

A photograph of a forest path. The path is covered in brown leaves and leads through a dense forest of tall, thin trees. The trees have green foliage, and there is a bright, glowing area at the end of the path, suggesting a clearing or a bright opening in the woods. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

Alabama's TREASURED Forests

An Alabama Forestry Commission Publication

Summer 2010

from the STATE FORESTER

During the past five years, 874 homes were damaged or destroyed as a result of 16,433 wildfires across Alabama. During that same time, wildfires burned 2,696 other structures, as well as 738 vehicles. As far as I am concerned, homes damaged or destroyed by wildfire are simply unacceptable, especially if such tragedy can be prevented.

To aid homeowners living in the Wildland Urban Interface – the areas where urban development meets wildland areas – the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) has produced two publications: “50 Ways to Make your Woodland Home Firewise” and “Five Ways to Protect Your Forestland from Wildfires.”

The “50 Ways to Make your Woodland Home Firewise” (found on pages 15-18) is intended to serve as a guide to help homeowners protect their most valuable assets – their family and home. Recommendations include a list ranging from no-cost actions such as “Maintain a green lawn for 30’ around your home,” to higher cost actions such as “Replace wood or vinyl siding with nonflammable material.”

The “Five Ways to Protect Your Forestland from Wildfires” publication (see pages 12 and 13) suggests actions to help forest owners become proactive in wildfire protection. Damages from wildland fires can be devastating to your forests and wildlife. A single wildfire during the wrong set of conditions can wipe out years of investment in your trees.

With more people moving to and living in rural areas of the state, the AFC and local fire departments are facing new challenges in providing fire protection. The threat from wildfire is very real, particularly during periods of high fire occurrence, extreme weather conditions, and for those people who live in high fire risk areas. Protection is a major concern of the Alabama Forestry Commission, but budget reductions will likely result in nearly one-third of our firefighters being laid off before the start of the next fiscal year. However, by taking personal responsibility for reducing hazards around their property, homeowners may substantially reduce the risks from damages caused by wildfire.

Alabama’s Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment has identified high fire-risk communities in the state. Current research indicates that 935 communities in Alabama are at high or very high risk from wildfires while 7,030 communities are at moderate risk. Homeowners and community leaders can visit the Alabama Forestry Commission website at www.forestry.alabama.gov/communities_at_risk.aspx or contact their local AFC office to find out if their community is in a high-risk area.

Professionals with the Alabama Forestry Commission have the training and experience to guide homeowners and landowners through the process of hazard reduction on their property. Consultations are free upon request. Both publications and additional information can be found by going to the Commission’s website, www.forestry.alabama.gov and clicking on the link, “Homes, Communities in the Forest.”

In light of our agency’s budget shortfall and its impact on the citizens of this state, we hope that all forest landowners and homeowners will follow this critical advice to practice Firewise principles and become proactive in protecting their property from wildfire.



Linda Casey,
State Forester

Linda Casey

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

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This shady glade looks inviting on the TREASURE Forest and Tree Farmer of the Year property of Bobby and Marilyn Jennings in Tallapoosa County.
Photo by Kelvin Daniels

The Alabama Forestry Commission is now on Facebook and YouTube!



GoodFIRES

VISIT MY FOREST



History Abounds in Crenshaw County

By Paul Hudgins, Registered Forester, Alabama Forestry Commission

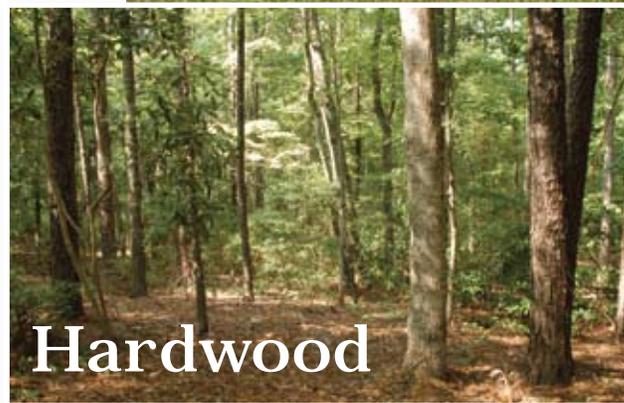
A true love of the land and the history that can be discovered within its boundaries

is what best describes the Clark-Burnside, LLC. The pride that comes with owning 800 acres of land in Crenshaw County and knowing that it has been in the family for 150 years is truly an inspiration for Charlie Clark; his wife, Debbie; his sister, Amy Paul; and their cousin, Hal Burnside. In the last three years, Charlie and his sister have added an additional 400 acres to the family land holdings, bringing the total to 1,200 acres of well diverse, multiple-use land.

This property was first recognized as an Alabama TREASURE Forest in 1999, but even before then, Charlie and the family were great examples for the multiple-use land stewardship philosophy that the TREASURE Forest program embodies. Maximizing timber production on the family land is their primary objective; however, wildlife habitat improvement is a very close secondary objective.

Everybody enjoys the wildlife viewing and harvesting opportunities that abound on the property. This is apparent with the planting of an estimated 25 acres of food plots annually. The willingness to plant 125 acres each year in a cultivated crop has proven to be a benefit for the family as well as friends alike. Sweet corn is often planted for production, but a few ears do manage to find their way into the freezers of family and friends as well as the local wildlife reserve.

Charlie personally conducts or oversees the prescribed burning of 150 acres a year for timber stand improvement and the resulting improved wildlife habitat. Using the family farm tractor and sprayer, the mid-rotation spraying of the pine plantations has added to the family enjoyment and overall aesthetic value of the property. In the last five years, the planting of 60 acres of longleaf pine has increased the overall diversity that is already present.

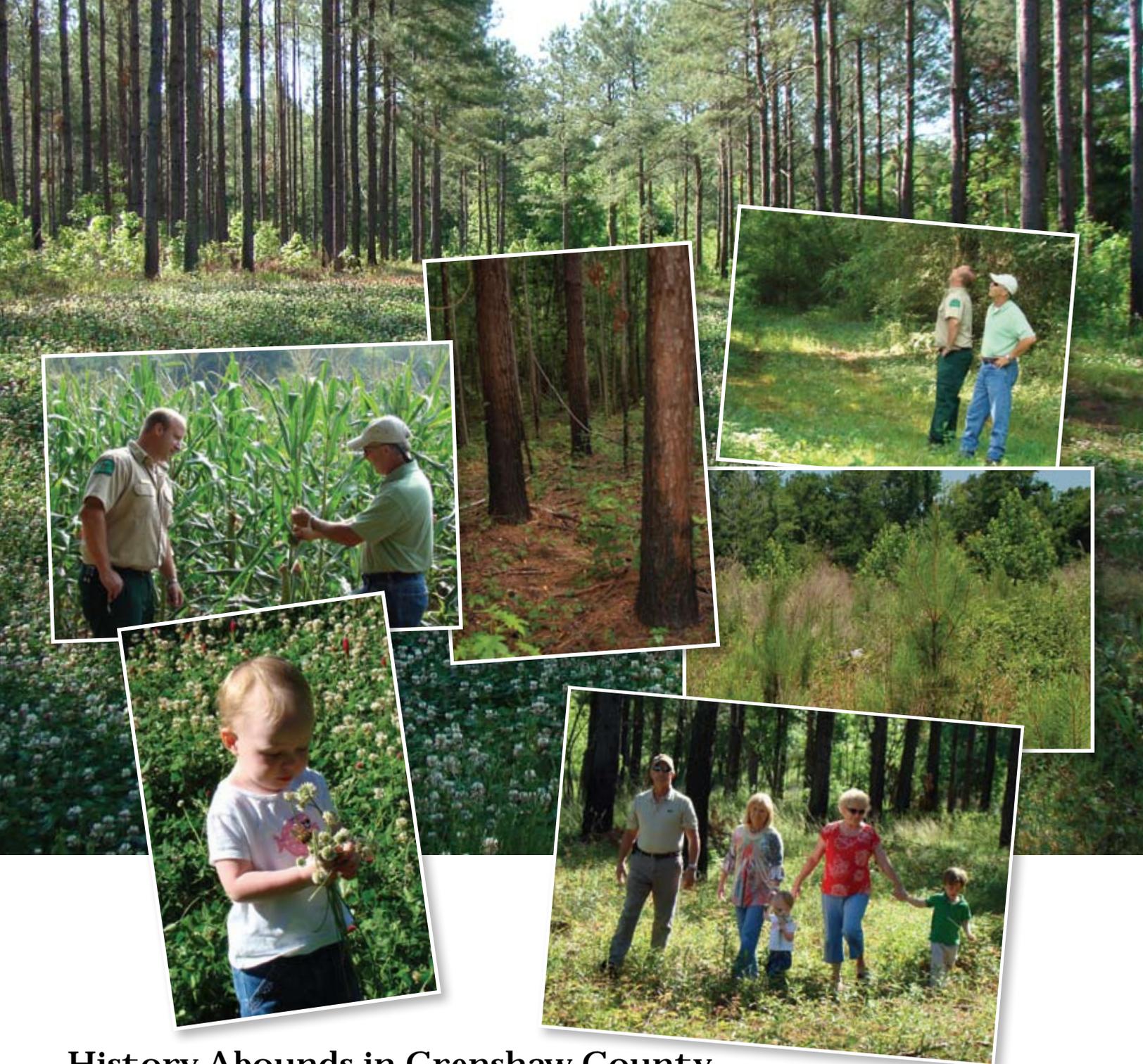


The Clark-Burnside, LLC boasts 150 acres of plantation pine in various stages of development. An additional 150 acres of plantation pine that was planted for wildlife habitat enhancement under the Conservation Reserve Program has also been a blessing for the family. The rest of the total 1,200 acres is in natural hardwood timber.

Charlie has been active in the local Crenshaw County ATFA chapter for the past 10 years, serving as president, vice-

president, and program chair. He is also a member of the Forest Landowner's Association. Because of his love of the land, Charlie participates in numerous workshops and attends tours and other educational opportunities across the state every year hoping to learn a new way of doing something while passing along his enthusiasm for the great outdoors to other landowners.

(Continued on page 6)



History Abounds in Crenshaw County

(Continued from page 5)

As he stated simply, “I’ve always loved history.” Charlie first found a piece of that history when he was 8 years old. While out exploring the family woods one day, he came across half of an arrowhead. From that point on, he became fascinated with Native American history and he has been able to share his knowledge with hundreds of interested landowners, homeowners, and children across Alabama. In researching Native American history, Charlie has determined that there is an Indian burial mound on the property.

Another unique aspect to the family land is an old cemetery that can be found resting among a hardwood stand on the back side of the property, dating back to the early 1800s when the first church located in Crenshaw County was built here. It was later determined that the dirt floor “Valley Church” as it was known, because it sat in a valley, was disassembled and relocated a mile down the road after a case of malaria killed several of the church members. It was then renamed the Mount Ida Church.

The Clark-Burnside, LLC was awarded the Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest award in 2007, and Charlie was further honored with the W. Kelley Mosley Environmental Award that same year. For him, a true love of family, the land, and the history that can be found among its fields, hardwoods, and pine stands is what makes Clark-Burnside, LLC a true piece of heaven in Crenshaw County. 🙏

A photograph showing two individuals, a man and a woman, standing in a field of tall, dry grass within a forest. The man is on the left, wearing a green jacket and blue jeans, looking towards the woman. The woman is on the right, wearing a blue jacket and blue jeans, looking down at something in her hands. The background consists of many thin, vertical tree trunks, likely pines, under a clear sky.

Alabama's Forest Health Cooperative

By Dr. Lori Eckhardt, Director

Organized in 2008 with the common goal of maintaining forest health, productivity, and sustainability, the Forest Health Cooperative has brought together interested parties from Auburn University, forest industry, consulting companies, timber management companies, as well as state and federal forest agencies. Created by Drs. Lori Eckhardt and Scott Enebak, faculty members at Auburn's School of Forestry and Wildlife Science, the Cooperative's mission is to address important, current and relevant forest health issues that include disease, insect, and invasive species, in a way that addresses real world management problems in the southern United States. In its second year of existence, the Forest Health Cooperative has 17 members: 12 from forest industry, 3 federal and state, and 2 private entities.

Several members of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences faculty work with the Cooperative in the establishment of research projects, technology transfer, and publications. They bring their expertise in pathology, entomology, silviculture, genetics, plant physiology, and invasive plants, with the amount of time each allocates to Cooperative activities related to their own discipline and interest in forest health work.

The Forest Health Cooperative already has an active research program that involves eight research projects falling into several general areas: disease development, pathogen ecology, insect ecology, insect and disease management, and invasive species management. Examples of current research topics include vector population dynamics related to silvicultural activities, pathogen resistance and host susceptibility, and delineation of pine decline.

Membership in the Cooperative is open region-wide to landowners, consultants, industry, federal and state forestry associa-

tions, as well as non-governmental organizations interested in maintaining forest health, productivity, and sustainability. To ensure that members are kept up-to-date on any new research or developments on forest health that may affect them, the Cooperative has an active technology transfer program and offers short courses on forest health as well as insect and disease identification. A newsletter is sent to members every spring and fall that includes research updates, articles, and technical reports. An advisory meeting is held each November at which time accomplishments, research reports, and new research project proposals are presented.

Membership is offered at three levels: full, associate, and sustaining. Sustaining members receive access to the Forest Health Cooperative webpage, newsletter, research and technical reports, email and telephone consulting, and participation in members-only workshops. Associate members receive the benefits of the sustaining members plus field consulting and laboratory diagnostics, and may participate at the annual advisory meeting, but cannot serve on the advisory council. Full members receive all the benefits of associate and sustaining members, serve on the advisory council, and have voting powers with respect to research direction and budgetary decisions. Membership dues go toward the salaries of one full-time research associate, an office administrative assistant, and an M.S. and Ph.D. student, as well as travel funds, installation, and analysis of Cooperative-sponsored research.

To learn more about the Forest Health Cooperative, visit our website at: <https://fp.auburn.edu/ForestHealthCooperative/default.htm> or contact Dr. Lori Eckhardt at 334.844.2720 or eckhalg@auburn.edu

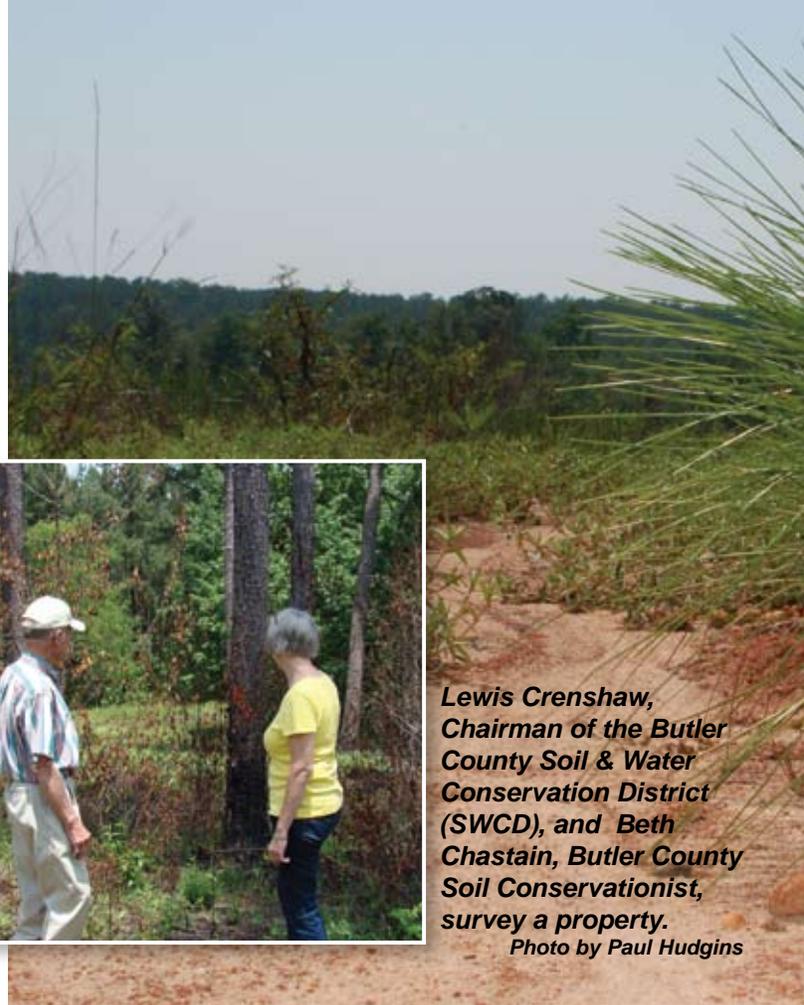
If you could design a cost-share program that 1) had a simple application with a straightforward approval process, 2) fit most of your forest management needs, 3) wasn't too difficult or confusing to understand, and 4) helped make our state a better place to live, what would you call it? If you guessed the Alabama Agricultural & Conservation Development Commission Program, you would be smarter than the average bear, and probably a lot of other forest landowners. The name may be a tongue twister, but it's appropriate, once you know the history behind it.

There are several assistance programs available to forest landowners for help in managing his or her timberland. Then why don't all Alabama forest landowners participate in these cost-share programs? The reasons of course vary, but the quick answer is that federal cost-share program objectives may not match the individual's objectives for his/her property. For instance, maybe you wanted to plant slash pine, but none of the programs would approve slash. Or, you may want to plant longleaf pine at a heavy stocking rate, but to qualify for financial assistance, the cost-share program requires longleaf to be planted at low density rates.

There can also be a lot of hoops to jump through on cost-share programs and the financial benefit may not be worth the hassle. A common example is trying to plan your forestry activities to coincide with cost-share sign-up and approval periods. If you want to plant trees in November and the approval won't be announced until March, you may have lost a year's production time. On top of that, you did the site preparation in the fall, but you find out too late that the program will not pay for practices accomplished before the application is approved, so you lost half of the money you were counting on.

Most of you that read this magazine are aware of federal cost-share programs for forestry, but you may not be familiar with a state-sponsored program, known as AACDCP or sometimes simply called "the State Program," which is short for the Alabama Agricultural & Conservation Development Commission Program. This assistance program helps both farmers and forest landowners with a variety of conservation practice needs. You can thank your local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) if your application gets approved under AACDCP. There are SWCDs in every state and some U.S. territories. These districts were formed in the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s when Congress passed an act that created the Soil Conservation Service, more commonly known these days as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The following paragraphs taken from the National Association of Conservation Districts' website provides some history and insight about where soil conservation had its beginnings:

“ On Capitol Hill, while testifying about the erosion problem, soil scientist Hugh Hammond Bennett threw back the curtains to reveal a sky blackened by dust. Congress unanimously passed legislation declaring soil and water conservation a national policy and priority. Because nearly three-fourths of the continental United States is privately owned, Congress real-



Lewis Crenshaw, Chairman of the Butler County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), and Beth Chastain, Butler County Soil Conservationist, survey a property.

Photo by Paul Hudgins

What Can the AAC

The Alabama Agricultural & Conservation

By Arthur Hitt, Registered Forester

ized that only active, voluntary support from landowners would guarantee the success of conservation work on private land.

In 1937, President Roosevelt wrote the governors of all the states recommending legislation that would allow local landowners to form soil conservation districts. Brown County Soil & Water Conservation District in North Carolina was the first district established. The movement caught on across the country with district-enabling legislation passed in every state. Today, the country is blanketed with nearly 3,000 conservation districts.

In keeping with the need to conserve our soil, water, and air as well as be good stewards of all our natural resources, the Legislature of the State of Alabama established the AACDCP in 1986 and authorized it to fund a conservation program bearing



AACDCP Do for You?

Conservation Development Commission Program

by Nick Granger, Alabama Forestry Commission

its name. The legislature appropriates these funds for both the AACDCP and the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee (SWCC). The SWCC serves the citizens of Alabama with many projects in helping to limit soil erosion, as well as keep our water pure and our air clean. In a nutshell, the purpose of the AACDCP state program is to provide cost-share assistance to owners of land used for agricultural or timber production by implementing soil conservation, water quality improvement, and reforestation and forest improvement practices.

Last year, the AACDC budgeted to each county approximately \$30,000 to spread between farming and forestry conservation practices. Every county in the state has a Soil and Water Conservation District Board, made up of five supervisors who are appointed by the Governor. These district supervisors rank and approve applications based on resource concerns such as soil, water, and air quality. To get the most “bang for the buck,” the conservation districts have the leeway to allocate their budget among the most needed resource concerns for the county and may also limit the amount per applicant or amount per practice.

The state SWCC has set the maximum assistance available to an individual landowner at \$5,000 per year, up from \$3,500 in past years. The state program budget may vary from one year to the next or even go unfunded in lean times because it competes with other legislative projects.

One of the advantages of the state program over other federal programs is in the application process. Don’t get the wrong idea that there is not any red tape involved with the AACDC program; it is still there, but in smaller quantities. You still have to follow the guidelines of the program and stay within the practices policies. However, since the main focus of the AACDC program is targeted at soil and water conservation, you may have more latitude in meeting your forest management objectives. The SWCD, through the oversight of the SWCC, has historically aided farmers and forest owners in implementing modern soil conservation practices to keep Alabama lands fertile and productive, making our state one of the top producers in the nation of both agricultural and wood products.

To be eligible for AACDCP assistance, you must apply for conservation practices that reduce erosion, improve agricultural water quality, or improve forest resources. Forestry site preparation practices such as prescribed burning, herbaceous weed control, and subsoiling are allowed. The AACDCP also pays for timber stand improvement practices such as cull tree deadening, release of desirable seedlings, pruning, firebreaks, crop tree release, and site preparation for natural seeding. And of course, it also pays for tree planting. Eligible lands in this program must be a minimum of 20 acres in size and used for agricultural purposes or timber production. To ensure your eligibility, check with your local SWCD district supervisors and the district administrative coordinator who generally works in the NRCS office.

The next time you run up on one of your local state legislators, consider thanking him or her for funding a program that benefits us all by encouraging good stewardship of Alabama’s natural resources. Be sure to visit the Alabama Forestry Commission website to learn more about available cost share programs such as AACDCP, the Alabama Agricultural & Conservation Development Commission Program. You’ll be glad you did. 🏠



A meeting of the Coffee County Soil and Water Conservation District Board: Nick Granger, Alabama Forestry Commission; Mike Harris, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Lee Boyd, SWCD Supervisor; Linda Norris, SWCD District Administrative Coordinator; Gilmer Grant and Kenneth Sanders, SWCD Supervisors.

Photo courtesy of James Norris

Timber Stumpage Values VS Mill Delivered Prices

*By Walter E. Cartwright, Registered Forester,
Forest Management Division Director, Alabama Forestry Commission*



Most landowners have heard the words “stumpage value” or “stumpage prices” but probably are not certain what the words mean to them. Basically, a timber buyer will offer landowners a price for trees standing “on the stump.” Webster’s dictionary defines stumpage as “standing timber with reference to its value,” or “the value of such timber.” The word is derived from stump + age, which means that older trees generally have more value over time, “on the stump.” For example, pulpwood size trees (6-8” in diameter) generally have less value “on the stump,” whereas larger trees (diameters greater than 10”) such as saw logs, ply logs, and poles have higher values “on the stump” according to their quality. Of course, we all now know that trees blown down or broken during storm events also have a residual value, although that value may be somewhat less than standing trees.

Most stands of timber increase in value over time if managed properly. This includes thinning to increase stand health and regular prescribed burning to control competing vegetation, resulting in increased growth rates. So, properly managed trees in good health and good quality will be worth more “on the stump” than trees unmanaged. Remember that trees are a crop for some landowners and need to be managed like any other crop to produce good quality products. The stand rotation is much longer than row crops, so proper management becomes a critical factor for good tree health and quality. More volume per acre created by bigger trees is another benefit achieved from proper management and will be worth more to most timber buyers.

A common phrase among buyers and sellers of any product is that ‘anything is worth only what someone is willing to pay’ for that product, or for what someone is willing to sell that product.

Some landowners make the mistake of selling their timber to the first buyer that makes an offer, without seeking other offers. NEVER tell a buyer what you are willing to accept for your trees, but seek other offers, or advertise the sale and accept sealed bids. More detailed information about "Selling Your Timber" is available on the Alabama Forestry Commission website at www.forestry.alabama.gov/PDFs/Selling_Your_Timber_color.pdf.



Landowners may be offered several different prices for different products. Products are generally determined by size classes ranging from pulpwood, chip-n-saw, saw logs, and ply logs, to poles, based on dollars per ton these days. Pine prices will be different from hardwood prices, and the units of measure may vary with the product.

Landowners should not get stumpage prices confused with "mill delivered prices" for several reasons. Wood-consuming mills pay different prices according to the products they manufacture from trees. Trees are then valued by timber buyers "on the stump" after deducting costs associated with cutting, skidding, hauling, and other fixed costs. These costs vary with equipment costs, maintenance, fuel prices, insurance, labor, markets for forest products (supply and demand), logging conditions, volume of timber per acre, road conditions, and other variable costs. Loggers pay very high prices for equipment that has a limited lifespan and high maintenance costs. With all their costs of doing business, they must cut and haul a minimum amount of timber per day, just to meet their minimum costs. Generally, the larger operations must cut and haul more volume per day than smaller operations, which may vary from a couple loads per day for small operations to 50 loads per day for larger operations. Remember too that skilled labor is required to get all this work done safely and efficiently. Weather is also a factor that may increase costs for loggers, along with equipment breakdowns that stop all production.

SO, when a logger finally gets a load of pulpwood, chip-n-saw, saw logs, ply logs, or poles to the mill site, they have a tremendous amount of money invested in the processes involved in that delivery. They are paid "mill delivered prices" to hopefully compensate them for all their costs, plus a minor profit for their labors. All the costs of "stumpage prices" + cutting + skidding + loading + hauling + other fixed costs + variable costs = "mill

delivered prices." Many loggers have gone out of business over the past few years as they have not been able to sell their products to make payments and feed their families and workers.

Forest products manufacturers are at the mercy of the markets, and can only pay "mill delivered prices" for raw materials (trees) that allow them to make a modest profit and stay in business. Unless you have been on Mars for the past two years, you know that domestic and world markets for forest products have declined dramatically, thus affecting both "mill delivered prices" and "stumpage prices." However, spot markets can be very favorable – due to weather conditions and mill inventories – if you are in the position to take advantage of the situation by having a management plan that gives you advanced notice of what needs to be done to maximize your profit.

Landowners are encouraged to contact forestry professionals at their local level to determine what prices they should be offered for their products. Your county Alabama Forestry Commission personnel can provide a list of timber buyers in your area to contact for bid offers, or visit our website at www.forestry.alabama.gov/ServiceProviders.aspx.





Five Ways

to Protect Your Forestland from Wildfire



Five Ways to Protect Your Forestland from Wildfire

Damages from wildland fires can be devastating to your forests and wildlife. A single wildfire during the wrong set of conditions can wipe out years of investment in your trees. Here are five ways you can become proactive in wildfire protection:



1. Install Firebreaks – Construct and maintain firebreaks around the perimeter of your forest to help keep fire from entering your property. Interior firebreaks help contain wildfire in isolated areas and aid in wildfire suppression. Firebreaks also allow for easier access to inspect your timber while providing trails for recreation. To find out about firebreak construction and other services provided by the Alabama Forestry Commission, visit www.forestry.alabama.gov/AFCServices.aspx



2. Prescribed Burns – Use of controlled fire is one of the best methods of reducing hazardous fuels, thus reducing damages to your forest in the event of a wildfire. A list of available service providers can be found at: www.forestry.alabama.gov/ServiceProviders.aspx

Some forest owners might want to employ prescribed burning as a “Do-It-Yourself” activity. The Alabama Forestry Commission recommends that you become a “Certified Burn Manager.” Check the AFC website periodically for upcoming prescribed burn workshops at: www.forestry.alabama.gov/BurnCourses.aspx



3. Mitigate Along the Edge – Reduce hazardous accumulations of flashy fuels along roadways and property entrances where arson fires are most readily ignited. Remove scrubby vegetation, ladder fuels, and mow or brush-cut the area. This reduces wildfire risk and adds to the aesthetics of your property. Visit www.forestry.alabama.gov/ServiceProviders.aspx for a list of available service providers.



4. Limit Access – Install gates or similar barriers to limit unwanted access to your property; post your telephone number should someone need to contact you. This also helps minimize trespassing and protects your land from arson, dumping, poaching, timber theft, and vandalism.

The Alabama Forestry Commission provides an arson/forest crimes hotline; the toll-free number is 1-800-222-2927. Information provided is confidential and you will remain anonymous. To learn more, visit: www.forestry.alabama.gov/arsontimber.aspx



5. Partner with Others – Become part of your community’s wildfire protection efforts. Get involved with your local volunteer fire department and the Alabama Forestry Commission’s efforts to plan for wildfire protection. More information can be found at: www.forestry.alabama.gov/WUI/Community_Wildfire_Protection_Plan.pdf

If you are an absentee forestland owner, enlist the assistance of a trusted local resident to serve as your “fire warden.” Some might do this for little or no cost, for example, if you provide them with written permission to hunt on your land, or written permission to cut pre-selected trees for firewood. Consult your attorney for ways to limit your liability when doing this.

The Alabama Forestry Commission is dedicated to serving you.
Contact us at: www.forestry.alabama.gov/Contact.aspx



"Honey, your car is on fire!"

March 30, 2010

Alabama Forestry Commission
513 Madison Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

To whom it may concern:

Sometimes in our busy lives we neglect to take time and say "thank you" to those who give us help and assistance. I would like to say a heartfelt "thank you" to Chris White [AFC Forest Ranger in Lauderdale County] and the Alabama Forestry Commission.

You see, Mr. White and the Forestry Commission helped save our home and possibly our neighbor's home also. Some time ago, Mr. White called me and explained Alabama's program for preventing fires in a rural wooded community. He came out to our home and explained specific procedures we could undertake to protect our home in case of a fire. And the best part was they would pay me to accomplish it! I had to brag on Alabama to my brother-in-law in rural Virginia.

We spent several days cutting brush and small trees, raking leaves and hauling it all away. To be honest, I really got started just so I wouldn't disappoint Chris White who spent so much time and effort showing us what to do.

Part 2 of the story started last Friday evening at 11:30 when my wife gently woke me saying: "Honey your car is on fire!" I ran outside in my night shirt and bare feet and my car was totally ablaze. While my wife was calling 911, I started hosing down the car and the side of the house with the garden hose. Pieces of flaming black plastic and rubber shot into the air and into the woods - right where I had cleaned up. The fire department arrived about a half an hour later and extinguished the car.

No fires started in the woods because all of the brush and trash had been cleaned up - there was nothing to burn! My car was burned to the ground, but no one was burned and our house is fine. It could have been much worse.

Thank you for showing me how to protect our home and giving us the means to do so. THANK YOU.

Sincerely,
Barry Rupp
980 Paradise Drive
Waterloo, Alabama 35677



As these photos demonstrate, the fire was extremely close to the Rupp family's home. Thanks to previous clearing of vegetation, the house was saved. According to AFC Forest Ranger Chris White, you could not walk around the garage prior to this vegetation removal because it was so thick with privet, briars, dead trees, etc.



50 Ways

to Make your Woodland Home Firewise

This publication contains suggestions and recommendations based on professional judgment, experience, and research. It is intended to serve as a guide to help you protect your most valuable assets – your family and your home.





50 Ways to Make your Woodland Home Firewise

Wildfires occur regularly in Alabama. Whether started by humans or by lightning, they are part of a natural cycle that helps to maintain the health of our forests.

Alabama is experiencing a movement of population from cities and towns into forestland and remote areas. Woodland homeowners must address the dangers that exist around them, particularly wildfire.



No Cost Actions Just A Little Time and Effort

- Perform a FIREWISE assessment of your home (pages 6 & 7 of the booklet): www.forestry.alabama.gov/WUI/Publications/WildfireRAGH.pdf or contact the Alabama Forestry Commission for a free consultation: www.forestry.alabama.gov/Fire_Risk_Request.aspx
- Clean your roof and gutters of leaves and pine needles (best when done in fall and spring).
- Clear the view of your house number so it can be easily seen from the street.
- Put a hose (at least 100' long) on a rack and attach it to an outside faucet.
- Trim all tree branches that overhang your house.
- Trim all tree branches from within 20' of chimneys.
- Move firewood pile out of your home's defensible space.
- Remove trees along the driveway to make it 12' wide.
- Prune branches that overhang the driveway to provide 14' overhead clearance.
- Maintain a green lawn for 30' around your home.
- Clear deadwood and dense flammable vegetation from your home's defensible space. Thin and prune trees; brush back; and remove ladder fuels.
- Consider replacing conifer shrubs from your home's defensible space, especially if your home is in a high-risk area.
- If new homes are still being built in your area, talk to the developer and local zoning officials about building standards.
- Plan and discuss an escape plan with your family. Have a practice drill. Include your pets.
- Get involved with your community's wildfire protection plans and disaster mitigation plans.
- Check your fire extinguishers. Are they still charged? Are they easy to get to in an emergency? Does everyone in the family know where they are and how to use them?
- Review your homeowner's insurance policy for adequate coverage. Consult your insurance agent about costs of rebuilding and repairs in your area.
- Talk to children about not starting fires or playing with matches.
- If you have a burn barrel that you use for burning trash, obey local ordinances.
- Compost leaves in the fall, instead of burning them.
- If you burn brush piles or grass, clear a 25' barrier and get a burning permit. Find the number to call on the inside front cover of the telephone book.
- Have a shovel on hand and hook up the garden hose before you start the fire.
- Never burn if the smoke and flames are blowing towards your home (or your neighbor's home).
- Become a Firewise advocate. www.firewise.org
- Be safe when using sharp tools and ladders; use the buddy system or have someone looking out for you. If uncertain about your "Do-It-Yourself" skills, hire a service provider. www.forestry.alabama.gov/serviceproviders.aspx

Minimal Cost Actions

\$10 - \$25 and a little time

- Install highly visible house numbers (at least 4" tall) on your home.
- Install big, highly visible house numbers (at least 4" tall) at the entrance of the driveway onto the street. Use non-flammable materials and posts.
- Install metal screens on all attic, foundation, and other openings on your home to prevent accumulation of leaves and needles.
- Hold a neighborhood meeting to talk about fire safety; invite your local fire chief.
- Install a fire extinguisher in the kitchen and the garage.
- Install a metal shield between your home and an attached wood fence.
- Replace conifer and evergreen shrubs with low-flammable plants in your home's defensible space.
- Thin and prune conifer trees for 30' to 100' around your home.
- Purchase and use a NOAA weather alert radio. Many types of emergencies are announced through this service.
- Install a spark arrestor or heavy wire screen with opening less than 1/2" on wood burning fireplaces and chimneys.



*If uncertain about your "Do-It-Yourself" skills, hire a service provider.
www.forestry.alabama.gov/ServiceProviders.aspx*

Moderate Cost Actions

\$50 - \$250 and a little more work

- Replace vinyl gutters and downspouts with non-flammable, metal gutters and downspouts.
- Build a gravel turn-around area near your house big enough to allow a fire truck to turn around.
- Join your neighbors in having an additional access road into your neighborhood; share the costs.
- Treat flammable materials such as wood roofs, decks, and siding with fire retardant chemicals.
- Modify driveway gates to accommodate fire trucks. They should be at least 10' wide and set back at least 30' from the road. If locked, use a key box approved by your local fire department or use a chain loop with the lock that can be cut in an emergency.
- Enclose decks to prevent accumulation of leaves, needles, and debris. Include a metal screen with a 1/8" mesh opening to prevent sparks from getting under the deck.





50 Ways to Make your Woodland Home Firewise



High Cost Actions (more than \$500)

- Replace your roof with fire-resistant materials such as Class A shingles.
- Install a roof irrigation system to protect your home's roof.
- Install an independent water supply for a sprinkler system with a non-electric (e.g., propane) powered pump capable of running unattended for 24 hours.
- Replace wood or vinyl siding with non-flammable material.
- Replace single-pane glass windows and plastic skylights with tempered, double-pane glass.
- Box in eaves, fascias, gable vents, and soffits with aluminum or steel materials with metal screens to prevent entry of sparks or firebrands.
- Improve driveway culverts and bridges to accommodate the weight of a fire truck.
- Relocate propane tanks a safe distance from your home. If inside the defensible space, make sure they are at least 10' from the house. Place a non-flammable ground cover such as gravel around them for 10'. Have electric service lines to your house placed underground.
- Improve your driveway by straightening sharp curves and filling in sharp dips that would hinder a fire truck. Provide sidetracks or pull-offs on long, narrow driveways.



The AFC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Make Firewise Fun!

Get your neighbors involved in Firewise Community projects and have a big party after the clean-up day.

Consider having a community firebreak around several homes and maintain it for recreation.

Work together with your neighbors and local fire service to have your community recognized as a Firewise Community USA.

For more information visit:

www.forestry.alabama.gov/WUI/homeowner_resources.aspx

Credits:

States of Minnesota, Tennessee, Virginia, South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, and Georgia

NFPA/Firewise Communities USA (FWCUSA)

Southern Group of State Foresters – Fire Prevention/WUI Coordinators

The Centers for Urban and Interface Forestry

Prescribed Fire Cooperatives:

Working Together for a Safe Burn

By Kent Hanby, Registered Forester,
Certified Prescribed Burn Manager

Prescribed burning is an important tool for managing natural resources, forests, wildlife, and eco-restoration in Alabama. Fire is essential in the management of numerous fire-dependant species. *Nothing* takes it place. Mechanical fuels treatment, herbicides, and grazing may simulate the natural phenomenon of fire and be considered surrogates, but they do not mimic fire. Nothing has the same impact on the flora, fauna, and soil solution as fire. It has been said that we have an ecological imperative to use prescribed fire.

Prescribed fire is a SAFE way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health, and reduce wildfire risk. Fire can be a low-cost technique for a landowner to achieve natural resource objectives.

Each year in Alabama, prescribed burning is conducted on approximately 900,000 acres. Of the 32.5 million acres that make up Alabama, approximately 70 percent are forested: 22.7 million acres. Of those, approximately 41 percent or 9.4 million acres are pine.

While there are valid management applications of prescribed fire in Alabama, for the sake of this article consider those 9.4 million acres. If half of those pine acres – 4.7 million acres – are in an age class where fire is an appropriate silvicultural tool, how many acres should prescribed burning be conducted on annually? In order to maintain ecosystem health and reduce wildfire risk, pine acres should probably be burned every two to five years, depending on the management objective. That means Alabama forest landowners should be burning between 940,000 and 2.35 million acres annually.

How do we get from where we are to where we should be? What are the reasons



Prescribed fire is a SAFE way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health, and reduce wildfire risk. ”

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Prescribed Fire Cooperatives

(Continued from page 19)

landowners are not burning? Some say cost; others say fear . . . fear of the unknown. They are afraid of fire in general, which is probably a healthy thing, and they are afraid of liability, which is a real issue. However, in Alabama a prescribed fire properly done by a Certified Prescribed Burn Manager minimizes and mitigates the risk.

The federal, state, and non-government organization (NGO) lands in Alabama are probably being burned at an appropriate rate. The need to ramp up prescribed burning in Alabama is on private lands. There are several opportunities to empower private landowners to effectively burn with confidence. The primary method is made possible through Alabama's Prescribed Burning Act (Code of Alabama, Section 9-13-270), sometimes referred to as the "Right to Burn" Law. That law states that Alabama landowners have the right to burn their land for certain purposes such as forestry, wildlife, and agriculture. The law also says that the landowner and Certified Prescribed Burn Manager have limited liability protection in the absence of negligence when the prescribed burn is conducted in a specific manner.

A second opportunity to ramp up prescribed burning on private forest and agricultural lands in the state is the formation of prescribed burn cooperatives. The cost of burning can be prohibitive when analyzed in a discounted cash flow evaluation of the economic value of a pine rotation. Many landowners appear to include other values in their management strategy such as aesthetics, recreation, wildlife habitat, etc. However, costs can be

minimized when the landowner or a family member takes an active role in the burn.

A landowner is not required to have expensive equipment and all the latest bells and whistles in order to burn prudently and efficiently. Many times the landowner can use materials and equipment already on hand for other operations. Landowners can also form relationships with neighbors and share the workload . . . neighbor helping neighbor. One neighbor may have certain equipment and skills while the other neighbor has different equipment and skills. By pooling their resources, they can get their burning done safely and effectively.

In Oklahoma, prescribed burning cooperatives have been functioning effectively for several years. Occasionally the cooperative owns the equipment. Sometimes the cooperative carries liability insurance. Generally, cooperatives are limited to counties or regions. They may be big or small.

An article that describes a cooperative prescribed burning organization in California can be found at www.forestsandrangelands.gov/success/documents/06_ca_usfwls_coop_prescribed_protects_hfr.pdf.

How might a prescribed fire cooperative work in Alabama? One place to start of course is neighbor with neighbor. There are cases where folks interested in hunting certain land assist the landowner with prescribed burning. There is a case of a college professor who invites colleagues and graduate students to his land for a burn followed by a cookout (similar to an old-time barn-raising). Landowner associations such as county forestry planning committees, Alabama TREASURE Forest Association county committees, Alabama Forest Owners Association groups, Alabama Forestry Association landowner groups, Alabama Wildlife Federation landowner groups, Alabama Cattleman's Association landowner groups, ALFA commodity landowner groups, and others could form prescribed burning cooperatives in communities. In many cases, the members of these organizations are the same people. A lot of them have common land management objectives and goals. They may be from different backgrounds and socio-economic groups, but they have a common interest in being good stewards of their land.

It usually takes two to three people to pull off a safe, effective prescribed burn on a properly prepared site. It doesn't take a lot; sometimes the more the merrier, as long as everyone is safety conscious. Consider burning your tract at the same time your neighbor plans to burn the adjoining property.

Take the Alabama Certified Prescribed Burn Manager Certification course. If you need help, contact the Alabama Prescribed Fire Council at www.alpfc.org, the Alabama Forestry Commission at www.forestry.alabama.gov, the Alabama Wildlife Federation at www.alabamawildlife.org, your Alabama Forestry Commission county forester, your Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources wildlife biologist, or your Natural Resources Conservation Service agent. 🏠

Alabama law expressly states that "Prescribed Burning is a landowner property right and a land management tool that benefits the safety of the public, the environment, the natural resources, and the economy of Alabama." [Section 9-13-271(a)] ”



Mobile Botanical Gardens: The Longleaf TREASURE Forest

By Andrew Saunders, Vice President,
Board of Directors, Mobile Botanical Gardens

In forest management, your past predicts your future. So it is that the Longleaf TREASURE Forest of Mobile Botanical Gardens (MBG), which is so visibly improved today, required early planning and some courageous early support by leaders such as Mary Cousar, Ann Bedsole, Bill Finch, Mike Dow, Mary Jo Broussard, Keville Larson, and Fred Nation. All of these folks personally contributed wherewithal that allowed the establishment of a controlled-burn regime essential to sustain a longleaf woodland ecology.

In January of this year, through the auspices of the Alabama Forestry Commission and the cooperation of the City of Mobile Fire Department, MBG completed the fourth controlled burn over five years on the 27-acre forest. By all accounts, this was the most technically efficient burn of the series. It was notably successful because it was well-planned by a current committee of forest management members of MBG, because it was well-financed by a 2006 grant from the Sybil Smith Foundation, and because the early trailblazers named above set the forest management model for us to follow.

Come out and walk our Longleaf TREASURE Forest along the newly created Perimeter Loop Trail. Watch for new signage and informative entry points at two locations along the trail—coming soon. 📍

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Photos by Carolyn Saunders

Stimulus Funding to Assist Landowners with Prescribed Burning

By Dan Jackson, Registered Forester,
Protection Division Director,
Alabama Forestry Commission

Historically, prescribed burning has been one of the most cost-effective forest management practices available to landowners. However, liability, the absence of qualified vendors, and unfamiliarity with prescribed burning have been some of the obstacles to landowners seeking to implement prescribed burning on their property.

With the necessity for burning in the southern forest ecosystem becoming more apparent, emphasis needs to be placed on the practice of prescribed burning. From the primitive methods of Native Americans to the high technology our burners currently use, prescribed burning techniques have changed, but the reasons for doing it have not. Improved wildlife habitat, hazardous fuel reduction, insect/disease control, and enhanced aesthetics are some of the benefits one achieves by implementing a prescribed burn program.

Prescribed burning has recently received a "shot in the arm." The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) was awarded a grant on August 31, 2009, under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for "Prescribed Burning and Hazardous Fuel Reduction on Alabama's Rural Lands." This grant will give forest landowners an additional incentive to begin addressing dangerous fuel buildup on their forested stands. One of the main objectives of this program will be to provide cost-assistance funding to eligible landowners. This grant will facilitate the landowner in controlling hazardous forest fuels such as the buildup of pine straw, leaves, and other vegetation under mature trees.

Several criteria will be used to distinguish landowners who are in greatest need for this funding. Some criteria examples are the absence of prescribed burning, participation in other government cost-share programs, if permanent firebreaks are currently established, and the existence of a written forest management plan. The landowner's certification or his/her representative's certification as a Certified Prescribed Burn Manager (CPBM) is important to establish a level of understanding about the process of prescribed burning. This grant will also afford landowners the opportunity to attend training to become a CPBM. These criteria will be evaluated heavily concerning a property owner's desire to participate in this program.

The final details are being completed for the implementation of this ARRA grant. Interested landowners are encouraged to watch the AFC's website www.forestry.alabama.gov this summer for an announcement about the schedule and application process for the "Prescribed Burning and Hazardous Fuel Reduction on Alabama's Rural Lands" grant. 📍



*By Derrick Heckman, Registered Forester,
Wildland Powersaw Boss/Instructor, Alabama Forestry Commission*

When asked to write an article pertaining to the use of power saws for those unfamiliar with the proper handling and use of a chainsaw, an array of horror stories filled my head. Over the years, I have had the ongoing challenge of re-training many chainsaw operators across the state and nation in the safe and proper handling of chainsaws. I use the word “re-train” simply because most folks were taught to use a chainsaw by their father, grandfather, or some other mentor figure in their life that in most cases didn’t bother to read the directions that came with the saw in the first place. I would hope this article will bring back memories for some, close calls and learning experiences for others, but most of all remind each of us that a chainsaw is one of the most dangerous power tools that we will ever use.

Loggers and insurance companies have known for a number of years that logging is one of the most dangerous and life threatening careers on the books. Today, actual logging with chainsaws is limited; however, landowners, farmers, and outdoor enthusiasts have taken up the slack in power saw sales in the last 20 years. More and more accidents are recorded each year with these increases in sales. The first chapter of most saw operation manuals is dedicated to safety, and most of the entire manual is safety-related to ensure that the owner understands the liability associated with operation of the product.

With all of that said, let’s go over some basics. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is highly recommended by all manufacturers. Strong sturdy clothing that allows for movement but is not loose fitting is advised. Jewelry, long hair, and loose jackets are discouraged because they can

become caught in the moving parts of the saw. Good footwear with non-slip soles is important; steel-toed safety boots are advocated. Lastly, a hard-hat, ANSI-rated safety glasses, hearing protection, and leather gloves are good investments when using a power saw. Over the years I have always made the recommendation to landowners, firemen, and rescue groups to invest in chainsaw chaps. Chainsaw chaps are inexpensive insurance to prevent leg injuries. Chaps are filled with Kevlar (a trademark for a reinforcing material used in bulletproof vests) and bind the chain in the event the saw strikes the leg area of the operator. Studies show that the highest percentage of saw injuries occur around the legs; therefore, chaps are a good investment!

Let’s talk a little about your saw. Depending on the brand, the oil fill will be in the front of the saw toward the bar, and the gas mixture filler will be toward the handle. Remember, all saws use a gas mix; most will recommend 50:1 or 40:1 gas to two-cycle oil mix. Manufacturer bar oil is recommended, but substitute brands will work. Never use bar oil to mix with gas; only two-cycle oil can be used for the gas mix. Always fill your saw in a well ventilated area and wait until the saw has cooled before refilling. Never fuel indoors, and if you transport your saw inside the vehicle, purge (empty) the saw of fuel before transport.

Prior to operation, check your saw for proper condition including the trigger, chain tension, stop switch, chain catch, and most importantly, the chain brake. It is rare to find saws not fitted with chain brakes these days. Chain brakes were designed to prevent kick-back injuries most often associated with the tip contacting a hard surface.





Most arm, neck, and face injuries are the result of kickback, so the chain brake is very important to those that don't like to part their hair down the middle! Manufacturers are required to have chain brakes and reduced kickback (safety) chains at the point of sale. It is recommended that the normal consumer not modify or change the chain brake or type of chain sold with the saw. I would personally recommend replacing a saw without a chain brake and never buy a saw without the manufacturer-provided chain brake. Before, during, and after use of your saw, it is important to sharpen the chain and recheck many of the above safety items. A sharp chain will decrease your work and increase the life of your saw and saw bar. At each gas refill, take the time to sharpen your chain properly and check for any loose or broken parts.

Now let's discuss starting and using your saw. There are only two methods for starting a saw: on the ground with your foot firmly in the throttle well, or at arm's length with the handle secured between your thighs. NEVER drop start a saw (commonly seen as a wild throwing and jerking motion) because there is no control . . . none! If you are left-handed, learn to use your right hand; there is not a south-paw chainsaw, sorry.

There are generally three types of use for a chainsaw: limbing, bucking, and felling. With each type comes a different set of rules to follow and a different set of dangers.

"Limbing" is the systematic removal of limbs from a felled or standing tree. It is a very dangerous operation because this is where the biggest percentage of kickback injuries occurs. Sawyers and helpers (swampers) must constantly be aware of the saw tip to avoid kickback injuries to either individual. Helpers must remain clear of the saw which means twice the distance of reach. For example, a person who is 6 feet tall can reach 2 feet in any direction; a saw is generally 30-36 inches in total length; therefore, helpers need to keep twice the distance of total reach from the sawyer, or 10 feet.

When limbing, compression (wood that is bound) or tension (wood that is bent) is very important to recognize as you systematically de-limb the tree. Compression wood will bind the saw and produce kick-

back. Tension wood will break unexpectedly depending on the weight and can result in injury to the sawyer or helper. Never saw over shoulder height when limbing, and always be prepared to escape the tree in the event you cut the limb that is holding the weight. Even the smallest of trees can produce serious injury to someone holding a saw as the tree falls on top of them. Unfortunately, foot injuries are very common during limbing operations. Keep the tip of the saw in plain sight at all times.

The next type of operation is "bucking." Bucking was very common years ago when logs were cut to length and shipped to the saw mill. Today, bucking is a common term used for cutting the log into movable pieces or firewood. Firefighters and road department workers are often faced with removing logs from the highway and after they limb the tree, they begin bucking the remaining main stem into rolling size pieces that can be rolled to the edge of the road. Dangers often associated with bucking

involve kickback, pull-in, and push-back. *Kickback* occurs when the tip of the saw contacts something, usually on the back side of the log, and causes a reactive force in the sawyer's direction. Always watch the tip of the bar regardless of the situation; the tip is the most dangerous part of the saw.

Pull-in occurs when cutting with the bottom of the bar. As the chain spins around the bar, another reactive force will pull the motor and the sawyer toward the log. Although this is not as dangerous as kickback, it is a reactive force that the sawyer needs to be prepared to handle.

Push-back is the opposite of pull-in, where the saw is pushed toward the sawyer when using the top of the bar to buck the log. What makes push-back particularly dangerous is that when the saw is pushed back, eventually the tip of the saw will reach the log and create its own kickback situation and therefore endanger the sawyer. Physical strength, technique, and experience play an important role in bucking logs. Always remember, the tip of the bar is the key to preventing injuries while bucking logs.

Finally, there is "felling," the cutting of standing trees. I have seen many injuries in limbing and bucking, but felling is the most life threatening. I have seen livestock, pets, sheds, vehicles, and a couple of good houses destroyed while felling trees.

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CHAINSAW SAFETY 101

(Continued from page 23)

Inexperience and determination are a dangerous combination. Most often the tree we need to remove is in the way of progress. We cut down trees to improve our property, open a road, clear for a garden, or simply because it was leaning toward the house after the last thunderstorm. That last one is my favorite. Instead of hiring a professional, we are going to just hook a rope to that old tree and start cutting. Unfortunately for the insurance companies, the rope never holds and the homeowner has a lot of explaining.

There is not enough room in the magazine to properly explain the geometry associated with sizing up a tree, but trees with a noticeable lean should be felled in the direction of their lean – never against their lean or pulled with the family car. Trees that lean away from the house are always fine; it's those that lean toward the house that worry most homeowners late at night. When you have a tree that leans toward the house, the barn, or whatever you have insured, call a professional and have the tree taken down. In the event of lightning, don't wait more than six months to remove the tree. Insects, decomposition, and damage associated with lightning strikes will increase the cost of removal after six months and create a dangerous situation for the tree service.

As for those trees not endangering any personal property, there are several different methods available to cut a tree. Most folks are content with the traditional or conventional method of cutting a modified "L" shape in the direction of the fall, and then cutting the back cut until the tree simply falls. Generally, that is a safe method as long as you can run. For those of us that have a few years experience, a safer approach would be using a wedge and leaving a little holding wood in the tree so we can ease the tree over and calmly walk away while the tree begins to fall.

Whether you use the Humboldt, Conventional, or Open Face method to guide the direction of the fall, it is important to remember that control is the key to a successful felling opera-

tion. The back cut can be done in two ways, although I have seen countless modifications to the same routine. First, a sawyer can cut in from the back a couple inches above the horizontal plane of the face cut and simply cut levelly toward the face, until a measured amount of holding wood is reached. Set the wedge, and finish the felling process. The second method was always

prohibited by my father: bore cutting. Just like the former process, cut whatever face cut you prefer, but instead of cutting from the back, you bore through the tree from the side of the tree, parallel and above the back of your horizontal face cut, leaving a predetermined amount of holding wood to control the fall of the tree. This method requires a certain amount of skill and control of the saw since you are required to push the tip of the bar through the tree and kickback is highly probable. With practice, many sawyers prefer bore cutting since they can bore, set wedges, and determine their best route of escape while safely standing under the tree.

After the wedges are set and all outside influences are controlled (helpers, media, cars, livestock, family pet, truck, etc.), you can simply cut the remaining portion of wood at the rear of the tree and exit the stage at 45 degrees. Always exit, regardless of the size of the tree. **DO NOT** hang around to admire your work.

In closing, watch the tree; the saw is doing all the work. Your job is to protect your life and those around you. The tree is very dangerous; don't take your eyes off of it. All too often I work with sawyers who watch the saw. Learn to listen to the motor (RPMs) and it will tell you if the saw needs attention. Otherwise, watch the tree for dangers falling from above and act accordingly.

I hope this has given you a few pointers and brought back some memories of days gone by, but most of all, a reminder that complacency is a killer, especially when it comes to chainsaws. 🙏



A Taxing Question

By Jim Jeter, Registered Forester,

Statewide BMP Coordinator/Hardwood Specialist, Alabama Forestry Commission

Selling timber can be a source of great satisfaction to a landowner or it may be a source of surprise, frustration, and stress, especially for those landowners who make timber sales infrequently. I am reminded of this as I read a job announcement from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) seeking to hire a Registered Forester in the Birmingham area to perform tax audits on forestry activities. Relying on the expertise of your own Registered Forester in pre-sale/pre-tax situations should help you avoid the surprises. This should help you with site preparation and reforestation declarations as well.

Even though it is not tax season, the most asked question I get is, "How do I claim capital gains treatment for the timber I sold?" I usually ask the person how and when they acquired the land, the timber sold off the land, and did they establish a "land basis" and a "timber basis" at the time of acquisition?

Unfortunately, most of the landowners that call asking this question have not established anything other than they sold their timber and received "X" amount of dollars for it and now it is time to pay "the man." They usually learn very soon in the process that it is more advantageous to claim capital gains on the sale proceeds than to declare it as ordinary income.

This article is not meant to make a timber tax expert out of the ordinary landowner. The intention is to get landowners that have never sold timber – but *plan on* selling their timber – to consider tax treatments as part of their pre-harvest planning. Competent tax advice should be sought well before a sale. It is recommended that prior to making the sale you contact your CPA for clarification of the current tax laws. There are also various sources of information you can access on the Internet. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System, my-forest.com, the US Forest Service Cooperative Forestry, and the National Timber Tax websites provide tax information through webinars and publications that may help you better understand the tax implications of selling your timber. These sites are:

- www.aces.edu/
- www.my-forest.com
- www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/
- www.timbertax.org
- www.timbertaxadvice.com

There are some new terms and sources of income for forest landowners with which you need to become familiar. Payments are being made for environmental services – primarily carbon credits – and markets for woody biomass are expanding. Many of these type transactions taking place are not specifically addressed in existing tax law, according to William L. (Bill) Hoover of Purdue University's Department of Forestry and Natural Resources.

Hoover states that all income from whatever source is taxable, unless specifically excluded by an act of Congress and incorporated in the Internal Revenue Code. Some cost-share payments meet this exclusion. Timber sold as pulpwood for conversion to wood pellets or other non-traditional products is taxed as timber. If capital gains are desired for topwood, tops must be included in the original sales contract disposing of the timber. After-harvest sales do not qualify. This is just another good reason to have a written timber sale contract. Logging slash is the source of most woody biomass presently, and if not accounted for, does not qualify. There are two precedents that need to be considered if woody biomass sources are derived from short-rotation plantations. Both deal with the present age of the stand and the rotation length of the stand. This leaves energy plantations such as two- to three-year-old coppice cuttings in doubt. Surprised?

Carbon sequestration payments may qualify for capital gains treatment. However, the variables within any individual contract specifying the timing and amount of payments may affect whether payments qualify for capital gains treatment or have to be declared as ordinary income.

Also, effective for sales after May 28, 2009, a Form 1099-S is required for reporting lump sum sales or exchanges of standing timber, just like pay-as-cut type timber sales.

As you can see, there are both simple answers and some very complex answers, but there are numerous experts out there in tax land that can and will help you. You just have to ask. For answers to such "taxing questions," I suggest you contact one or more of the following:

- Dr. Linda Wang, National Timber Tax Specialist, US Forest Service
- William L. (Bill) Hoover, Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, Purdue University
- John L. Greene, Research Forester, Southern Research Station, US Forest Service
- Mark Batson, Forest Products Technical Advisor, IRS

Sources:

Hoover, William L., *The Forestry Source*, January 2010, Vol. 15, No. 1. "Tax Treatment of Environmental Service Payments and Woody Biomass."

"Selling Your Timber" – Alabama Forestry Commission brochure, 2010.



Eyes in the Sky

*By Brad Lang, Registered Forester,
Alabama Forestry Commission*

“**W**hat do you do for the Commission?” This is a question I often get from the public, which can turn a brief introduction between two people into a ten to fifteen minute conversation discussing the various duties conducted by the field staff of the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC). Going through college, I decided to be a forester by profession. After watching “Top Gun” in the movie theater at age 10, I knew I wanted to be a pilot by hobby. Never did it cross my mind to be a pilot for a forestry agency. But there are some gentlemen currently employed by the AFC that did just that.

The primary duties of the AFC pilots include flying their areas to perform reconnaissance of wildfires and insects such as southern pine beetle, provide aerial monitoring of forestry activities such as harvesting operations to detect possible water quality issues, and provide eyes in the sky for our firefighters to assist with the suppression of wildfires by guiding them to the fires. They also provide information about the wildfires and assist our law enforcement team in capturing arsonists.

Forestry pilots are well skilled in their profession. They must be instrument rated, have a current Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Class 2 medical certification with a commercial license, a minimum of 1,000 flight hours, and perform a satisfactory check ride in each type of aircraft to be flown. The Forestry Commission owns three Cessna 182s, one federal excess 185 tail wheel, and two Cessna 206s. All of these provide needed speed, room, and proper load rating required for the job.

Aviation is nothing new to forestry across the globe. It plays a major role in the US Forest Service and other state forestry agencies in several ways. As with our pilots, aviation is used to scout fires, monitor forestry activities from the air, transport cargo, and conduct educational studies. Planes are famously known for providing suppression measures on fires by dropping fire retardant and water.

Flying is not a job for everyone. When the AFC performs recon missions for southern pine beetles, one or two “spotters” ride along to scout the forests for beetle activity while the pilot navigates the predetermined flight lines across the flight area.

These spotters are difficult to recruit because the job is not an easy one. Some people may find it hard to ride carnival rides . . . well, flying at a minimum of 1,000 feet AGL (above ground level) in the middle of July with temperatures “cooking” you around 95 to 100 degrees, the last thing you want to do is find a beetle spot!

When a spot is detected, the pilot then performs several tight spiraling circles to gather needed data. This data includes a pinpoint location determined by establishing a latitude and longitude using GPS (Global Positioning System), determining the size of the spot in acres, and counting the number of trees infested by beetles. After collection, this data is turned in to create a map that is sent to the county field staff for ground verification. Once verified as an active spot, the landowner receives a letter of notification and contact information to receive assistance from the AFC in controlling the infestation. It is very demanding work on the individuals involved, and let’s just say, some get their stomach turned inside out – literally. Speaking as a pilot myself, this is not a comforting experience. It just adds another constraint to the demanding career of being a forestry pilot – but also to the laughter after it is all over.

In case you have always wondered why you must have a burn permit for any fire over a quarter acre, this is the main reason. When our pilots fly wildfire reconnaissance and locate a fire, they first check to see if it is permitted, then look for anyone on the tract, or if firebreaks are installed. If no permit is issued for

the area, the pilot calls in the fire and county ground personnel check it out. Permits are free to obtain and help us determine where fires are supposed to be.

The Alabama Forestry Commission began using aircraft in the 1970s while still manning fire towers. In the early 1990s, fire towers were decommissioned and the use of aircraft to spot fires went into full swing. As historical landmarks, fire towers still exist today and are used to house AFC and volunteer fire department (VFD) radio systems.

When storms and hurricanes blow in, aircraft operations are vital to the forestry community to survey and evaluate the extent of the damage caused by the storm. This method really helps speed up the recovery effort to salvage all timber possible. As a firefighter in Tuscaloosa and Walker counties, the aviation program delivers an effort too valuable on which to place a price tag. Not only do our pilots find fires in their early stage of development, but they also help navigate us closer to the fire, while keeping us updated on its status to keep us safe. Today, more and more roads are constructed and the pilots can give us real-time data and information pertaining to such ground references to aid in suppression. AFC pilots are equipped with GPS units and cameras with built-in GPS receivers that provide us with valuable “bird’s eye view” photos of the action

that we can then use in debriefing and apply in training. Another valuable asset they provide is next-day reconnaissance of a fire to ensure it is suppressed. Control lines, especially around wildfires of large size, are difficult to maintain. Checking from the



Photo by Brad Fite

Retired AFC pilot Ralph Montgomery with full-time pilots Jack Wingate, Jim Woods (now retired), Phil Montgomery, and Charles Squires.

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Eyes in the Sky

(Continued from page 27)

air gives the firefighters a break and the reassurance that the fire is “cold” (controlled), or aids in re-evaluating suppression efforts.

“Top Guns” of the AFC

Currently, the Alabama Forestry Commission has three full-time pilots: Charles Squires in the Southwest Region, Jack Wingate in the Northeast Region, and Phil Montgomery in the North Region.

At the time this article was being written, Jim Woods in the Northwest Region retired (April 1, 2010). The agency also contracts with four aviation services: Walt Williams of Vaiden Flying Services and Kenny Hicks of Kenny Hicks Flying Services – both based in Centreville, Buck Williams in the Southeast Region, and B&G Flying Services in Clanton.

What a wealth of valuable flight experience . . . many of these pilots have logged over 10,000 hours and achieved multiple ratings throughout their careers. I had the privilege of sitting down with them recently at Mr. Wood’s retirement gathering, listening to their “hanger talk,” a term pilots use when they sit around and tell stories of various aspects of flying. These guys definitely have some tales to tell. “We have come a long way from the way it used to be,” said Jack Wingate. “I had a large loud speaker mounted on the aircraft with a siren. If I saw a break-over [in the fire] or needed to tell the ranger [on the ground] something, I



It was a reunion of sorts for some pilots who attended the retirement luncheon for Ray Jones. Pictured left to right are Phil Montgomery, Jim Spradley, Jim Mosley, Ed Long, Walter Williams, Walt Dixon, Roy Dickey, Ralph Montgomery, Ray Jones, George Simpson, Langston Rowe, Betty Norris, Jim Bass, Brian Cooper, Jack Wingate, and Danny Mayfield. All are current or former AFC pilots except for Long, who is with Montgomery Aviation.

AFC Pilot Reunion - photo thought to have been taken in 1992, courtesy of Jim Woods.

would ‘buzz’ him with the siren on and he would shut off the tractor. Then I could talk to him over the loudspeaker. We have come a long way with our technology over the years, but our job has not really changed.” Wingate goes on to state, “We are the eyes for the people on the ground. Our job is to help them accomplish the mission.” Today’s FAA would love that!

Southwest Pilot Charles Squires recalled a special flight of his own. He talked about a day that he and Southwest Regional Forester Gary Cole flew fire reconnaissance in north Mobile County, when they actually observed someone starting fires. “We really worked the radio to the Citronelle Police Department to intercept them. There were times the pickup was doing over 100 mph; they [the suspects] knew we were on to them.” Squires went on to say they attended the court hearing when the judge told the men that if they didn’t plead guilty, he had a jury ready

to hear the case, and that he just couldn’t wait to hear “the story about the airplane chasing down the truck.”

These are just a couple stories from the “hanger talk” and trust me, there are more where these came from. It just goes to show how important these pilots are and how valuable their services are to the citizens of the state, landowners, and firefighters. Budgets are getting tighter every year and pilots have not been replaced. As a state agency responsible for protecting Alabama’s natural resources, our pilots are a key essential to providing an effective protection blanket for our customers.

Stanley Anderson, the AFC’s Wildland Urban Interface Coordinator (South), is also a private pilot by hobby. “Over the years



This aerial photo was taken by AFC Forester Brad Lang, flying with AFC pilot Jim Woods in Shelby County on a wildfire investigation.

the AFC pilots have established a highly reliable fire operations relationship that is greatly respected by wildland firefighters, VFDs, resource managers, and forest landowners. This valuable service cannot be economically replaced by other means. Our experienced pilots offer real-time feedback to ground units about fire behavior; they often recommend alternative courses of action based on the terrain and values at risk. These services are even more critical in the wildland urban interface where homes and businesses are at risk,” according to Anderson. He went on to say, “Our pilots can see a broader landscape and possess a keener situational awareness from their perspective. They can advise the Incident Commander of the need for more resources and alert units to developments that can’t be seen from the ground. Safety is of paramount importance. I know of many firefighters and law enforcement officers who can provide personal testimonials as to how AFC pilots have saved the day.”

Anderson also related a time he was on a fire in Cherokee County when Northeast pilot Jack Wingate provided valuable feedback to a 20-man volunteer firefighter hand crew that had no idea the fire was advancing uphill towards their position. “Without that pilot’s professionalism and vigilance, the outcome might have been tragic for this hand crew,” he stated.

Phil Montgomery of the North Region is a second-generation forestry pilot, starting as a seasonal pilot in 1986 and taking over his Dad’s duties as a full-time pilot in 1994. Montgomery stated, “Since then I have seen a lot of fires, tornado damage, beetle damage, and helped in search and rescue. Our duties over the years have included guiding water drops from helicopters, directing VFDs to protect structures, and having our ground crews

attack fires saving structures, houses, livestock, and high-value timber.” Phil once assisted Flight Service Station (FSS), an air traffic facility that provides information and services to aircraft pilots, in recovering a downed aircraft. His skills, experience, and training helped him locate the downed aircraft and guide emergency personnel into the wooded area to retrieve the injured parties.

There is no “Top Gun” trophy or plaque on the wall for the best pilot when it comes to these guys, but in my opinion they rank among the very best of all forestry pilots. They work further behind (or above) the scenes than the rest of us as wildland firefighters, but they do not go unnoticed. I am fortunate to share the same view as they do and work with them on a regular basis. It always gives me a good feeling to hear those piston engines roar over a fire I am fighting, knowing I am about to get valuable information from the “Eyes in the Sky.”



Photo by Brad Fite

“Wash Down” – When AFC aircraft pilot Jim Woods taxied down the runway of Tuscaloosa Regional Airport toward the hangar for the final time, family and friends gathered to watch as a fire truck sprayed a cascade of water over his plane. This ceremony is often performed for retiring pilots on their last flight. Woods retired in April of this year with 16 years of dedicated service.





Alabama TREASURE Forest Association Conference and Tour

September 17 & 18, 2010 Troy, AL
"2010: The Year of Family and Friends"

Friday, September 17, 2010 Conference

Pike County Cattlemen's Park – Troy, AL

- 8:30 - 10:00 am – Registration
- 10:30 am - 12:30 pm – ATFA Luncheon with Special Guest
- 12:30 pm – Rodeo Performance
- 2:00 - 5:30 pm – Sessions
Session Topics:
 Land Management
 The Role Birds of Prey Play
 Feral Hog Management
 Self Reliance & Sustainability on Your Land
- 7:00 - 9:00 pm – ATFA Banquet & Auction

Saturday, September 18, 2010 Tour

- 7:30 am – Prayer Breakfast
- 8:30 am – Wagons load for forestry tour.
 Visit the beautiful Renfroe Family
 TREASURE Forest in Pike County.
 See and learn how wildlife, recreation,
 timber management, and aesthetic beauty
 can be great educational opportunities.

Hotel Information

Conference Primary Hotel: Courtyard by Marriott Room Rate: \$89.00
Hotel room block held until September 3, 2010

To make reservations call: (334) 566-0540 or visit us at <http://cwp.marriott.com/mgmtr/atfaconference/>

**For more information, call ATFA at (251) 675-7481 or toll free at (888) 240-4694.
Register on line at www.atfa.net**

Regional Forestry Events for 2010

North Region

Jackson County - Raymond Jones Property
Thursday, October 14, 2010
Contact: Lynn Washington, AFC Work Unit Manager
(256) 574-3217

Central Region

Greene County - Dr. Finley McRae Property
Thursday, September 30, 2010
Contact: Marian Beck or Patty Presley-Fuller, Greene County Extension Office
(205) 372-3401

South Region

Covington County - Gail and Phillip Jones Property
Tuesday, October 5, 2010
Contact: Chuck Simon, Covington County Extension Office
(334) 222-1125



Patriotic Employer

On behalf of the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), Richard Little presented State Forester Linda Casey with the “Patriotic Employer Award” on May 27, 2010. The recognition was given “for contributing to the National Security and protecting Liberty and Freedom by supporting employee participation in America’s National Guard and Reserve Force.”

Over the last several years, agency employees have served in numerous campaigns – some being deployed more than once – including Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, as well as various hurricane and flood support details, and most recently, the Gulf oil spill. These men and women have served in various capacities with the Alabama Army National Guard, the Air Force Reserve, and Marine Reserve units.

Accepting the award on behalf of the Alabama Forestry Commission, Casey commented that this award was a tribute for the whole organization. She also emphasized the importance of the AFC’s continued support of its National Guard and Reserve personnel and the job that they do protecting our state and country in time of need. 🇺🇸

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Richard Little, Vice State Chair South, Alabama Committee, ESGR; AFC Regional Forester Hank McKinley, also Command Sergeant Major with the Alabama Army National Guard who nominated the agency for the award; and State Forester Linda Casey.



Richard Johnson



Leitha McClain



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Wild Blueberries

By Tracy Nelson, Area Biologist,
Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Many people enjoy the sweet taste of tame blueberries found in backyards throughout Alabama. However, there are also five species of wild blueberries in Alabama that are beneficial to people and wildlife. These five species of wild blueberries (*Vaccinium* species) are Elliott's blueberry, tree sparkleberry, dryland blueberry, ground blueberry, and deerberry. These wild blueberry species prefer acid soils, plenty of sunlight, and newly cleared land. Blueberry bushes also spring up in areas that have been recently burned. Fruits vary in color, including black, blue, green, and yellow. Blueberries ripen from August to October and often persist into winter.

Blueberry fruits are eaten by many species of wildlife including turkey, quail, ruffed grouse, black bear, deer, chipmunks, rabbits, foxes, squirrels, and raccoons. Songbird species such as the scarlet tanager, robin, cardinal, bluebird, and brown thrasher also eat the blueberry fruit. Deer readily browse some blueberry foliage with the greatest use occurring in April and May. Winter browsing also occurs in some areas.

Wild blueberry species are also important to people, and can be used much in the same manner as their domestically grown counterparts. The berries can be eaten raw, cooked, or dried. They can be added to muffins, cakes, and pies to make delicious desserts. Historically, Native Americans dried the berries and added them to a combination of pounded venison jerky and fat to make a high-energy food called pemican. Wild blueberries can also be used to make jams and jellies.

With a nutritional value similar to their tame counterparts, blueberries contain antioxidant compounds that show promise in reversing some of the effects of aging.

Historically, one species of wild blueberry (tree sparkleberry) was used by some herbalists to treat a variety of illnesses such as high blood pressure, heart problems, and diabetes.

In summary, many of the wildlife species in Alabama benefit greatly from the five species of wild blueberries growing throughout the state. Both the fruit and the foliage provide a high quality food for wildlife as well as humans who enjoy using wild blueberries in a variety of ways. ☝

Photos by Scott NeSmith, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

