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The Florida Forest Steward

A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals



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Community Forestry: Landowner Associations and Cooperatives

Farmers and forest landowners value their freedom and independence and seek to manage their property as they see fit. That's what owning land in America is all about, right? Given our free, independent spirits, the word 'community' may raise a red flag, but read on. By the end of this article, your presumptions about what's involved in landowner associations and cooperatives may be challenged.

To explore this topic we return to the question-answer format of the last issue of the Florida Forest Steward (Vol. 8, No. 4) to share the insights of a few landowners and professionals who have experience to share regarding community forestry and how landowner associations or cooperatives benefit their constituents. Phillip Guillory is the director of the Community Forestry Resource Center in Minnesota. He has been involved in the development of successful landowner cooperatives in the Lake States. Michael Bondi is the Clackamas County Extension Forestry Agent in Oregon and has been involved with Oregon Small Woodlands Association, a strong landowner association that has been around since the 1950s. John Alter is the President of the Jackson County Landowner Association in Florida. We thank these gentlemen for their contributions to this article.

1 - What is a landowner association or cooperative and what, historically, has led to their formation in your region?

John Alter: "Traditionally, a landowner association is a group of landowners (usually with planted pines) who have similar interests. Individual members value the strength of united numbers whenever a threat or an issue arises that could negatively impact the owners' land and timber investments."

Phillip Guillory: "Forest owner cooperation, whether as a co-op or association, consists of non-industrial, private forestland owners who work together to improve management practices on their land. In general, the groups we work with have between 30 to 100 members with woodlots ranging in size from 20 to 200 acres. These groups are motivated by a variety of factors including a general interest in information sharing, joint marketing for improved economic returns, natural resource

protection and management, and other social, economic and ecological values. Sometimes a tragic event, such as a windstorm or other dramatic forest changes, also creates a spark that gets landowners talking."

Michael Bondi: "Landowner associations in Oregon are county-based, affiliated chapters of a state-wide organization called the Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA). The purpose of OSWA is to provide a forum for forest owners to come together for learning about land management, share information and network, and jointly represent their views in the political arena."

2 - What benefits attract landowners to become involved with associations or cooperatives?

Michael Bondi: "Learning is probably the most common reason landowners join OSWA. The county-based chapters are active in planning and delivering a variety of educational programs, tours and demonstrations covering a wide range of topics of interest to their membership. In most cases, the Oregon State University Extension Service works with the chapters to assist with this educational programming. OSWA produces an excellent quarterly magazine for its members that provides well-written articles and includes numerous ads for services of interest to forest owners. In addition, several chapters now have their own newsletter providing a forum for local information and sharing."

John Alter: "Benefits accrue whenever common interests are served such as when education and information opportunities are provided to the members, i.e., lectures, briefings and land tours. There is also a certain value added to association membership when members with similar interests have an opportunity to get together socially and swap experiences and know-how -- that's a form of learning, too."

Phillip Guillory: "Landowners involved in cooperative efforts have the opportunity to realize increased benefits, both economic and non-economic, through value-adding and joint marketing as well as over the long-term through improved management, utilization and conservation. Landowners also have access to unique and often very hands-on educational opportunities that are well focused on their specific region and forest issues. The local communities can benefit through improved forest aesthetics and conservation, increased job and income opportunities in forest based industries, and improved understanding and appreciation of the community's forest resources. Foresters, loggers, and other forest related industries can benefit from a more reliable and higher quality forest resource."

3 - What types of landowners get involved in these opportunities?

Phillip Guillory: "All types of landowners interested in any or all of these benefits can and do get involved. Hunters interested in managing for wildlife, farmers looking to diversify income, absentee landowners searching for information, and foresters and loggers interested in working within their local community can be found in these groups. Early in the process, it is often the "risk-takers" who break the trail, but as the group develops a mission statement, recruits membership and starts to show benefit to its members, the membership diversifies to include all types of forest owners. The common denominator is that all members are interested in good management for their forests."

Michael Bondi: "Just about every forest owner who is a member of OSWA or one of its affiliated chapters participates in programs, events and services provided throughout the year. Obviously, some landowners have greater needs for how-to-do-it information than others. But there is usually a wide variety of opportunities for just about everyone. Frequently, forest owners do travel around the state to various chapters to participate in events"

John Alter: "Usually folks who have developed an appreciation of the concept that there is strength in numbers. They have a sophisticated approach toward working in the political arena and understand how the system works."

4 - What are the essential components of a landowner association or cooperative and how might one go about getting one started?

John Alter: "Most landowners have a strong streak of individualism and independence in their makeup. This trait works in opposition to the "joining" attitude required to participate and support a group -- even an affinity group. A successful association must present a strong offer to its potential members that will overcome this tendency to stand alone. The mechanics of starting a landowner association requires forming a committed core of local leaders who will lend their name and talents to endorsing and building the association, and urging fellow landowners to join in on the activities and mission of the group. It is a challenge to create a "group" of "individuals," but I have seen effective and positive results come from such an effort."

Michael Bondi: "Without a doubt, leadership is the key. Our best chapters are ones with strong leadership - people willing to put a little time in for the good of the organization. Good landowner association leaders are people committed to learning, improving how they practice their forestry, and dedicated to making a positive difference in the community. Finally, the most active chapters are the ones where there are several good leaders who can work together effectively. Busy chapters find places for many to get involved!"

Phillip Guillory: "Whether landowners organize as a cooperative or as an association, it is important for the group to clearly identify their purpose. By defining the mission, the group will also be able to determine which method of cooperation best fits their needs. For example, if a group is not interested in joint processing or marketing, it probably doesn't make sense to develop a co-op business. Regardless of which type of organization is being formed, there are some basic steps, including establishing a steering committee, initiating fund raising, incorporating as a legal entity, recruiting members, conducting a feasibility study, preparing a business plan, and hiring staff or personnel. The details for each step will depend on the type of group being formed."

With increasing challenges faced by many landowners today, involvement in educational programs or meetings with fellow landowners can be a good way to learn and voice your concerns about things happening in your region that may affect what you do on your property. An anonymous landowner involved with an association in Alabama says "our greatest challenge is to involve those people that have not been involved." If you are interested in pursuing this type of opportunity in your county or region, your County Extension Office may know of an association that exists in your area or can help

provide space and educational programming for a meeting. A way to unite with landowners at the national level is through the Forest Landowners Association, whose leadership is active on both the educational and political fronts. At the State level, the Florida Forestry Association is a good organization for landowners with timber investments and is politically active in Tallahassee and Washington.

We welcome and strongly encourage your questions or comments about this topic. Write, call or email the editor of the Florida Forest Steward. The contact information is in the box at the bottom of the last page of the newsletter.



Lloyd and Dara Dobson Named Stewardship Landowners of the Year for 2001

Those of you who attended our Stewardship Property tour on March 14 in Walton County had the opportunity to meet a couple of landowners whose land management and outreach activities exemplify the Stewardship concept. Lloyd and Dara Dobson, avid outdoorsmen and nature enthusiasts, started with a vision of what they wanted their land to look like in 10, 20, and 30 years, sought assistance in writing a management plan, and are now working hard to make their vision a reality.

The Dobsons' wildlife management strategy is based on a sound balance between maintaining and enhancing viable, diverse forest stands and providing traditional farmland habitat. Several permanent wildlife openings are maintained by planting, burning, and/or disking. These are used by wild turkey, white-tailed deer, bobwhite quail, mourning dove, and songbirds. Fire, an important component of their management, is used for maintaining wildlife habitat, site preparation, aesthetic enhancement, and timber stand improvement. Sensitive areas, such as stream corridors, pond margins, and native pitcher plant bogs, are protected on the property. Erosion is minimized by conducting soil-disturbing activities along the natural contour of the land, and through the use of waterbars and turnouts where necessary.

Lloyd actively manages two fishponds: one for channel catfish and the other for trophy largemouth bass, bluegill, and shellcracker. They have been monitoring their populations by regularly measuring and tagging fish. This was demonstrated on the tour with the help of Shep Eubanks' son, Justin. Wood duck boxes were recently installed in the pond margins and, as Wayne Harris discovered shortly after, are now occupied.





Dara loves nature, especially native wildflowers, and has taken the time to become a local expert on wildflowers native to northwestern Florida. Many of these plants are enhanced or planted on the property in strips across the landscape. These plantings will add much to the already high aesthetic value. In addition to promoting wildflowers on her own property, Dara works with the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs to promote native wildflowers across the region. She is the editor of the monthly Wildflower Newsletter, which covers everything from recommended species to the latest in wildflower research. She has also contributed to this issue of the Florida Forest Steward.

Wildlife and aesthetics are primary goals for the property, but their management will also yield high-value longleaf and slash pine timber products through the rotation. These species have been planted on the appropriate sites to ensure survival and optimum growth. They also have a few horses, which are incorporated into a rotational grazing system. Timely haying and proper nutrient applications are used to insure healthy hayfields and pastures.

Choosing the Stewardship Landowner of the Year is always a difficult job because there are so many landowners doing great things on their lands, but few combine management and outreach to promote a distinct land ethic to others in the community, county, and state. Congratulations to Lloyd and Dara Dobson for their accomplishments and best wishes for the future.



Native Wildflowers Beautify and Diversify

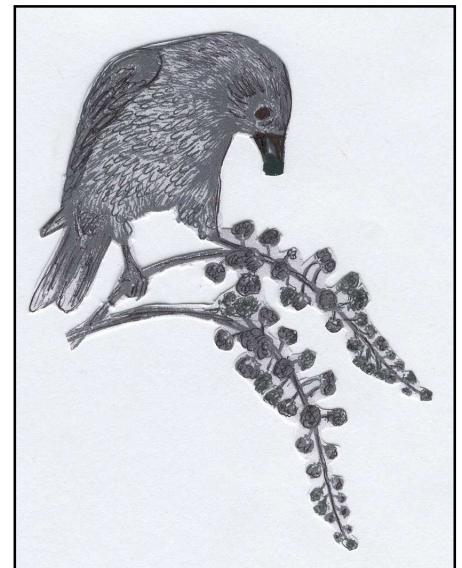
Wildflowers are plants that grow in their natural state with little or no interference from man. Florida has more than 3,600 native and naturalized flowering species. Only Texas and California have larger floras, and both states are physically larger than Florida. Our state has more than 170 endemic species, most of which are in the northwest counties. Many of our wildflowers with restricted distribution are endemic and many are endangered, threatened or rare. These plants are a part of our heritage and need our assistance to ensure their preservation.

At one time Florida had large continuous tracts of longleaf pines (*Pinus palustris*). The conversion of these areas to agricultural production in the early twentieth century practically eliminated this ecosystem. Additionally, a skyrocketing population has taken its toll. Housing, farming, ranching and commercial development have replaced large areas of forests. With these disappearing forests, we have also lost thousands of acres of natural wildlife habitat. Birds, butterflies and bees, our vital pollinators, have lost much of their native flora required for food and shelter. With a little worthwhile effort we can help replenish the habitats they require to survive.

The purpose of this article is to encourage you to enjoy and appreciate the value of our wildflowers; and second, to motivate you to become actively involved in protecting and preserving them for future generations.

More Than Beauty...

An ever-increasing number of private forest owners are taking time to enjoy their property and also grow trees. Wildflowers provide a beautiful array of color when in bloom, and butterflies and hummingbirds will come to drink their nectar. Your flowers will also attract lots of other small birds, such as finches, pine siskins, buntings, and sparrows, which come to eat their seeds. Wildflowers that produce berries will attract fruit-eating birds, such as mockingbirds, cardinals, jays, robins, and many others. Many species of native shrubs and trees provide seeds and fruits that attract a variety of wildlife. When you see wildlife using wildflowers, it is a reminder of the interconnectedness of nature. Take time to enjoy your land, take in the fresh air, look at the flowers, listen to the birds sing, and feel a sense of pride in what you are doing for the environment.



Where Do I Start?

Prescribed burning will bring many native wildflowers back. If your property was previously used for farming, it may need a little more help. You may need to sow some native species of wildflower seeds in sunny open areas or along the sides of your roads. Also, many native plants are available through nurseries that specialize in natives. Through a cooperative effort of the Florida Department of Transportation and the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, research is being conducted to facilitate development of commercial sources of native wildflower seeds. We now have several new Florida wildflower seed growers. Dr. Jeff Norcini and other faculty at the North Florida Research and Education Center at Monticello have shown that seed source can affect the growth, flowering, and survival of several species. Plants derived from wildflower populations native to Florida outperform the same species derived from non-Florida sources. By supporting this new wildflower seed industry in Florida, we are helping to develop a stronger wildflower population.

If you would like to add wildflowers to your property, I am available to help you get started. Some good choices are blanket flower (*Gaillardia pulchella*), black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), lance-leaf tickseed (*Coreopsis lanceolata*), and Phlox (*Phlox drummondii*). All species of coreopsis are native, do well, and are easy to manage. The coreopsis is our state wildflower.

Please let me know if you would like assistance selecting the best varieties of wildflowers for your property. I will also be happy to make planting method recommendations and send you a list of wildflower growers and native plant suppliers. This free service is provided by "Wildflowers

Matter," a District 1 Florida Federation of Garden Clubs project. For more information contact Dara Dobson, District 1 Wildflower Chairman, Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, 850-859-0096 or e-mail sevpines7@aol.com.



Timber Price Update

This information is useful for observing trends over time, but does not necessarily reflect current conditions at a particular location. Landowners considering a timber sale would be wise to let a consulting forester help them obtain the best current prices.



Stumpage price ranges reported across Florida in the 1st quarter 2002 Timber Mart-South (TMS) report were: \$16-\$27/cord for pine pulpwood, \$56-\$76/cord for pine C-N-S, \$84-\$113/cord for pine sawtimber, and \$88-\$121/cord for pine plylogs. On average, prices were up, down slightly, up slightly, and up for the four product prices respectively, compared to 4th quarter 2001 prices. Hardwood pulpwood prices ranged from \$9-\$18/cord, which was about the same as those from the previous quarter. A more complete summary of 1st quarter 2002 stumpage prices is available at your County Extension or County Forester's office.

Trend Report

The graph linked below charts quarterly Timber Mart-South stumpage prices for three major pine log classes in northeast Florida since the beginning of 1993. Numbers on the horizontal axis indicate the year (first digit) and quarter (second digit), so 31 indicates the first quarter of 1993.

Click on the link to see the [graph](#) - use the "Back" function to return here:

Although improved somewhat in some areas of the south, pine pulpwood markets continue to be depressed. This is blamed on mill curtailment, thinnings associated with cost-share programs, excess sawmill residuals and drought. Prices have improved the most in regions that have experienced heavy rainfall. Despite weak market conditions in many sectors of the economy housing has

remained relatively strong, keeping lumber prices stable.

Canadian Softwood Lumber Update

The U.S. Commerce Department found that the Canadian Government does subsidize its lumber industry by charging low stumpage fees and allowing the industry to sell the lumber in the U.S. at a below-market price. Canada is expected to appeal this decision to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA). The U.S. Coalition for Fair Lumber is interested in resuming negotiations and prefers a revised Canadian stumpage system over tariffs, now totaling 29% on Canadian imports.

