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THE FLORIDA FOREST STEWARD A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals

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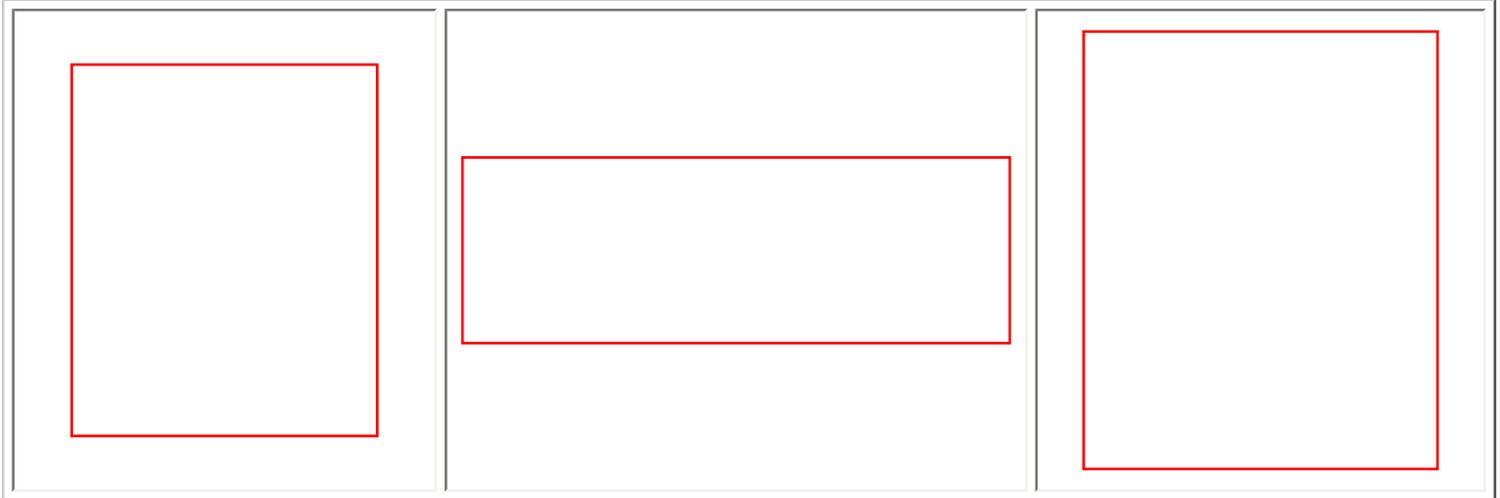
A University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service and Florida Division of Forestry joint project:

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

Alan Long (co-editor), School of Forest Resources & Conservation, UF, (352) 846-0891 or ajl2@ufl.edu

Todd Groh (co-editor), Florida Division of Forestry, 3125 Conner Blvd, Tallahassee, FL 32699-1650, (850) 414-9907 or groht@doacs.state.fl.us

Chuck McKelvy (co-editor), Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, 3125 Conner Blvd, Tallahassee, FL 32699-1650, (850) 414-9911 or mckelvc@fwc.state.fl.us



Forest Stewardship Program Update

The 2002-2003 fiscal year was a productive one for Florida's Forest Stewardship Program. Increased emphasis on the Program from the Division of Forestry (DOF) resulted in a significant increase in new Stewardship plans this year. Between July 1, 2002 and July 30, 2003, 275 new management plans were completed, a record number since the Program was initiated in 1990. This translates to 62,647 new acres enrolled in the program. In addition to new plans, 19 properties, a total of 3,062 acres, were certified this year as Stewardship Forests, distinguishing the owners of those properties as individuals and families who are actively managing their land for long-term, multiple benefits. As of July 30, 2003, 1,911 landowners and a total of 555,018 acres are enrolled in Florida's Forest Stewardship Program. Of these, 172 have properties that are certified Stewardship Forests (100,775 acres).

Our Forest Stewardship educational programs drew good crowds this year as well. Over 450 of you attended our property tours and workshops this year and more than 500 landowners, extension agents, DOF county foresters, FWC biologists, and others participated in the Master Wildlifer program. Many thanks to all the landowners and natural resource professionals who made this an outstanding year!

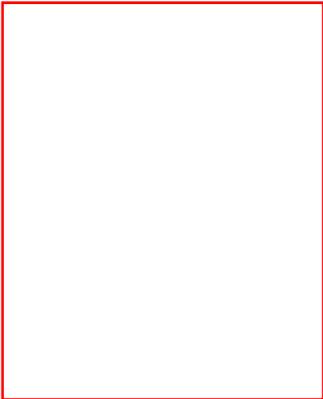


Bronson Announces New Federal Cost-share Program for Forest Landowner

Tom Gilpin, Florida Division of Forestry

Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson has announced that the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services will implement a new forest landowner assistance program in August. The Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) replaces two previous landowner cost-share programs - the Forest Incentives Program (FIP) and Stewardship Incentives Program (SIP).

“The new Forest Land Enhancement Program allows state forestry agencies more flexibility in providing private non-industrial forest landowners a means of managing their forest resources for diverse purposes,” Bronson said. “Under this program, landowners manage timber production, wildlife habitat management, recreation and aesthetics, while enhancing their property’s environmental value by protecting water quality and listed species.”



The program, authorized under the 2002 Farm Bill, will be administered by the Department’s Division of Forestry. The program is available to landowners on a 50-50 cost-share basis. Eligible practices include, but are not limited to site preparation, tree planting, and prescribed burning activities. All practices will have established rates determined in a similar manner as those that were established under FIP and SIP.

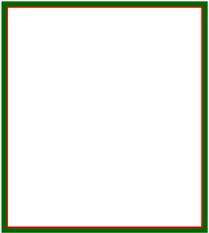
Landowners who own at least 10 acres but no more than 10,000 acres of land and who have a written multiple-resource practice plan will be eligible to receive funding assistance under FLEP. A maximum of \$10,000 will be available for each qualifying landowner per year as reimbursement for incurred expenses for approved practices.

Almost half of the state’s 14 million acres of forestland is owned by private non-industrial landowners. According to national, regional and statewide landowner surveys, most forest landowners don’t have a management plan for their property. A majority of the state’s allocation under the program will be used for implementation of forest practices prescribed in existing or newly developed plans.

“The Forest Land Enhancement Program complements other Florida Division of Forestry initiatives by providing assistance to help landowners develop and implement long-term multiple-resource management strategies for their forest land,” Bronson said. “This program is a tremendous

opportunity for landowners, particularly smaller forest landowners, to become an active partner in the state's sustainable forestry initiative.”

Landowners can obtain applications in late August to early September. Application forms will be available from all Division of Forestry offices and from other cooperating agencies. The deadline for this year's sign-up period is September 15. The Division's foresters will provide technical assistance to landowners and will be the local contact person for participating landowners. For information, contact Todd Groh, Programs Manager, in Tallahassee at (850) 414-9907, contact your local county forester, or visit www.fl-dof.com.



Horse Bedding: a Small but Promising New Market for Small-diameter Pines

by Chris Demers

Jeff Doran's article on Suncoast Bedding in the last issue of Florida Forestry Association's Florida Forests magazine (Spring 2003) provides a light of hope that, perhaps, all is not lost in the market for small-diameter trees. I met with Dean Hill, Agri-Products' National Sales Manager for their new Suncoast Bedding product, to learn more about the business and get a feel for what kind of long-term impact he thinks this new product might have on the market for pulpwood-size trees.

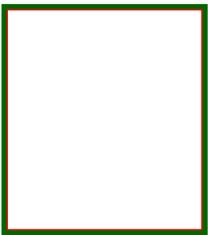
Recognizing a vast supply of pulpwood-size pines in the south and discovering a viable market for animal bedding produced from pine shavings in north Florida and south Georgia, Agri-Products, Inc. of Tallahassee initiated Suncoast Bedding and began selling their new product in November of 2002. What they thought was a viable market turned out to be much larger than anticipated, for they quickly learned that the new demographic of exurbanites, urban dwellers moving to the country, would contribute significantly to the demand for animal bedding.

Located in Thomasville, Georgia, their new manufacturing facility uses a patented Belgian packaging technology enabling them to package nearly 11 cubic feet of shavings into an ultra-compressed, convenient 30-pound bale. This bale makes for a greatly improved storage and handling system for animal and stall owners. The advantage of Suncoast animal bedding to others that use sawmill by-product is their use of low-density loblolly pine that is shaved to consistent dimension to maximize its cushioning and absorbency qualities. Loblolly pine shavings are preferred because they have found them to be more bright and attractive, more absorbent, and able to neutralize odors better than other species. Committed to quality control, the company has created a product advisory board that includes a certified forester, veterinarians, and horse breeders. The initial success of Suncoast Bedding has been assured by its acceptance at the 2002 Tennessee

Walking Horse Celebration and being named the bedding of choice in the Red Hills equine event in Tallahassee. It is also interesting to note that their facility uses by-product biomass to power the dryer so their only net emission is water vapor. This is important because they are located in the middle of downtown Thomasville. Distribution of the bedding is through seed, feed, fertilizer and farm supply distributors throughout the southeast. The Big Question - how will this product affect the pulpwood market?

Suncoast Bedding contracts with loggers to purchase loblolly pine pulpwood with a 3-inch top, that is pre-cut to 16-foot lengths. The pre-cutting makes their price for the wood slightly higher than the market price for the wood. Their mill in Thomasville currently draws from a radius of about 100 miles around that city. Supply outside of that radius is not likely to be affected now. However, given the higher-than-expected demand for this product, an abundant supply of raw material, and the likelihood of other bedding manufacturers to follow, Dean Hill thinks this will change in time, stating, "In five years this will be a major factor in the wood industry." He compares the current size of this market to that of the mulch industry when it first began.

While it is impossible to predict the impact of animal bedding on the timber market, the rules of supply and demand will hold true if other manufacturers of these types of products locate in Florida, south Georgia or south Alabama. The necessary components of the industry - supply of raw material and demand for the end product - is all here.



Specialty Forest Products - It's all in the Marketing

A National Arbor Day Foundation fact sheet on marketing specialty forest products begins, "No one has ever made any money growing specialty forest products. They make money selling them." I guess the same principle applies to trees and crops for that matter, but specialty forest product (SPF) markets are "niche" markets - they require producers to spend a lot more time and energy finding them than do timber or traditional commodity crops. However, since most SPFs are not suitable for large-scale production there are very few large producers that can control the markets, giving the advantage to new, smaller producers.

What are specialty products? They fall into four general categories:

1-medicinals and botanicals (catnip, ginseng, ginkgo, echinacea, St. John's wort, palmetto berries, camphor)

- 2-forest-based food products (berries, wine, pecans, black walnuts, mushrooms, honey, plums)
- 3-decorative plants (ferns, flowers, orchids, bromeliads, Spanish moss, palmetto fronds)
- 4-handicraft products and specialty woods (sweetgrass or pinestraw baskets, cypress, hardwoods, rusty lyonia, grape vine, wax myrtle)

Marketing strategies for SFPs:

Know your customers. Who, if anyone, wants your products? This can be learned from talking to people in person, distributing surveys or questionnaires, or by visiting places where similar products are sold. Up-front market research is critical.

Identify your marketing options. Will you market directly to customers through farmers' markets, fairs, roadside stands, etc.; market to retailers; market bulk quantities to wholesalers; or market through distributors? The type of marketing you do will depend largely on what product you are selling. For example, jelly, juice and wine producers often establish written contracts with a limited number of growers to provide a portion of fruit for their processing facilities. A specialty craft like straw or sweetgrass baskets might be more appropriately marketed at the roadside, fair or farmers' market. Value-added processing usually leads to better prices than just selling the basic natural product.

Niche products sold through multiple markets can give you an advantage. You might want to focus on producing a product that can be used and marketed for different purposes. For example, nuts can be marketed as crushed nuts, as a spread or confection, or pressed for oil.

Secure markets before production begins. Line up buyers ahead of time if possible and work closely with customers to make sure your product meets their needs. This will allow you to set higher prices.

Think small at first. Starting small will allow you to test markets, focus on quality and attend to your customers. As with any venture, *keep good records and develop a plan.*

Set prices carefully. If marketing through retail or wholesale buyers, ask how much they pay for particular products, paying close attention to quality characteristics that affect price. Quality is likely where you can best compete. Calculate your labor and overhead costs before setting your price. If done correctly, direct marketing can allow small producers to set the highest prices and profit margins for their niche products. Some tips for successful direct marketing:

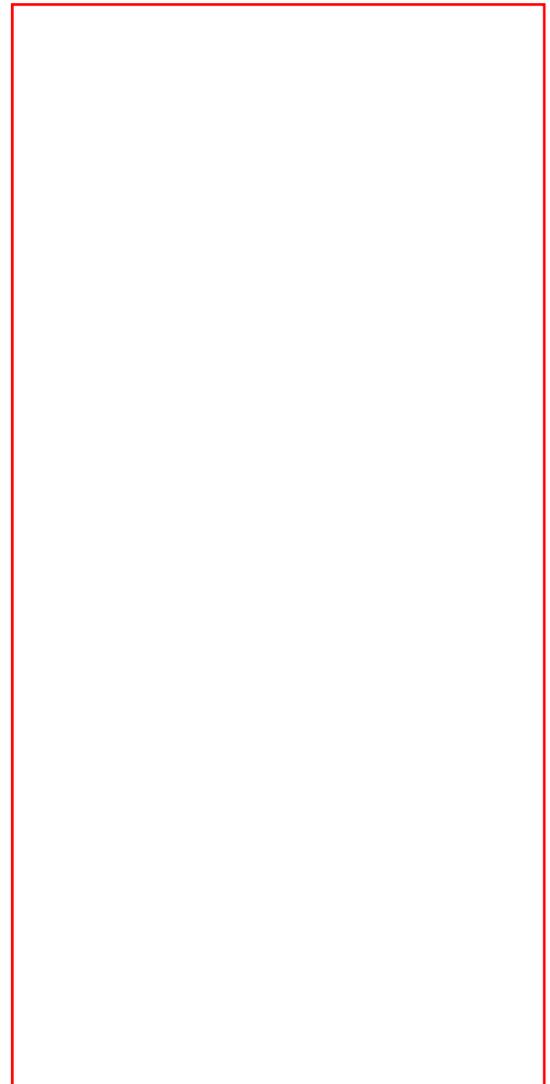
- Introduce your product to customers by offering samples.
- Display your products for maximum impact.
- Price all products and include a hang tag that describes the product
- Stand at your display, don't sit.
- Have a clipboard to write orders.
- If you are also marketing through retail, charge the same price charged in the store or you will risk alienating your retailers. Provide a list of stores that carry your product(s).

To receive “Marketing Specialty Forest Products” or other National Arbor Day Foundation publications, write to The National Arbor Day Foundation, 211 N. 12th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508.



Wildlife Plant Feature: Golden Aster (*Pityopsis graminifolia*)

Also called silkgrass or grassleaf goldaster, golden aster is a perennial herb whose blade-like leaves resemble a clump of grass. It forms dense colonies by rhizomes on dry sites in open forests and clearings.



Form: perennial herb with blade-like leaves. Grows an erect flower stalk in late summer to fall.

Leaves: grass-like blades in early to mid-summer; dense, silky hair beneath each leaf gives the leaf a silvery-gray appearance. In late summer leaves are alternately spiraling with a tapering tip.

Flowers: small, bright yellow ray petals and yellow centers, 1/2-3/4 inch wide, present in July-October.

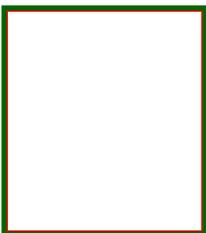
Fruit and seeds: a tiny linear nutlet forming in November-February.

Wildlife value: This plant is an important food for the gopher tortoise and attracts butterflies.

Reference

Miller, J.H. and K.V. Miller. 1999. Forest Plants of the Southeast and their Wildlife Uses. Southern Weed Science Society. Champaign, Ill. 454 pp.

For more information on wildlife food plants see the reference above or the University of Florida's 4-H Companion Plant page at www.sfrc.ufl.edu/4h/Trees_Plants/Plants/plants.html



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. Note that price per ton for each product is now included in parentheses after the price per cord.



Stumpage price ranges reported across Florida in the 2nd quarter 2003 Timber Mart-South (TMS) report were \$17-\$27/cord (\$6-\$10/ton) for pine pulpwood, \$52-\$72/cord (\$19-\$27/ton) for pine C-N-S, \$81-\$116/cord (\$30-\$43/ton) for pine sawtimber, and \$94-\$109/cord (\$35-\$41/ton) for pine plylogs. On average, prices were up for all products, except plylogs, from 1st quarter 2003 prices. Hardwood pulpwood prices ranged from \$15-\$25/cord (\$5-\$9/ton), which was up from those of the

previous quarter. A more complete summary of 2nd quarter 2003 stumpage prices is available at your County Extension office. See www.forest2market.com for weekly, South-wide, per-ton price updates for the major pine and hardwood timber products.

Trend Report

The graph below charts average quarterly Timber Mart-South stumpage prices for three major log classes for all of north Florida. Numbers on the horizontal axis indicate the year (first digit) and quarter (second digit), so 61 indicates the first quarter of 1996. Although average stumpage prices for most products were up in Florida, average South-wide prices changed little from last quarter. The increase in sawtimber, chip-n-saw and pulpwood prices in Florida may have been attributed to heavy rains and the return of water to low lying areas in several parts of the State.

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



Thanks to Stewards for Hosting Tours in 2002 and 2003

We had a unique variety of tours this year: we looked at the extensive longleaf pine regeneration efforts and ponds on the Spencer brothers' property in Santa Rosa County; learned about the youth development programs at the Eckerd Youth Camps in Hernando and Citrus Counties and how the management of those properties tie into their objectives; and toured the diverse Boll Green Acres Wildlife Sanctuary where Liz Seiberling and Randy Cullom gave us a primer on solar power and an environmentally responsible lifestyle. Many thanks to all of these landowners for hosting us, all of you who helped organize the tours, and to all who attended one or more tours.

We will have another round of tours starting in the fall and will try to cover different areas, particularly in the central Panhandle area. If you are a certified Forest Steward, or have managed your land according to the stewardship ethic and would like to host a tour, contact Chris Demers at 352-846-2375 or cdemers@mail.ifas.ufl.edu.



Master Wildlifer and Master Tree Farmer Programs Available on VHS

The Master Wildlifer, a satellite program engineered by professionals at Clemson University, Southern Regional Extension Forestry, participating universities and others is now available on videotape and via streamed video on the internet. The program, a 21-hour shortcourse for landowners, outdoor enthusiasts, farmers and others was broadcast live in February and March of this year. Topics include Introduction to Wildlife Management, Bobwhite Quail Biology & Management, Cottontail Rabbit Biology & Management, Mourning Dove Biology & Management, Biology & Management of Eastern Wild Turkey, Managing Waterfowl, Wetlands and Other Aquatic Resources, Biology & Management of White-tailed Deer, Managing for Wildlife Diversity, and Developing Wildlife Recreational Opportunities.

To order a videotape set and/or the notebook visit masterwildlifer.com or call 1-864-656-3302. Tape sets are \$85 for the tapes and \$120 for the tapes and notebooks. To view the series on-line you must have the free RealPlayer(TM) loaded on your machine. Visit soforext.net and click on the Master Wildlifer series link on the homepage to view the on-line version.

You may also order and/or view previous Master Tree Farmer and Master Tree Farmer II videos by visiting mastertreefarmer.com or call 864-656-3302. The CD and DVD versions will also be available in the near future. Many thanks to Mr. Bryan Veal, Southern Regional Extension Forestry Internet Developer, for the many hours spent digitizing (and viewing!) the Masters' series.

Stay tuned for the New Master Tree Farmer I series scheduled for February and March 2004. If you have questions or would like to be a sponsor for next years' program please contact Dr. George Kessler at 864-656-4836 or Bill Hubbard at 706-542-7813.

