



A Plan for All Seasons

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Ask Danny and “Sizy” Landrum any question about their forestland, and they likely have the answer written down in their files of land management plans. The Landrums meticulously document their timber tactics, from the first plan put down on paper decades ago, to a

Danny and “Sizy” Landrum know they need a plan for their nearly 800 acres of forestland. They also know that the next hurricane could sweep their plans away.

pile of revisions. These tangible records of their property – located near Citronelle, Alabama, which is about 50 miles north of

Mobile – provide concrete metrics and drive them to implement new and challenging goals each year.

Their goals include growing pines for income, managing wildlife habitat, improving aesthetics, and enriching the environmental qualities of

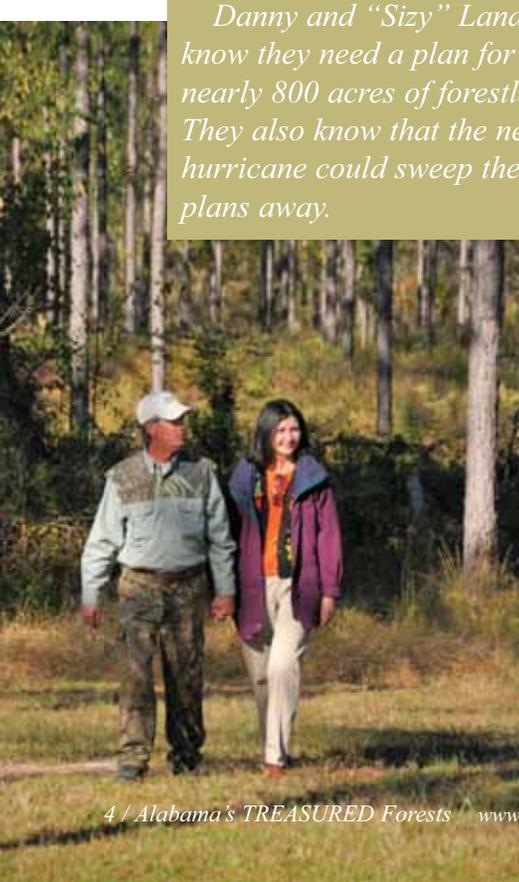
the property. The Landrums admit they often let their wildlife goals dictate more than they should, but a love for the land and wildlife provides motivation to painstakingly care for each tract of their nearly 800 acres of forestland.

But true perfection is elusive – the Landrums know the minute they settle into a plan, something will change. An invasive species will creep through the forest understory, hurricane debris will wreak havoc on plans to conduct a prescribed burn, or a new technology will provide a cheaper or quicker solution for success.

“You can sit down and come up with the best scenario in your mind, but if you don’t put it down on paper, you may fail to follow through,” Danny said. “Even so, managing land is a job that requires flexibility, and the best plans are ones that evolve based on what else is happening in and around the land.”

Objective **1** *Growing Pines for Income*

With 345 acres of planted pine, the Landrums’ main priority is to see a return on their investment. The majority of their land is slash pine, Danny’s preference because it resists insects and tolerates a frequent burn schedule. They choose management practices they believe will grow the best quality trees for that acreage.



Danny and Sizy Landrum enjoy the beauty of their property and its abounding wildlife.

With each hurricane that has blown through the Landrums' property – and there have been several, most recently Rita, Katrina, and Ivan – their management plans have had to change. The storms knocked down mature trees, snapped thick trunks like twigs, and twisted trunks to an inevitable pulpwood future. But Danny and Sisy adjust. They clear the fallen timber and thin tracks as needed to improve the surviving stand. "If you've got timber planted and you've got investments out there, you don't want to see it torn up," Danny said. "Every time a storm blows through you can bet you've lost a percentage of your future income."

Hurricanes are not the only thing taking a bite out of profits. Until 2008, Danny used a program of heavy mechanical site prep, shearing, raking, and burning to manage unwanted vegetation on the land, in hopes of creating a clean and healthy plantation. This was not only costly, but unwanted oak, galberry, sweetgum, and privet returned quickly, requiring additional management.



Landrum and QVM Certified Applicator Donnie Givens, owner of DonChem, Inc., discuss his recent site prep.

Also in 2008, the Landrums purchased several clearcut plots that had grown into a jungle of unwanted hardwoods and brush. Danny had read about using chemical site prep to prepare the land and felt this was an opportunity to test a revised management plan that might give seedlings a stronger start with less hardwood competition.

New to using herbicides for forest management, the Landrums turned to QVM Certified Applicator Donnie Givens, owner of DonChem Inc., to help them understand the role of site prep chemicals on an overgrown clearcut plot, as well as what results they could expect. DonChem's specialty is herbicide recommendations and application. "I've gained a lot of knowledge about herbicide application working with Donnie. He understands the goals we have for this land, and how to manage it properly to achieve those results," Danny said. "He's a valuable information resource and a heck of a nice guy to work with."

Danny carefully documented this new approach for his land management plans. He and DonChem decided to use ground sprayers to apply a tank mix of Chopper® GEN2™ herbicide, MSO, and nitrogen to the land in July 2008. This would knock

down undesirable species, allowing the land to be cleared of unwanted vegetation, which would be less likely to return and overtake new seedlings.

The Landrums burned the 40-acre site to remove any remaining dead vegetation and debris, and planted pine seedlings in March 2009. The primary goal of the herbicide program was to cost effectively remove unwanted vegetation, allowing the new seedlings to thrive without competition for water and nutrients. They chose a planting regimen recommended under the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. To create a pine tract ideal for wildlife habitat, they planted 500 slash pine trees per acre and an additional four acres of wildlife food plots.

Objective 2 *Improving Wildlife Habitat*

On the Landrums' more mature acres, burning was part of the regular management plan. But Danny was burning the property more frequently than most landowners – as often as every two years – to control mid-story vegetation and allow sunlight to reach the forest floor. The fire frequency helped suppress unwanted vegetation but also added risk and liability.

Danny and his son D.J. are both prescribed burn managers, certified by the Alabama Forestry Commission. Through 32 hours of education, they learned fire science and fire behavior, including the impact environmental conditions have on fires. "We had to escalate our fire schedule in order to help the land support the wildlife," Danny explained. "But, long-term, I wanted to adjust our fire schedule back to every fifth year."

In addition to helping the Landrums get clearcut sites ready for planting, DonChem also took special interest in managing the land for wildlife habitat in order to meet all the family's goals.

"As Danny and I talked about his wildlife goals, I encouraged him to consider a mid-rotation release treatment on his more mature acreage," Givens said. "This would help decrease the number of scheduled burns, help valuable forbs and legumes flourish, and provide longer, more consistent vegetation control."

With a goal of reducing the burn schedule and mid-story growth, Danny worked with Givens to apply Chopper GEN2 in the fall of 2008. They used ground rigs to navigate the thick understory and treated both hardwoods and brush. The Landrums followed the treatment with a controlled burn to clean the understory of dead vegetation and debris. Danny hopes to burn these acres less often, but with a more strategic approach. Without the hardwood and brush competition,

(Continued on page 6)

Danny Landrum examines his cogongrass treatment.

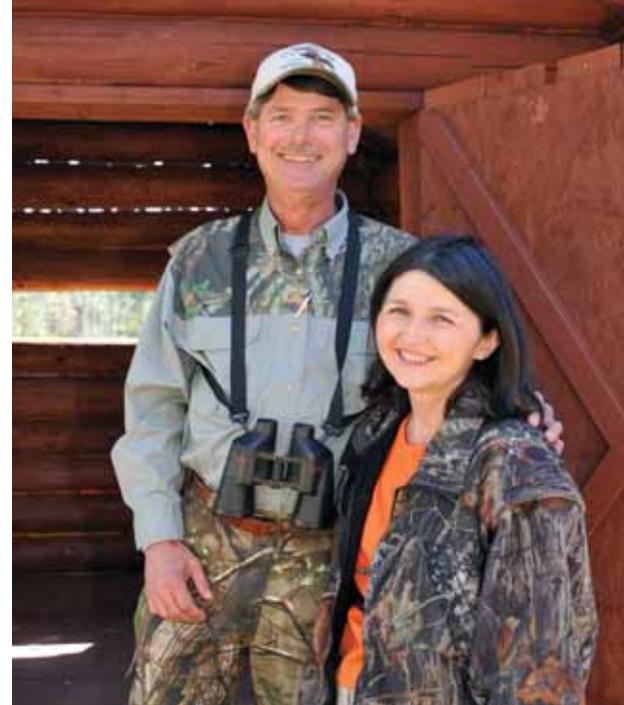


the desirable grasses, forbes, and legumes can thrive, close to the ground. “Nothing likes to live in a thicket. I try to keep the ground as open as possible for quail and turkeys,” Danny said.

The Landrums also aim to keep forage food sources for deer at a height of 36 inches or less. “Once vegetation reaches 48 inches or higher, it’s out of the deer’s reach and it’s no longer a food source – even if it is a major food source plant.”

While Landrum’s understory management helps provide high-value food sources for wildlife, they also manage 16 food plots scattered throughout their property totaling nearly 30 acres. A little more than half of the food plots are planted in annuals, and a smaller eight-acre field is planted with perennials. A portion of the annuals include browntop millet and grain sorghum, beneficial for quail and turkey. Once seed heads dry out in the grain sorghum plots, Danny runs over the rows with a Bush Hog® so that the seeds fall on the ground for the birds to eat. “All I have to do is walk outside the house to see the quail enjoying the land,” Sizy said, recalling the whistling sounds of quail around their property during mating season.

Danny cherishes the time he can spend with Sizy, enjoying the land together. “Sizy is my partner in everything. She was with me for two of my best turkey hunts. I call her my good luck charm.”



Danny and Sizy Landrum enjoy hunting and watching wildlife from their Ivan House.

Objective 3 *Aesthetics*

The Landrums also write aesthetic improvements into their land management plans. Danny and Sizy enjoy the beauty of the land and watching the abounding wildlife on their property – from a showy male turkey performing for hens to an endangered gopher tortoise sunning itself in a perennial food plot.

Generations before, Sizy’s grandparents and great-grandparents lived on a portion of the property when it was primarily used to harvest turpentine. The land was eventually sold, but Sizy’s memories held on. When the opportunity came, the Landrums bought the land back, piece by piece, to create the pine plantation they nurture today.

Danny keeps 12 miles of roads and trails groomed and cleared of debris. He even tries to tidy the land around the remnants of the turpentine community. The original well sits near one of the trails in a cleared area, and the chimney from Sizy’s great-grandparents’ house still remains.

The Landrums are quick to clear any weather-related damage and have even used storm remnants to create something beautiful in its place. After the recent hurricanes, Danny started to collect fallen timber to create log cabin-style shooting houses. He built his first shooting house in 2006 from trees on the property knocked down by Hurricane Ivan. Friends and family now hunt from the “Ivan House,” which is bordered by a five-year-old perennial food plot. The shooting house sits on the original home site of Sizy’s great-grandparents.

With three young grandsons eager to be out hunting, Landrum has started construction on a larger “Katrina House.”

Objective 4 *Environmental Management*

Situated in the Escatawpa River basin, the Landrum property has creeks and the Escatawpa River meandering through it. The

waterways travel through Mobile County, into the Pascagoula River. Danny is thorough in his efforts to take care of the land and the water resources, from managing streamside zones to simply teaching his grandsons to pick up after themselves.

Their environmental aptitude was put to the test when the Landrums found highly invasive cogongrass on their land. “The thick grass was choking out virtually all understory plants and leaving no food sources for the deer, turkey, and quail,” Danny said.

After consulting with Givens, Danny sprayed 25 acres of cogongrass using Chopper GEN2 and glyphosate mix. He plans to monitor the land closely and retreat any patches of the grass that grow back, but he is confident he can take back the land.

Because of the work that the Landrums and Givens put into managing the forest acreage, they were recognized with a QVM™ Project Habitat™ Award. The award honors outstanding vegetation management programs following the principles and practices of Quality Vegetation Management, such as restoring and improving plant, animal, and human habitats; applying herbicide responsibly; and using the appropriate amount to achieve the desired results.

“It is important for us to write environmental management into our timber plans,” Danny explained. “We make a conscious effort to leave the land in better shape than when we walked onto it, whether we inherited it or purchased it.”

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