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# The Florida Forest Steward

*A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals*

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## Stewardship Landowner of the Year -- Where Are You?

During the past six years, over 700 Florida landowners have received forest stewardship management plans. Almost 75 of them have attained the *Stewardship Forest* certification in recognition of their devotion of time, effort, and funds to following their plans and improving their lands.

Now, we are looking for the *Stewardship Forest* landowner who has made the extra effort above and beyond what is needed for certification. We want to recognize this landowner as Florida's 1996 Stewardship Forest Landowner of the Year .

*What does it take to be eligible for this honor?* If any (or all) of the following statements sound like what you have been doing on your property, you may be the landowner we are looking for.

*\* You undertake management activities that improve timber growth, wildlife habitat, conservation of soil and water, recreation, aesthetics, and (as applicable) grazing forage.*

*\*You have made significant improvements, as outlined above, to your property since you began your Stewardship management program.*

*\*You perform much of the forest management work on the property yourself.*

*\*You have promoted the Forest Stewardship Program and encouraged other landowners to follow a stewardship land ethic .*

The landowner who earns this honor will be recognized with a ceremony and presented with a special plaque and sign. The winner will also receive a piece of equipment, such as a chain saw, that would come in handy on most forest properties.

If you are interested in becoming the 1996 Stewardship Landowner of the Year, or if you know of a landowner who deserves this honor, contact your local County Forester, Resource Biologist, Cooperative Extension Director, or natural resource consultant. The deadline for nominations is August 31. One Landowner of the Year will be selected from each of the five Stewardship Program regions, and the Florida statewide winner will be chosen from among those five.

## Regulations and the Forest Stewardship Program

Recently, we visited an unhappy Forest Stewardship Program participant. The local Water Management District (WMD) had cited him for building a road through a wetland without first obtaining a permit, and for obstructing surface water flow by not using culverts. The landowner thought that he did not have to worry about permits since he had a stewardship plan.

We hope that other landowners are not under this assumption. A stewardship plan does

not substitute for any permit or required action. The resource professionals who write the plans try to suggest practices that minimize the landowner's expenses, cause the least amount of site disturbance, and involve as little regulation as possible. If permits cannot be avoided, the plan writers try to let landowners know what permits are needed and where to obtain them.

If this landowner had mentioned during plan preparation that he wanted to improve access to this area of his property to harvest timber, we would have discussed the need for permits and possibly some alternative ways to get the job done.

We are not leaving this landowner, or any other Stewardship Program participant, without assistance. Right now we are working with this landowner and the WMD to resolve the problem as painlessly as possible. We are also trying to help another landowner obtain county permits for wetland wildlife habitat improvement as recommended in his plan.

By setting an example of ecologically sound and profitable forest management Stewardship landowners can help convince the public that additional regulations are not needed.

## Project Learning Tree

Each of us needs a basic understanding of how earth's natural systems function and of how our economy and our lives depend on the healthy working of those systems. Children need to start building that understanding when they are young. Toward that end, in 1976, school teachers and natural resource professionals began Project Learning Tree (PLT) in schools in the western U.S. This innovative environmental education program has been such a great success that it is now used in all 50 States and several other countries.

Here are a few of the favorable comments about PLT:

*\* The hands-on activities are enjoyed by both teachers and students, teaching them how to think, not what to think.*

*\*PLT enables the dedicated school teachers of tomorrow's leaders to provide exciting, fun-filled learning experiences which help to develop critical thinking skills.*

*\*Young people who experience PLT have the opportunity to learn about the valuable natural resources upon which we all depend. They also have a chance to explore the importance of trees and forests to our society from both the economic and environmental standpoints.*

*\*PLT exposes students to the challenges of decision-making and conflict resolution regarding land use and resource allocation.*

In 1977, Florida was one of the first eastern states to bring PLT to its schools. Florida's PLT program grew slowly at first. Before 1991, less than 200 teachers per year were trained to include PLT in their lessons. But, in 1994 PLT trained about 1200 teachers and in 1995, about 1600. That remarkable achievement needs to keep growing. Each year about 2,000 new public school teachers are hired in



Florida--and that does not include our many private schools. Much work remains to be done before PLT's seeds can be planted in every classroom.

There are several ways that owner's of private, non-industrial forest lands can become involved in PLT:

*\*Attend a one-day PLT teacher training workshop. You'll come away with first hand understanding of this important program. You'll receive your own copy of the PLT activity guide so you can see the methods teachers use to make PLT part of classroom activities. Also, because a natural resource professional helps to lead each workshop and all the many benefits of forests are discussed, you may get some new ideas for managing your own land.*

*\*Tell local teachers, principals, and school board members about PLT and put them in touch with the PLT organization so that steps can be taken to hold a teacher training workshop in your area.*

*\*Sponsor a workshop or help find other local sources of funding. PLT is not a government "handout". In each town or county where a training is held, financial support to cover some workshop costs must come from local businesses or individuals.*

*\*If you know a forester, wildlife biologist, or other natural resource professional who is not yet involved in PLT, encourage them to take part. Natural resource professionals who can help train teachers are especially needed in south Florida.*

Project Learning Tree is teachers and natural resource professionals working together so that tomorrow's leaders--in today's classrooms--will have a sound and balanced understanding of forests and the many benefits they provide. Teachers, natural resource professionals, and forest landowners are encouraged to get involved in PLT and help school children have fun getting ready to be responsible citizens in the 21st century. For more information about PLT contact:

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## **Southern Pine Beetle Update**

"As long as we have lots of loblolly pine, we'll have more frequent, more widespread, and more destructive southern pine beetle (SPB) outbreaks than our area has known in the past (when loblolly pine was much less common in Florida)." That view, stated by a Florida Division of Forestry (DOF) scientist, is shared by many researchers and practicing foresters familiar with the SPB. In northern Florida, in the last 25-40 years loblolly pine has colonized many old fields and pastures and had been widely planted for timber production.

In March, DOF Entomologists conducted a systematic SPB trapping program. Since 1986, this type of survey has been widely used throughout the south as a way to predict SPB activity. Predictions have proven to be accurate 75-85% of the time. In April, the prediction for northern Florida was that the heavy SPB outbreaks of the last two years would not occur in 1996. However, DOF did not drop it's guard and continued aerial surveys to pick up signs of any SPB outbreaks as early as possible.

So far this year, DOF's continuing surveillance has shown that forecast to be accurate ... with one major exception. There is now a rip-roaring southern pine beetle outbreak in southern Hamilton County, along the Suwannee River, with some "spots" in adjoining areas of Suwannee, Madison, and Columbia Counties. Timber company lands, State Forests, and non-industrial private holdings have all been affected. Dense plantations as well as older natural stands are involved. The severity of this outbreak is attributed to the

vast amount of preferred host material--loblolly pine--that is available. In this particular infestation the attacks have not yet involved slash, longleaf or other pines besides loblolly.

To try to stop the spread of the beetles (and to salvage the wood of the dead and dying trees), the owners have loggers "cutting like crazy" in and around the Hamilton Co. infestations. We hope everyone is following the correct precautions for handling this wood: The mill should be informed in advance that infested wood is coming in. Once at the mill, the wood and bark of the infested trees should be processed immediately, killing all SPB eggs, larvae, pupae, and adults present.

Hurricanes and SPB outbreaks have taught the state government that it is sometimes unwise to follow all the standard rules for cutting trees on State lands. To get infested and at-risk trees rapidly removed and bring SPB outbreaks under control, a new "fast track procedure" is now being followed on affected Water Management District and State Forest lands. This arrangement seems to be working well this year; loggers start work in the woods only about three weeks after an SPB infestation is first spotted on State lands.

So far, in this year's Hamilton Co. outbreak no premerchantable stands have been attacked. However, 1995 infestations included some five year old stands on company lands. The company bulldozed the infested areas and buffers around them. This worked pretty well. With the tree trunks lying exposed in the sun, heat killed most of the beetles in them. Also, this procedure disrupted the chemical communications that the insects use to attack trees in overwhelming numbers; the beetles that did emerge from the felled trees did not start new outbreaks.

SPBs are present in other areas of north Florida this year, but, with the help of other kinds of bark beetles, they are mainly just taking out scattered trees that have been weakened or wounded by lightning or other factors. They are not attacking nearby healthy trees. That is how SPBs almost always operated before changes in land use provided them with vast, dense natural stands and plantations of their preferred host, loblolly pine.

The first easily noticed sign of an SPB outbreak in your woods is a group--a half dozen trees or more--of dying pines (trees with mostly yellowing or red needles). This would be most likely to occur in a loblolly stand. However, when an outbreak gets going, other pines, even longleaf, may be attacked. In an SPB infestation, the dying trees will usually have many popcorn size "pitch tubes," up and down the trunk, where sap has oozed out of the holes where the beetles bored in. If the victim trees were highly stressed before the beetle attack, pitch tubes may not be present, but reddish dust from the beetles' boring through the bark may be seen around the tree on spider webs, leaves, and cracks in the bark. Peel some loose bark from a dead tree. Winding, S-shaped galleries (made by the tunneling adult beetles) on the inside of the loose bark are a telltale sign of SPBs. In the kind of SPB presence that is cause for alarm, the beetles attack healthy looking green pines near the dying ones. Pitch tubes 10-20 feet up the trunk are the first sign of the attack on green trees. As more beetles attack the tree, more pitch tubes appear higher and lower on the trunk.

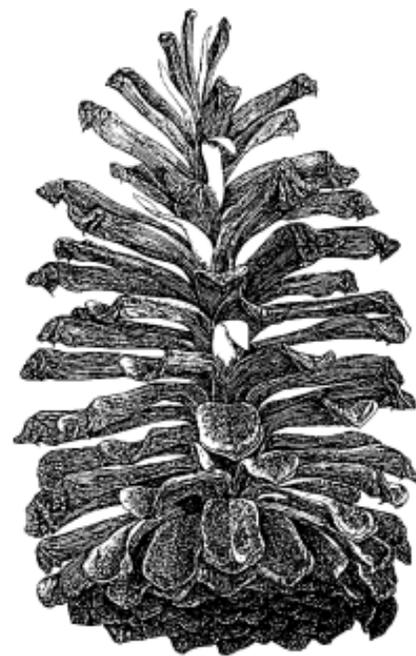
If you come across what looks like an active SPB infestation in your woods, contact a knowledgeable forester. If it is indeed a spreading SPB "spot", try to contain the damage: with the forester's guidance, bring in loggers to take out the infested and at-risk trees. In Florida today, 95% or more of the reported SPB "spots" are first noticed during aerial surveys.

For more information about the Southern Pine Beetle, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service office or County Forester.

**Heads Up for the 1996 Longleaf Seed Crop!**

(We gleaned the following information from a longleaf pine management workshops recently put on by Tall Timbers).

As many of you know, longleaf pine seed production varies considerably from year to year and also from area to area. In a given area, five to ten years may pass between good seed crops. 1996 is shaping up to be a "mast year" with exceptional longleaf cone production! In fact, this bumper crop extends beyond the bounds of Florida and may cover the entire range of longleaf. This creates an excellent opportunity for naturally regenerating longleaf pine stands.



Longleaf seeds fall from the cones from mid-late October through November. Longleaf seed is larger and heavier than that of the other southern pines. The wind does not carry it far, the rule of thumb being roughly a distance equal to the height of the parent tree. These seeds cannot easily penetrate a heavy ground cover; they need bare mineral soil on which to germinate.

For natural regeneration of longleaf, it is best to clear away ground cover and duff with prescribed fire within a year before seed fall. Lands that are well-maintained through the use of regular prescribed burning should be in good shape to catch this year's seed fall. Land that has not been burned and has a thick ground cover of woody and herbaceous plants can be treated by mowing, disking, and/or raking to expose bare soil. Carefully applied, growing season burning may be another option in limited cases. You may want to consider letting some old wildlife food plots seed in to longleaf this fall. If your longleaf stand has a well-developed understory of gallberry and saw palmetto that has not been thoroughly burned in the last couple of years, it's probably not practical to get a good seed bed ready this year. But, if you begin a program of regular and frequent prescribed fires, you can have the stand ready for the next good seed crop.

Longleaf seed germinate soon after seed fall, usually within the first week. Look for seedlings on your land beginning in December. If an adequate number of seedlings are present, leave the areas you intend to regenerate out of your burning schedule for at least one season. Longleaf pine seedlings need protection from fire until they are at least one year old.

To take advantage of this year's good longleaf pine seed crop you need to follow these simple steps:

- 1) *Check your trees for cones.*
- 2) *Look over the ground cover in the areas you want to regenerate and take action to expose mineral soil as needed.*
- 3) *Check these areas for seedlings this winter.*
- 4) *If seedlings are present, leave the area out of the next season's burn.*

Natural regeneration is not the only way the abundant longleaf seed will be used. For those interested in direct seeding longleaf this coming fall/winter or next year, expect greater seed availability and, possibly, lower seed prices than usual. Also, expect more longleaf to be sown in nurseries and more longleaf seedlings to be available starting a year from this fall. (Don't expect prices of high quality longleaf seedlings to come down much; the price of the seed is a very small portion of the cost of producing a seedling.) But, animals other than humans will harvest most of this bumper crop: insects, mice, squirrels, migratory birds, and other small animals will feast on the nutritious seeds--and hawks and other predators may take prey that is a bit fatter than usual.

## Seeking More Cooperation and Less Regulation

The Safe Harbor program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) aims to get private landowners to voluntarily help protect endangered species. Enrolled landowners agree to create or maintain habitat suitable for certain endangered species. In turn, the government agrees that, even if the listed species takes up residence on enrolled land, the landowner will still have the freedom to convert that land to some other use. Safe Harbor is expected to bring about a net increase in both the population and habitat of the targeted endangered species, even if some of the new habitat is eventually converted to another use.

Before Safe Harbor, the laws designed to protect endangered species actually caused private landowners to avoid attracting these rare plants and animals to live on their lands. Landowners believed that once you have listed species living on your property, you can face severe restrictions on future timber harvests, conversion to agriculture, or real estate developments on that land. Since 1982, when "incidental takings" provisions were added to the Endangered Species Act, some private landowners have legally altered habitat where listed species lived, but only after a very difficult permitting process.

One of the most prominent endangered species in the southeast, the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW), requires a stand of mature longleaf pine with practically no trees and shrubs in the understory and midstory. Until now, owners of mature longleaf stands might have felt the need to "cut the timber before the bird gets here" to preserve long-term land use options.

Property owners in the sandhills region of North Carolina have enrolled 17,500 acres of potential RCW habitat in the Safe Harbor program. They have agreed in writing to clear understory hardwoods and take other measures to make or keep their longleaf stands attractive to the RCW. If RCWs come to live on those lands, the owner is still free--subject to the normal land use regulations that apply in that area--to alter that habitat, as long as the FWS is first given a chance to relocate the RCWs. The RCW population on private land in that part of North Carolina has been steadily declining. Now, with the voluntary cooperation of private landowners brought about by Safe Harbor, it is expected to increase.

Our source of information (the May/June 1996 issue of "Common Ground", a newsletter of the Conservation Fund) is unclear about whether landowners who already have endangered species on their lands can benefit from Safe Harbor. As far as we know, Safe Harbor is not yet working with private landowners in Florida. For more information about this promising program, contact the FWS or a Florida wildlife biologist.

### Florida Stumpage Prices, 1996, 1st Quarter (from Timber Mart-South)

Product	Region	Average	Range	&/Ton
Pine Pulpwood (\$/Std. Cord)	Northeast (1)	\$ 42	\$ 36-48	\$ 15
	Northwest (2)	\$ 37	\$ 30-43	
	Average	\$ 39		
Chip-n-Saw (\$/Std. Cord)	Northeast (1)	\$ 77	\$70-83	\$ 27
	Northwest (2)	\$ 69	\$61-77	
	Average	\$ 73		
Pine Sawtimber (\$/MBF Scrib.)	Northeast (1)	\$235	\$203-266	\$ 32
	Northwest (2)	\$248	\$208-289	
	Average	\$242		

Oak Sawtimber (\$/MBF Doyle)	Northeast (1)	\$110	\$ 91-128	\$12
	Northwest (2)	\$ 94	\$ 74-114	
	Average	\$102		
Mixed Hardwood Sawtimber (\$/MBF Doyle)	Northeast (1)	\$114	\$ 95-132	\$13
	Northwest (2)	\$116	\$ 92-140	
	Average	\$115		
Pine Plylogs (\$/MBF Scrib.)	Northeast (1)	\$285	\$267-303	\$45
	Northwest (2)	\$390	\$390-390	
	Average	\$338		
Power Poles (\$/MBF Scrib.)	Northeast (1)	\$341	\$327-354	\$47
	Northwest (2)	\$367	\$345-389	
	Average	\$354		
Hardwood Pulp (\$/Std. Cord)	Northeast (1)	\$ 14	\$ 11-16	\$ 5
	Northwest (2)	\$ 14	\$ 8-19	
	Average	\$ 14		

**Reminder:** When sharing this price information with others, please include the following cautionary remarks: This information is based on sales in Jan.-March, 1996; since then, general market conditions may have changed significantly. Also, prices vary depending on size of tract, access, amount and quality of timber, other stand conditions, and distance to mills. For example, especially during periods of wet weather, timber on "high and dry" tracts tends to bring better prices.



### Florida Stumpage Prices, 1996, 2nd Quarter

(from Timber Mart-South)

Product	Region	Average	Range	&/Ton
Pine Pulpwood (\$/Std. Cord)	Northeast (1)	\$ 40	\$ 35-45	\$14
	Northwest (2)	\$ 34	\$ 30-37	
	Average	\$ 37		
Chip-n-Saw (\$/Std. Cord)	Northeast (1)	\$ 73	\$ 64-82	\$26
	Northwest (2)	\$ 67	\$ 60-73	
	Average	\$ 70		
Pine Sawtimber (\$/MBF Scrib.)	Northeast (1)	\$249	\$210-287	\$33
	Northwest (2)	\$239	\$195-283	
	Average	\$244		
Oak Sawtimber (\$/MBF Doyle)	Northeast (1)	\$ 94	\$ 74-114	\$12
	Northwest (2)	\$121	\$ 91-151	
	Average	\$107		
Mixed Hardwood Sawtimber (\$/MBF Doyle)	Northeast (1)	\$100	\$ 70-130	\$13
	Northwest (2)	\$128	\$109-147	
	Average	\$114		

Pine Plylogs (\$/MBF Scrib.)	Northeast (1)	\$242	\$224-261	\$34
	Northwest (2)	\$266	\$238-294	
	Average	\$254		
Power Poles (\$/MBF Scrib.)	Northeast (1)	\$316	\$286-346	\$46
	Northwest (2)	\$372	\$339-405	
	Average	\$344		
Hardwood Pulp (\$/Std. Cord)	Northeast (1)	\$ 13	\$ 10-17	\$ 5
	Northwest (2)	\$ 16	\$ 11-20	
	Average	\$ 15		

**Reminder: When sharing this price information with others, please include the following cautionary remarks: This information is based on sales in April-June, 1996; since then, general market conditions may have changed significantly. Also, prices vary depending on size of tract, access, amount and quality of timber, other stand conditions, and distance to mills. For example, small tracts, particularly those in and around urban areas, tend to bring lower prices.**

**A University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service and Florida Division of Forestry joint project:**

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