
The Florida Forest Steward

A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals



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Spring,

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Florida's Forestry Forum: A Focus on the Private Forest Landowner

To a crowd of over 200, Bob Crawford, the Commissioner of Agriculture, emphasized that we can grow trees for economic profit in an environmentally sound and aesthetically pleasing manner and still protect wildlife. He applauded the outstanding management practices of the Stewardship Landowner of the Year, Paul Bleeling from Marion County. The Forum was held in Gainesville on Feb. 18th and 19th. It presented a wonderful opportunity for landowners and forest professionals to not only voice their opinions about critical issues facing forestry in Florida, but also to gather up-to-date technical information from a wide diversity of speakers on taxes, regulations, endangered species, marketing, intensive management, property rights and wildlife.

Guerry Doolittle of Champion International highlighted what we've done right in relation to the environment. Since 1920, forest acreage in the United States has increased after having undergone two centuries of decline. The percentage of forest land owned by private individuals has increased as well which Mr. Doolittle equated with the record environmental achievement of revitalizing the nation's

forests.

Cooperation is the key word for such a successful effort. For example, a multi-agency task force developed Florida's BMPs which are the most comprehensive in the South. Compliance with these non-regulatory practices has increased dramatically from 84% in 1984 to 96% of landowners in 1995. The Sustainable Forestry Initiative is another example of a cooperative venture by the American Forest and Paper Association to set measurable standards for forest management practices.

John Alter, a forest landowner from Jackson County, spoke about trends he sees for the future of private forest landowners. He pointed out that they should be called "working environmentalists" because of the emphasis on sound forest management practices and the long-term perspective held by many landowners even though they are over 60 years of age.

With the continuing public debate on private property rights he emphasized the need for forest landowners to:

1. respond to misinformation using local media to clarify what forestry practices are and how most of them generate minimal environmental impact,
2. join local service organizations which tell the forest landowners story to the public,
3. support and sponsor Project Learning Tree activities so that children learn about forest management practices,
4. demonstrate shared interests in protecting environmental quality by working with organizations which are opposed to certain types of forest management,
5. support forestry organizations that represent private landowners, and
6. engage in dialogue and debate to enlighten the public. We have a social contract to educate the public as to the value of forest products and required management.

What Landowners Said

Landowners surveyed before the Forum by the University of Florida indicated that there were seven barriers to their managing their forest land more actively:

- lack of marketing knowledge/opportunities
- availability of technical information
- assistance with prescribed burns and other forest management practices
- federal and ad valorem taxes
- information on wetland management practices and BMPs
- ability to reforest
- information on new forest management practices that are economically viable, socially sound and environmentally friendly.

Discussion groups took each of these barriers and listed the causes and possible actions which could be

taken by the organizations participating in the Forum to minimize or eliminate each barrier.

The Forum was presented by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry, the Florida Forestry Association, USDA Forest Service, Florida Farm Bureau Federation, and the University of Florida School of Forest Resources and Conservation. The support of numerous sponsoring organizations was greatly appreciated. Look in the next issue of the Florida Forestry Association's magazine for more information about what happened at the conference.

For More Information on the Forum:

Florida Forestry Association

P.O. Box 1696

Tallahassee, FL 32302

Phone: 904-222-5646

The American Forest & Paper Association

Sustainable Forestry Initiative

1111 19th St. NW, Suite 800

Washington, DC 20036

Phone: 202-463-2751

A Stewardship Horse Story

On a beautiful, sunny day in March, Mary Farr, the manager of Horse Creek Farm and Robin Harris, the Riding Instructor, proudly showed us their outstanding Forest Stewardship efforts in St. Johns County. The 32 acre farm is located north of Switzerland, Florida and has a diversity of habitats including 18 acres of planted slash pine, two acres of upland hardwoods and five acres of bottom land hardwoods which border Mill Creek. Longleaf pine is widely scattered throughout the ranch.

A stewardship management plan was prepared right when the land was purchased in 1993. The primary objectives of the plan are habitat improvement for wildlife species, enhanced aesthetics for horse-back riding, establishment of pasture areas and management of timber.

With the help of resource professionals in forestry, wildlife management, and water quality from both government and industry, Mary and her partners have used prescribed burns to enhance species diversity and promote natural regeneration of forage species in the understory. She has noted a substantial increase in the wildlife populations in the stand including finches, owls, squirrels, hawks, turkey, migratory birds and gopher tortoises.

The ranch has forged community partnerships with not only the County Forester, Water Management District and Fire Department, but also with school and community groups. Several school groups have been active in building bird boxes, establishing a butterfly garden and making name plates for different tree species. Mary plans to ask the local Audubon group to consider using her property for bird counts and

identification of migratory species such as Eastern blue birds and yellow-throated warblers.

Selective, small-scale logging operations of plots ranging in size from one to five acres was both difficult and demanding. "It was hard to find professional help to harvest such small areas", Mary told us. The job required constant supervision to avoid damaging trees adjacent to the harvest area.

Having recently completed construction of a small bridge, the next project will be to design a trail system for the riding school that meanders through the woods past the horse cemetery and the oddly-shaped *meditation tree* that twists into a natural seat. Overall, Mary and her partners have enthusiastically implemented the management practices in their Stewardship plan and have been very pleased by the results.

For More Information:

- **Selecting a Logger:**

Florida's Master Logger Directory 1997. Lists contact information for all loggers who have successfully completed the Florida Master Logger Course which focuses on current government regulations, environmental concerns and business management techniques. The directory is available by writing:

Florida's Forestry Association
PO Box 1696
Tallahassee, FL 32302-1696
Tel:(904) 222-5646
Fax: (904) 222-6179
E-mail: forestfla@aol.com

- **Prescribed Burns**

A prescribed burn course is offered three times per year (Feb., April and May), by the Division of Forestry in conjunction with Hillsborough Community College and several other state agencies. It is an intensive, week-long prescribed fire course which includes planning for and conducting a prescribed burn. This popular course cost \$280 (including room and board at a state forest or park), so if you are interested, book now for next year. For more information contact:

Fred Webb

Hillsborough Community College
Division of Environmental Programs
1206 N Park Rd
Plant City, FL 33566
Phone: 813-757-2104
E-mail: webb@mail.hcc.cc.fl.us

The Division of Forestry's home page also has a description of this and other educational opportunities under Standards and Training at: <http://flame.doacs.state.fl.us>

Measuring Water Quality

(Submitted by Chris Demers, University of Florida, Research/Extension Assistant)

Freshwater mussels? It's likely that you've never even noticed them, and if you have, you probably think these immobile creatures are about as fascinating as mud. But, a close look at creatures that are small, quiet, ugly and slow usually reveals that they are just as amazing and important as those glamorous wildlife species that seem to get all the attention.

How many anglers know that certain freshwater mussels living on stream bottoms were "catching" fish with artificial bait long before any human came up with the idea? The shinyrayed pocketbook, a mussel found in certain pristine north Florida streams, dangles a minnow-shaped sac of its larvae at the end of a mucous strand similar to a worm on the end of a fishing line. Large-mouth bass are attracted to this remarkable "bait." The bass' strike allows the larvae to swim free and attach to the gills of the fish. After about two weeks on the gills, the pinhead-size mussel larvae drop off the fish and then continue to develop as they drift in the current of the stream. Later, they settle to the bottom and grow into shelled adults. Most mussel species require a host fish on which the larvae develop.

The U.S. has about 180 species of mussels, most of which are found in rivers and streams in the southeast. An additional 100 species have gone extinct over the last 30 years, due to human activities. About 60 mussel species are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 with 70 more proposed for listing. Among them are eight species found only in certain streams draining southeast Alabama, southwest Georgia, and north Florida. Many mussel species are being affected by stream channelization, bank clearing, gravel mining, impoundment, siltation and pollution from industrial agricultural and urban activities. Harvesting mussels for food and for the pearl industry are also potential threats to native mussels.

Why should we be concerned about mussels? What good are they? For one thing, they are biological monitors sitting at the bottom of the river, the "miner's canary" that can give an early warning that water quality is declining. When populations of mussels and other benthic (bottom-dwelling) life forms are in trouble, it is a warning that many other creatures in and around the stream may soon be in danger. A healthy stream bottom is home for many organisms -- insect larvae, snails, crawfish, waterlice, mussels, and certain fish -- that are the basic food for most fish. Erosion, channelization, and other disturbances damage and even destroy benthic communities. As a result, fish populations decline. Because certain mussels are highly sensitive to changes in water quality, researchers find them to be excellent indicators of river and stream health. In Florida, a team of researchers from the Division of Forestry, the Water Management Districts and several other agencies is testing the effectiveness of silvicultural BMPs by using biological organisms in streams to monitor changes in water quality. Contact your local DOF office for more information on BMPs.

For More Information Contact:

Jim Williams

Biological Resources Division of USGS

Gainesville, FL

(352) 378-8181

E-mail: jim_williams@nbs.gov

USDA Fish and Wildlife Service

6620 Southpoint Drive, South, Suite 310,

Jacksonville, FL 32216-0912.

Navigating the Net

There's an amazing amount of forest information on the world wide web and it can take hours to navigate through what's out there. We will highlight a few homepages you might want to explore in each newsletter. Here's a sample of a few sites to browse:

THE ELECTRONIC FOREST RESOURCES LIBRARY has a fantastic website that links you to valuable information on many topics throughout the south including subscriptions to Timber-Mart South, technical information from Cooperative Extension Service sites in many states and lots of federal information and homepages related to forestry, wildlife and the environment.

Located at this web address: <http://www.uga.edu/~soforext/> is a map of the southern states that you can click on which automatically sends you to loads of forest information at Cooperative Extension Service sites in the "clicked" state. Below the map, are Southern Forestry Extension newsletters, the Forest Owners' Guide to Federal Income Tax which you can read by downloading an acrobat reader and several hotlinks to other forestry resource homepages.

Lets walk through an example of how to use this homepage. To find more information on mussels and water quality from the previous article, you can click on **Georgia** on the map, then select **Environment** and scan down the list of articles to one by Kim Koder on **Freshwater Mussels**.

FOREST PROTECTION is the name of the Florida Division of Forestry's home page. It has lots of useful information on wildfire season statistics and history, maps of Florida from the 1600-1700s, how to contact field offices around the state and prescribed fire technical information and training courses. There are also links to state forestry sites throughout the nation as well as the USDA Forest Service. Check out the "questions answered with a single picture" section! Located at: <http://flame.doacs.state.fl.us/>

THE SCHOOL OF FOREST RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION's homepage at the University of Florida has forestry extension information including: news, activities, stewardship, reforestation, urban forestry, natural resources education, alternative enterprises and publications. There are also links to other

important forestry related materials. Located at: <http://aris.sfrc.ufl.edu/Extension>

FORESTRY GRAB BAG OF FOREST RELATED SITES is in a draft format right now, but it has tons of useful links to forest industry, research and government. Located at: <http://www.igc.apc.org/forest/grabbag.html>

SEVENTH AMERICAN FORESTRY CONGRESS: MANY VOICES -A COMMON VISION has information from throughout the nation on efforts to form partnerships between stakeholder groups for developing sound forest policy. Located at: http://www.cis.yale.edu/forest_congress

To get an overview of the global resources on the net in forestry try browsing through this clearinghouse:

FORESTRY INFORMATION RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET homepage located at: <http://www.metla.fi/pp/JSaa/doc/Toronto94-09.htm>. This site has extensive descriptions of resources on the web, such as listserves (which are E-mail messages from others who are interested in a particular topic), use groups (which are discussion groups on specialized topics), and archives (which are storage sites for information that you can copy). This site not only lists all the different electronic resources available, but it also describes what each particular information resource is and how you subscribe or find it on the web. There are instructions for conducting a search for a specific topic or how to obtain regular news updates on almost any forest topic.

Having trouble searching the web for more information on forestry topics? One search engine that finds *the exact phrase* that you are looking for is Hotbot located at: <http://www.hotbot.com> For example, entering the phrase, "prescribed burning" results in information at websites on fire ecology, alternatives to prescribed burning, laws on agricultural burning and lots of other relevant topics. You can specify date, location, area to modify your search to get the information you want instead of lots of listings to wade through that have nothing to do with the topic at hand.

News From Washington: SIP, EQIP and CRP Programs

Landowners who have applied for SIP funding should have been notified concerning the status of their applications in mid-April. The two excerpts from USDA news releases below outline the key elements of two other government programs. If you are interested in keeping up with USDA news releases, check out their home page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.usda.gov>

• \$200 Million for New Environmental Program (EQIP)

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman announced in March preliminary state funding allocations for the USDA's new \$200 million Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), that will help farmers and ranchers address agriculture's priority natural resource and environmental problems.

EQIP is a new USDA program created by the 1996 Farm Bill. It provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to farmers and ranchers to address significant natural resource concerns and objectives. EQIP replaces four previous programs including the Agricultural Conservation Program which was heavily used by Florida's forest landowners to establish forestry practices.

Under EQIP, USDA can provide cost-share assistance to family-sized farms and ranches for up to 75 percent of the costs of certain environmental protection practices, such as grassed waterways, filter strips, manure management facilities, capping abandoned wells, and wildlife habitat enhancement. Forestry practices used to protect soil and water resources or enhance wildlife habitat may also be eligible for EQIP cost-shares.

EQIP will be delivered primarily to state priority areas. Under EQIP, state priority areas are watersheds, or geographic regions, with special environmental sensitivity or significant soil, water, or related natural resource concerns. Each state's priority areas were locally-determined by the NRCS state conservationist, in conjunction with state technical committees and USDA Farm Service Agency personnel.

To determine state funding allocations, another USDA team developed an objective rating system based on 26 national environmental factors. These factors addressed a wide range of natural resource conditions, such as soil erosion and deposition, water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat, wetlands, grazing lands, and other concerns. Initial state funding for Florida's EQIP program assistance is \$3,250,000.

"The new EQIP program is part of the Clinton Administration's commitment to providing farmers and ranchers with flexible, effective and voluntary conservation programs," Glickman said. "The EQIP will be one of our key tools to help producers protect natural resources and ensure the sustainability of our food supply." Producers will be able to sign EQIP contracts when the final rules and regulations for the program are published in the Federal Register. In June, producers should contact local USDA Service Centers and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for information on possible eligibility for EQIP. Producers also can work with NRCS to develop their own conservation plans which are required for any EQIP contract.

• **Successful CRP Sign-up**

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman announced the successful conclusion of the sign-up period for the new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). "Preliminary figures from the field show that we got approximately 301,650 offers for almost 26 million acres," said Glickman. "Of these, nearly 8 million are new and offered for the first time, and the remaining 18 million or so are currently enrolled in contracts due to expire in September." This large pool of offers will allow the USDA to enroll those acres yielding the highest environmental benefits. "That helps us get the biggest bang for the taxpayers' buck," he added.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is based on voluntary partnerships between government and members of the public. Agricultural producers receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance for establishing various kinds of protective cover on suitable farm property to protect and improve air, water, soil quality, and habitat for wildlife. Rents are based on local market rates, and acres are chosen so

as to yield the greatest resulting environmental benefit. All land that is enrolled in the program must compete for acceptance based on an environmental benefits index that ensures fair and equal consideration for all types of land. Producers will be notified by mid-June as to which acres have been accepted into the CRP.

The states of Texas, North Dakota, and Montana finished the sign-up period with the highest numbers of acres offered. Producers offered about 3.4 million acres in Texas, 2.5 million in North Dakota, and 2.3 million in Montana. In comparison, Florida had 1,503 offers on 75,591 acres. Approximately 80% of the acreage offered in Florida was for re-enrollment of land that is currently enrolled in CRP (mostly in pine plantations).

Books and Articles of Interest:

Safer Tree Felling

The National Arbor Day Foundation recommends the, *Fallers and Buckers' Handbook* as one of the best books currently available on safe methods for tree cutting.

The 114 page book is intended primarily for professional loggers, but its clear text and illustrations on care of equipment, protective clothing, directional felling and all phases of tree felling are equally valuable for anyone interested in tree cutting. The book was produced by the Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia and is free for the asking at:

WCB
6951 Westminister Hwy
Richmond, BC V7C 1C6
Phone: (604) 276-3068

Timber Mart-South Update

The first quarter Timber Mart-South report has just been released. State averages for pine pulpwood and chip-and-saw stumpage were up 5% to 10% over fourth quarter 1996 averages, while pine and oak sawtimber or plylogs were up 20% to 25%. Hardwood pulpwood was unchanged. Full copies of the Florida report will be available in County Extension offices in early May.

Current Stewardship Workshops

Announcements for the April and May Forest Stewardship Workshops were mailed to everyone on the mailing list. *Forested Wetlands Ecology and Management Workshops* for Stewardship landowners will be held April 28 and 30 in Callahan and Gainesville, respectively. *Alternative Enterprises for Your Timberland: Managing and Marketing Cattle or Pine Straw* will be held May 5 in Jasper.

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

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