



U.S. Naval Cryptologic Veterans Association (NCVA) Members

Veterans Take a “Walk in the Forest” at a Clay County TREASURE Forest

By Don East, TREASURE Forest and Tree Farm Landowner,
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A group of 43 visitors – many from other states – participated in a “Walk in the Forest” tour in Clay County, Alabama on Saturday, October 8, 2011. This educational event was hosted by “The Creeks Tree Farms,” the certified Tree Farm and TREASURE Forest of Don C. East, situated along Fox Creek in east-central Alabama. The Clay County Forestry Planning Committee/Clay County Chapter of the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association conducted the environmental tour, which was also sponsored by the American Forest Foundation (AFF), and supported by the American Tree Farm System (ATFS). The “Walk in the Forest” program is designed to help people develop an appreciation for nature, and an understanding of why caring for American forests is so important to all its citizens.

The diverse group of forest landowners, educators, administrators, and businessmen/women on the tour shared one thing in common . . . all were former U.S. Navy cryptologists who spent a career working with highly classified military codes and ciphers during the Korean, Vietnam, Cold War, and Gulf Wars. They hailed from Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. For the most part, this was their initial exposure to the TREASURE Forest program and the Tree Farm system.

Participants on the tour were provided six educational stops where certified foresters and other professionals presented the benefits of proper forest land management. Topics included both longleaf and loblolly pine plantation management, streamside management zones, wildlife habitat enhancement, “patchwork” management, prescribed burns, wildlife food plots and plantings, forest road construction and maintenance, as well as the importance of historical and other special sites located on Tree Farms. Providing presentations at the various stops were

W.N. McCollum, Earl Smith, Lamar Dewberry, Alabama Forestry Commission’s Nick Jordan, and host, Don East.

Transportation was handled by John Decourcey and Alabama Forestry Commission’s Josh Benefield. Recording the event with her photography was Kacie Smith. The cooks for the day were Marie and Jim Gasser. At the end of the tour, they provided a great hamburger and hot dog meal for the hungry participants. The picnic site was at a set of rapids on scenic Fox Creek where the remains of an 1840s water-powered mill, an ancient Indian grinding mortar, and a placer gold mining site provided the setting for a presentation on the need for protection of historical and special sites on forestland.

The Creeks Tree Farms is a past winner of several environmental, forestry, and wildlife management awards, including the ATFS Alabama Tree Farmer of the Year, runner-up for the ATFS Southern Region (16 states) Tree Farmer of the Year, the Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award, and the National Forest Landowner of the Year from the Forest Landowner Association.

The group concluded the tour with a greatly enhanced appreciation for sound forest management and all the benefits that flow from such practices. They were especially impressed with the intense forestry and wildlife management taking place in Alabama. 🌲

