

A large white paper bag is wrapped around a pine cone, which is the central focus of the image. The bag is made of a textured, slightly translucent material. The pine cone is green and has several long, thin needles extending from it. The background is a clear blue sky with some green pine needles visible on the left and right sides. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

# Accomplishing the AFC Mission at Geneva State Forest

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**T**he Alabama Forestry Commission's mission is to "Protect the forests of Alabama from all harmful agents; Sustain our forest resources through service and assistance by employing professionally applied stewardship principles; and Educate the public about the value of our forests in ensuring both a healthy economy and environment." This three-fold mission is complex and challenging, taking hard work and dedication to accomplish. Our 'Genetically Improved Seed Orchards' at Geneva State Forest (GSF) are a perfect example of how we are striving to accomplish this mission.

**Protection from Disease** – In cooperation with International Forest Company (IFCO), the Alabama Forestry Commission conducts developmental breeding in the seed orchards at Geneva State Forest. The goal is to breed and develop trees that are more resistant to disease and pathogens. This process is highly labor-intensive and requires great care to ensure the best genetic crosses are made to produce the desired seedlings. These crosses are replicated over and over, which in turn produce millions of seedlings that are sold and planted across the state of Alabama, as well as neighboring states.

**Sustaining our Forest Resources** – Seeds produced from the developmental breeding are harvested and sent to be sown at the IFCO nursery in Pine Hill, Alabama. Without these high quality, disease resistant seedlings, landowners would face increased risks in sustaining a healthy stand. Also, landowners are more likely to reforest after a final harvest with advanced genetic seedlings due to increased profitability. These factors help ensure that the forest landscape across Alabama is sustained for future generations.

**Educating the Public** – Every year Geneva State Forest hosts several groups during the breeding season to showcase and explain the developmental seedling process. Landowners, consultant foresters, industry representatives, as well as civic leaders take great interest in the strides being undertaken at GSF to develop better seedlings. Educating these groups about available genetics allows them to make informed decisions as to what seedlings would best suit their particular management objectives.

Geneva State Forest is accomplishing not only the AFC mission, but also a mission to supply future generations with advanced genetic seedlings that are suited to take on ever-evolving challenges. ♣

