

Alabama's TREASURED Forests

An Alabama Forestry Commission Publication

Fall 2010

Important Message from the **STATE FORESTER**

By now, most of you are aware of the drastic measures taken during the second half of Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 in order for the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) to balance our budget and survive into the new fiscal year. Unfortunately, cutbacks resulted in a loss of 70 employees which is a reduction of more than 20 percent of our workforce. We closed six county offices and there have been no equipment purchases or major capital improvements in over three years, resulting in costly repairs and in some cases, the loss of firefighting units.

The outlook for FY12 and beyond also remains bleak. Our FY11 budget has been established and we can survive through September 2011 at the funding levels we have projected. "Survive" is the key word in that outlook. Our budget for the current fiscal year does not allow rebuilding of our workforce to a level that would provide adequate fire protection to forest landowners and homeowners who live near forested lands.

We must now turn our attention to preparations for FY12. By the time you read this, Governor-Elect Bentley and his advisors will be preparing a general fund budget to submit to the newly-elected Legislature, which convenes for its regular session on March 1, 2011. In the weeks leading up to the start of the session, we must be making our case that the AFC simply cannot absorb further cuts to our budget and continue to fulfill even the most basic parts of our mission.

If our revenue sources continue to erode, we could face further cutbacks in personnel in 2012. Without sufficient manpower, our response time to fires will continue to increase, which means the size of fires will increase, more property will be lost, and lives will be endangered. Lack of funds for fire equipment replacement and/or maintenance will hamper firefighting efforts even further. Many of the basic services we are providing to landowners could be curtailed or eliminated, including forest management advice, continuance of federal assistance programs, fire prevention programs, training and equipment assistance to volunteer fire departments, and landowner education programs.

In the coming weeks, we will be requesting your help. Specifically, we will be asking you to make personal contacts with your local legislators to let them know that the Forestry Commission's 2012 State General Fund budget cannot be reduced below its current level. The alternative is a potential disaster for our state because we would not be able to respond to some wildfires before they get out of control. We are not "crying wolf." The situation I have described has already happened in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and other states in our region and in other parts of the country.

I hope when you are provided sample letters and other educational material to use in discussing AFC funding with your legislators, you will respond positively. The viability of the AFC and the vital services we provide depend on maintaining adequate funding for our agency when the Legislature works on the FY12 general fund budget. If you value the services we provide, we need you to join us in our efforts.

If you would like to discuss our budget and circumstances in your county, please call me or any of the AFC staff in your county or region. We don't want to simply maintain the status quo; we want to start rebuilding the Alabama Forestry Commission in both personnel and firefighting equipment so we can continue to provide you with the programs and services you need and deserve. I look forward to working with you to accomplish this goal and appreciate your efforts.



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State Forester

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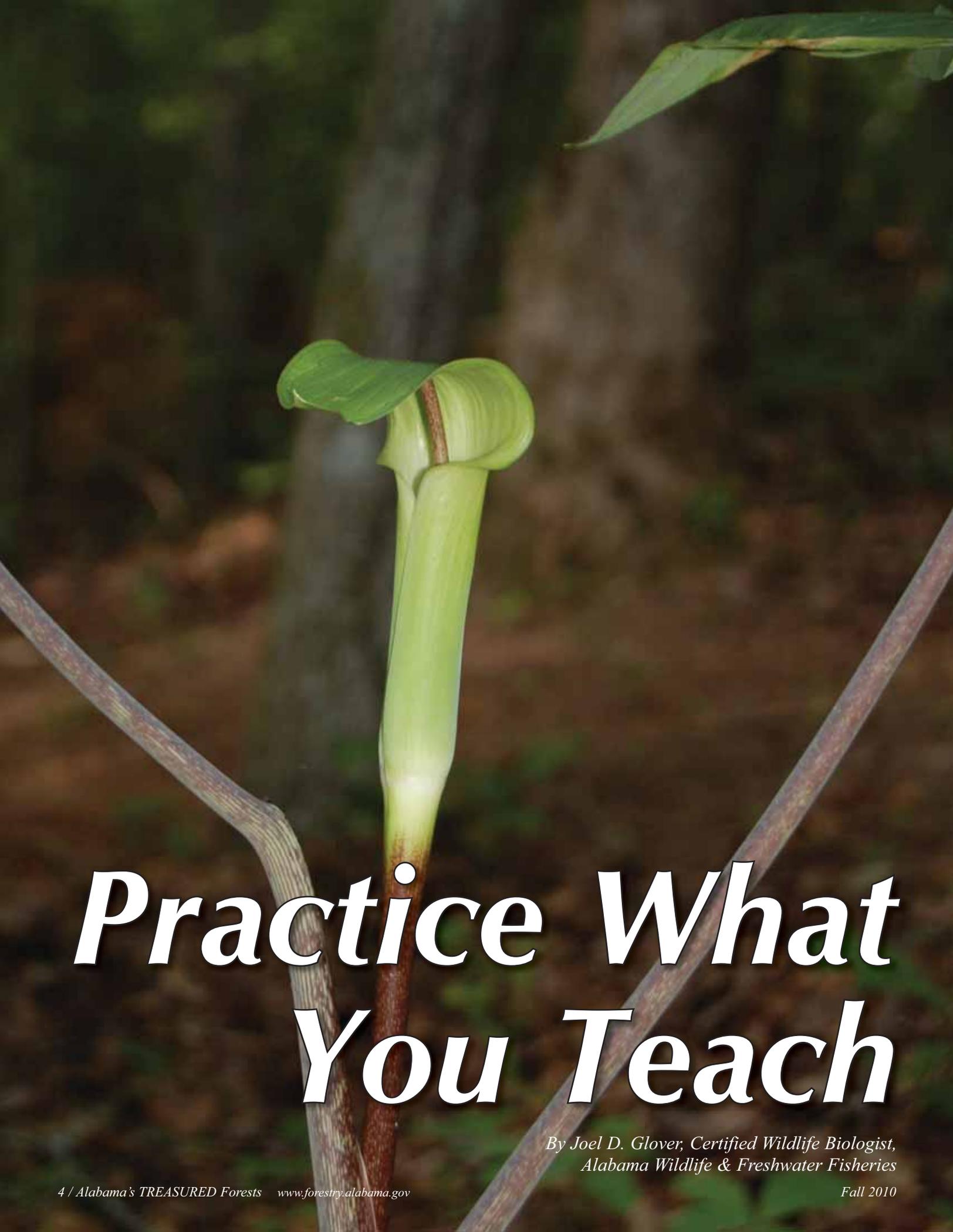
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Early autumn colors
grace Baker Creek in
Coosa County on the
TREASURE Forest
property of Chuck and
Lauren Welden.
Photo by Mike Kyser

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GoodFIRES

VISIT MY
FOREST



Practice What You Teach

*By Joel D. Glover, Certified Wildlife Biologist,
Alabama Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries*

As a high school Ag teacher at Lineville High School, Lamar Dewberry realized his students were out of their element competing for FFA crop production proficiency awards. Much of the small amount of corn grown in Clay County wasn't even used for food! Since Clay County is a forest and wildlife county, Lamar began to promote natural resource management and his students were quick to grasp the concepts. Soon they were excelling in both state and national contests. Not only were they preparing for and winning contests, the students were putting their knowledge to work on family property. After assisting a freshman student in obtaining Junior TREASURE Forest certification, Lamar realized it was time for him and his wife Felicia to begin working on getting their property certified. It was time to demonstrate that he was practicing what he was teaching.

As with many potential TREASURE forest landowners, the Dewberrys had been working hard on their property before they heard of the TREASURE Forest program. At this point in time, growing timber for a monetary return was a necessity, and the wildlife associated with good timber practices was simply a bonus. Therefore they began their quest by selecting timber production as their primary and wildlife as their secondary objective, following TREASURE protocol. Working together in a partnership with the Good Lord, the couple began with 35 acres of poor quality land. Soon they had acquired more property, and based on their many accomplishments toward their goals, they were soon certified as a TREASURE Forest.

Over the past 23 years, it has been my good fortune to know and work with hundreds of TREASURE Forest landowners and many Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award winners. I have observed many desirable traits in these landowners. They each understand that as the famous football coach Vince Lombardi stated, "The dictionary is the only place where success comes before work." In addition, they are normally driven to strive for excellence. Encompassed in this desire is the progression these landowners go through from having a primary and secondary objective, to embracing all of the TREASURE forest objectives. The TREASURE Forest program was designed to promote multiple-use management. The Dewberrys have not deviated from this pattern.



Over the years, while growing timber remained important, wildlife and recreation began to play a larger role in their management philosophy. Forest recreation was pretty much the only recreation Lamar knew growing up in rural Clay County. Building tree houses, hunting whatever was in season, fishing and wading in the creek were his usual pastimes. Today the entire extended family enjoys hunting and recreational outings on the property.

While everyone enjoys a property that is pleasing to the eye, not everyone will put forth the effort needed to enhance the aesthetics of a property. An aesthetic forest can be a functional healthy habitat if managed correctly. Most will agree, a thinned pine stand looks good. A thinned stand that is prescribed burned is often even more appealing. Understanding this, the Dewberrys are regularly thinning and burning their pine areas. In addition, they've added longleaf pine stands to their portfolio. Not only do longleaf produce great timber, with proper management they provide valuable early successional habitat and are arguably the most aesthetic pine species. After Felicia earned her real estate license and the family opened their own real estate business, Mountain Streams Realty, they began to appreciate the value of aesthetics even more.

Possibly unaware, Lamar has embraced the TREASURE Forest objective of environmental education since 1978 when he chose Ag Education as his major at Auburn. Late in his career, he realized educating students about the environment had deeply affected the lives of many of them, as they had decided to pursue natural resource management as their profession and applied the concepts on their property. Lamar says he learned a lot right along side the students.

Although Lamar retired as a professional educator in 2003, I'm not so sure that isn't when his teaching really took off. Being free from his day job and now running the family farm, he had all kinds of time on his hands. I jest. Although very busy, Lamar was now in a better position to share the farm with others. While the education of young people is extremely important, there may be several years before they have the opportunity to put their knowledge into practice. Adult landowners on the other hand, have the ability now, yet often lack the know-how. By making their property available for tours and demonstrations to groups of

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Practice What You Teach

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all ages and by serving on committees that organize and promote educational activities, the Dewberrys have been able to educate a wide range of people concerning proper forest management. They have embraced these roles on a local and state-wide basis. Based on these exceptional educational efforts and the excellent stewardship of their property (which now encompasses 800 acres), Lamar and Felicia were named as winners of the Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award.

Another favorite quote from Vince Lombardi says, “The spirit, the will to win, and the will to excel are the traits that endure.” Lamar and Felicia demonstrate this type of resolve. Not only have they won the highest TREASURE Forest honor possible, they have gained much recognition for practicing what they teach. The duo has garnered an NWTf Wild Turkey Woodland Award and been recognized as the Alabama Tree Farm of the Year. They were designated as an Alabama Farm of Distinction and were named the Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year for Alabama. In addition, they were selected to receive the Governor’s Conservation Achievement Award for Forest Conservationist of the Year. While the recognition associated with their many accolades has allowed them to reach even more people with the multiple-use conservation message, it is not the impetus for their efforts.

Recently Lamar testified before members of the United States Congress concerning the importance of the family farm and the need to support farmers. In his remarks he said, “Nothing is more pleasing than walking through a beautiful, well managed forest. The water is clearer, the air is fresher, the soil is more stable, and wildlife is more abundant.” This statement gives some insight into his stewardship philosophy.

While researching this article I found a quote from Lamar and Felicia that sheds a lot of light . . . “We are privileged and blessed by being able to own the property we own and being able to manage it for a time. One day it’ll be someone else’s. God just let us own it for a little while, and we’ll try to do the best we can with it while it’s ours. That’s the way we look at it as we manage it and use it, and hope that when we get through with it, it’ll be in better shape than it was when we got it.”

Reading that quote, many would probably ask, “Why would anyone spend so much time and effort on something that is only temporary?” I’ll answer that one for you, because the Dewberrys understand something we all need to understand, today may be the only day we have. It’s a gift, that’s why we call it the present.

While many landowners have received recognition for good stewardship, few have amassed a resume equal to Lamar and Felicia Dewberry. While they will admit they have worked hard, they are quick to point out that they have been richly blessed. They have shared their property, passion, and knowledge with family, friends, and other landowners and students. They profess God, family, and stewardship, and I’m thankful they practice what they teach. 🙏



Report

Takes

pulse

of State's Forest

*By Neil Letson, Assistant Division Director, Forestry Operations
Alabama Forestry Commission*

Alabama's forest underwent its first-ever full "physical" and the results are in. Overall, the state's forest resources are in good shape. However, several threats loom over the horizon that, left unattended, jeopardize the overall health and condition of the state's forest.

This is according to the Alabama Forestry Commission's summer release of the *Forests at the Crossroads: Alabama's Forest Assessment and Resource Strategy* document.

"This report gives a very clear yet sober look at where our forest resources stand today," said Alabama State Forester, Linda Casey. "While we should be proud of our forest and its legacy, we really stand at a crossroads. It's very important that we understand the challenges facing our forest and do what needs to be done to maintain its value and function for all citizens."

Alabama's Forest Assessment and Resource Strategy was the result of an 18-month mutual effort containing input from 33 organizations, 37 subject matter experts, and 865 survey respondents. In addition, relevant information and strategies were gleaned from eight federal and state natural resource plans and then incorporated into the document. The findings of this collaborative effort will provide a critical focus to help coordinate federal, state, and local efforts toward conserving and increasing Alabama's forest resources.

The original incentive for *Alabama's Forest Assessment and Resource Strategy* can be traced back to the 2008 Farm Bill. It requires each State Forester to develop and submit to the Secretary of Agriculture an assessment of his or her state's forest in order to remain eligible for US Forest Service funding. Early on, the Forestry Commission decided that with or without this Farm Bill requirement, a forest resource assessment was needed in Alabama.

"From the beginning, this task was seen as an opportunity to develop a strategic plan for the future that would ensure the sus-

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Report Takes Pulse of State's Forest

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tainability of our forest for future generations,” Casey stated. “It was something we wanted to do.”

The first part of *Alabama's Forest Assessment and Resource Strategy* involved considerable input and thought from landowners, resource professionals, and other private and public partners. Their task was to look at the condition and trends of Alabama's forest and then determine threats that need to be addressed. Their work identified nine threats to Alabama's forest future. These include urban growth and development, forest fragmentation, invasive species, changing markets, insects and diseases, wildfire, catastrophic storms, air quality, and climate change.

Of the nine threats, urban growth and development was considered the most serious because of its impact on forest acreage lost. Between 2000 and 2008, Alabama's forest decreased approximately 225,000 acres. Most of this loss is attributed to urban land use change, and future urban growth is expected to put even more pressure on forest acreage in the future.

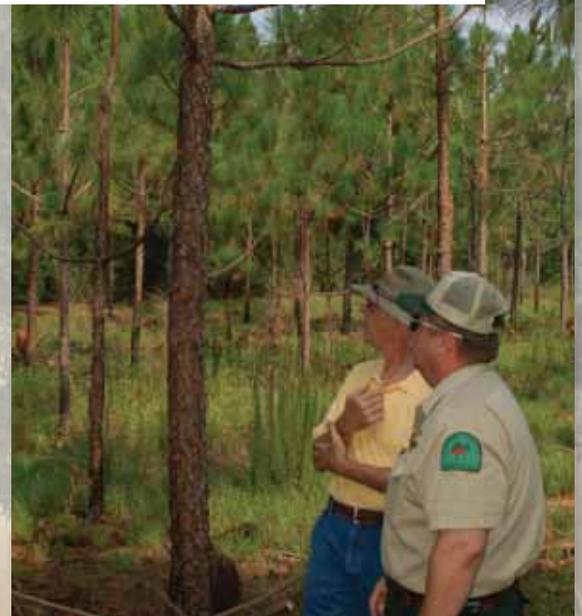
The second part of the document lists prescriptions, or strategies, that can be used to address each threat. Because of the landscape scale of each threat, many of the strategies crossed jurisdictional lines. To carry them out successfully will require multi-state and even regional initiatives.

What this Means for Alabama's Forest Landowners

In many ways, the nine threats facing Alabama's forest are felt first-hand by the many landowners who own 68 percent of the state's forestland acreage. They are the ones who are impacted when the forest economy changes, urban development influences traditional forest management, or a new invasive plant emerges. For that reason, the *Alabama's Forest Assessment and Resource Strategy* was written as a guide for natural resources organizations and their partners to work together not only to benefit the forest, but to help the people who own forestland.

“No longer can we take our forest resources for granted,” Casey commented further. “They are vital to our quality of life and affect everyone. That's why this plan is so important. It not only helps us better understand our forest and its contributions, but also provides a road map to stewardship that can sustain this vital resource.”

The complete *Forests at the Crossroads: Alabama's Forest Assessment and Resource Strategy* report is located on the Alabama Forestry Commission website at www.forestry.alabama.gov/State_Assessment.aspx





War Journal: Our Fight Against Cogongrass

*By Stephen Pecot, Communications Director,
Alabama Cogongrass Control Center*

Since my last installment in *Alabama's TREASURED Forests*, "The Battle on Our Doorstep: Cogongrass" (Fall 2009), we at the Alabama Cogongrass Control Center have been tremendously busy. Given the scope of the problem and three staff members, it is a monumental and unprecedented assignment. Thank you to everyone who has contacted the program, enrolled for help, given us outreach ideas, provided access to your property, and been patient as we get the program up and running. In just 11 short months, we have watched this program come to life under the leadership of the Cogongrass State Task Force and the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC). Larson & McGowin, a forestry consulting firm out of Mobile, was selected in September 2009 to be the Coordinator of a \$6.281 million grant from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (also known as the "Stimulus Bill"). We were given a daunting task, combining decades of inaction and underfunded endeavors into a successful, long-term program that not only creates jobs but also helps landowners while being efficient and transparent. Bill Baisden, former Assistant State Forester of Alabama, gave a succinct order: create a program that helps landowners with one of the world's worst weeds.

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War Journal: Our Fight Against Cogongrass

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Chris Evans, River to River CWMA, Bugwood.org



Cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*) is bad news. Some claim it is worse than kudzu, and many readers are likely nodding their heads in agreement. What makes cogongrass so insidious is the way in which it becomes part of the landscape without you even knowing it, and its uncanny ability to outcompete almost anything. This is the modus operandi for many invasive species. Though the majority of invasives persist in a small niche across the landscape, a small number are referred to as *ecosystem*

transformers (Richardson, David M. et al. "Naturalization and invasion of alien plants," *Diversity and Distributions*, 6[2000]: 93-107). Cogongrass makes a strong case for inclusion in this class. Put another way, kudzu is not even in the Top 10 of the world's worst weeds.

At this point we don't know how much cogongrass is in Alabama. Neighboring states are more fortunate: Tennessee, Georgia, and South Carolina all have a relative handful of infestations compared to Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama. If our initial work is any indication, there are at least three-quarters of a million infestations in Alabama. The number could go much higher, well into the millions.

I heard a landowner say that funding and cogongrass control are positively related. This is partly true but misses the larger picture. Anyone knows that throwing money at a problem without proper planning and oversight will likely not fix it and may lead to unintended problems. What is needed is a common-sense, thorough, efficient, and responsible approach, backed in science that incorporates the best ideas from all parties to affect a mutually beneficial result for everyone.

This is what we are accomplishing with the Alabama Cogongrass Control Center. From the project's inception we have listened to you, the landowner. We've heard your concerns and ideas for fighting this noxious weed. Some have been fighting this plant for decades; others were just recently informed by the AFC, a land manager, or us, that their property has cogongrass.

This program is designed to help private, non-industrial landowners in every Alabama

county. This is not a cost-share program; it is offered at **no cost** to you. Nothing needs to be done by you except to enroll. We take care of it all, including retreating sprayed areas. We do ask that you adhere to our "one property per landowner" rule, and to not enroll areas that are currently receiving cost-share assistance for cogongrass control. Since this is a multi-year program, we are focusing on certain areas in 2010 and adding more in 2011. Though more details are on our website (www.alabamacogongrass.com), in 2010 we are generally treating cogongrass infestations in central and northern Alabama, as well as the state's borders in the south, to create a "cogongrass-free zone." In 2011 we will treat these areas again and begin work in south Alabama, where the lion's share of cogongrass is found. The dividing line between these two operational zones is Hwy 82 running from the Alabama/Mississippi line to Montgomery, and Hwy 80 running from Montgomery to the Alabama/Georgia line. This line is subject to change as we learn more.

How the Program Works

From a landowner's perspective, this program is simple. There is a three-page enrollment form which provides us with information about you and your property, in addition to an access agreement so that we can legally be there. That is the only form you'll ever have to complete for this program. One of our scouts will call you to arrange a site visit, although it may take several weeks or even months for us to get to you. They will map cogongrass on your property using a GPS (global positioning system) and make a determination of the best herbicide prescription for each infestation.

The GPS information collected on your property is used in several ways. Obviously one way is to determine the extent to which we are able to help. We do this through *spatial analysis*, where we compare information from your property with the larger dataset. We ask questions such as: How many infestations are there? How big are they? Are they close to water or other infestations? Does the landowner have a cogongrass treatment program? Are there endangered or threatened habitats or species in proximity? Could we clear this property of cogongrass? These are but a few of the questions asked as we determine placement.

If we are able to help, we will arrange for one of our applicator contractors to contact you and schedule a time for the selected infestations to be sprayed. These contractors are experienced in herbicidal applications and are licensed and insured. Application contractors will be assigned to a local region, thereby cutting down on travel time and increasing the number of local contractors we use. If we are not able to help by spraying, we will give you the best



information for you to do so. If you have more cogongrass than we can spray within our guidelines, you are welcome to enter into a separate agreement with the applicator.

This is a purely voluntary program for all private, non-industrial landowners in the state. There is no ownership size requirement, but depending on the property location, we have restrictions on how many landowners can be helped and how much cogongrass can be treated. Below the eradication line, landowners will enter into a “pool” with other landowners in the area and be selected based on numerous factors. For those selected there is a cap of 10 acres of cogongrass treated per landowner. I am working to raise that restriction and not have to turn some away in highly infested areas. To that end, I will be pursuing more funding in the next year to keep the momentum going.

Conclusion

In my travels around the state, I’ve been fortunate to meet a lot of you. Many of the success stories with regard to treating cogongrass have a consistent thread that may be useful to bear in mind. Effective cogongrass treatment programs have elicited buy-in from *all* groups affiliated with a property, including the landowner, hunting clubs, logging crews, and even adjacent landowners and county roads departments. One landowner pays loggers to keep their equipment clean when moving around the property. Another has educated their hunting clubs on identification and asks them to GPS any new infestations. It likely became a financial choice: do they spend the money now to control cogongrass, or pay *later* in high eradication costs and reductions in timber and hunting lease values? The cost of dealing with cogongrass *later* can exceed that which is necessary to prevent its spread *now*.

Many relate our efforts to Sisyphus, the mythical king who pushed the boulder up the hill for eternity. I don’t subscribe to that view. Yes, cogongrass is found in every corner of our beautiful



state. And it does seem a daunting task to make these goals a reality. But we are succeeding in reaching the public and those who may be spreading it without even knowing. And we are educating those who deal with cogongrass in their vocation (farmers, cattlemen, loggers, road maintenance crews) or in their hobbies (sportsmen, hikers) in simple ways they can prevent, mitigate, and control this unwelcome plant that is destroying native ecosystems and our way of life. 🏠

Stephen Pecot, a Forester and Environmental Specialist with Larson & McGowin, Inc., is the Communications Director for the Alabama Cogongrass Control Center. He lives in Fairhope and is a Registered Forester (Alabama license #2121).

He can be reached at specot@alabamacogongrass.com or on the Cogongrass Hotline at (334) 240-9348. The program’s website is www.alabamacogongrass.com.



SOUTHERN PINE BEETLE: FALL BRINGS A FEW SURPRISES

*By Dana McReynolds, Forest Health Coordinator,
Alabama Forestry Commission*

As 2010 draws to a close, it seemed that a positive outlook would continue for southern pine beetles (*Dendroctonus frontalis*) in Alabama – the low insect population contributed to low infestations. There were very few documented spots at the end of the summer, with the state only receiving reports of isolated cases of infestations. From both aerial detection and ground monitoring, southern pine beetles (SPB) did not appear in pine stands.

In the past, a normal occurrence would have them attacking and killing over 60,000 trees in a given year. In 2004 and 2005, the number of detected SPB spots was extremely high. Some counties reported more than 300 spots during a given aerial detection flight. Despite the drought of 2006 and 2007, the number of beetle spots began to decline. Even in 2008, the SPB population continued to decrease at a steady pace. For both 2009 and 2010, population predictions were low and stable.

This past spring, the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) conducted a pheromone survey to predict the population of this native bark beetle. The data analysis from this survey indicated that the SPB population would remain steadily low.

The good news, however, did not last. As the fall season proceeded, heightened activity from bark beetles was reported. With most of the identified infestations concentrated in the southwest part of the state, detection flights were conducted to record the actual status of this situation. Based on these flights and ground monitoring activities, hundreds of beetle infestations now exist in the state. Some counties are reporting as many as 100 or more beetle spots. Wilcox County, for instance, is reporting over 400 spots detected so far this season. These high numbers will classify many of the monitored counties as epidemic.

Some of these documented infestations are caused by the SPB, while others are caused by another bark beetle of the south, the Ips engraver beetle. Both are native and can cause serious damage and outright mortality to pines. Ground surveying of identified spots will assist in distinguishing whether the type of beetle attack is SPB or Ips.

The increase in beetle attacks is most likely due to environmental factors and insect population cycles, both having a significant influence on bark beetle levels. The cool, wet climate of spring transcended into a hot, dry summer, resulting in an unpredictable number of infestations this fall.

If pine timber growers and forest landowners believe that declining pines are due to a bark beetle attack, they should contact their local AFC office. A confirmation on the beetle will be given, management recommendations written, and control options offered. For further information about the Alabama Forestry Commission's southern pine beetle program, visit the AFC website at: www.forestry.alabama.gov/SPBBiology.aspx?bv=3&s=1. 



Silvopasture

An Opportunity for Additional Income from Your Forestland

*By Dr. Becky Barlow, Extension Specialist,
Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences*

Take a minute to think about why you own land . . . Is it to pass on to your children and grandchildren? Outdoor recreation? Because you enjoy the beauty of nature? Is it part of your farm?

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, then your land ownership motivations are very similar to most of Alabama's small-scale private landowners – especially for those who own less than 100 acres. These landowners consistently state that their primary reason for owning land is to pass it on to their heirs, with outdoor recreation and scenic beauty often rounding out the top three.

So where is timber production in all this? Surprisingly, it comes in fifth in order of importance for small-scale private landowners. When surveyed, most landowners indicated they would like to generate some revenue from their land, but believe financial benefits are limited.

However, there are ways to combine multiple land management objectives on the same tract to increase financial returns and ecological benefits. One way is through the application of agroforestry techniques, or the intentional combination of crops

with trees. As part of a land management strategy, agroforestry practices have the potential to generate periodic revenue beyond that of traditional forest management, while keeping the land forested. Additional financial and ecological benefits such as native forage establishment, wildlife habitat creation, longleaf pine restoration, and pine straw production may also be achieved with proper management of these systems.

The most common form of agroforestry in the southeastern United States is silvopasture, or managing property for livestock, forage, and timber on the same parcel of land. These systems are designed to produce high quality timber while also providing cash flow opportunities from livestock and forage production.

Silvopasture Basics

Timber establishment and management

Southern pines such as loblolly (*Pinus taeda*), slash (*Pinus elliottii*), and longleaf (*Pinus palustris*) are well suited for use in silvopasture systems. Pine silvopasture may be established on

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Silvopasture – An Opportunity for Additional Income from Your Forestland

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existing pasture land by planting single or double rows of trees with forage corridors between them. It may also be established in existing stands of trees by thinning the forest to a desirable level to support forage production, or by the removal of trees to create corridors or alleyways.

As with traditional forest management, thinning can be used to control the stocking level of trees and provide some income from your silvopasture. As trees grow, their crowns begin to close increasing competition for resources such as water, light, and nutrients. Crown closure can lead not only to shading of understory forage, but also reduced timber growth. Thinning your timber to 25-60 percent canopy cover will keep the desired amount of light reaching the understory for optimum forage production, provide some periodic income, and improve your stand by selecting for the best crop trees.

Forage establishment and management

Forage includes grasses and legumes in the understory that are used as hay or food for livestock. While the process of forage establishment in a silvopasture system is similar to accepted practices for open pasture establishment, the most productive forages in agroforestry systems are somewhat shade tolerant. Bahia grass does best in southern and coastal portions of the Southeast. Native grasses may be a good option for many landowners, with such species as big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), and eastern gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactaloides*). Among legumes, red and white clover (*Trifolium pratense* and *Trifolium repens*) are well suited to silvopasture systems, as are native legumes such as white prairie clover (*Petalostemon candidum*) and showy tick trefoil (*Desmodium canadense*).

Introduction of Livestock

Both fences and watering facilities must be established prior to livestock introduction. Fencing controls animal movement and



is critical to a successful silvopasture management area. Take time to plan your fence carefully to maximize grazing options. Water for livestock must also be considered during the development of a fence plan. Water tanks can be placed in the fence line so that they are centrally located and serve more than one paddock. This will promote more uniform grazing of the site and limit soil compaction around watering areas.

Choice of livestock will vary based on your objectives, but can range from smaller animals such as poultry, sheep, or goats, to larger species such as cattle and horses. Remember that young trees will be browsed or trampled by livestock, so it is best to delay introduction of any livestock until trees are 10-15 feet tall. Haying operations may be used early in the rotation prior to livestock introduction to promote forage production and produce some early income.

Once introduced, animals must be controlled through stocking levels and rotational grazing to improve efficiency of forage utilization. Rotationally grazed animals are moved among grazing management units to allow time for grazed paddocks to recover for forage re-growth.

Expanding the Benefits

Agroforestry systems have the potential to provide additional financial and environmental services and benefits beyond timber, livestock, and forage production. One potential application is wildlife habitat creation and conservation banking. As wildlife habitat is fragmented or lost, conservation banking allows large parcels of land to be purchased and managed for certain wildlife populations. Most agroforestry systems have the potential to produce high quality wildlife habitat for certain key species, including open pine habitat for species of concern such as the gopher tortoise or Northern bobwhite quail.

There is also long-term potential to restore imperiled longleaf pine forests. Following



European settlement, much of the original longleaf forests were grazed with free-ranging livestock. This fire-maintained forest system was ideal for grazing, as livestock foraged in the open understory of grasses and legumes which were promoted by frequent fire. Today, longleaf pine forests are listed as one of the rarest ecosystems in the United States with less than 5 percent of the original longleaf forest acreage in existence.

As part of the restoration effort, planting agricultural fields in longleaf pine is growing in popularity. Low-density plantings of longleaf (less than 600 trees per acre) are often promoted by cost-share programs to improve wildlife habitat. These low-density stands may be well suited to agroforestry with the potential to use alternative planting strategies that will eventually result in naturally regenerating forested systems.

Finally, there is the added benefit of pine straw production in southern pine silvopasture systems. Sold either by the bale or the acre, income from pine straw can exceed that of any other forestry activity. Silvopastures are ideal for pine straw raking, either by hand or mechanically, because of the clean, open understory and wide row spacing. Stands can usually be raked beginning when the trees are approximately 8 years old and annual production can range from 80 to over 200 bales per acre, depending on tree species and location.

Considering your Options

Because livestock and timber are affected by different market pressures, the use of silvopasture allows landowners to diversify their risk while realizing diverse income-generating possibilities from the same acreage. However, silvopasture may not be for everyone because it requires actively managing livestock and timber on the same acre. It is important that you take into consideration all of your goals for your property when making any land management decision. But for many, it is a way of life that allows them the flexibility to meet not only long-and-short term objectives, but also lifestyle and financial needs that are not addressed with traditional forest management systems.

For more information on implementing silvopasture on your property, an instructional video is now available entitled *Silvopasture: 30 Years of Research and Innovation*. Developed in partnership with Auburn University, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and the USDA National Agroforestry Center, this video features practical information on the development and management of southern pine silvopasture. A copy of the video can be requested by emailing becky.barlow@auburn.edu or nhammond@fs.fed.us. Additional information is also available at www.unl.edu/nac/silvopasture.htm. 



Growing Christmas Trees . . .



Is It Right for You?

*By Dr. George Brown, Professor, Retired, Alabama A&M University
Owner/Operator - Valley Christmas Tree Plantation*

You have 10 spare acres and are trying to figure out the best way to put the land to productive use. Should you be thinking of becoming a Christmas tree grower? What should you consider before starting a new plantation and how best to get started?

First, you need to consider how you are going to market your trees once they are ready, four to eight years down the road. You have two basic options: either set up your operation as a “Choose and Cut” where you allow customers to come onto your farm, pick out, and cut down their tree; or, wholesale your trees to a broker in large lots. The method of sales will dictate how you set up your operation and which tree species are best for you.

If you decide on a “Choose and Cut” operation, then you need to consider the distance from your farm to the nearest metropolitan area. Most operations are located relatively close to large cities. The farther out you are, the less likely customers will drive to get their tree. Buyers of real trees tend to be owners of homes with children still present, so the closer you are to housing developments with moderate-to-high priced houses, the better.

Coming to your farm to select a tree is a family event. You are not just selling trees, but rather the total experience of visiting a farm as a family outing. You will need adequate all-weather

roads and parking, and a pleasant sales area where you can shake, bale, and load the trees after purchase. This method also requires more labor per tree, with the peak sales on weekends from Thanksgiving through the first two weeks of December. During these three weeks, your life will be dictated by tree sales.

“Choose and Cut” will yield the highest price per tree, but also has higher labor and sales costs associated with it. It gives you the greatest flexibility in choice of tree species. Since the trees are cut fresh and placed in water relatively quickly, Leyland and Arizona cypresses along with Virginia and white pines work well. This option also affords you the opportunity to sell other items such as wreaths, sprays, stands, B&B (balled and burlapped) trees [live trees that can be replanted], refreshments, ornaments, etc. It is also a good method for educating children and the public by hosting school and church tours. Many operators schedule a visit from Santa Claus, or rent reindeer or other petting zoo animals. Remember, it’s the experience you are selling as much as the trees.

If you choose to wholesale your trees, December becomes a much easier month. In fact, most trees will be cut before Thanksgiving and off your farm before December arrives. However, only trees that have excellent needle-holding capacity

and stay fresh for weeks can be used, which eliminates the cypresses. Even Virginia pines – which have a shelf life out of water of a couple of weeks – should be sold in split-delivery orders at local markets only. Instead of all-weather roads and a large parking lot, you will need to establish an all-weather staging area where your cut trees can be baled and loaded onto trucks.

Whichever method of sales you choose, you will need to produce high quality trees. In the production of Christmas trees, it is possible to do 90 percent of the work necessary to produce a good tree, but still not have much of a product. Most retail customers will pay \$30 to \$40 for a good tree (half as much for wholesale), but will not pay \$20 for a defective tree (improperly sheared, weak base due to poor weed control, crooked stem from being blown over or no insect control, bad color from not being sprayed, improper handle length, etc.). You will need to devote four to eight years to produce each tree. Although most field procedures do not require immediate attention, they still must be accomplished within a set time period. For example, white pines need to be sheared between the first of July and the middle of August. Not shearing in this time period will result in improper bud set and much corrective work on the tops of the trees. If a shearing is missed, there will be a large gap between whorls, rendering most trees worthless. In short, you need to know what you are doing and be dedicated to getting it done.

So how should you get started? First, begin at least one year before you plant your first tree. You need to visit other farms, join the Southern Christmas Tree Association (www.southernchristmastrees.org), and pick up technical information from the Alabama Cooperative Extension System on how to grow Christmas trees. Dr. Ken Tilt (ktilt@acesag.auburn.edu) is the state specialist at Auburn University. Every grower I know would be willing to have you come out to their farm, show you around, and answer any questions you may have. They would probably be willing to demonstrate cultural practices such as planting, weed control, basal pruning, shearing, and insect control, as well as let you see their sales area. Visiting an existing farm is the best investment of time you can make before starting up your operation. By joining the Southern Christmas Tree Association, you will have the opportunity to meet with other growers and ask questions of the experts across the South at one of their annual meetings. Starting the year prior will also allow you to get your soil tested, correct any deficiencies, and lay out and sub-soil (if needed) your first field.

You also need to consider the availability of good labor and your current age. As stated above, it will take four to eight years just to produce your first crop of trees. Most of the work is man-

ual field labor that requires a bit of training and practice before a worker becomes proficient. I've often commented that when training a worker to shear trees, the first week they will probably harm more trees than they will help. Then for the next few weeks, they will do a satisfactory job – but are very slow. It's into the second month before they get good and get fast. If you do not have regular, consistent workers, you will end up doing what most Christmas tree growers do . . . you'll do the work yourself. Once you open your gates, it may take another several years to establish your clientele and build your business to its capacity. Then, when you decide to quit, it may take several more years to clear out all trees after you stop planting. That's

four years to first harvest, five or more years to establish the business, and another six years after you stop planting to clear trees – or a minimum of 15 years. If you are considering this as a retirement job and are already 60 years old, are you going to be able to do the physical field labor when you are 75?

Finally, we are in Alabama. Summers are hot and humid. When the temperature is over 90 degrees with heat indices in the 100s, physical field labor such as shearing is not possible. You may estimate that you can get the majority of your shearing done on weekends if you work six hours per day, but realistically you only have from 7:00 a.m. until around 10:30 a.m.

before you get too hot. How many trees can you shear in that time frame, and how many days per week can you do it? That will determine the maximum number of trees you should have. Probably, well over 90 percent of all landowners who have planted seedlings have never seen a commercial harvest – the numbers look good on paper, but the heat of July is the reality.

If you do decide to press ahead and start planting trees, go slowly. Grow your operation as your trees grow. At 6-by-7 foot spacing, you can plant close to 1,000 trees per acre. If you do a good job, you may be able to harvest 70 percent of each planting, or approximately 700 trees per acre. At a wholesale value of \$15 per tree (over \$30 per tree for Choose and Cut), you may harvest over \$10,000 worth of trees per acre on a six- to seven-year rotation. Few crops can generate this income – Christmas trees can, if they are high quality trees. You will also have the pleasure of being a part of many families' Christmas celebrations. After 20 years, you'll get to see the second generation of a family coming out to experience your farm. It can be very rewarding, but be committed for the long run. Start a year early and visit with as many growers as you can. 🌲





Tallowtrees are "Popping" Up Everywhere!

*By Dana McReynolds, Forest Health Coordinator,
Alabama Forestry Commission*

Recently, I received a phone call from a concerned landowner in Elmore County citing a sudden increase in the number of tallowtrees in the area. The landowner was not sure if the trees were regenerating at a rapid pace, or if homeowners were planting them in their yard. Whatever the case may be, the discussion continued with the emphasis that everywhere one looked, there seemed to be tallowtrees, more commonly known as "popcorn trees."

At the end of our conversation, I recalled a current news release from the USDA Forest Service specifically reviewing this ecological phenomenon: "Invasive Tallowtree Spreading Rapidly Across Gulf Coast." So from this report, concerns from landowners, and visual evidence, I came to the realization that we DO see tallowtrees – everywhere!

Another import from Asia, tallowtree (*Triadica sebifera*) was first introduced into South Carolina in the 1700s and again into the Gulf Coast area in the early 1900s. A rather aesthetically pleasing tree with its distinctively heart-shaped leaves, this species was mainly planted for the production of seed oil. Like many non-native, invasive plants, tallowtree escaped cultivation and inhabited wetlands and uplands throughout the South, from east Texas to North Carolina. This shade-tolerant, flood-tolerant, deciduous tree has invaded stream banks, riverbanks, and wet areas, but has also established infestations on upland sites.

Quite adaptable to freshwater and saline soils, tallowtree continues to spread in low areas and flat lands, riparian zones and rights-of-way, harvested sites and disturbed properties, as well as young stands and private forests. With its allelopathic character-



16-year period. Sonja Oswalt, a research forester with the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program in Knoxville stated, "...between 1991 and 2005, the number of tallowtree plants in Louisiana increased by more than 500 percent." Moreover, from 1994 to 2006, the number of tallowtree plants increased by 445 percent in Mississippi. In east Texas, the number increased by 174 percent between 1992 and 2007. Data for Alabama is not specifically given, but there is also a significant increase in the presence of tallowtree in this state.

The exact cause of the escalated occupation of tallowtree is somewhat unclear. A common explanation for the spread is that regeneration occurs from unsuspecting homeowners planting this exotic as an ornamental. An indirect influence on tallowtree occupation can be from animal damage, wind storms, timber harvesting, and fire occurrence. Animals and wind can move viable seed to other suitable habitats and start a new infestation. Timber harvesting and wildfires can gravely disturb the site, making it more compatible for tallowtree regeneration.

Not only will tallowtrees spread at a rapid rate, ecologists predict that these trees may occupy areas of the country that were assumed not possible. It was previously thought that the mean minimum temperatures in winter inhibited tallowtrees from migrating northward, but this assumption may be wrong. Because of the warming climate trend, the increase in both range and severity of tallowtree invasion can reach farther north beyond the predicted boundary.

The rapid spread and existence of tallowtree in Alabama's forest and non-forest ecosystems can not be easily rectified. Even though there are herbicides that are used to control this non-native, invasive plant, it is still moderately difficult to curb. Landowners can do their part in slowing down the spread by not purchasing and planting this tree. They can even try to eradicate existing tallowtrees from their property, especially if they work with a consulting forester on a prevention and control method.

Natural resource specialists can also aid in deterring the spread of tallowtrees by implementing monitoring and mitigating efforts on known congruous sites. If all of these combined efforts were executed consistently and continuously, there may be a sudden decrease in the spread of tallowtrees. 🌱

istic [a biological phenomenon whereby one plant species has the ability to suppress growth of another by the release of toxic substances], this exotic tree can change the chemical properties of soil and thus alter the composition and structure of native plant communities. This unique feature can also modify the flora and fauna along the Gulf Coast. Even the litter from this exotic tree in wet areas can affect some amphibian species. Wherever tallowtree expansion exists, forests and non-forests can gradually shift to an unhealthy, semi-functional ecosystem.

Establishing the fact that tallowtrees are everywhere, to what extent is this exotic plant spreading? According to a study by the USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station in Knoxville, Tennessee, the population growth of tallowtree in Louisiana, Mississippi, and east Texas averaged about 370 percent over a

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Safe Harbor Agreements:

A TREASURE Concept for Landowners

By Bill Clem, Work Unit Manager,
Alabama Forestry Commission

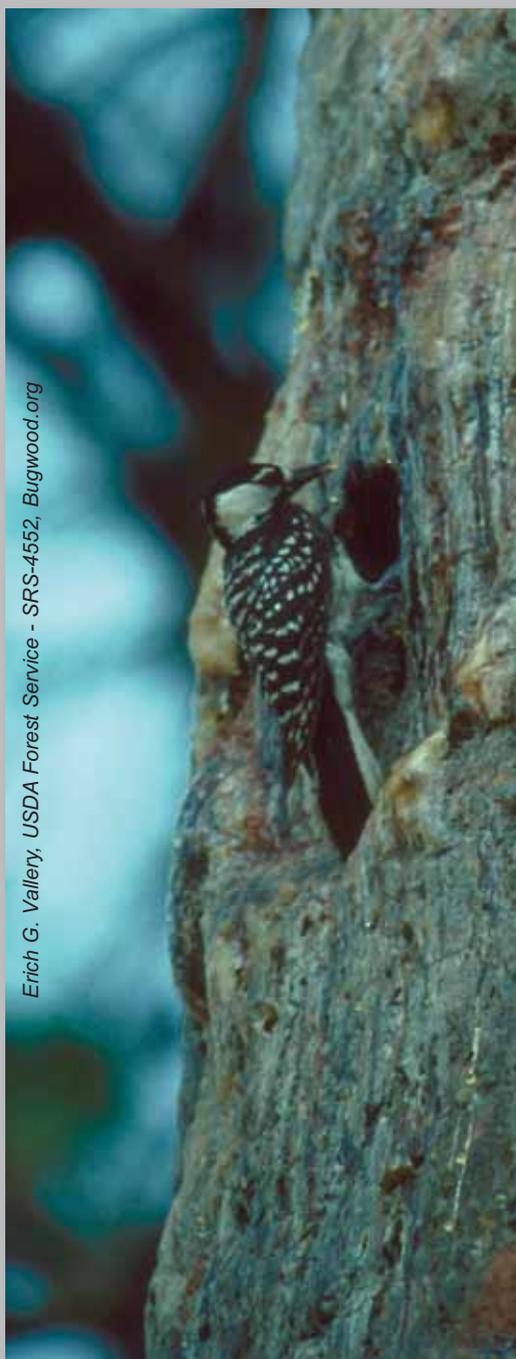
What are Safe Harbor Agreements? They help private landowners voluntarily conserve Threatened and Endangered Species and habitat, in exchange for legal assurances that no new Endangered Species Act restrictions will be placed on their land.

While the concept of “Safe Harbor” was being created, several points of interest became clear. First, most of the populations of Threatened and Endangered Species occur on private land. Second, most landowners are good stewards of their land and do not want additional legal restrictions placed on them. Last, the Endangered Species Act had no incentives for landowners that wanted to help. Sometimes they were rewarded with additional restrictions.

A Safe Harbor Agreement virtually freezes the landowner’s responsibility at current baseline conditions, when the agreement is signed. The landowner’s voluntary actions should result in net conservation benefits for the covered species. A permit is then issued that enables the return of the enrolled property to baseline conditions.

One advantage for landowners that have potential habitat for Threatened and Endangered Species is that if a basis of zero is the current basis, then under the agreement, zero is the basis to be maintained. If populations exist, then those populations can be relocated.

Before the Safe Harbor Program was implemented, landowners felt threatened by legal responsibilities and restrictions imposed by the



Erich G. Vallery, USDA Forest Service - SRS-4552, Bugwood.org

Endangered Species Act. Landowners would sometimes purposely destroy potential habitat. Safe Harbors take away the fear of government intervention and replace it with assurances that no added restrictions will occur.

Safe Harbor for Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers in Alabama

Four properties in Bullock, Macon, and Russell counties have enrolled significant acreages in red-cockaded woodpecker habitat. The largest of these properties, Enon and Sehay Plantations, are owned by Cam Lanier. Lanier has enrolled 18,000 acres in conservation easements, of which 12,500 acres are enrolled in Safe Harbor for red-cockaded woodpecker. It was an easy decision for Lanier who stated, “In a landscape managed for quail, aesthetics, and timber, managing for woodpeckers was something I was already doing.”

Lanier is able to continue intensive management of his quail plantation. All private property rights are maintained with management flexibility. Prescribed fire, hardwood and mid-story control, pine thinning, and longleaf pine restoration is encouraged. These are all forest management activities he was already doing. He can manage his property for sawtimber, poles, bobwhite quail, aesthetics, and pine straw without fear of increasing red-cockaded populations and land use restrictions.

For more information on Safe Harbor Agreements, contact Bob Hastings with the Alabama Natural Heritage Program at (334) 324-1071. 



Should You Have a Plan for Your Estate?

Part 1 of 2

*By Robert A. Tufts, Attorney and Associate Professor,
School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, Auburn University*

We all know that Hurricane Katrina was devastating, but there are some stories you may not have heard. Federal assistance was available to clean up destroyed property, but it was only available to landowners. In several cases, children were living on the land their parents had owned, and no one challenged their right to possess the land. However, they did not have legal title because their parents either did not have a will or the children did not probate or administer the estate. A document must be recorded in the Office of the Judge of Probate to change the title to land. The last recorded deed was in the name of the parents; so, the legal owner of the land was the estate of the parents, and the children did not qualify for the federal assistance.

No Estate Plan

Not having an estate plan can create both a financial burden and administrative hassle. If a decedent does not exempt his personal representative from posting a bond, the personal represen-

tative must give a bond equal to twice the value of the estate. The bond must be backed by two sureties, or a guaranty or surety company, and payable to and approved by the judge of probate. Therefore, the personal representative must first pay the money for a bond from his own funds before he can be appointed to probate or administer the estate. In addition to the bond, the personal representative must also file an inventory of all the decedent's property with the probate judge, and this inventory will become part of the public record.

Who owns the property? It is your property and you have the right to leave it to anyone you please, but you must exercise that right in the form of a will if you want to direct the disposition of your property. Maybe you have a child with special needs or want to do something for your favorite charity. Perhaps you want to leave the farm to your son and an insurance policy of equal value to your daughter. Maybe you want to take care of your

(Continued on page 22)

Should You Have a Plan for **Your Estate?**

(Continued from page 21)

spouse during his or her remaining life and leave the remainder to your children, without having to worry about your former spouse remarrying someone with children of their own.

Another problem that sometimes arises is, who takes care of your minor children? Suppose both parents are killed in a traffic accident. Would you want the grandparents to care for your children? Which ones? Would your brother, who has a family about the same age as yours, be a better choice? Does the children's guardian also manage their money? If you don't have an estate plan, we don't know the answers to these questions and a judge will have to answer them.

If you do not have a plan for your estate, the State has a plan for you. The plan is specified in the probate code (§§ 43-8-1 *et. seq.*, Code of Alabama, 1975), and it may not be what you would have wanted. For example, if you have a spouse and minor children, your spouse will get the first \$50,000 and half the rest while your minor children get the remainder. Your spouse, as conservator of the children's money, will have to make an annual accounting to the probate judge on how they spent the children's money. If that were not bad enough, the probate judge will hire an attorney for your minor children (paid from the children's money) who will determine if you spent the children's money for their benefit and not yours. By the way, you cannot use the children's money to pay for all of their expenses. Since you have a child support obligation, you must use your money to pay part of their expenses; otherwise, you are not a good steward of the children's money and may be replaced as conservator.

Estate Plans

An estate plan will generally consist of three documents: an advance directive for health care, which includes a living will and health care proxy; a power of attorney; and a distribution plan which can be either a will or a trust. If the distribution plan is in a trust, a power of attorney is not necessary, but the plan should include a "pour-over" will.

Everyone probably remembers the Terri Schaivo case. The question was, what would she have wanted? The purpose of the advance directive for health care is to make known your wishes if you should become terminally ill or permanently unconscious. The form also provides the opportunity to appoint a



health care proxy to speak for you if you cannot speak for yourself.

The power of attorney is an appointment of someone to manage your financial affairs. Basically you give an agent your signature authority, and the agent's signature binds you, just as if you had signed yourself. It is normally called a "durable" power of attorney because it is effective when the principal is no longer competent to manage his affairs; however, the principal has to be competent to give someone his power of attorney, and it terminates at the death of the principal. The power of attorney can be currently effective, or it can become effective only when the principal becomes incompetent ("springing" power of attorney).

A will provides for the distribution of property owned by the decedent at his death. The will must be in writing and signed by two witnesses, and it should be in the format of a self-proving will which basically means that the testator's and witnesses' signatures must be notarized. A will can be changed at any time before the death of the testator, either amended or revoked.

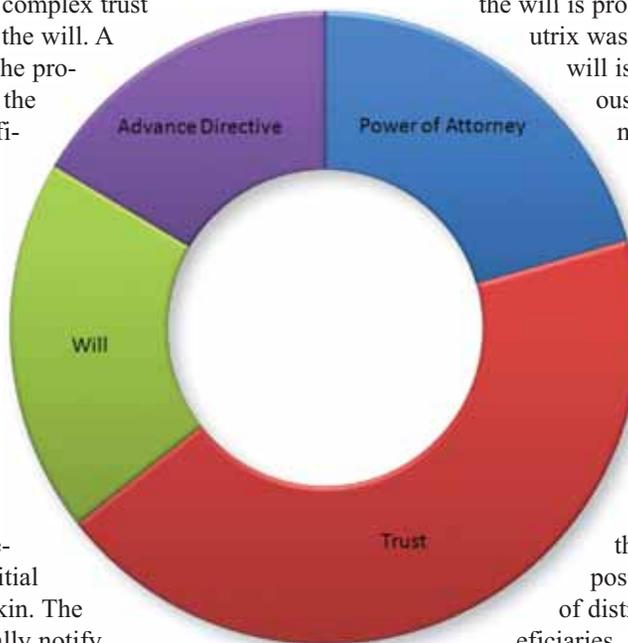
Jointly-owned property can be a substitute for a will, but there is no opportunity for planning. If a husband and wife own all their property jointly with right of survivorship, then the property will automatically become the sole property of the surviving spouse at the death of the first spouse, and the estate does not have to be probated. However, what happens to the property at the death



of the second spouse, or what if they die together in a common accident?

The distribution plan in a will can be as simple as, “all to my spouse if he/she survives me; otherwise, equally to my children,” or the will can create a rather complex trust to distribute the assets controlled by the will. A will provides for the distribution of the probate estate, which is not the same as the taxable estate. If an asset has a beneficiary designation, such as a life insurance policy or a retirement plan, or if the asset is owned jointly with right of survivorship, it is not part of the probate estate and will not be affected by a will.

A simple will, meaning a will that does not create a trust, provides for the outright distribution of the estate after the probate period. To be effective, a will must be offered for probate. The probate judge will appoint the personal representative or administrator after an initial hearing with the decedent’s next-of-kin. The personal representative must personally notify all known creditors of the estate and give notice to unknown creditors by publishing a notice weekly for three weeks in a local newspaper. Creditors are allowed up to six months to present their claims against the estate, and creditors must be paid before any assets can be distributed to the family.



Relatives may not be happy with the distribution plan in the will and may want to “contest” the will. “Grandfather promised me the truck” is not a valid argument. The result of a will contest is that either the executor/executrix was of sound mind and the will is probated as written, or the executor/executrix was not of sound mind, and none of the will is valid. If the will is invalid, a previous will may be effective, but if there is no valid will, the estate will be distributed according to the Probate Code.

At the end of the six-month period and after the debts are paid, the personal representative will distribute the assets remaining in the estate according to the distribution plan in the will. Once the assets are distributed, the decedent no longer controls the assets; if the child wants to sell the farm, that is his decision.

A trust is an alternative to a will that provides more control over the disposition of the decedent’s assets. Instead of distributing the assets outright to the beneficiaries, a trust can hold the assets and distribute them over a number of years, and the distribution can be contingent on the decedent’s wishes.

Part 2 of this article (in the next issue of *Alabama's TREASURED Forests* magazine) will discuss the differences in a will and a trust, and why you might want to use a trust. 🏠



Best Management Practices for Forestry

By James P. Jeter, Registered Forester

BMP/Hardwood Programs Specialist, Alabama Forestry Commission

In this issue I want to digress from talking about hardwood silviculture only. I have stated previously that I wanted to use this opportunity to address questions I receive in the field from landowners and other folks that work in the woods. With that said, here is the question: Are “Best Management Practices for Forestry” voluntary or mandatory in Alabama? A simple question, with a little more complex answer.

The Administrative Code of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) prohibits the deposition of pollutants into or the degradation of the physical, chemical, or biological integrity of waters of the state. With regard to silviculture, non-point source pollutants include, but are not limited to, sediment, organic materials, temperature, trash, pesticides, and nutrients that are man induced.

Alabama’s Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Forestry are non-regulatory guidelines suggested to help Alabama’s forestry community maintain and protect the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the waters of the state as required by the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, the Clean Water Act, the Water Quality Act, and the Coastal Zone Management Act. There are exceptions to the rule:

1. Roads and stream crossings within wetlands and other waters of the U.S. must be constructed and maintained in accordance with the following U. S. Army Corps of Engineer baseline BMPs (from Section 404, Corps of Engineers Permit Requirements, 40 CFR Part 233.22) in order to retain exemption status for the road operation. These 15 BMPs are included in Alabama’s BMPs for Forestry and are listed on pages 19 and 20 of Alabama’s BMP manual. You may obtain a copy of this manual by contacting your local Alabama Forestry Commission office or by visiting the AFC website: www.forestry.alabama.gov. Click the left tab “Manage Your Forest” then scroll to Best Management Practices. If you are not familiar with these BMPs and operate within wetlands, I suggest you read and get familiar with them.

2. American Forest Foundation (AFF) 2010-2015 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification (i.e., Tree Farm)
Standard 4: Air, Water, and Soil Protection
Performance Measure 4.1: Forest owner **must** meet or exceed practices prescribed by State Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) that are applicable to the property.
Indicator 4.1.1: Forest owner **must** implement specific BMPs that are applicable to the property.
Indicator 4.1.2: Forest owner **must** minimize road

construction and other disturbances within riparian zones and wetlands.

In order to maintain third-party certification, inspections of Tree Farmers must show consistent implementation of BMPs across the state. If predictions hold true and an energy bill or carbon bill is ever passed, a landowner will have to have third-party certification to be eligible to participate.

3. Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Standards for 2010-2014 Programs

Section 6 – Guidance to SFI 2010-2014 Standard
Part 5 – Objective 10 – Best Management Practices Monitoring:

Objective 10 calls for adherence to Best Management Practices: “to broaden the practice of sustainable forestry through the use of best management practices to protect water quality.”

The use of BMPs to protect water quality is a critical component of sustainable forest management and is emphasized in the SFI Standard with requirements for on-the-ground management, monitoring, training, and research. The SFI 2010-2014 Standard strengthened requirements for best management practices application with a new indicator:

10.1.3 Contracts for the purchase of raw materials include provisions requiring the use of best management practices.

This new indicator will further highlight the importance of BMPs and their use by all suppliers throughout the supply stream. To view the complete list of requirements in the new SFI Standard go to www.sfiprogram.org.

Back to the answer of the original question: Yes, Alabama’s BMPs for Forestry are voluntary guidelines to help the forest landowner avoid degrading the waters of the state. However, if you operate on certain types of ground or participate in certain programs, BMPs are no longer voluntary, but required. If you are a landowner selling timber, you may be asking the logger to cut and operate within areas he really does not need to be in if you are not implementing BMPs. If the timber buyer has a contract that does not include BMPs in the fine print, it should be a red flag. Please add them.

The most important guidance that these BMPs can offer the forestry community is to THINK and PLAN before you ACT. As always, feel free to contact me with any BMP questions. 📧

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American Tree Farm System – Inspector Manual
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HARDWOOD CORNER

HIDDEN TREASURES

Sharing the Pleasure of the Great Outdoors

By Elishia Ballentine, Editor

Expressing what most TREASURE Forest landowners know is the true joy of land stewardship, Bruno Tropeano says, “Half the enjoyment of having property is watching *others* enjoy the land and nature.”

He experienced that pleasure earlier this year, when a dozen or so “senior” folks from Plantation Manor in McCalla, accompanied by a caretaker, came and fished in the Tropeano’s pond. Although most were in wheelchairs, it did not present a problem as the pond’s arrangement is handicap-accessible.

This is just one of the activities hosted by Joanne and Bruno Tropeano, opening their place for other people to benefit from the great outdoors. They also welcome youngsters who experience fishing for the first time, local folks hunt deer and turkey, and neighbors ride their horses along the fire break. They had previously hosted a “Classroom in the Forest” session when Brenda Morrison and Jerry Moss (now retired) with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources contacted the Tropeanos about a pond mentoring program, having youngsters come and fish at the pond as part of a reward system in the schools. The first class – an elementary school in Bessemer – was scheduled to fish in October. It was also through Brenda that contact was made with the folks at Plantation Manor.

Located in the extreme southern end of Jefferson County, the Tropeano property is about 107 acres. They purchased the land in 1995, initially building the pond. Now an Alabama TREASURE Forest, the

Tropeanos have come a long way. Literally! Commuting from New Jersey every two months or so, Joanne and Bruno built their home, doing most of the work themselves. With low maintenance and low cost in mind, they were very

property. Utilizing the services of the Alabama Forestry Commission, they had fire breaks installed that same year. They have had some of the lesser trees removed, replacing them with longleaf pines. For their own personal use, they harvest a variety of fruits from the land: figs, kiwi, blackberries, blueberries, hybrid muscadines, and American plums. It’s obvious that Bruno likes working and experimenting with plants, starting some from cuttings while grafting others. His latest project is a 28’x32’ greenhouse.

He noted that at their farm in New Jersey where they lived before moving South, they started and maintained a Christmas tree farm for 33 years. Although demanding at times, Bruno said he thoroughly enjoyed the operation and the family clientele. He even considered growing a plantation here in Alabama, but they both decided it was time instead to begin enjoying life without so much hard work.

Nowadays, not only do they stay active on their property and take pleasure in sharing it with others . . . Bruno also chairs the

Jefferson County TREASURE Forest chapter, sits as a supervisor of the Jefferson County Soil and Water District, and is a member of the Cawaco RC&D Council. He and Joanne recently celebrated their 47th anniversary. Both of their two children are married and also live within 10 miles of them. Without a doubt, the Tropeano family seems to have taken firm root in Alabama soil. 🌲

attentive to shading from trees and directional facing so as to eliminate direct sunlight intrusion during the summer. Along with high-quality insulation, they employed geothermal heating and air-conditioning. These efforts must have paid off, as, according to Bruno, the all-electric 3,000-square-foot home was only billed \$1,226 for electricity for the entire year of 2009 – “a pretty good average for a house that large!”

Since moving to Alabama in 2001, the couple has continuously improved the



Former AFC employee John Morris (left) and AFC Forester Tim Browning (right) congratulate Joanne and Bruno Tropeano on receiving their TREASURE Forest certification a few years ago.

Alabama's Lookout Tower Legacy

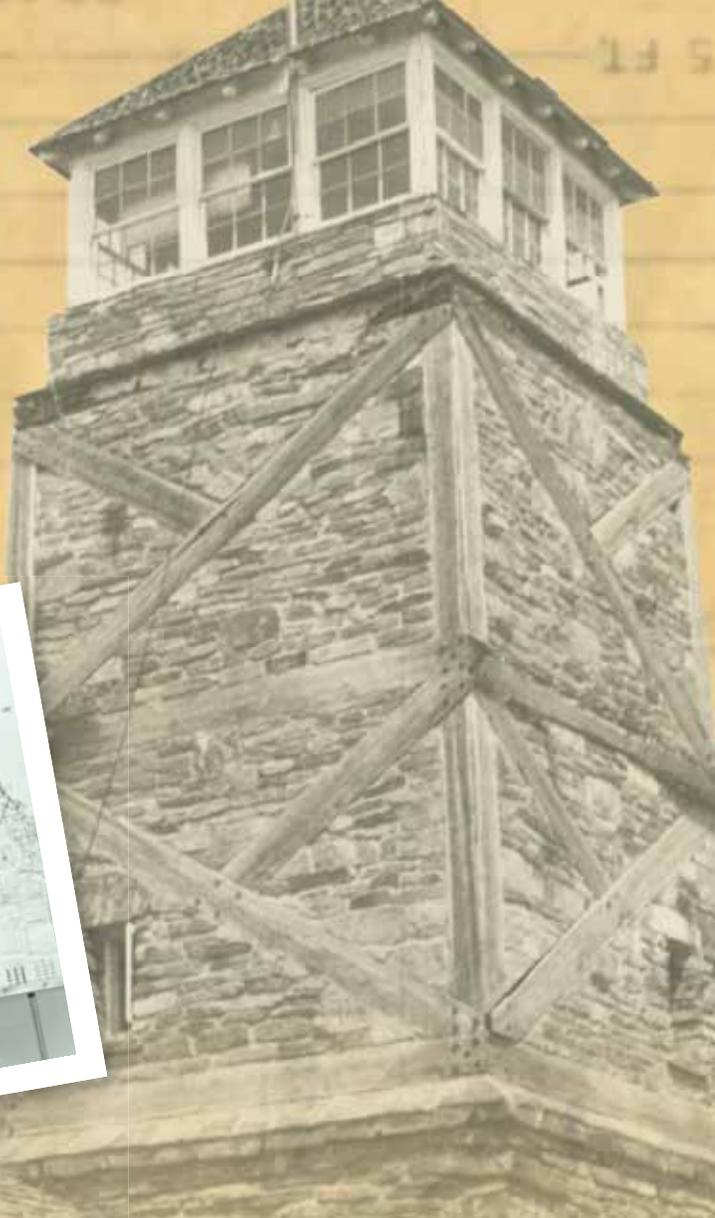
Why Our State's Firetowers Are So Important
and Why They Deserve To Be Preserved

By Thomas Kaufmann,
Preservationist and Area Representative for Alabama,
Forest Fire Lookout Association (FFLA)

I am always awestruck when I see them . . . those magnificent steel structures which rise from the forest floor to the level of command over the mountain, plain, and valley range – marvelous examples of American engineering at its best. From deeply anchored concrete piers, the soaring diagonally-braced steel frame – crowned with an 'Arts & Crafts-inspired' observation cab – pierces the airspace above the forest skyline. More than just a rusty steel frame armature, they are the only major historical link to our state's fire protection past – they are Alabama's lookout towers.

Just one look and you can feel the quality of engineering, craftsmanship, and excellence. For the better part of the past century, they served well in protecting our state from the threat of flame. Archival records list nearly 190 in total number (including US Forest Service lookouts) during the apex of lookout tower history. However, now there are only around half as many still standing, and due to present

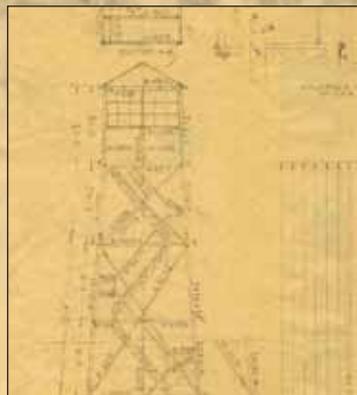
Elevated at 1,189 feet, the view from Flagg Mountain Tower in Coosa County allowed Forest Fire Lookout Kate Prater and Forest Ranger L. D. Roberts to see across seven counties on a clear day.
 (Photos courtesy of AFC)



Blackjack Tower, Clay County
 (Courtesy of AFC)

issues and circumstances, that number could diminish even more over time.

As excellent examples of ‘triangulation,’ these structures are vector-force-resistance diagrams which came to life straight from the engineering textbook. The structural designer surely had the forces of nature in mind during their conception, as practically all of Alabama’s lookouts have withstood the fierce tempest winds of hurricanes, thunderstorms, and tornados. And they are still



Aermotor LS-40 blueprint
 (Courtesy of Dave Quam, FFLA Minnesota)

standing strong even now, despite a general rusty appearance among the greater number. These artifacts are the only Forest Service icons left from a great generation, and once they are gone – that’s it . . . there will be nothing left to serve as memory of this classic era of Forest Service history in Alabama.

Early Alabama lookouts were primitive at best, sometimes taking the form of a

(Continued on page 28)

Alabama's Lookout Tower Legacy

(Continued from page 27)



Wooden pole lookout

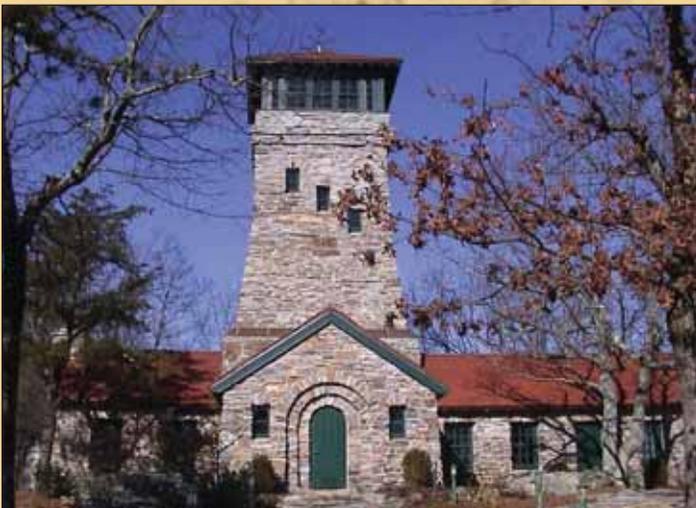
(Photo by J.M. Stauffer,
July 1942, Alabama
Conservation News)



Mulga Lookout Tower,
Jefferson County

(from Alabama Department of
Conservation - Division of Forestry
Annual Report 1947-1948)

tree-stand or a wooden pole. Before 1933, all or nearly all of the forest observation towers in Alabama were wooden structures that later steel towers closely modeled. For certain, the original steel tower designers wanted very much to emulate the look of the wooden towers, such as the Mulga Tower in Jefferson County. After all, this age of tower building was still enjoying aesthetic benefits under the sustained influence of the Arts & Crafts Movement in America, which made its indelible stamp upon the National Parks Service architecture. We can all be very grateful for this as the most appropriate design movement to influence or coincide with national and state outdoor conservation programs of the early 20th century. As a case in point, Bunker Tower of Cheaha State Park reveals the influential hand of Boston architect H.H. Richardson upon its design in the use of heavy stone arch-work incorporating the mounted observation



Bunker Tower - Cheaha State Park

(Courtesy of Ryan Cragun)

cab atop the stone tower shaft – a very strong allusion to the ‘Richardsonian’ vocabulary of building. Bunker Tower is also the highest lookout tower in Alabama, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1935 . . . the fraternal twin of the Flagg Mountain Lookout in Coosa County.

During the golden era of lookout tower building in the state, steel towers also followed the influence of the Arts & Crafts Movement design as original examples of sustainability. One of the hallmark tenets of the Arts & Crafts Movement was to celebrate structural function (the tower frame) and to reconcile architecture (the forest observation cab) with nature. As to the question of who manufactured the lookouts, clearly it was the case that Aermotor Company [of Chicago, Illinois] and International Derrick & Equipment Company [of Los Angeles, California and Columbus, Ohio] were the principal fabricators of Alabama's steel towers, as best determined from available records, surviving manufacturer stamps on the tower frame, and educated guesswork.

Despite the fact that Alabama's steel towers don't always have the same company as ‘parents,’ in many cases the overall design composition and configuration share similar themes for



Blacksher Lookout Tower,
Monroe County

(Courtesy of AFC)



Pine Mountain Tower,
Tuscaloosa County

(Courtesy of AFC)



McGowin Lookout Tower,
Butler County

(Courtesy of Author)

the tower frame and cab design: most cabs typically have two windows of proportional panes over a solid wainscot on each side. Some towers in Alabama are really unique and rare, such as the Underwood Lookout Tower in Escambia County. It has so far been an enigma for fire tower experts in certifying its manufacturer and type due to the assembly of four steel cabs together on a wider, broader steel tower frame. Still, the fact remains that if any of these steel cabs were not forest observation tower modules, they could very easily be additions or outbuildings/ greenhouses for Craftsman homes with the right use of historic paint colors of course. Lookout towers are a great fit for the forest, even as shiny galvanized artifacts, and everyone loves them and uses them – as landmarks, historical icons of forest service, or wayfinding compass points. They are a friend of the forest in every way.



Underwood L
Escambia Co

For the history and legacy of Alabama's lookout towers, much is owed in retrospect to the vision and foresight of the former Alabama Department of Conservation-Division of Forestry leadership and personnel from that great era of tower building that took place from the early 30s through the early-mid 70s. A review of Alabama forest history and state annual reports will produce a number of important recurring names in the archived narratives: Col. Page S. Bunker, J. Brooks Toler, C.F. Attaway, and J.M. Stauffer, among many others. If there was any one person among these titans of state forestry history which is most closely associated with the epic age of tower building, it was long-time State Forester J.M. Stauffer. He enjoyed a lifetime of hallmark service to our state beginning in 1927 as a young Forest Inspector for the Alabama Commission of Forestry, as it was known then. Stauffer continued to show great promise over time, being promoted to Associate Forester in 1933 in charge of 14 Alabama CCC camps – 12 of which were Forestry camps – the principal 'engine' for the tremendous decade of tower building prior to WWII. In 1937, during his tenure in superintending the CCC camp initiatives, he was promoted to Assistant State Forester in charge of Fire Control. Due to his outstanding leadership, pro-active strategy, and wonderful way with his staff, this very gifted, unassuming and hardworking man earned the title and position of State Forester in 1942. Under his leadership, scores of lookout towers were erected toward the goal of greater fire protection measures and improvements for Alabama. In 1948, Stauffer reported 111 operational lookout towers were in place protecting Alabamians from the threat of fire. By the time of his retirement from the Alabama Forestry Commission in 1970, over 150 had been built – the zenith for lookout towers in the state.



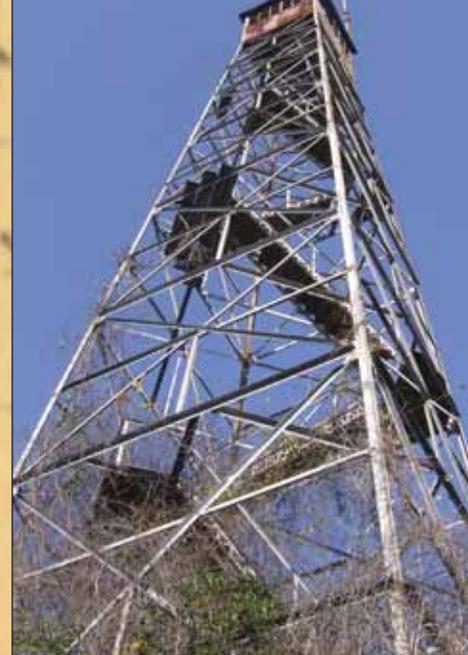
**State Forester
J.M. Stauffer, 1942**
(Courtesy of
Jane Stauffer Snyder)

But, as surely as there was a zenith, there was also a nadir, which began when aviation and satellite use for detecting fires spelled the end for Alabama's fire towers. With advances in technology, a staffed tower just wasn't needed any longer, and it was only a matter of time before the state towers were reconditioned for use as repeater stations for Alabama Forestry Commission communications. Over time, many towers became 'party central' sites: illegally climbed and vandalized. Some became victims of neglect due to the recurring fiscal issues of budgetary proration. Consequently, a large number have been demolished during the past several years due to these and other concerns. As well, a number of towers either have already or will revert back to the original landowners. Given these conditions, projecting a sustained outlook for retaining the greater majority of our firetowers seems unlikely. The towers could be said to be living on borrowed time, barring anything short of a miraculous windfall of funding to restore them for posterity.

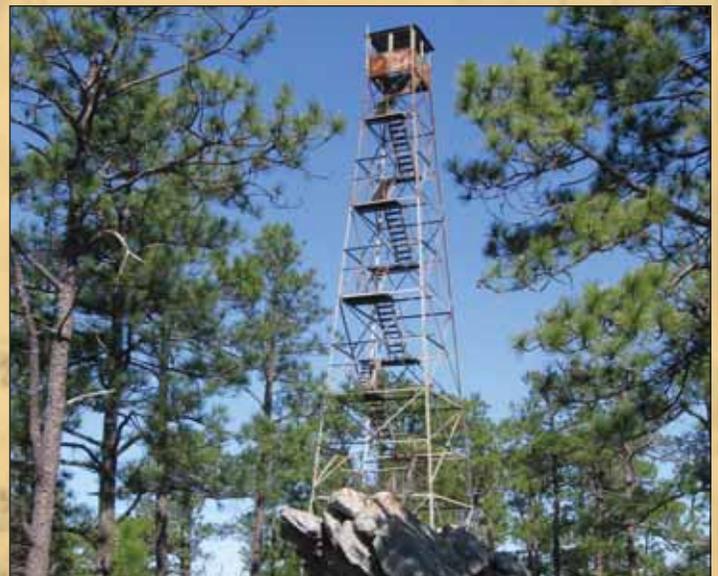


**Lookout Tower,
county**
(Courtesy of AFC)

But there is hope. Slowly but surely, interest in lookout towers is increasing, along with news of lookouts which have been successfully restored, where those interested in conserving them did not let the seemingly deteriorated appearance of the tower keep them from what was burning in their hearts to do in preserving memory. These people found a way to affect successful and complete restoration initiatives for the following towers: Open Pond Lookout Tower in Conecuh National Forest, the Perry Lakes Birding Tower (formerly Rumley-York Tower) in Perry County, and Longleaf Tower (formerly Huxford Tower) in Butler County. More tower/tower site restoration projects are either being planned or are already underway including Smith Mountain Tower on Lake Martin in Tallapoosa County, as well as Pondville, Payne Lake, Cahaba, and Perry Mountain Lookout Towers in the Talladega National Forest-Oakmulgee Division. This is great news. As more lookouts are restored, project experience and firsthand knowledge becomes available for those contemplating tower restoration initiatives, along with more creative ideas to problem-solve for lookout tower preservation and rehabilitation issues. All of this will prove that there are more possibilities and available options for preserving firetowers than one would imagine at a glance – those with vision, determination, and a can-do spirit, plus an ability to think out of the box will find a way to make it happen. What could be more honoring to the memory of those who have served and protected our state so well? 🏠



**Lookout Hill Tower,
Monroe County**
(Courtesy of AFC)



**Smith Mountain Fire Lookout Tower,
Tallapoosa County**
(Courtesy of Author)

Seedling Sources for Landowners

Tree planting season is soon on us. By now, landowners should have their planting plans in place and be ready to go. Successful tree planting requires good planning, skillful site preparation, correct handling, and proper planting. It also depends on having a reputable and reliable tree seedling source.

The list below identifies tree seedling nurseries that serve Alabama landowners. Listed alphabetically, this is in no way an endorsement of any particular company or product. The Alabama Forestry Commission maintains a list of tree seedling nurseries on a continual basis at the agency website address: www.forestry.alabama.gov/seedling_search.aspx. Qualified tree seedling vendors that market to Alabama landowners can request being added to this list by calling (334) 240-9332.

Advantage Forestry

302 South Main Avenue
Demopolis, AL 36732
Phone: (334) 287-0106
www.advantageforestry.net

American Tree Seedling, Inc.

401 Industrial Blvd.
Bainbridge, GA 31717
Phone: (229) 246-2662
Fax: (229) 256-4787
Email: customerservice@americantreeeedlings.com

ArborGen - Alabama SuperTree Nursery

264 County Road 888
Selma, AL 36703
Phone: (800) 222-1280
Fax: (877) 833-4758
www.supertreeseedlings.com

ArborGen - Bellville SuperTree Nursery

6482 Highway 169 South
Bellville, GA 30414
Phone: (877) 833-4760

ArborGen - Georgia SuperTree Nursery

78 Supertree Lane
Shellman, GA 39886
Phone: (800) 554-6550
Fax: (229) 679-5628

ArborGen - South Carolina Supertree Nursery

5594 Hwy 38 S
Blenheim, SC 29516
Phone: (800) 222-1290

Baucum Nursery

3821 W. Roosevelt Road
Little Rock, AR 72204
Phone: (501) 296-1940

Bell Brothers, Inc.

5619 Highway 169
Claxton, GA 30417
Phone: (912) 739-2273

Blanton's Longleaf Container Nursery

302 Pecan Drive
Brewton, AL 36426
Phone: (251) 867-7629
Email: dismukes@bellsouth.net

Blanton's Longleaf Container Nursery

1091 NE Daylily Avenue
Madison, FL 32040
Phone: (850) 973-2967
Email: BIGJMB1@vol.com

Buckeye Nursery, Inc.

1490 Buckeye Nursery Lane
Perry, FL 32347
Phone: (800) 838-2218
Fax: (850) 838-2681

Chestnut Hill Nursery, Inc.

15105 NW 94th Avenue
Alachua, FL 32615
Phone: (800) 669-2067
Fax: (386) 462-4330

Chiappini Farm

P. O. Box 436
Melrose, FL 32666
Phone: (800) 293-5413
Fax: (352) 475-5268

Deep South Growers

1535 Harvey Vickers Road
Douglas, GA 31534
Phone: (912) 384-5450
Email: careed@hotmail.com

Delta View Nursery

659 Burdette Road
Leland, MS 38756
Phone: (800) 748-9018
Email: hardwoods@tecinfo.com

Florida Division of Forestry

Andrews Nursery
9850 NW 42nd Court
P. O. Drawer 849
Chiefland, FL 32644
Phone: (352) 493-6096
Fax: (352) 493-6084
Email: gillys@doacs.state.fl.us

Georgia Forestry Commission

9850 River Road
Byromville, GA 31007
Phone: (229) 268-7308
www.gatrees.org/Seedlings/Orderinginfo.cfm

Glennville Regeneration Center/Rayonier

11704 Baxter Durrance Road
Glennville, GA 30427
Phone: (912) 654-4065

Hains Nursery

Mark Hains
5457 Harts Bridge Road
Andalusia, AL 36420
Phone: (334) 427-1029
Fax: (334) 222-0581
Email: hains@alaweb.com

International Forest Company

Wayne Bell
1265 Georgia Highway 133 N
Moultrie, GA 31768
Phone: (800) 633-4506
Fax: (229) 890-0087
www.interforestry.com

Joshua Timberlands, LLC

29650 Comstock Road
Elberta, AL 36530
Phone: (251) 986-5210

K & L Forest Nursery, Inc

Ken Singleton
3782 Hwy 41 South
Buena Vista, GA 31803
Phone: (229) 649-3572
Email: singleton@windstream.net

The Liner Tree Farm, Inc.

4020 Packard Avenue
St. Cloud, FL 34772
Phone: (800) 330-1484

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry

P.O. Box 1628
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
Phone: (225) 925-4515

LTF Greenhouses

195 Ty Ty Omega Road
Tifton, GA 31793
Phone: (229) 382-4454

Meeks' Farms & Nursery, Inc.

George or Steve Meeks
187 Flanders Road
Kite, GA 31049
Phone: (877) 397-0166
Fax: (478) 469.3150
www.meeksfarms-nurserys.com

Native Forest Nursery

11306 Highway 411 South
Chatsworth, GA 30705
Phone: (706) 483-3397
Email: Nursery.nfn@mindspring.com

Plum Creek - Shubuta Nursery

1444 Shubuta Eucutta Road
Shubuta, MS 39360
Phone: (601) 687-5766

Plum Creek - Jesup Nursery

1689 Nursery Road
Jesup, GA 31546
Phone: (912) 427-4871

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1032 Camp Lane Road
Hazlehurst, MS 39083
Phone: (601) 894-1072

Rock Creek Nursery

4346 Parker Springs Road
Brewton, AL 36426
Phone: (866) 407-9556

Rutland Forest Nursery

Terrell Rutland
502 Owen-Medford Road
Lenox, GA 31637
Phone: (229) 382-5504

South Carolina Forestry Commission

Box 219
Trenton, SC 29847
Phone: (803) 275-3578
Fax: (803) 275-5227

Superior Trees, Inc.

12493 East US Highway 90
Lee, FL 32059
Phone: (850) 971-5159

Tennessee Department of Agriculture

9063 Highway 411, South
Delano, TN 37325
Phone: (877) 868-7337
Email: Nursery@state.tn.us

Weyerhaeuser

3890 Highway 28 West
Camden, AL 36726
Phone: (800) 635-0162
Fax: (334) 682-4481
Email: kimmie.vanwyck@weyerhaeuser.com

White City Nursery

Louis Olivier
707 County Road 20 West
Verbena, AL 36091
Phone: (334) 365-2488
Email: wcnursery@bellsouth.net

The Wildlife Group

2858 County Road 53
Tuskegee, AL 36083
Fax: (800) 221-9703
www.wildlifegroup.com

**This
just in!...**

Assistance Available for Longleaf Pine Restoration/Management!

To help sustain, enhance, and restore longleaf pine forests, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced the availability of funds for nine southern states. In Alabama, the Longleaf Pine Initiative will incorporate both technical and financial assistance providing \$2.5 million to help private landowners improve habitat on agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest, and tribal land. Approved participants will receive financial assistance for implementing conservation practices including planting longleaf pine, installing firebreaks, conducting prescribed burning, and controlling invasive plants.

Applications are being accepted through **January 7, 2011**. For additional information on the Longleaf Pine Initiative, visit your local NRCS field office listed in the telephone directory under U.S. Department of Agriculture or on-line at <http://offices.sc.gov.usda.gov>



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OF ALABAMA Plants

American Elder

(*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *Canadensis*)

By Fred Nation, Environmental Services, Baldwin County

American elder is a large, irregular native shrub to about 15 feet tall, which occurs throughout the eastern United States. In Alabama it can be found scattered throughout the state, mostly in moist, disturbed areas. The common name has several variants including elder, elderberry, and American black elderberry. In older references the scientific name is given as *Sambucus canadensis*.

The leaves are opposite on the stem, odd-pinnately compound, about one foot long, with 5 to 11 serrate, lanceolate leaflets. When crushed, elder leaves have a disagreeable odor. The flowers are small, creamy white, with five petals, in large, flat clusters, mostly in late spring through midsummer. The fruits are dark purple drupes, about one-quarter inch across, ripening from midsummer into fall.

Sambucus leaves, branches, roots, and seeds all contain toxins. Any of these plant parts, as well as the sap, can cause cyanide poisoning if ingested. Additionally, the unripe berries and flowers contain a poisonous alkaloid which makes them toxic as well. Despite these dangers, the ripe fruits are often made into jelly, preserves, and wine.

Worldwide, the 20 or so *Sambucus* species are surrounded by many myths and legends. In medieval Europe, elder leaves and branches were believed to repel bad luck and evil influence. It is probably no accident that the most powerful

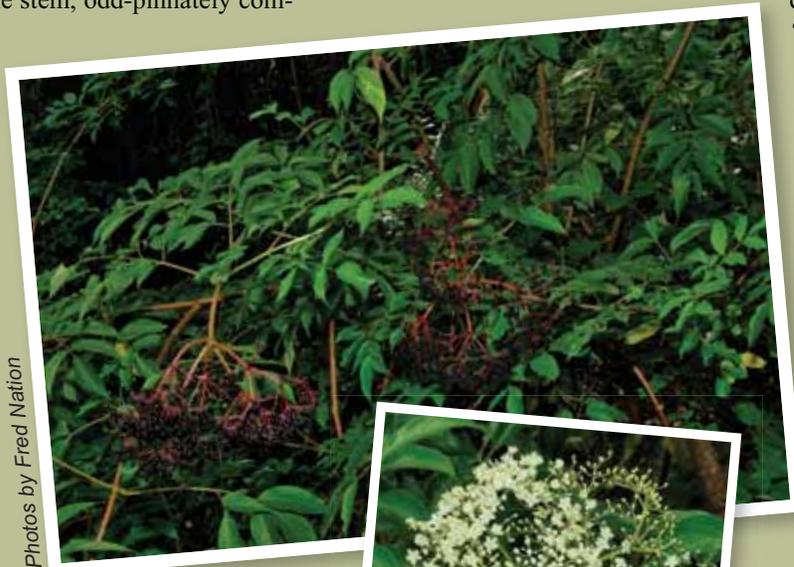
magic wand of Harry Potter, the popular literary character, is the "Elder Wand."

Pith is a soft, spongy substance that is found in the centers of the stems of dicot vascular plants. In American elder, the pith is soft and relatively quite large. Generations of children have used a sharp stick to remove the pith from elder branches to make popguns, blowguns, and whistles. *Sambucus*, the genus name,

comes from the Greek "sambuce," an ancient musical instrument similar to a flute.

Possibly because of its toxic chemistry, elder foliage is not widely foraged, but the ripe fruits are valuable food resources for foxes, raccoons, and a variety of birds including blue jays, thrushes, grosbeaks, and the occasional woodpecker. Their dense, irregular habits make elders good nesting shrubs for birds.

Several named varieties are available, and their masses of white flowers can be a nice native landscape addition to moist, open sites such as stream and pond banks. ♣



Photos by Fred Nation

