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Timber Tales

No. 127 **News and Ideas for Forest Landowners from Ricky Kilpatrick, Area Forestry Agent** **1st Quarter 2009**

Affordable Pre-commercial Thinning...Great for Wildlife and Forest Health

Many forest landowners have young pine stands that are very overcrowded. If the stand was established from natural seeding or even if it was planted, it often ends up with way too many trees per acre because of seeds blown in from nearby mature trees. The stand grows slow and usually ends up with mostly lower-valued unhealthy trees. Pre-commercial thinning is an option to greatly improve the stand, however, in the past the cost has made this prohibitive for the landowner.

New USDA cost-sharing programs have recently made this a much more lucrative option, giving landowners the opportunity to improve forest conditions and wildlife habitat on their property.

The LSU AgCenter along with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service recently coordinated and conducted a field tour in the Northwest Region for landowners to see stands that had been pre-commercially thinned. Landowners were able to see first hand the improved forest health and wildlife habitat as a result of the tour. They also learned about the cost-sharing programs and how to apply for them.

If you have a thick stand that could benefit from pre-commercial thinning, visit with your parish NRCS office about cost-sharing for pre-commercial thinning. You may be surprised at the rates available for this. Parish NRCS office numbers are as follows:

Bienville	894-2174	Desoto	872-4949
Bossier	965-2108	Natchitoches	357-8366
Caddo	676-3333	Red River	932-4352
Claiborne & Webster	377-3950	Sabine	256-3491

Bugs, Bugs, Bugs - Winter 2008-09

Here's an insect update from LSU AgCenter entomology specialist Dale Pollet.

1. **Firewood insects** - A very large complex of insects live in wood once it has been cut. When we cut firewood and stack it, this becomes an ideal host or home for several insects. Although these insects are secondary infesters, finding them in the house can be aggravating and scary. Long-horned beetles, flat headed borers, ants, termites, some bees and wasps, and many other small insects may hide in the wood. Firewood should not be stored in the house. It should be kept outdoors where it is cool, and only what you are using immediately should be brought in. Otherwise, when brought into the warmth of a house, these insects that are using the

For additional information, call Area Code 318 and . . .

BIENVILLE	**263-7400**	**BOSSIER**	**965-2326**	**CADDO**	**226-6805**
CLAIBORNE	**927-3110**	**DESOTO**	**872-0533**	**NATCHITOCHES**	**357-2224**
RED RIVER	**932-4342**	**SABINE**	**256-3406**	**WEBSTER**	**371-1371**

wood to grow and develop think it is springtime and complete development and emerge in your home. To have them flying or running around the home can cause panic because wasps and fire ants can sting, and termites can infest your home. The other insects are just looking for a way out and will collect at windows or light sources.

2. **Asian lady beetles** - With the onset of cool weather, we have gotten reports of massive gatherings of these lady beetles. Although an excellent predator on aphids and other insects, when the weather turns cool in the fall, they begin to gather on trees, houses and other structures. On our homes they find every crack and crevice and get into the walls to overwinter. The problem here is the warmth and lights. Once they warm up, the lady beetles begin to actively move around. In most cases they are attracted to the light sources in the home and emerge from the walls through light fixtures and wall outlets. Once they're indoors, the safest way to remove them is through the use of a vacuum cleaner because grabbing them causes them to defecate on the walls and furniture – in many situations causing stains. Where gatherings collect on outside walls, many fly indoors every time the door is opened. Where this occurs, the use of a pyrethroid around the doors and on the colony will repel them or make them move on.

3. **Potted plants** - Although they are not insects, they are a prime source for bringing indoors problem insects such as scales, mites, ants, termites, springtails, slugs and fungus gnats. Be sure to check the plants before bringing them inside. If an insect population exists, it will only continue to grow and develop once in the warm confines of the home. Where infestations exist, be sure to treat them before bringing the plant inside to reduce the problem with the pest and the odor of the pesticide. Always allow time before the plants are brought inside to clean up any problems. Scales excrete honeydew, and this will get on walls, floors and furniture and make them sticky, and if unchecked, sooty mold will develop. Ants can be a problem either from stings or foraging for food. Termites can get into your home and furniture, and fungus, gnats and springtails can be an aggravation and can be difficult to manage.

4. **Case-making clothes moths** - Many hunters are opening their hunting gear and finding these fun-looking little boat- or cigar-shaped things along with moths flying out of the bag, box or closet where they were stored. These little moths are the case-making clothes moths. Although not very damaging, they can cause concern. They are primarily a pest of animal-origin materials, such as feathers, hair, fur, wools and such. They can be a problem on mounted trophies. Keeping hunting clothes clean can greatly reduce this minor problem.

5. **Bees and wasps** - The only colony to overwinter among bees and wasps is the honeybee. It is reduced in numbers, but the colony remains intact throughout the winter. Other bees and wasps only overwinter as queens who in the spring will begin their colonies or nests again. One of the primary places for honeybees to overwinter is the walls or attic of your home. These protected areas keep them from freezing or being exposed to the elements. The problem begins when the temperature outside warms or the heat from the house warms them up and they begin to fly around looking for a way out. Not knowing where they got in, they go to any light source and make their way out of the wall or attic – usually into the bedroom, family room or other room of the house. Although not aggressive, they can sting if sat on, stepped on, mashed in the hand or caught in clothing. To prevent this problem, check outside the house for any potential entrances and close them and make sure attic vents are screened. Those bees that get in the house will normally go to lights or windows and many times are found dead or dying in light fixtures or on windowsills. The fly swatter is the easiest control. There's no need to spray, and control is as good as your accuracy.

6. **Millipedes** - This non-insect arthropod at times can become a nuisance in and around the home. These multi-legged individuals have two pairs of legs per body segment. They are usually found in damp places – under mulch, in thatch, under leaves, stones or boards, in rotten wood or in the soil. They are primarily organic feeders, although some are living-plant feeders in greenhouses and gardens and a few are predaceous. Some are capable of giving off an ill-smelling fluid that can kill small insects. They do not bite. Extreme weather conditions – such as heavy rains with flooding and extreme changes in temperature – will sometimes force them inside the house. The use of weather stripping or flashing under doors provides an excellent barrier to home entry. Occasionally the use of a pyrethroid is necessary as a repellent around doorways to prevent their entry.

Rainfall Measurement Volunteers Needed

The Louisiana Community Collaborative Rainfall, Hail, and Snow Network is looking for volunteers to take daily precipitation measurements. Following is some information from the Louisiana coordinator of this program.

I am Don Wheeler and am the co-state coordinator for a new rainfall network in Louisiana. I, along with Malcolm Moreau in the LSU Climate Office, am trying to get the word out to as many potential observers as possible. In contacting other states, I have found they are working, with much success, alongside their county extension offices.

The rainfall network is called the Community Collaborative Rainfall, Hail, and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) founded in Colorado. With a grant from the National Weather Service and the National Science Foundation, the network has expanded rapidly including many states in the country. Louisiana came on board this past January. We currently have 77 active observers statewide and are in need of many more. We would like to have as many observers in place as possible prior to the upcoming tropical season.

Anyone interested in taking rainfall measurements is encouraged to participate. Observers can be farmers, students/4-H'ers, teachers, gardeners, etc. More information can be found at the CoCoRaHS website at: www.cocorahs.org. Clicking on Louisiana will allow viewing of our state information. Observers must obtain their own official rain gauge. Gauges can be purchased at a variety of locations found on the CoCoRaHS website listed above.

Can you assist us in getting the word out to potential observers? If you need brochures, please let me know. Please contact me or Mr. Moreau and let us know if you can assist us.

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Selling Timber by the Ton - Part I

Most mills and timber buyers are now using weight when purchasing timber. Many landowners have questions about selling by the ton, and it can be very confusing.

Often a landowner calls and says, "I've just marked 250 MBF of pine logs. How many tons is that?" Well, it's not as easy as using a conversion number to come up with the answer. I usually have to answer with, "It depends." What it depends on is the size of the trees. When the landowner says, "Well, they range from 10 inches dbh to 28 inches dbh," there's a problem. The 28-inch tree weighs about half of what the 10-inch tree weighs per MBF. Think about cramming a one-pint jar full of toothpicks and another one full of pencils. The volumes are the same, but the jar of toothpicks will weigh more because there is less air space in that jar. If two trucks have a load of 3,500 board feet of logs, one with 12-inch logs and the other with 30-inch logs, the truck with the 12-inch logs will weigh more. Therein lies the biggest problem with determining if the quoted price per ton is good, or how it compares to some price per MBF. There is also some variation from tract to tract, differences between plantation pines and natural pines and variation with different growth rates.

The best way to get some idea specific to your land is to do this. The next time you sell timber, be sure to measure the volume just like you're selling by the MBF. You also need to determine your average diameter and a diameter distribution. Just keep a record of all the dbh's (diameter breast height). You will receive mill tickets with the weights. It would be nice if you could get volumes and weights on the tickets, but you'll probably only get weights. With your scaled volumes and the mill ticket weights, you can determine the conversion factor yourself. Attach this conversion number to your average dbh and diameter distribution. The next time you sell, you'll have an idea of your weight/volume conversion factor. If your next sell has a larger average dbh, expect the tons per MBF number to be smaller, and conversely, if the next sell has a smaller average dbh, expect the tons per MBF number to be higher.

As you might have guessed from this discussion, $30/ton for 12-inch trees isn't the same as $30/ton for 20-inch trees. Some buyers have price scales based on diameters. Others have one price per ton based on the average diameter of the trees.

Hopefully, by keeping track of volumes and weights for one or two sales, you'll be able to get a better understanding of these conversions. If it's still clear as mud, give me a call. One thing is certain…weight is standard…there are no varying factors…a ton is a ton. With volume, we have different log scales and form classes (tree taper), which all yield different numbers. As a landowner, you'll want to get a good understanding of timber weight and in the end there will be less room for variation of the value of your timber.

Selling Timber By the Ton - Part II

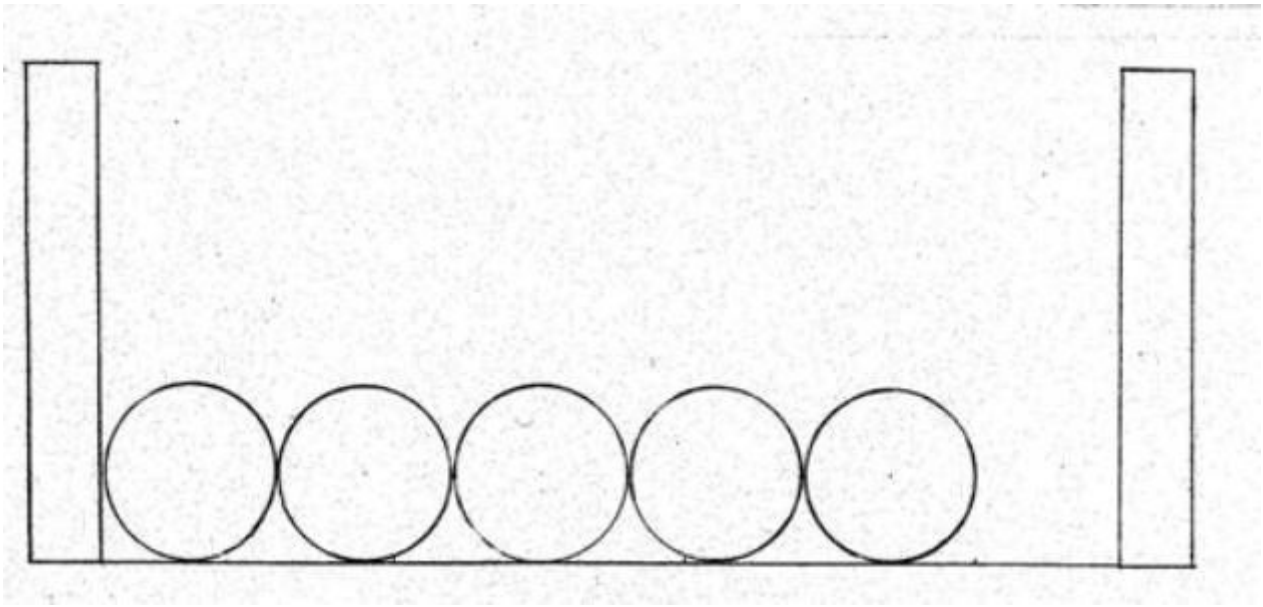
Here's some more information and thoughts on selling timber by the ton. Hopefully, this will help clear the picture a little more.

In the two following pictures, imagine you are looking at the back end of a log trailer with some logs on it. Trailer one has 5 logs that are 14 inches d.i.b. (diameter inside bark at the small end of the log). The logs are 16 feet long. Trailer two has 20 logs that are 9 inches d.i.b. and also 16 feet long.

Each of the pictures are drawn to scale where one inch equals 1.34 feet (16 inches), so you can have a good idea of how the two compare. Based on this scale, the outside width of the trailer bed is 8 feet.

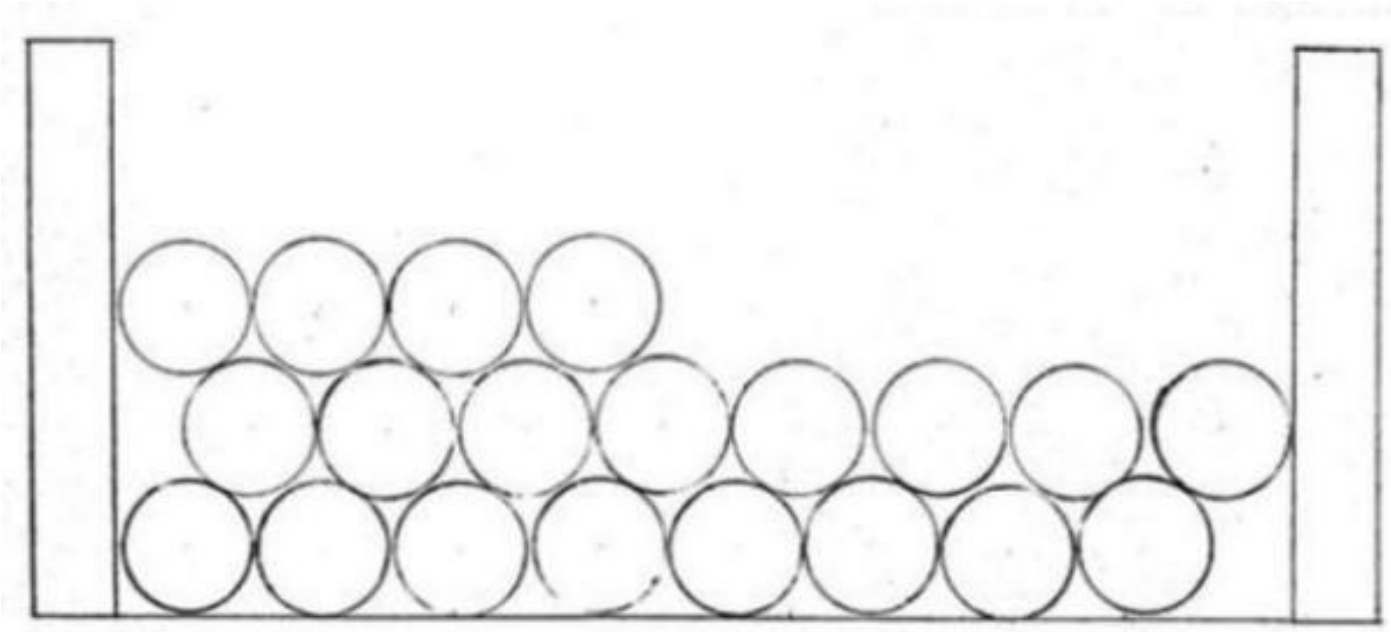
Based on Doyle Scale, form class 78, both trailers contain 500 board feet of wood. So at a stumpage price of $300 per MBF, both loads would be valued at $150. However, the logs on trailer one weigh 6,642 lbs. and the logs on trailer two weigh 10,935 lbs. So at a stumpage price of $38 per ton, trailer one would sell for $126.20 while trailer two would bring $207.77.

I hope this gives you a better picture of the weight/volume issue. As I mentioned earlier, if you can get weights, volumes and the average diameter the next time you sell timber, then you can determine your own conversion factor based on your trees.



TRAILER ONE Scale: 1 inch = 1.34 feet (16 inches)

. 500 board feet (Doyle, FC 78) of 14-inch d.i.b.16-foot logs
. weight = 6,642 pounds
. value at $300/MBF = $150
. value at $38/ton = $126.20



TRAILER TWO Scale: 1 inch = 1.34 feet (16 inches)

. 500 board feet (Doyle FC 78) of 9-inch d.i.b., 16-foot logs
. weight = 10,935 pounds
. value at $300/MBF = $150
. value at $38/ton = $207.77

Do You Know Your Soil and Water?

As we strive continually to improve water quality by the way we manage our land, vegetation and our activities on the land, it might be beneficial for us, as landowners, to have more information about the water and soil on the land. Here's a few thoughts and ideas landowners might consider.

Water Monitoring - Landowners with creeks, streams, ponds or lakes on their land might consider periodically testing the water. Basic water testing kits can provide pH and dissolved oxygen levels. A lot of problems Louisiana's Department of Environmental Quality is having establishing TMDL's is because they have no good base data to work with. Recording annual levels on private lands could provide some useful information. Maybe this type information could minimize the setting of standards at too high or unattainable levels. Also, with a little help, landowners could occasionally monitor creeks and other water bodies for aquatic animals. Certain species serve as indicators of water conditions.

Soils Maps - Don't forget about the parish soil surveys through the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Not only can you get productivity numbers such as site index and best suited species for site, but also information on which soils have a greater potential for erosion and which soils have the greatest compaction problems. This information could be used in mapping land for management activities such as locating logging decks and roads.

Sedimentation/Erosion - I'm not sure how this would best be measured, but I'm sure the NRCS folks could help. Especially with ponds or lakes, an annual or biannual measure of sedimentation could be obtained. I'm sure some method for measuring this could be devised by establishing a benchmark reference point or devising a pan-type collection instrument. As far as soil loss from erosion, the NRCS could provide assistance using their USLE (universal soil loss equation) which is based upon five factors ... rainfall and runoff, soil erosion potential, steepness of slope, length of slope, and cover and management practices.

I realize all of these measurements, mapping and other projects could get to be quite a task, but maybe some part of this could be helpful. One thing is certain, the more we know and understand our land, the better we can maintain and manage it in a sustainable and productive way.

Events, Thoughts and Tidbits

***Consulting forester, Paul Smeltzer, will again be conducting classes on forest management (Saturday, February 7) and inventory and cruising (Saturday, February 14) at Bossier Parish Community College. If you are interested, contact the Continuing Education Department at BPCC or check out this website at www.bpcc.edu/continuingeducation.

***During this "lean" time for the timber business, it's important for landowners to take advantage of every forestry tax break or incentive that is available. "Tax Tips for Forest Landowners for the 2008 Tax Year" is available on our website at www.lsuagcenter.com/parish/bossier.

Also, come hear the latest concerning timber taxes from Paul Spillers at the Ark-La-Tex Forestry Forum on March 12.

***The CENLA Forestry Forum will be held February 5 at the Tall Timbers Baptist Conference Center on Hwy. 165 on the south side of Woodworth. For further details about the forum, contact Barry Crain at (318) 767-3968 or email him at bcrain@agcenter.lsu.edu.

***The 2009 AgOutlook Conference is set for February 26 from 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Lod Cook Conference Center in Baton Rouge. More details, electronic registration, hotel information and directions are available on the Internet at www.lsuagcenter.com/agoutlook.

***The Ark-La-Tex Forestry Forum is scheduled for Thursday, March 12, at the Holiday Inn, 5555 Financial Plaza in Shreveport. Pre-register by March 9 for $20. See the registration form on the following page.

Sincerely,

Ricky Kilpatrick

Ricky Kilpatrick
Area Forestry Agent

25TH ANNUAL ARK-LA-TEX FORESTRY FORUM
THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2009
8:30 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M.

HOLIDAY INN FINANCIAL PLAZA
5555 FINANCIAL PLAZA
SHREVEPORT, LA

The program is currently being planned and speakers are being contacted. Planned topics include:

- Timber taxes
- Mineral rights
- Bare root vs. containerized seedlings
- Safety in the forest
- Forest management in a depressed market
- Other current forestry issues

Door prizes will be given by several exhibitors.

Come and enjoy an excellent forestry meeting, great lunch and the fellowship of others interested in forestry.

If you pre-register by March 9th, the fee is $20. After that date or at the door, registration will be $25. Your fee includes lunch and a copy of program proceedings.

ARK-LA-TEX FORESTRY FORUM
MARCH 12, 2009

Name _____ Phone _____

Company/Organization _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

This form may be duplicated. If more than one person shall be registered, please include names and addresses of the additional people.

_____ Number of people registered @ $20 per person ($25 after March 9th)

_____ Logger (will need certificate for **2 CLE credit hours**)

_____ Amount enclosed

Make check payable and mail to: **ARK-LA-TEX FORESTRY FORUM**
P O Box 370
Benton, LA 71006-0370

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
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Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Dr. William B. Richardson, Chancellor
Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Dr. Paul Coreil, Vice Chancellor and Director
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