

Mobile Botanical Gardens: The Longleaf TREASURE Forest

By Andrew Saunders, Vice President,
Board of Directors, Mobile Botanical Gardens

In forest management, your past predicts your future. So it is that the Longleaf TREASURE Forest of Mobile Botanical Gardens (MBG), which is so visibly improved today, required early planning and some courageous early support by leaders such as Mary Cousar, Ann Bedsole, Bill Finch, Mike Dow, Mary Jo Broussard, Keville Larson, and Fred Nation. All of these folks personally contributed wherewithal that allowed the establishment of a controlled-burn regime essential to sustain a longleaf woodland ecology.

In January of this year, through the auspices of the Alabama Forestry Commission and the cooperation of the City of Mobile Fire Department, MBG completed the fourth controlled burn over five years on the 27-acre forest. By all accounts, this was the most technically efficient burn of the series. It was notably successful because it was well-planned by a current committee of forest management members of MBG, because it was well-financed by a 2006 grant from the Sybil Smith Foundation, and because the early trailblazers named above set the forest management model for us to follow.

Come out and walk our Longleaf TREASURE Forest along the newly created Perimeter Loop Trail. Watch for new signage and informative entry points at two locations along the trail — coming soon. 📍

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Photos by Carolyn Saunders

Stimulus Funding to Assist Landowners with Prescribed Burning

By Dan Jackson, Registered Forester,
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Historically, prescribed burning has been one of the most cost-effective forest management practices available to landowners. However, liability, the absence of qualified vendors, and unfamiliarity with prescribed burning have been some of the obstacles to landowners seeking to implement prescribed burning on their property.

With the necessity for burning in the southern forest ecosystem becoming more apparent, emphasis needs to be placed on the practice of prescribed burning. From the primitive methods of Native Americans to the high technology our burners currently use, prescribed burning techniques have changed, but the reasons for doing it have not. Improved wildlife habitat, hazardous fuel reduction, insect/disease control, and enhanced aesthetics are some of the benefits one achieves by implementing a prescribed burn program.

Prescribed burning has recently received a "shot in the arm." The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) was awarded a grant on August 31, 2009, under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for "Prescribed Burning and Hazardous Fuel Reduction on Alabama's Rural Lands." This grant will give forest landowners an additional incentive to begin addressing dangerous fuel buildup on their forested stands. One of the main objectives of this program will be to provide cost-assistance funding to eligible landowners. This grant will facilitate the landowner in controlling hazardous forest fuels such as the buildup of pine straw, leaves, and other vegetation under mature trees.

Several criteria will be used to distinguish landowners who are in greatest need for this funding. Some criteria examples are the absence of prescribed burning, participation in other government cost-share programs, if permanent firebreaks are currently established, and the existence of a written forest management plan. The landowner's certification or his/her representative's certification as a Certified Prescribed Burn Manager (CPBM) is important to establish a level of understanding about the process of prescribed burning. This grant will also afford landowners the opportunity to attend training to become a CPBM. These criteria will be evaluated heavily concerning a property owner's desire to participate in this program.

The final details are being completed for the implementation of this ARRA grant. Interested landowners are encouraged to watch the AFC's website www.forestry.alabama.gov this summer for an announcement about the schedule and application process for the "Prescribed Burning and Hazardous Fuel Reduction on Alabama's Rural Lands" grant. 📍