

# The Alabama Forestry Commission Reaches Out a Helping Hand

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The Alabama Forestry Commission's latest incentive is to "reach out" to underserved landowners and underrepresented groups. In past years, some forest landowners were not receiving equal access to information, assistance and programs provided for them by the state, federal and local forest agencies. To prevent the problem of unjust prac-

tices, an outreach effort was initiated. This effort is designed to inform landowners who are not knowledgeable about all of the resources available to them. Once the landowners receive information, they will learn that their property provides many positive opportunities if managed effectively and efficiently. These opportunities include maximizing

environmental benefits, wildlife habitat, recreational activities and economic returns.

The outreach effort, however, is not just an effort to inform landowners about forest management opportunities but also to educate students from underrepresented populations about the field of and careers in forestry. When discussing career goals with students, there is an emphasis on career opportunities with the Alabama Forestry Commission. It is hoped that the outreach effort will continue successfully and prevent any confusion and complacency about forestry due to the lack of knowledge and opportunity.

## How Does the Outreach Program Work?

The Alabama Forestry Commission's outreach program is ahead of similar programs in other states and is being used as an example of what can and should be done. From January 1999 to July 2000, four outreach foresters were hired, one for each Alabama Forestry Commission region in the state. Unlike other foresters in the regions, the outreach foresters will focus most of their efforts on the underserved and underrepresented populations. How does the outreach program work? To answer that question completely, here is the vision statement for the outreach program and an explanation of the responsibilities of the outreach foresters.

The vision of the Alabama Forestry Commission's outreach program is to engage underserved landowners in enhancing the forest resources in the state by increasing participation, understanding and trust through a focused outreach effort.

In order to begin the process, the outreach forester must first identify the underserved landowners in the region. Using a referral system is the primary

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## Outreach

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method to achieve this goal. The outreach forester can receive a list of names from community organizations, educational institutions, federal agencies, state agencies, and even from other landowners. From this collection of names, the outreach forester can establish a landowner database.

Once the underserved landowners are identified, the outreach forester will contact these landowners and build a trusting relationship. The outreach forester can contact landowners at churches, schools, community organizations, social events and field tours. By attending these functions the outreach forester can encourage the landowners present to meet, visit and discuss their concerns with other landowners.

## Grass Carp

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Large grass carp will injure fingerling catfish by thrashing and jumping in the harvesting seines. Workers who harvest catfish in ponds stocked with grass carp can also be injured from jumping grass carp and should be made aware of this potential danger.

## Restocking Grass Carp

When compared with other mechanical and chemical methods, the use of grass carp to control weeds in ponds is inexpensive. Results usually last about five years. You should restock grass carp at the first sign of weed growth.

Grass carp are very active swimmers and jumpers. Entire populations have been lost through spillways during heavy rains. Ponds that overflow should be equipped with spillway barriers that prevent fish from escaping. For more information on how to construct a spillway barrier, contact your local Extension office for a copy of Circular ANR-326, "Spillway Barriers for Farm Ponds."

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Now that the outreach forester has empowered landowners to take an active role in managing their property, the next plan of action is to assess what needs to be done. The outreach forester will ask the landowners about their interests and objectives and apply the available training, financial and technical assistance needed to accomplish their goals. Several visits to the landowner's property will be necessary to assess the situation.

To serve landowners further, the outreach forester must deliver services to the landowners when possible or refer the landowners to other agencies that can. Some of the services provided by the outreach forester include writing management plans and assisting them with cost-share applications. Also, the outreach forester will inform landowners about meetings, workshops, tours, or any other activity that will enhance their

knowledge and accomplish their goals.

To complete the outreach success, the outreach forester must maintain contact with the underserved landowners, encourage them to take advantage of the available opportunities, and empower them to serve as role models for other landowners.

Even though the outreach effort is the main responsibility of the outreach forester, it is also the responsibility of all the employees in the Alabama Forestry Commission. If there are landowners not knowledgeable about the resources and opportunities available to them, then they need the agency's assistance. For further information about the Alabama Forestry Commission's outreach program, contact the state office in Montgomery or one of the outreach foresters. 

## AWF and AFC Team Up for Seedling Giveaway

Approximately 90,000 tree seedlings beneficial to wildlife will be given away in late February by the Alabama Wildlife Federation (AWF) and the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC). Mixed packages of 25 seedlings containing sawtooth oak, water oak, white mulberry, persimmon, Allegheny chinkapin, and other species that provide soft or hard mast beneficial to a variety of wildlife, will be given away through AFC personnel and AWF volunteers across the state. The seedlings are provided by the AFC, which grows them at the Hopper Nursery in Cullman, Alabama.

To reserve your pack of 25 wildlife seedlings, contact the Alabama Wildlife Federation in Montgomery at 334-832-9453 and provide your name, address, phone number and county where you live. In mid-February, you will be notified by mail of the date, time, and location for picking up the seedlings in your county. Supplies are limited in each county, so secure your pack early.

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