

# STEWARDSHIP IN ALABAMA

## An Explanation of Available Programs and the AFC's Role in These Programs

*By John Pirtle, Northeast Regional Forester, Alabama Forestry Commission*

If you look up stewardship in the dictionary, you will find the following definition: (1) "Conducting, supervising, or managing of something; especially: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." (*Webster*) (2) "The management and/or care for resources for which one has no ownership." (*Wikipedia*)

A simple definition I have heard used by many forest landowners in Alabama is, "Do what is necessary to ensure you leave your forest to future generations in better shape than you received it." Hopefully, all landowners reading this article are already committed to doing just that.

### **Alabama's Approach to Stewardship**

The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) is committed to helping Alabama's forest landowners be "good stewards" of their land. We do this by providing free forest management advice and then recognizing landowners who are proven to be "good stewards." The three programs that the Commission uses to promote "good stewardship" and sustainability of our forestlands are: the USDA Forest Service Forest Stewardship Program; the American

Forest Foundation Tree Farm Program; and the Alabama Natural Resources Council TREASURE Forest Program.

### **USDA Forest Service Forest Stewardship Program**

Congress passed the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, authorizing the Forest Stewardship Program. This provided technical assistance – through state forestry agency partners – to non-industrial private forest owners to encourage and enable active long-term forest management. A primary focus of the Forest Stewardship Program is the development of comprehensive, multi-resource management plans that provide landowners with the information they need to manage their forests for a variety of products and services. Established and implemented nationally in 1991, this program used the Alabama TREASURE Forest Program as a base guide for its development.

### **American Forest Foundation Tree Farm Program**

The American Forest Foundation Tree Farm Program was established in 1941 in response to concerns that America's private forests were being cut at unsustainable rates without reforestation. The first Tree Farm was designated in Washington





Photo by Kelvin J. Daniels

## The Alabama Forestry Commission's Role in Stewardship

If you as a forest landowner are interested in being recognized by one of these programs, or are just interested in obtaining management advice on your property, contact your local Alabama Forestry Commission office, or go to our website, [www.forestry.alabama.gov](http://www.forestry.alabama.gov), and click on the "Contact Us" tab. One of our foresters will schedule a visit to your forest and prepare a Forest Stewardship Plan for you at no cost. Each of the three programs mentioned above requires an approved Forest Stewardship Plan. These Forest Stewardship Plans are tailored for each individual parcel of forestland, based on the management objectives the landowner

desires to achieve. These objectives can include timber income, wildlife habitat, recreation, aesthetics, protection of historic and culturally important sites, and environmental concerns. Whatever your reason for owning forestland, remember the Alabama Forestry Commission is committed to helping you manage your forests using a stewardship ethic to meet the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. ♣

State. The Tree Farm's purpose was to demonstrate sound forest management practices to area landowners.

The Tree Farm Program has evolved over the years and today meets the same standards and guidelines of the USDA Forest Service Forest Stewardship Program. However, unlike the Forest Stewardship Program and the TREASURE Forest Program, Tree Farms are recognized as "Certified Sustainable Forests" by the PEFC Council (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes). Founded in 1999, the PEFC Council is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization that promotes sustainably managed forests through independent third party certification. The PEFC provides an assurance mechanism to purchasers of wood and paper products that they are promoting the sustainable management of forests.

### Alabama Natural Resources Council TREASURE Forest Program

The idea of the Alabama TREASURE Forest Program was initially conceived in the early 1970s by the Alabama Forestry Commission's State Forester Bill Moody. Shortly after coming to Alabama to serve as State Forester, Mr. Moody realized that forest landowners were caught in the middle of a war that was being waged between the forest industry, environmentalists, and wildlife biologists. The forest industry had convinced private forest landowners that growing trees was a profitable venture. He identified the need for a statewide program that would not only assist landowners in managing their land for multiple-use benefits, but also recognize those landowners who managed their forest above and beyond the average forest landowner. Mr. Moody approached the Alabama Natural Resources Council, then known as the Alabama Forestry Planning Committee, requesting that the council sponsor and support the TREASURE Forest Program. Consisting of thirteen state and federal agencies, the council unanimously agreed, and in October of 1973, officially sanctioned the first state stewardship program in the nation.

As a side note, **the Alabama Natural Resources Council TREASURE Forest Program is an "agency" program and is not affiliated with the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association (ATFA), a private organization.** Membership in the ATFA is not required to be a part of and receive benefits from the Alabama Natural Resources Council TREASURE Forest Program.

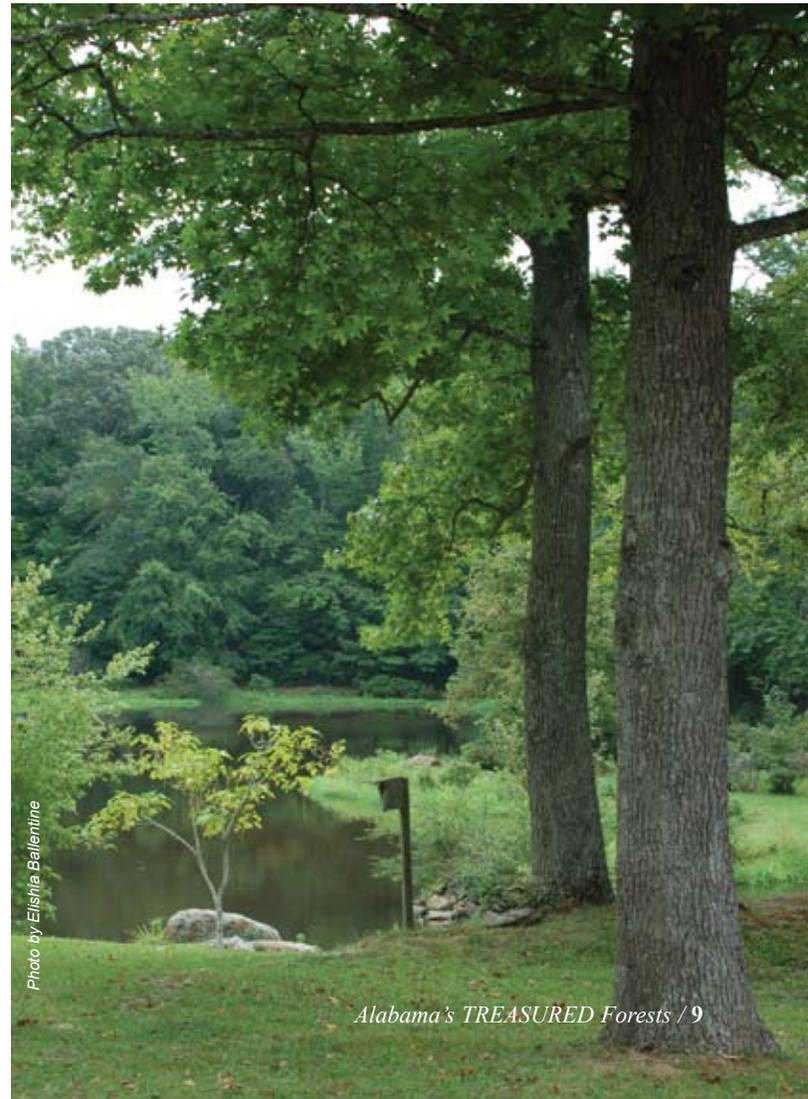


Photo by Elishia Ballentine