of tendrils. Common names include 'passion vine' and 'wild apricot.' The leaves are alternate, sharply three-lobed, to 6 inches across, and ever-green most years in the Deep South. Passion flower occurs in well-drained, open, sunny sites throughout Alabama and the Southeast, from Delaware, west to Kansas, south to Texas and Florida.

The spectacular blooms are blue, purple, or rarely white, to 4 inches across, with five petals and five sepals. The complex flowers have a 'crown' or corona of numerous fringelike segments that arise above the petals. The reproductive parts are quite unusual, adding to the strange beauty of the flowers.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, Spanish missionaries envisioned the unique physical structures of this plant, particularly the numbers of the various flower parts, as symbols of the events leading to the crucifixion. This explains both the genus and vernacular names which are 'passion flower.'

The plants bloom for several months in Alabama, from June into September. They attract a large number of beautiful insects, including butterflies such as zebra longwing, gray hairstreak, and

Gulf fritillary. The fruits are the size, shape and color of small limes, ripening to a dull yellow. They develop an air cavity around the seeds, which makes a muted popping sound when they are stepped-on or squeezed. This explains another common name: 'maypop.'

Although passion flower has not found wide acceptance by the mainstream medical community in the United States, it has been recognized by the National Pharmacopeias of France, Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, and a number of Eastern and Central European countries. The catalog of medical uses alleged for this species is truly remarkable. A brief list includes such diverse ailments as burns, hemorrhoids, insomnia, muscle cramps, hysteria, neuralgia, hypertension, boils, and a tonic for the liver.

In the landscape, *Passiflora incarnata* is a spectacular, trouble-free perennial with nearly year-round interest. It makes a fast-growing cover for fences, a handsome dark green screen for swimming pools, and a covering for utility poles. While passion flower can be grown from seed, potted stock is often available at native plant sales, and . . . the butterflies and bumble bees will thank you all summer long! ♣

