



The Florida Forest Steward

A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals

Volume 11, No. 1

Summer 2004

Florida Forestry Best Management Practices: Spanning Twenty-Two Years of Success

By Roy Lima, Watershed Specialist,
Florida Division of
Forestry

In 2003, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Division of Forestry (DOF) completed the 12th Statewide Survey on Silviculture Best Management Practices (BMPs).

The Silviculture BMP Implementation Survey was initiated in 1981 and has since been conducted every two years. The purpose of the Survey is to determine the level of implementation (compliance) with Florida's Silviculture BMPs. The Survey is conducted throughout the state, on a random sample of recent forestry operations.

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Both public and private forest lands that meet the selection criteria have been included in the Surveys.

The Division of Forestry has demonstrated that when forestry BMPs are implemented, water quality is protected. In cooperation with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Division of Forestry measured the effectiveness of Florida's forestry BMPs by examining water quality and aquatic organisms in streams in selected major ecoregions of the

state. The stream bioassessment study looked at all aspects of forestry including timber harvesting, intensive mechanical site preparation, and forest chemical application. The results revealed that BMPs worked well to protect nearby streams during and after such activities. The results of this research project were recently published



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in an international journal.

The 2003 BMP Implementation Survey evaluated 7,500 practices on 253 individual forestry operations (sites). The range of compliance scores was 74% to 100%, and the statewide average for overall BMP compliance was 97%.

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Division of Forestry has promulgated a state rule that adopts the current BMP Manual by reference. The purpose of the new rule is to provide incentives for landowners to comply with BMPs under Florida's "right to farm" act, which prohibits local governments from establishing rules, ordinances, etc. that regulate silvicultural activities that are in compliance with existing BMPs. In addition, forest landowners who submit a one-time "notice of intent" to the Division of Forestry and comply with adopted BMPs have a presumption of compliance with state water quality standards. This includes important incentives under the Total Maximum Daily Load program, which has the potential to regulate land use activities such as forestry in watersheds where streams or lakes are on the state's impaired waters list.

For more information about Florida's BMP program, see www.fl-dof.com/Conservation/index.html or contact Jeff Vowell, Forest Hydrologist e-mail vowellj@doacs.state.fl.us.

Sudden Oak Death – What's Happening?

By Ed L. Barnard, Forest Pathologist, Florida Division of Forestry

Many by now have heard something of a relatively new disease called "sudden

oak death" or S.O.D. This disease showed up in the mid 1990's in several coastal counties in northern California, and it has been detected in one localized area of southwest Oregon. The disease, an apparent killer of tanoak (*Lithocarpus densiflorus*), coastal live oaks and California black oaks (*Quercus agrifolia* and *Q. Kelloggii*) in that limited geographic area, has been linked to the activity of a newly described fungus, *Phytophthora ramorum*. *P. ramorum* is believed to have been introduced into California, possibly on ornamental nursery stock from Western Europe. Its association with dying trees, habit of being moved on a variety of ornamentals, and its "exotic" or non-native/introduced status makes *P. ramorum* a potentially serious threat to oaks in much of the country. Thus, for years portions of California and one county in southwest Oregon have been subject to federal quarantine/regulatory action.

In recent weeks, it was learned that large ornamental nurseries in southern California (outside the federally quarantined area) were infested with *P. ramorum* and that ornamental plants possibly infected or infested with the pathogen had been shipped to many parts of the country. This news has created quite a stir. What is important to understand is that state and federal regulatory agencies are "all over this." Working cooperatively, these agencies are tracking shipments and sales of possibly infected/infested plant materials, and conducting appropriate regulatory actions, eradication protocols, etc. These actions will continue for some time as potential threats are evaluated and dealt with, and our understanding of the situation improves.

While all of this represents a situation deserving the attention it is now receiving, there is a good deal of miscommunication and misinformation surrounding same. Sadly, many news releases are stating things like “sudden oak death found . . .” or “scientists battle sudden oak death . . .” For eastern states, this is simply not true. What is true for several eastern states is that *P. ramorum*, the fungal pathogen that causes “sudden oak death” (not always sudden) on tanoaks and certain oaks in parts of California and Oregon has been confirmed on ornamental nursery stock (mostly camellias, with largely non-descript foliar lesions) received from southern California.) The situation is of concern, but we in the eastern U.S. are a long way from having “sudden oak death”. For sudden oak death to occur here, the pathogen (*P. ramorum*) must 1) successfully escape from its current spatial and possibly temporally limited distribution, 2) successfully establish itself in native environs, 3) successfully colonize our oaks in either natural or urban settings, and 4) succeed in killing our oaks. None of this has yet happened. Perhaps it will, perhaps it won’t. In the meantime, precise and accurate communication will minimize misunderstanding and unnecessary panic. Stay in touch with your state and federal regulatory officials (Ag. Departments, Divisions of Plant Industry, U.S.D.A. – APHIS) – and stay informed. Helpful websites include www.suddenoakdeath.org and www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/enpp/pathology/sod-up.html.

Watch Out for Scams. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has received a report that several pest control companies in

central Florida have offered to spray a yard to prevent S.O.D. According to Commissioner Charles Bronson, “There is no cure for sudden oak death and no approved treatment at this time. There is also no reason for residents to have their properties sprayed; to date we have no evidence the pathogen has escaped the nurseries in which it has been detected.” Be wary of scam artists trying to profit from this situation and call the Department’s hotline if approached by anyone offering to treat your property. The hotline number is 888-397-1517.

Making Power Line Right-of-Ways Work for Wildlife

Dr. Jeff Jackson, former extension wildlife specialist at the University of Georgia, wrote an interesting article about this topic in the January/February 2004 issue of Tree Farmer magazine. I’ve only visited a relative handful of private forest properties in Florida but I can recall at least 3 or 4 that had some sort of utility right-of-way within the~~ir~~ boundaries, so this management challenge may be one shared by many readers.

Power line right-of-ways, if managed properly, can yield wildlife benefits, particularly for those species that require early successional habitats like grass and shrub lands. This habitat can be enhanced by improving the part of the puzzle you have control of - the edge.

Edges and Ecotones

An *edge* is a place where different plant communities or vegetative conditions meet. The forest edge of a power line right-of-way is usually an abrupt edge, where a wall of trees meets a mowed or herbicided zone of low vegetation. This

edge can be enhanced by making it less abrupt. Introduce a zone of midsize vines, shrubs, and trees between the mowed area and the taller trees. You can plant preferred trees or shrubs in this zone, or you can leave it after harvesting the trees – some of the shrubs and vines in the list below will naturally fill in. This zone of midsize vegetation will serve as an *ecotone* – a transition zone between 2 distinct vegetation communities that will support wildlife species not found in the clearing or forest.

This edge improvement will require cutting some of the trees from the edge of the right-of-way to make room for the new plantings. However it is recommended that some large trees are left along the line so the mowing crew can see the boundary.

Fruiting Trees, Shrubs and Vines

To benefit wildlife year-round, introduce a mix of vegetation that provides fruit at different times of the year. Here's a summary of suitable vegetation by seasonal importance for wildlife (from Sekarak and Tanner's extension publication, "Making the Most of Your Mast", <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FR036>).

Spring: wild plum, red maple, blackberry, mulberry

Summer: hawthorn, saw palmetto, blueberry, blackberry, grape vine, holly, gallberry, greenbriar

Fall: dogwood, beech, grape vine, holly, gallberry, greenbriar, legumes

Winter: beech, sumac, laurel cherry, holly, gallberry, waxmyrtle, greenbriar

Rotational Mowing in the Right-of-Way? Get Permission First

Since the vegetation in this area must be kept short anyway, the power company may welcome your efforts here. You may wish to replace a uniform mowing of the entire area every few years with a mowing rotation, where you mow a different strip each year to create mosaic pattern of 1-, 2- and 3-year-old growth. Orienting these strips across the path of the power line would create corridors for different animals. Gainesville Regional Utilities welcomes landowners' efforts to maintain low vegetation on their right-of-ways. Call your power company to see if you can make these types of improvements.

Chronic Wasting Disease in Deer

By Erin Myers, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Chronic wasting disease (CWD), a fatal brain disease found in deer and elk, has spread over the past three years from the original endemic area of Colorado and Wyoming to seven new states including Wisconsin and Illinois. As it spreads closer to the southeastern United States, state wildlife agencies in the region have prepared protocols to monitor and manage the disease.

CWD is believed to be caused by an abnormal protein called a prion, which has the ability to reproduce in an infected animal, destroy nerve cells, and ultimately cause death. It is found in free-ranging and captive elk, mule deer, and white-tailed deer in several western and mid-western states and in Canada. CWD's mode of transmission is thought to be either direct from animal to animal or indirect through contaminated

environment. Unlike the cattle and sheep forms of the disease ("mad cow disease" and scrapie, respectively), there are no statistics that would link CWD to animal feed contaminated by insufficiently treated material from other animals. Research is currently being conducted to develop a live animal diagnostic test for CWD. Currently, however, definitive diagnosis is based only on necropsy examination and testing of brain stem material.

CWD attacks the brain of affected deer or elk, causing the animals to become emaciated, display abnormal behavior, lose bodily functions, and subsequently die. Clinical signs include excessive salivation and grinding of teeth, increased drinking and urination, dramatic loss of weight and body condition, poor hair coat, staggering, and finally death. Behavioral changes, including decreased interaction with other animals in the open, listlessness, lowering of the head, blank facial expression, and repetitive walking in set patterns, also occur in the majority of cases.

Over the past two hunting seasons, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has implemented active and passive surveillance programs to monitor the disease within our state. The active surveillance program involves collecting and testing over 500 volunteered hunter-harvested deer throughout the state annually. The passive surveillance program involves collecting and testing any sick deer showing CWD-like signs

There is no evidence that CWD can be transmitted to humans, and there are several diseases that produce symptoms in deer similar to those of CWD.

However, it is always prudent to avoid handling or consuming any animal that appears sick. If you should handle any sick-looking deer, regardless of what disease the deer may have, you should take a few simple precautions: wear rubber gloves, place the deer on a tarp to transport, and, when finished, clean out your truck bed with a 10% bleach solution and rinse with water.

The FWC will continue testing white-tailed deer as part of an annual monitoring program. Results from the 2002-03 survey were negative (no occurrence of CWD was found in Florida) and although the majority of samples collected during the 2003-04 hunting season are still being processed, all those that have been tested have been negative.

We would, however, like you to continue keeping an eye on the deer in your area when you are in the field this hunting season. Remember: deer affected with CWD may walk in circles, stand with a wide stance, and have subtle head tremors. Over time, they will lose weight, increase their water intake and urination, salivate and drool, and ultimately die.

Wildlife Plant Feature: Gopher apple (*Licania michauxii*)

Gopher apple, also called ground oak, is a low-growing plant that regenerates well after fire. It is commonly found in upland areas where gopher tortoises reside and is a substantial part of their diet. Gopher apple is occasionally grown as a ground cover plant for landscaping purposes because of its attractive, shiny, evergreen foliage. This plant's range is generally limited to the southeastern

states from Mississippi to South Carolina and south into Florida.

Form: an evergreen ground-cover shrub, 1' to 2' in height, often grows in clumps due to underground runners.

Leaves: simple, alternate, and oblong to elliptical in shape, with distinctive shiny, lime-green color on the upper surface and a paler or whitish underside that is often slightly fuzzy. Leaves are 1" to 5" long, $\frac{1}{2}$ " to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide and may have a tiny bristle at the tip. Leaf margins are smooth. The mid-stem leaves are often larger than the upper or lower leaves. Stems are often reddish-brown.

Flowers: small, terminal, white clusters, bloom from late spring through summer.

Fruit and seeds: a small elliptical drupe (seed with a fleshy covering) forms in mid to late summer.

Wildlife value: This plant is an important food for the gopher tortoise, other wildlife, and the sweet, juicy pulp of the fruit is also edible for humans.

Reference

University of Florida's 4-H Companion Plant page at:
www.sfrc.ufl.edu/4h/Trees_Plants/Plants/plants.html.



Photo by Larry Korhnak

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

included in parentheses after the price per cord.

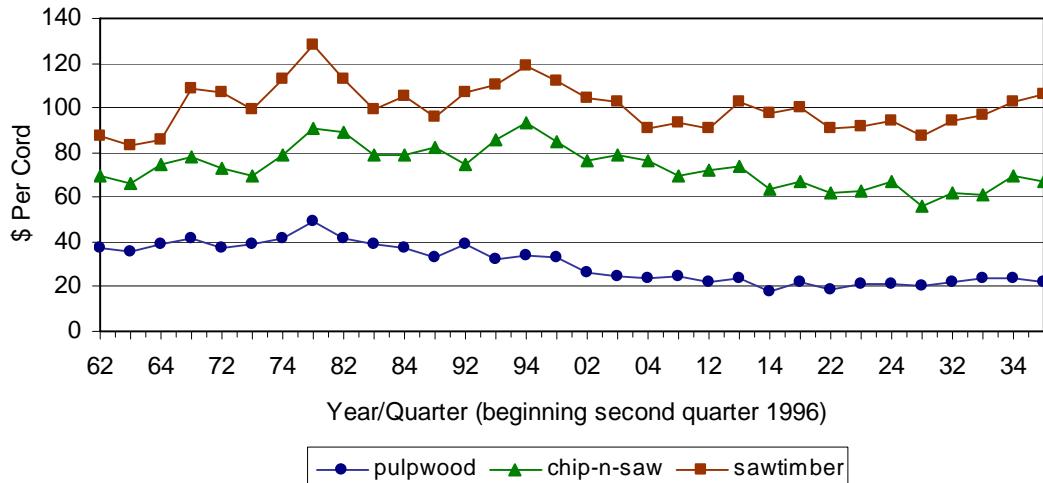
Stumpage price ranges reported across Florida in the 1st Quarter 2004 Timber Mart-South (TMS) report were:

- Pine C-N-S: \$57 - \$78/cord (\$21 - \$29/ton), ↓ from 4th Quarter 2003
- Pine pulpwood: \$13-\$29/cord (\$5- \$11/ton), ↓
- Pine sawtimber: \$90 - \$121/cord (\$34 - \$45/ton), ↑
- Pine plylogs: \$105 - \$127/cord (\$39 - \$47/ton), ↑
- Hardwood pulpwood: \$14 - \$30/cord (\$6 - \$10/ton), ↓

A more complete summary of 1st Quarter 2004 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.

Average Pine Stumpage Prices for Florida

1st Qtr 2004



Trend Report

The graph above charts quarterly average stumpage prices for three major pine log classes in Florida since the second quarter 1996. Numbers on the horizontal axis indicate the year (first digit) and quarter (second digit), so 62 indicates the second quarter of 1996.

Average southwide pine sawtimber prices increased again this quarter but there was very little change in most product prices overall. Hardwood pulpwood saw the largest decrease (down 5.5% from last quarter southwide) but its average price still holds above that of pine pulpwood. Interest rates are low (around 5.5%) and housing starts so far this year have exceeded those of last year up to this date, with Atlanta, GA holding the number one spot in the top 50 U.S metropolitan areas for housing starts.

Upcoming Programs and Events

**Forest Stewardship Workshop:
Invasive Exotic Plants and Their
Control, 3 dates:**

**June 18, 2004; Liberty County
Extension Office in Bristol,** note the change in start time: sign in at 8:30 AM ET, conclude at 3:00 PM; call the Liberty County Extension Office at 850-643-2229 to register. CFEs will be available for foresters and there will be a fee to cover lunch.

**July 9, 2004; Alachua County
Extension Office in Gainesville,** note the change in start time: sign in at 8:30 AM ET, conclude at 3:00 PM; call Chris Demers at 352-846-2375 to register. CFEs will be available for foresters and there will be a fee to cover lunch.

**August 4, 2004; Lee County Extension
Office in Fort Myers,** note the new date and start time: sign in at 8:30 AM ET, conclude at 3:00 PM being rescheduled; call the Lee County Extension Office at 239-461-7500 to register. CFEs will be

available for foresters and there will be a fee to cover lunch.

Southeastern Society of American Foresters Annual Meeting: It's All About Wildlife. November 7 - 9 at the Hilton Riverfront Hotel in Jacksonville, FL. Landowners and natural resource professionals are invited to participate in this event, which will include presentations on game management, economics, recreation, and endangered species. Participants will also have their choice of wildlife-related field trips. Arrangements are being made for trips to D-Dot Ranch, Longleaf Timber Company lands, and an urban forestry walking tour. For more information contact Charles Hall at 706-845-9085 or chall@asginfo.net.

Send Us Your Updated Address

We're still looking for some updated addresses. U.S. Post Offices in some parts of the state are no longer delivering to route-box addresses (example: RR 1 Box 234). They will only deliver to 911 addresses: a house number followed by a road, street, drive, lane, circle, place, etc. (example: 123 Hound Dog Rd). PO Box addresses are good too. If you currently have a route-box address and know your 911 address, please take a moment to send your 911 address to Chris Demers at University of Florida, PO Box 110410, Gainesville, FL 32611; or by email to cdemers@ifas.ufl.edu. If you don't know your 911 address, ask your local post office. If your 911 address is not yet available, simply send it to us when it is. Thanks very much in advance for your help!

For more information about Florida's Forest Stewardship Program and forest management visit the Florida Forestry Information Web site at www.sfrc.ufl.edu/Extension/ffws/ffwshome.htm

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@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