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Timber Tales

No. 125 News and Ideas for Forest Landowners from Ricky Kilpatrick, Area Forestry Agent 3rd Quarter 2008

Developing A Forestry File

A good starting point for managing your forest land is to develop a file of pertinent information you will need from time to time. This is the “paperwork” of forest management. Items in this file will be useful in designing a management plan, delineating tracts, determining site productivity and saving tax dollars!

There are several public offices that will be useful as you put together your forestry file. One is the parish tax assessor. At this office you can obtain the actual legal description of your property. This description is something you’ll need anytime you sell timber, conduct a controlled burn, plant seedlings or perform other management tasks that require help from outside sources. In the world of forestry, you’ll find out that the people speak in terms of quarter sections, instead of communities or roads. Another useful item to obtain from the assessor’s office is a plat of your land. This may come in handy in making a map of your property, and you can also determine who the adjacent landowners are, in case you need to contact them about access, property lines or other matters.

Another office to visit is the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). With NRCS soils maps, you can map out your property and determine productivity levels for various tree species throughout different areas of your land. This will help you match the site to the best suited species and also help prioritize where to use your management efforts and dollars. Crop production capabilities for the various soils are also provided. Aerial photos are available at the NRCS office. These are great for making a map of your property. One can accurately place roads, fields, ponds, buildings, etc., on a map using aerial photos.

While visiting the NRCS office, you should also inquire about the various cost-sharing programs and technical assistance that is available. This office can do many things such as help you pay for planting seedlings, assist in designing a pond, and many others.

And before you leave the NRCS office, ask for directions to the Farm Services Agency (FSA). It’ll be nearby, and they also administer several cost-sharing programs related to forestry.

Another office to visit is the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry. A local or district headquarters is in every parish. This office can provide technical assistance regarding management plans, planting seedlings, controlled burning and much more.

The Cooperative Extension Service is an information warehouse. In this office, you’ll find publications related to forest and wildlife management, wood products and many things specific to your locale. This office also has access to forestry software and numerous natural resource specialists throughout the state and country. There’s an Extension Service office in every parish.

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

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

Another item to include in the forestry file is a journal or record book. Keeping records can come in handy for tax purposes. Expenses related to forest management such as surveying costs, planting costs, mileage to and from the land and many others can be used to off-set income tax from harvests. Forestry-related taxes, like another tax, can be complicated, but good record keeping can save lots of money and makes the job much easier for the tax accountant. I have a copy of a good tax record book that was developed by one of our Extension foresters and a tax attorney. After visiting these offices and keeping a journal, one should have plenty of "paperwork" to fill a forestry file drawer with information specific to his or her property.

Boundary Maintenance

In working with forest landowners, a common problem that arises is the location of the landowner's boundaries. Boundary line maintenance is usually something that the landowner forgets about or may not think is very important. Maintenance may be neglected because the landowner knows his lines well in relation to natural markings or has not had reason to know the exact boundaries in the past. However, regardless of the situation, there will come a time when a definite knowledge of the boundary line will be important. Well marked lines will assure the landowner of a better job of cutting desired trees near the line during a harvest or thin. It will also help prevent accidental cutting from adjacent landowners.

The cost of frequently remarking and maintaining boundaries is very small compared to the cost of running a boundary line survey periodically. If your lines are gone, you might consider getting them re-established at the time of your next harvest or thin. If your lines can still be found or if you get them surveyed, make a point to keep them established by remarking them every few years.

Louisiana 4-H Team Places Second in National Competition, Will Host 2009 Event

The 4-H team representing Louisiana at the national Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program (WHEP) walked away from the event with two pieces of good news – they placed second out of 18 state teams, and their state will host the event in 2009. WHEP is a 4-H program that teaches wildlife and fisheries habitat management. The 2008 contest was held in Stillwater, Oklahoma, July 23-27. The 2009 event will be at Wildwood Resort on Toledo Bend in Zwolle.

Although it is a competitive event, WHEP's primary function is education, said Joe Barrett, the LSU AgCenter agent who coached the team. He was assisted by AgCenter agent Monique Hebert.

The Louisiana team included Maggie Brakeville of Bossier Parish, Carlin LeDoux of Beauregard Parish, Eric Smith of Calcasieu Parish and Lindsey Tassin of East Baton Rouge Parish. After they were selected to compete earlier this summer while attending 4-H University, they met as a team as well as studied on their own. LeDoux placed first in essay and third overall in individual competition. Smith was eighth and Tassin was 12th overall.

The major parts of the invitational are identifying wildlife animals, management practices and plans. Participants are introduced to a tract of land and are asked to determine which wildlife management practices they would use to manage the tract in the best possible way for a selected set of wildlife species. They must write a wildlife management plan taking into account the defined objectives of the landowner, making compromises and concessions in trying to develop the best plan possible for a set of two or three wildlife species. The Louisiana team placed second in team management plan.

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, WHEP began in 1978 in Tennessee as the "wildlife judging" contest. The program soon grew to other southeastern states, and the first regional contest took place in 1987. It went nationwide in 1989 and was officially named WHEP a year later.

Organizers say the 4-H program fosters relationships among professional wildlife and fisheries biologists, volunteers, parents, youth, teachers, farmers and ranchers. About 10,000 4-H'ers participate in WHEP nationwide.

Louisiana Competes in National 4-H Forestry Invitational

Louisiana placed seventh at the 29th Annual National 4-H Forestry Invitational which was held July 20- 24. The event was held at West Virginia University's Jackson's Mill State 4-H Camp and Conference Center near Weston, West Virginia. The Farm Credit System and the Cooperative Extension Service sponsored the Invitational.

At the Invitational 4-H members compete for overall team and individual awards in several categories. Events included a forestry written exam, tree identification, tree measurement, compass and pacing, insect and disease identification, topographic map use, the Forestry Bowl and forest evaluation.

Representing Louisiana were Julie Barrios of Converse, Leah Delahoussaye of Erath and Kristen Hippler of Many. The team was coached by Keith Hawkins, Area Extension Forester in Beauregard Parish.

Alabama won the event. Illinois and Pennsylvania placed second and third, respectively. The Joe Yeager leadership award was given to Traci Byers of Texas. This award is presented to the individual who demonstrated excellent communication, management, decision-making and interpersonal skills at the Invitational.

This event is sponsored by the Farm Credit Systems (FCS), a government-sponsored enterprise created by Congress in 1916 to provide American agriculture with a dependable source of credit. The FCS is a nationwide network of cooperatively organized banks and associations that are owned and controlled by their borrowers. It serves all 50 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The FCS provides credit and other services to agricultural producers and farmer-owned agricultural and aquatic cooperatives.

ATFS Receives PEFC Endorsement

Washington, D.C. - Family forest owners in the U.S., who own nearly two-thirds of the country's forestlands, cheered the international approval of the American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC). PEFC is an international, independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization, founded in 1999 which promotes sustainably managed forests through independent third party certification. ATFS is the oldest and largest forest conservation, certification, and advocacy program in the United States. The 67 year-old program is sponsored by the American Forest Foundation.

Family forest landowners welcomed the endorsement by PEFC for certifying sustainably produced wood, a step that will open the door to new green markets for wood that is sustainably produced on their land. The Geneva-based Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC) made the announcement after a 14-month rigorous review designed to provide assurance to purchasers that certified wood and paper products are in fact produced from sustainably managed forests.

For some U.S. companies like NewPage Corporation whose North American operations include a mill in Rumford, Maine, this change could not come soon enough. "We sorely needed this endorsement in order to satisfy our customers who are demanding that our pulp and paper come from certified forest operations," said Tony Lyons, Director of Fiber Supply at the NewPage Rumford Mill. He added that the market dynamics for sustainably produced wood have changed dramatically over just the last two years. "We can't meet the demand, and that's a shame when qualified forest owners are standing ready. This fixes that problem."

"This is fantastic news for conservation-minded family forest owners who are struggling to survive in tough economic times," said Laurence Wiseman, President and Chief Executive Officer of the American Forest Foundation, the parent group of ATFS. "PEFC approval is the key to connecting more of the good operators to the rapidly growing marketplace of green manufacturers, distributors, retailers and consumers."

Forest landowners who voluntarily commit the extra time and expense to produce wood sustainably under the ATFS system will now qualify for access to the international markets that they never had before. Traditional markets for U.S. wood have been shrinking as more foreign wood gains control into those markets, and Wiseman believes this endorsement step will help U.S. growers.

The United States is permanently losing 1.5 million acres per year of family forestland to development. Many people mistakenly assume that forestland they see is owned by either the government or large paper companies, when in fact 60 percent of all the wood harvested in the U.S. actually comes from family forestlands. For many of these small forest landowners, achieving some economic return on their property is essential if they are to avoid the pressures of development.

Joe Pierce is a sixth-generation family forest owner in Cumberland County, Maine who walks the talk. Not only does he spend much of his time teaching other landowners how to manage their forest sustainably, his own operation won the national ATFS Tree Farmer of the Year award in 2007 for his conservation practices. A pioneer in this area whose grandmother first enrolled the family's forestland in the volunteer ATFS program in the 1960's, Joe credits his great, great grandfather who reportedly once said "Take care of the land first, and it will take care of you."

By using selective thinning and other conservation practices, the Pierce family has both earned an income and protected black bear, bobcats, moose, red-tailed hawks and other wildlife. He and his wife Cathy even took steps to reintroduce wild turkeys on the land. A wild island on their land has been reserved for wilderness canoeists. "I was brought up to love this land, its plants and its wildlife," Joe Pierce said. "It's a legacy for all our family that Cathy and I have been blessed with and that we want to continue. Certification lets everyone know that we take care of our land properly." He added, "We are lucky. So many people don't have a special place that gives them roots."

Many communities depend on private forests to provide benefits including water purification, clean air, recreation, wildlife habitat and education. Eighty percent of all rain that falls east of the Mississippi River falls on family-owned forests where it is purified, stored, and released into aquifers.

"By joining the largest forest certification system in the world, the American Tree Farm System is creating new markets for American growers," said Ben Gunneberg, Secretary General of PEFC International. "The demand for sustainably-procured wood is rapidly increasing because more businesses and more consumers are stepping up to the plate on issues like climate change. PEFC endorsement means that more American growers can now serve this rapidly growing market. "

Only about 10 percent of the global wood market currently comes through forest certification systems. Now with ATFS, PEFC has 500 million certified acres. At this size and growing rapidly, PEFC is by far the largest global program for certifying sustainable forests. Canada, Norway, Finland, Spain, Brazil, the Malaysian Republic, and many other European countries are among those with PEFC-approved forest certification systems. This is the second such approval for the U.S., with the first being the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

The American Tree Farm System was first launched in 1941 as a private initiative to address concerns that America's forests were being cut at unsustainable rates without reforestation. It now represents more than 90,000 family forest owners in 45 states, most of whom manage woodlots of less than 100 acres. ATFS is the largest private forest conservation and forest restoration initiative in the history of the U.S. "The number of certified family forests landowners in the system has doubled over the past four years, and this shows the tremendous growth potential in this area," said Bob Simpson, Senior Vice President for the American Forest Foundation.

For more information contact Bob Simpson, Senior Vice President, Forestry at 202.463.2458 or bsimpson@forestfoundation.org.

The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) is a national program of the Center for Family Forestry that promotes the sustainable management of forests through education and outreach to private forest landowners. Founded in 1941, ATFS has 23 million acres of privately owned forestland and 90,473 certified forest properties that exhibit excellence in forest stewardship. ATFS private forest landowners [Tree Farmers] manage their forestlands for wood, water, wildlife, and recreation with assistance from 4,400 volunteer foresters.

The American Forest Foundation (AFF) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) conservation and education organization that strives to ensure the sustainability of America's family forests for present and future generations. Our vision is to create a future where North American forests are sustained by the public which understands and values the social, economic, and environmental benefits they provide to our communities, our nation, and our world.

Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC). PEFC is a framework for the assessment and endorsement of national forest certification systems that have been developed based on internationally recognized requirements for sustainable forest management. Since its launch in 1999, PEFC has become the largest forest certification umbrella organization covering national systems from all over the world, delivering hundreds of millions of tons of wood to the processing industry and then onto the market place from currently more than 200 million hectares of certified forests. This is an area which is larger than the combined forest area of all European Union member states. PEFC has strong grass roots support from many stakeholders including the forestry sector, governments, trade associations, trade unions and non-governmental organizations.

Food Plot Plantings for White-Tailed Deer

Hunters and land managers are always seeking new and more innovative ways to improve the quality and attractiveness of their hunting areas. Wildlife biologists and other experienced personnel who deal with the management of deer are often asked the one question that relates to how these same hunters and land managers attempt to improve the quality and attractiveness of the areas they control: "What should I plant to attract and hold deer on my hunting area?"

As with any management decision, consideration should be given to what is already available on the area before making any changes to the habitat. Management of native browse species is many times overlooked when hunters and sportsmen want to improve habitat conditions. Fertilizing Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), blackberry and dewberry (*Rubus*) and other forbs and vines normally found in open timber stands will greatly enhance the food and cover that Louisiana upland wildlife depend on. In some cases, individuals fail to plan and prepare when it comes to planting food plots and actually destroy large areas of these native browse species. The critical step is to plan before you plant.

Plants that can be used for cool season food plots

Austrian Winter Peas

Planting Dates: Sept. 1—Nov. 1

Austrian winter peas, a cool season forage, rival warm season plantings of soybeans and cowpeas in their attractiveness to white-tailed deer. Inoculated seed should be drill planted at 40 pounds per acre or broadcast at 40 to 60 pounds per acre. These plantings are better adapted to heavy clay soils with moderate to heavy fertility. Fertilize at 250 pounds per acre with 0-14-14 and maintain a soil pH between 6.0 and 7.0.

Crimson Clover

Planting Dates: Sept. 1—Nov. 15

Crimson Clover is one of eight or more clovers that can be planted for deer in Louisiana to provide a high protein source in the winter. Clovers are generally planted in a mix with other cool season annuals. Clovers are rather expensively priced per pound, but this cost can usually be justified when one looks at the small amount of seed required to cover an area. Clovers are one of the items land managers can save money on by mixing chosen species themselves rather than buying premixed bags. In planting any variety, take care to maintain pH at recommended levels. Most clovers are very site specific. The big advantage of Crimson Clover is its high tolerance to acidic soils. With any species of clover chosen for planting, reseeding can be enhanced by disking or mowing in the fall after initial establishment. After soil disturbance, apply 0-20-20 fertilizer at the rate of 300 pounds per acre and maintain soil pH between 6.5 and 7.5. Seed should be inoculated and drill planted at 15 pounds per acre or broadcast at 20 pounds per acre.

Subterranean Clover

Planting Dates: Sept. 1—Oct. 15

Subterranean Clover is a cool season annual legume that can tolerate shade quite well, making it an ideal choice for plantings on narrow logging roads and small loading decks in thinned timber stands. Fertilize at the rate of 200 pounds per acre of 0-20-20 and maintain soil pH between 6.5 and 7.0. Inoculated seed should be drill planted at the rate of 8 pounds per acre or broadcast at 15 pounds per acre.

White or Ladino Clover

Planting Dates: Sept. 1—Nov. 15

White Clover or Ladino Clover is another popular cool season annual legume that provides excellent high protein deer forage. Plantings can be established by seeding as little as 4 pounds per acre when drill planting and 5 to 6 pounds per acre when broadcast planting. Fertilize with 400 pounds per acre of 0-20-20 and maintain soil pH between 6.5 and 7.0. Ladino Clover varieties include Osceola, Tillman, Regal, Louisiana S1 and California.

Elbon Rye

Planting Dates: Sept. 1—Nov. 15

Elbon rye is a small grain annual plant that is similar to wheat and heavily used by deer in its early growth stages. It is very cold tolerant and can survive fairly frigid conditions later in the year although as it matures it loses a portion of its protein levels. Plantings established in the fall begin to die back the following summer. Elbon rye should be drilled or broadcast at the rate of 80 pounds per acre with 200 pounds per acre of a balanced fertilizer blend such as 13-13-13 applied at planting. Soil pH should be maintained between 5.6 and 6.5. Elbon rye makes its best growth on well-drained, light-textured soils.

Oats

Planting Dates: Sept. 1—Nov. 1

Oats are a cool season annual grain that has the disadvantage of being less cold tolerant than rye or wheat. Established plantings are browsed heavily by deer in their early growth stages. Seed should be drilled or broadcast at 80 pounds per acre, and 200 pounds per acre of 13-13-13 should be applied at planting. Top dressing with a blend of ammonia nitrate fertilizer such as 34-0-0 in January or February is recommended to give added growth later in the year. Maintain soil pH between 5.5 and 6.5.

Ryegrass

Planting Dates: Sept. 1—Nov. 1

Ryegrass is able to grow under such a wide range of soil and light conditions that it is one of the most common plantings to establish for white-tailed deer either planted alone or more often as part of a mix. It is a cool season annual grass, but repeated stands can be achieved by allowing plantings from the previous year to mature and go to seed. Disking such areas the following fall will almost always show some ryegrass returning. Seed can be drilled or broadcast at the rate of 20 pounds per acre. Fertilize at planting with 250 pounds per acre of 13-13-13 followed by top dressing with 150 pounds per acre of 34-0-0. Ryegrass grows best in soils maintained at a pH of 6.0.

Wheat

Planting Dates: Sept. 1—Nov. 1

Wheat is a cool season annual small grain that is widely used by deer in the early stages of growth. It, along with ryegrass, is a staple food plot item that represents some of the most used food plot ingredients for white-tailed deer. Establish plantings by broadcasting seed at the rate of 80 pounds per acre. Fertilize at planting with 200 pounds per acre of 13-13-13 and top dress later in the year with 150 to 200 pounds per acre of 34-0-0. Soil pH should be maintained between 5.5 and 6.5.

Properly planted food plots can be a tremendous benefit to white-tailed deer. Before you plant food plots, consider these factors.

The total acreage to be planted in food plots, along with the size of individual plantings, must be decided before planting begins. There is always considerable debate when trying to determine the correct amount of acreage to devote to food plots. The answer to this question is best provided by closely examining the natural habitat conditions surrounding the area to be planted. When native habitat provides adequate food and cover for deer, look at food plots as a supplemental management option that can improve the forage quality of an area. As mentioned earlier, however, these plantings should never be done at the expense of managing for high quality native foods. Where habitat conditions and finances allow, planting up to 10 percent of an area in various types of supplemental food plots could be considered a management option, while planting as little as one percent of the total area may benefit deer as well as attract them to the area for viewing or harvest opportunities.

In considering the size of the openings to be planted, managers should first look to existing openings such as power line or pipeline rights of way or existing open fields. Food plots should be wide enough to allow for adequate sunlight to reach the ground and at least one-half acre in size. In areas with high deer densities, planting plots smaller than this will generally be of little value since deer will quickly “eat down” these small plots with no long-lasting benefits. Where manipulation of the native habitat is possible, establishing long narrow food strips in a “wagon wheel” fashion can be of maximum benefit in getting the highest amount of food plot acreage established on a minimal amount of total area. In this planting arrangement, the deer stand or viewing platform is the hub of the wheel, with food strips coming off at various angles and lengths as the spokes of the wheel. In many cases, over-hunting a food plot by continual usage in morning and evening will cause deer to avoid use except nocturnally.

The forest habitat type is a second factor to consider when deciding how to establish food plots for white-tailed deer. Various forest habitats and the soils upon which they exist play an important part in determining the carrying capacity of deer and other wildlife on an area. Pine and mixed pine/hardwood forests of Louisiana cannot support the numbers of deer that our state’s bottomland hardwood forests are capable of supporting. Regardless of the forest type, regular manipulation of the native habitat by timber management is necessary to keep a forest productive for deer. Clear-cutting, regular thinning and prescribed burning are forest management activities that land managers can use to accomplish this task. With the forest habitat type considered, food plots have the potential to be more beneficial where soil and timber types are not as productive in providing the necessary food and cover for white-tailed deer.

The availability and types of agricultural crops grown on farms located on or adjacent to hunting leases have an impact on the decision of what and how much to plant in food plots. In areas where corn or soybeans are grown close to wooded tracts, the potential for these crops to be a tremendous supplemental food source for white-tailed deer should not be overlooked. The same is true for many cattle operations where fields of winter wheat and rye grass established as part of improved pasture operations provide white-tailed deer with a readily available source for winter foods. Studies have shown that these types of agricultural operations, when done on a large scale, can increase body weights and improve the overall condition of deer in the surrounding area. The absence of these farming operations should make the establishment of permanent food plots a more critical management decision in most cases, particularly in intensively managed pine plantations where long-term hardwood control is practiced.

Another factor to consider when initiating a food plot program is deciding what species will be planted. The most successful operations involve plantings that are available for deer more or less year-round. To achieve this objective, plant cool and warm season plots. In this type of operation, quality food is available to deer during the two most critical periods – late summer and late winter. Normal Louisiana weather provides little rainfall during late summer. Native vegetation under these conditions develops into browse that is low in nutrition and palatability. Lactating females and bucks in the later stages of antler development depend on quality forage for maximum body performance at this time of the year. Late winter finds some deer habitat devoid of the hard and soft mast crops and deciduous browse species that they started with the previous fall. Food plots at this time of the year may provide deer with the necessary energy to carry them through until spring green-up takes place.

Events, Thoughts and Tidbits

***We will be having a forestry tour in Webster Parish on November 13 to look at a young pine stand that was pre-commercially thinned through the USDA’s NRCS cost-sharing program. Details will be in the next edition of Timber Tales.

***The LFA’s Annual Meeting is scheduled for August 26-28 at the Paragon Resort in Marksville. Check out www.laforestry.com or call (318) 443-2558.

Sincerely,

Ricky Kilpatrick

Ricky Kilpatrick
Area Forestry Agent

It is the policy of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, or disability. If you have a disability which requires special assistance for your participation in a meeting, please contact the Bossier Parish Extension Office at (318) 965-2326 three days prior to the meeting.

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