

[Back to
Extension Home Page](#)

[Back to
Newsletter Index](#)

[Back to
Extension Publications](#)

[Back to Florida Forestry Information](#)

The Florida Forest Steward

A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals



Volume 5, No. 4

1998



[An Unusual Year](#)

[Cost-share Programs for Forestry Practices](#)

[The Great Florida Birding Trail - An Income Opportunity for Private Landowners](#)

[Tax Tips for Forest Landowners](#)

[Master Loggers Directory](#)

[Upcoming Workshops](#)

[Conferences](#)

[Timber Price Update](#)

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

Chris Latt (editor), School of Forest Resources & Conservation, UF, P.O. Box 110410, Gainesville, FL 32611-0410, (352) 846-2375 or CRLA@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu

Alan Long (co-editor), School of Forest Resources & Conservation, UF, (352) 846-0891 or AJL@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu

Charles Marcus (co-editor), Florida Division of Forestry, 3125 Conner Blvd, Tallahassee, FL 32309-1650, (850) 414-9907 or marcus@doacs.state.fl.us

An Unusual Year

I once heard of a traditional curse (Arabic, I think) that went something like this—"May you live in interesting times." Interesting times...a curse? Well, think about it. The most "interesting" times are characterized by disruptive events that force us from our normal routines and make business-as-usual an impossibility. I'm sure the curse refers to major upheavals like war and plague, but on a lesser scale, Florida's forest landowners endured interesting times during 1998.

The year started with heavy rains and flooding that made timber harvest and replanting extremely difficult, if not impossible, in many areas. Along with the rain, some parts of Florida suffered a double whammy when severe storm fronts spawned a number of devastating tornadoes. The tornado outbreak of 1998 was one of the worst in our state's history. The rain eventually stopped, of course, and when it did, it really stopped. Floods gave way to drought and the tinder-dry forests burned on a scale we have not witnessed in Florida during modern times. About 500,000 acres of timber were burned by the time the rain returned in mid-July.

"Enough already," you might think, but the mischievous weather gods (or the combination of weather variables, for our more scientifically inclined readers) still had a few tricks to play, at least in south Florida and the Panhandle. Hurricane Georges tore into these areas with high winds and drenching rain in late September. Many parts of the state are again in an extended drought, providing a final flourish to this unusual year.

Let's hope that 1999 will be a bit more benevolent and perhaps a little less interesting for Florida's forest landowners. In that spirit, all of us in the Forest Stewardship Program wish you a prosperous New Year. May we all be blessed with less interesting times in 1999.



Cost-share Programs for Forestry Practices

Two Private forest landowners have access to a number of cost-share programs that provide financial assistance for specified forest and wildlife management practices. Each program has specific objectives, eligible practices, eligibility requirements, reimbursement limits, and administering agencies, making for a lot of confusion among folks who might benefit from participation. To help cut through some of the confusion, we briefly describe several of the most relevant programs in this article. For more information on a particular program, contact the administering agency. Local listings for government agencies are provided in the blue pages of your phone book. Federal agencies such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Services Agency (FSA) are listed under U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Florida Division of Forestry (DOF) is listed under Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services. The Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (FGFWFC) is also listed under State of Florida.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Objective: To protect erodible soils, and maintain or enhance water quality and wildlife habitat by removing sensitive areas from agricultural production.

Administering agency: FSA

Technical agencies: NRCS, DOF, FGFWFC

Practices covered: tree planting, permanent wildlife habitat, various other natural resource management practices

Eligible lands: erosion index greater than 8 unless in a Conservation Priority Area (for example, lands included in the National Longleaf Pine CPA); and a farming history of at least 2 years in the past 5.

Eligible landowners : N/A

Maximum reimbursement: annual rental payment up to \$50,000 per year; 50% of average practice cost

Practice lifespan: 10-15 years

Enrollment dates: Usually two 1-month periods each year. Check with FSA.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Objective: To identify local resource conservation priorities, and address concerns such as soil erosion, water quality, wildlife habitat, waste management and others.

Administering agency: NRCS; sign up at FSA

Technical agencies: NRCS, DOF, FGFWFC

Practices covered: Wildlife habitat, and soil and water conservation practices, including tree planting, timber stand improvement, and various non-forestry practices (forestry is not a specific objective of EQIP)

Eligible lands: Priority is given to highly erodible land and parcels in Conservation Priority Areas. Priority Areas can change annually, so call the administering agency to check.

Eligible landowners: N/A

Maximum reimbursement: up to 75% of average practice cost, up to \$10,000

Practice lifespan: 5-10 years

Enrollment dates: Usually one enrollment period each year. This year it will run from February 1 to March 5. Check with the FSA.

Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)

Objective: To encourage the establishment of trees in order to increase the nation's supply of timber products, and to enhance other forest amenities .

Administering agency: NRCS

Technical agencies: NRCS, DOF

Practices covered: tree planting, timber stand improvement, site prep for natural regeneration

Eligible lands: minimum 20-acre treatment area, suitable for pine production

Eligible landowners: maximum 1000-acre productive forestland ownership

Maximum reimbursement: 65% of average practice cost, up to \$10,000

Practice lifespan: 10 years

Enrollment dates: Usually one 30-day period each year, in the Fall. Check with NRCS.

Stewardship Incentives Program (SIP)

Objective: To encourage multiple-use management of non-industrial private forestlands.

Administering agency: DOF; sign up at FSA

Technical agencies: DOF, FGFWFC, NRCS

Practices covered: tree planting, timber stand improvement, prescribed burning, site prep for natural regeneration, wildlife habitat improvement, soil and water conservation

Eligible lands: minimum 25-acre total ownership, and a completed Forest Stewardship Management Plan

Eligible landowners: maximum 1000-acre forestland ownership

Maximum reimbursement: 50% of average practice cost, up to \$5000

Practice lifespan: 10 years

Enrollment dates: continuous

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

Objective: To enhance, create or restore wildlife habitats, for both game and non-game species, on private lands.

Administering agency: NRCS

Technical agencies: NRCS, FGFWFC

Practices covered: establishment of wildlife openings, prescribed burning, wildlife tree and shrub planting

Eligible lands: minimum 20-acre treatment area

Eligible landowners: N/A

Maximum reimbursement: 75% of average practice cost, up to \$10,000

Practice lifespan: 5-10 years

Enrollment dates: continuous

Please note that the amount of funding actually appropriated for each of these programs varies

annually, depending on the Federal budget for that year. Consequently, there may be inadequate annual funding to cover all applicants or all practices every year. For example, during the 1998-1999 fiscal year there will be no money available for SIP cost-shares, although eligible landowners can get on a list for consideration during the next fiscal year.

Administering agencies can provide details about each program, as well as about incentive programs that were not summarized in this article. This article is simply an introduction to the financial assistance programs most commonly used by private, non-industrial forestland owners.



The Great Florida Birding Trail - An Income Opportunity for Private Landowners

Submitted by Nancy Jordan, Birding Trail Coordinator for the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission

The Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission and the Florida Department of Transportation are offering private landowners an opportunity to diversify their incomes through nature-based tourism. This opportunity is provided through the establishment of the Great Florida Birding Trail (GFBT), a 2000-mile highway trail, which will connect existing and new birding sites throughout Florida. As envisioned, the Trail will consist of a series of loops, each containing 5 to 10 sites highlighting different natural communities and special ecosystems, such as the Lake Wales Ridge.

Modeled after the successful Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, this ambitious project will combine special highway signs identifying Birding Trail sites with a flipchart map showcasing the wonderful birdwatching opportunities in Florida. The map will direct birdwatchers of all abilities to a variety of birding sites, which will be identified by beautiful highway signs depicting the Great Florida Birding Trail logo—the American Swallow-tailed Kite.

By combining prominent birding sites with smaller local sites in driving loops, the GFBT aims to distribute casual birdwatchers and their ecotourism dollars throughout the surrounding communities. The foundation of the GFBT is our state's fabulous birdlife, and ultimately, one of the project's main goals is to conserve bird habitat by providing economic incentives for its protection.

Impetus for the project has evolved directly from the phenomenal public interest in birdwatching—an increase of 155% over the past decade (Source: 1994-95 National Survey on Recreation and the Environment - University of Georgia Survey Research Center). Birds are the most "watchable" of all wildlife and it is estimated that 80% of all wildlife viewers are birdwatchers.

In 1996, birdwatching residents and tourists in Florida spent approximately \$535,700,000 on food, lodging, public and private transportation, public and private land access fees and guide fees (Source: The 1996 Economic Benefits of Watchable Wildlife in Florida - Southwick Associates). According to a June 1997 article in Newsweek magazine, "Between now and 2080, the only major outdoor pastime that will grow faster than the national population is.... birdwatching."

Private landowner participation in the GFBT is strictly voluntary. Landowners who choose to participate will have the opportunity to market their private sites as birdwatching destinations alongside the various public sites—National Wildlife Refuges, State and National Parks, Forests and Preserves, and city and county parks.

In October 1997, I toured the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail and talked with participating landowners about their experiences with the program and the aspects that made it an attractive business investment. The two words I heard most often from the private landowners were 'voluntary' and 'control'. The landowners called the shots about visitor access and fees. Many said that having their site placed on the map and identified by an eye-catching highway sign attracted casual nature lovers who otherwise were not being reached by their regular marketing plans.

Private sites in Texas had special symbols on the map that designated them as sites a birdwatcher needed to call first to arrange a visit. Usually a fee was charged. Sites like the Kings Ranch in Kingsville and the Fennessey Ranch in Bayside scheduled birdwatching tours for visitors who called in advance, while the B Bar B Ranch Inn, also in Kingsville, let birdwatchers use the nature trail unescorted, but wanted visitors to call ahead of time. How birdwatchers have access to a site is totally up to the landowner.

When completed, the GFBT will have four sections (East Florida, West Florida, Panhandle Florida and South Florida). The Trail will start at the Florida-Georgia state line on the northeast Atlantic Coast, extend south to the Keys and the Dry Tortugas, then travel north along the Gulf Coast to Escambia County in the Northwest Panhandle. Additional inward loops, highlighting unique ecosystems such as the Lake Wales Ridge, will be accessible from both the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. Funding for the first section, the East Florida Birding Trail, has been secured through FLDOT's State Transportation Enhancement Program. This section, highlighting about 190 sites, will be completed during the year 2000, and will include the following counties: Nassau, Duval, St. Johns, Clay, Putnam, Flagler, Marion, Volusia, Brevard, Lake, Seminole, Orange, Osceola, Indian River, St. Lucie, Okeechobee, Polk and Highlands.

Public meetings to further explain the project and the site nomination process will be held Feb. 8 - Ravine State Gardens in Putnam county; Feb. 11 - North Florida Community College in Duval county; Feb. 15 - Wekiwa Springs State Park in Orange county; and Feb. 18 at the Environmental Learning Center in Indian River county. Site nomination packets will be available starting in February 1999. You can get one at the public meetings, by contacting me

directly, or from the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission's web site (www.state.fl.us/gfc).

If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact me at the address provided at the end of this article. By working directly with you or a person in your organization who is familiar with your site and your concerns, we can ensure that the site description will contain accurate information about visitor access, fees, specific birdwatching areas within the site, guided tours, directions to the site, habitat, and the seasons when various bird species occur on the site

If you would like to receive additional information, regular updates and notices about the project, or, starting in February, site nomination packets, send your name, address, phone number, fax number and email address to: Nancy Jordan, Birding Trail Coordinator, FGFWFC, 620 S. Meridian Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600; ph: 850/922-0664; fax: 850/488-1961; email: jordann@gfc.state.fl.us. Your email address is very important because, as much as possible, we will be sending out notices by email. Also, I am always available to answer questions or discuss individual concerns about the GFBT.



Tax Tips for Forest Landowners

It's that time of year again...the taxman cometh once more. Fortunately for forest landowners, Larry Bishop, Forest Management and Taxation Specialist with the U.S. Forest Service, has produced another helpful publication, Tax Tips for Forest Landowners for the 1998 Tax Year. In his introduction, Mr. Bishop states that the tax laws changed little during the 105th Congress. The major change from last year is that the holding period for long-term capital gains was reduced from 18 months back to 12 months, effective for sales after December 31, 1997.

The 4-page article is too long to reprint in its entirety, but the article's "Conclusion," reprinted below, gives a good idea of the topics Mr. Bishop covers in greater detail. The complete article has been e-mailed to the county extension offices, so they should be able to print a copy for you. It is also available from the U.S. Forest Service-Southern Region website at: www.r8web.com/

Conclusion of Larry Bishop's article

Remember these points when you file your 1998 Federal income taxes:

1. Decide if you are going to be an active or passive participant or an investor [with regards to your forestland]. Generally you

will get the best tax advantage if you are active.

2. Keep good records! This includes a management plan and map, receipts for business transactions, diaries, and landowner meeting agendas.
3. If you had reforestation (timber stand establishment) costs, be sure to consider the 10% reforestation tax credit/7-year amortization.
4. If you sold timber during 1998, you may be able to benefit from the long-term capital gains provisions because you do not have to pay self-employment tax on capital gains.
5. If you had cost-share assistance during 1998, you must report it to the IRS. You may choose to exclude some or all of it, if certain qualifications are met, but you still must report it.
6. If you participated in the CRP, your annual payments must be reported as ordinary income. Likewise, if you received CRP cost-share assistance funds, you must report them as ordinary income.
7. Proper tax planning is just as important as the management techniques to grow a profitable timber crop. For help, contact a professional tax advisor, the Cooperative Extension Service, or your State forestry agency.



Proper timber harvesting involves much more than the simple removal of trees from a forest stand. If done properly, logging will produce a minimum of land disturbance. If done improperly, it can degrade site quality and productivity for years to come. You and your forestland deserve the services of skilled loggers. Fortunately, the Florida Forestry Association (FFA) provides a means of locating these individuals. The FFA sponsors a Master Logger educational program, designed to enhance the professionalism of loggers through training in safety, timber harvesting, business, and environmental regulations. All loggers who have completed the course are listed by name and county, in the Master Loggers Directory, which the FFA maintains on their internet website: www.fl-ag.com/forest/

We encourage you to visit the FFA website. It consistently provides interesting forestry information and up-to-date news concerning forestry in Florida.



Upcoming Workshops

Economic Value of Forests: Options to Maximize Landowner Returns

- Locations:

January 26, 1999 - Hamilton County. Brother Deas' cabin in Jennings (ask for a map); 4PM-9 PM.

February 2, 1999 - Walton County. Cooperative Extension Building, 732 N. 9 St, Suite B, DeFuniak Springs; 9AM-1 PM.

- Agenda:

The first 2 hours will cover the nuts-and-bolts of financial analysis for forestry investments: discounting, discounting formulas, inflation, alternative decision criteria for project evaluation, land and timber value, optimal rotation. The second 2 hours will cover relevant applications for economic decision-making: comparison of forestry with other land uses, alternative management regimes (thinnings, herbicides, fertilization, pine straw, etc.), tax issues, incentive programs.

For more information:

Program: Mike Jacobson, (352) 846-0883

In Hamilton County: Allen Tyree,
(904) 792-1276

In Walton County: Bruce Ward,
(850) 892-8172

Several workshops are also planned for later in 1999. Details will be mailed to Stewardship Program participants at the appropriate time(s).

Probable topics include:

- Intermediate treatments in forest stands
- Forest fertilization
- Regeneration and establishment of longleaf pine
- Estate planning for forest landowners

In addition, a one-day dendrology/plant identification class for natural resource professionals will be held in Gainesville on May 12. If landowners and professionals express enough interest, a modified and shortened version may be developed to "take on the road." If you are interested, call or email your name and address to Alan Long: (352) 846-0891; email: ajl@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu



Conferences

Sustainable Forestry: It's the Right Thing To Do

Florida Forestry Forum 1999

March 9-10, 1999

Hilton Hotel, Ocala, Florida

Two main sessions, each with three or four speakers, are scheduled for March 9. In the day's first session, a private landowner, and representatives from private industry and the U.S. Forest Service will speak on Perspectives on Sustainable Forestry. In the day's second session the issue of Sustainable Forestry and Fire will be addressed. Day two will feature a number of concurrent breakout sessions, each of which will be presented twice. Topics include forest health (insects and diseases), reforestation, fire management, longleaf pine, marketing, and alternative sources of forest income.

For more information contact: Florida Forestry Association, P.O. Box 1696, Tallahassee, FL 32302-1696; phone: (850) 222-5646; email: forestfla@aol.com

Fire: Friend and Foe!

1999 Florida SAF/SFRC Spring Symposium

April 20-21, 1999

Sheraton Hotel, Gainesville, Florida

Registration fee: \$60 SAF members

\$80 non-SAF

\$25 students/spouse

\$8 alumni breakfast

Last summer 500,000 acres of Florida's lands were devastated by wildfires. This symposium will bring together forestry professionals and fire management specialists to discuss what happened, why it happened, and what can be done in the future to prevent losses from wildfires.

For more information contact: Mike Jacobson, School of Forest Resources and Conservation, University of Florida, P.O. Box 110410, Gainesville, FL 32611-0410; phone: 352-846-0883; fax: 352-846-1277; email: mgj@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu.



Timber Price Update

The 3rd quarter Timber Mart-South report for Florida listed average stumpage prices in July to September 1998 as \$39/cord for pine pulpwood, \$79/cord for pine C-N-S and \$107/cord for pine plylogs. Prices were \$3, \$10 and \$16 per cord, respectively, lower than in the second quarter, but were back at about the same level as in the third quarter of 1997. Hardwood pulpwood prices dropped about \$1/cord between quarters, but hardwood timber prices were slightly higher than last quarter. As previous newsletters have pointed out, stumpage prices are highly variable and the actual price for a particular timber sale can be affected by characteristics such as tract size, timber density, access, proximity to mills, and weather.

We have seen some extremes this year. Although prices were high in January to March because of the long periods of rain, they have decreased since then. Salvaged timber sold after the summer fires and decreased demand for finished products have resulted in considerably lower prices for some product classes than earlier in the year. A more complete summary of third quarter stumpage prices is available at your County Extension Office. If you are trying to determine current prices in your area your best source of information will be forestry consultants and timber companies that regularly conduct timber sales in your area.

