

Stewardship

Showcased in Regional Events

By Allen Varner, Stewardship Forester, Alabama Forestry Commission

This past fall as the leaves changed color and temperatures dropped, three forestry planning committees in Alabama were very busy completing arrangements to conduct three very significant landowner tours. During late September in Greene County, a combined effort by the Sumter and Greene County Forestry Planning committees provided 267 participants with a very successful forestry field day on the McRae property near Eutaw in west central Alabama. In early October, the Covington County Forestry Planning Committee entertained 250 visitors in south Alabama with forestry, food, and fun on the Full Circle Farm west of Andalusia. The third and final forestry field day event took place in mid-October in Jackson County in north Alabama on the Jones & Sons Farm near Paintrock, where over 120 interested guests were treated to examples of landowner-implemented forest management practices and traditional southern barbecue.

These tours were designed to showcase sound forest stewardship, demonstrate on-the-ground forest management practices, and promote the achievements of Alabama's private non-industrial forest landowner. Sponsored by the Alabama Natural Resources Council and the Alabama Tree Farm Committee, planning for these events began nearly a year ago. The Natural Resources Outreach Committee of the Alabama Natural Resources Council assists the local planning committees and helps with the planning of these events. By maintaining regular lines of communication and assisting as needed, the Outreach Committee helps maintain consistency in the regional events across the state. Primary goals for each event are the safety of everyone attending, the protection of the landowner's property, and highlighting of the landowner's accomplishments. Achieving these goals translates into a successful forestry tour.

Greene County

McRae's Pond greeted 267 visitors with coffee and doughnuts on a cool brisk late September morning. Dr. Findley McRae, one of three Helene Mosley recipients for 2009, welcomed everyone with a brief history



of the property and their approach to forest management. Afterwards, everyone loaded into trailers to tour the property.

The first stop on the tour – and perhaps the one stop receiving the most oohs and aahs – was the high ropes course. Constructed as a training exercise for team building, successful completion of the eight stations in the course depends on each participant's ability to work together and follow instructions. The course is designed to focus on teamwork, build trust, and increase leadership skills by encouraging individuals to step outside their comfort zone, push past fears, and overcome stumbling blocks to personal achievement.



The next stop compared prescribed burning to the use of a skid steer mulching machine. Both treatments have their place, depending on the immediate objective. It was noted that there can be a significant cost difference between the two, with the mulching being more expensive on a per-acre basis, but it does achieve more immediate results.

Continuing along the tour route, the group stopped next at the large vineyard. Here, a presentation about the importance of bee colonies to plant pollination was given by state apiarist Dennis Barclift. Collin McRae, who manages the vineyard, talked about the muscades grown and invited everyone to take a sample before they loaded back onto the trailers.



The last stop was the outdoor wedding site next to the pond. Here, talks about "Selling Your Timber" and pond management were presented. Although not available to the public, vows have been exchanged at the outdoor wedding site.

At the conclusion of the tour, lunch was served back at the pavilion where the award ceremony was held. The highlight of the event was the presentation of the state Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award. The 2010 recipient was Barton Ridge in Coosa County, owned by Howard and Elizabeth Barton, and recognized as one of the most outstanding TREASURE Forests in Alabama for outstanding achievement in multiple use management with special emphasis on educational value and use.

Other local awards were also presented. The Walker County Forestry Planning Committee received the Central Region Outstanding Forestry Planning Committee Award for 2010. Sam Wiggins of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System received



an award for being the coach of the State Champion 4-H Forestry Judging Team, as did team members J. W. Ashmore, James Pugh, Anna Gray, and Jackson Lawrence, all of Pickens County. This was the first time for Pickens County to win the forest-

ry judging award. Tuscaloosa County's Wildlife Judging Team won the state award for that category which was presented to team members Brandon Bounds, Hunter Ford, and Levi Campbell. The final award presented was a lifetime achievement award given to Wayne Ford, Extension agent for Tuscaloosa County. Wayne deserves recognition for coaching local teams to 13 national championships. He was presented with a porcelain eagle statuette and a framed poem.

Covington County

During the first week of October, the South Regional Forestry Field Day took place west of Andalusia on the Full Circle Farm of Gail and Phillip Jones. Home-made pound cake and coffee greeted the 200 guests that morning. Gail and Phillip Jones had received the 2009 Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award for the South Region the year before, and the condition of their property clearly demonstrated that it was justly deserved.



Paul Hudgins of the Alabama Forestry Commission called everyone to order and gave instructions for the field day, introducing the Joneses and listing the tour stops. After a few brief comments from the tour's hosts and a couple of thoughts on safety, everyone headed to the tour trailers.

A circuitous route began with a "field" first-aid display and talk. Wayne Godwin of LBW Community College presented topics ranging from substitute "medicines" to take, such as syrup or honey when blood sugar is low, to first-aid techniques for insect stings or falls.

Since timber management is a primary objective for the Joneses, the next two stops were very appropriate and fit with their forest management plan. The "Selling Your Timber" presentation, given from the tailgate of a pickup truck by AFC associate Jim Jeter, covered the main items a landowner should be aware of when planning a timber harvest. Following that presentation, the advantages of longleaf pine and its proper establishment was discussed by Mark Hains of the Longleaf Alliance.



Many landowners have to deal with nuisance pests and the problems they cause. At the next tour stop, Covington County landowner Paul Langford discussed dealing with a beaver problem that was damaging a portion of his timberland. He related how he went from little-to-no knowledge of how to trapping and eradication methods.

In addition to animal pests, southern Alabama is home to one of the most invasive plant species: cogongrass. Tim Jones of the US Forest Service displayed a spray rig and talked about how to chemically eradicate invasive species such as cogongrass.

The last tour stop was at one of several existing gopher tortoise burrows on the property. The sand hills habitat required by the tortoise was discussed by wildlife biologist Thagard Colvin (retired, ADCNR). The Jones property is ideal gopher tortoise habitat with its dry sandy ridges and open stands of longleaf pine.

Following completion of the field tour, a lunch of steaks and baked potatoes was served which was prepared by the Covington County Cattlemen's Association. The crowd was pleased to hear from a hometown favorite, the Honorable Seth Hammett, who reflected on his time in the Legislature. At the time of the tour, he was Speaker of the House of the Alabama House of Representatives. Assistant State Forester Patrick Glass then gave the audience a "State of the Commission" report. His message was that the AFC needed help to maintain the current budget status so that the agency can continue to provide landowners with the services they require. Finally, the Allen Varner (AFC) presented the South Region Outstanding Forestry Planning Committee Award for 2010 to the Covington County Forestry Planning Committee.

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Jackson County

Along the Paintrock River on the R. B. Jones & Sons Farm, the third forestry field day event took place under beautiful blue skies. The weather was perfect, for which the Jackson County Forestry Planning Committee was very appreciative and thankful, as any rain occurring before the event could have caused the Paintrock River to rise, making the planned tour site inaccessible. The event started with a brief welcome by Raymond Jones, Helene Mosley winner for the North Region in 2009, followed by a few housekeeping and safety announcements. Afterwards, the crowd of 120 or more visitors was ready to load the wagons and head for the tour stops.



Because of the unique arrangement of the property, three separate tour trails were established with each highlighting different management activities. The Red Tour had a riparian theme consisting of three stops: riparian forest buffers by Jim Frost (NRCS), wetland habitat management and field borders by Jim Schrenkle (ADCNR), and cherrybark oak stand management by Lynn Washington (AFC).

Continuing further east, those riding on the Blue Tour were treated to a history of the property by host, Raymond Jones, Jr. Next, wildlife biologist Joel Glover (ADCNR) explained the uses, locations, and values of wildlife corridors and hedgerows. For the last stop on the Blue Tour, wildlife biologist Frank Allen (ADCNR) presented the management, establishment, and role in wildlife management of native warm season grasses.

Turning south, the Green Tour had a timber management theme as Allen Varner (AFC) discussed "Selling

Your Timber" and Tim Albritton (NRCS) presented hardwood crop tree release steps.

Everyone returned to the Event Tent when the tours were over. Phillip Thompson, chairman of the Jackson County Forestry Planning Committee, recapped the tour stops and again thanked Raymond Jones and his family for their hospitality. A traditional southern barbeque lunch was served.

The day's Stewardship theme continued with a presentation on Alabama Forestry Commission's supported forestry programs of Stewardship, Tree Farm, and TREASURE Forest. Cherokee County was presented with the North Region Outstanding Forestry Planning Committee Award for 2010, and, very appropriately, Anthony McLaughlin received his Stewardship certification plaque from AFC Work Unit Manager Lynn Washington.



The Jackson County Forestry Planning Committee thanked all those who supported the event and in particular named the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES), Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC), Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), ALFA, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) for their active participation.

The three 2010 Forestry Field Day Events were well received and very successful as indicated by the nearly 600 attendees. Of course, having beautiful blue skies and warm sunshine certainly contributed. The Field Days are designed to help landowners meet their forest management objectives by sharing information through demonstrated successes. If at least one individual takes home one idea and successfully implements that idea, then the mission of the field days has been achieved. As you finish reading this article, planning for the 2011 Field Days is already underway. Hope to see you there. 🏠

SAVE THE DATE!

Alabama Natural Resources Council (ANRC) 2011 Forestry Event and Regional Field Days

North	October 7	Winston County
Central	October 13	Coosa County
South	October 6	Houston County

ATFA 2011 conference

September 30 - October 1 Tuscaloosa County