

April 25, 2005

Wilkinson County Timber Times Newsletter

“ENHANCED FORESTRY EDUCATION PROGRAM”

Youth Conservation Camp

This past summer five young men and women from Wilkinson County had the opportunity to attend a Youth Conservation Camp that was held at Tara Wildlife in Vicksburg, MS. During the weeklong camp, the campers were “certified” in First Aid, CPR and Hunter’s Safety. They also spent time learning to shoot .22 caliber rifles, archery equipment, and shotguns. Additionally, they learned predator control with live traps, tree identification, and canoe paddling.



Pictured (left to right) Geordon Dennis, Joshua Swaggart, Autumn Stout, Justin Ryan, and Peyton Stout.

Because of the success of these kids, they were invited back this spring for an Advanced Camp. Several of these students spent their spring break at the Advanced Youth Conservation Camp. During the week, campers were taught about turkey calling and hunting strategies, wildlife habitat management, compass and orienteering, general forest management, fish identification and population structure by electro-shocking. They also spent time on the .22 rifle, archery and skeet ranges. These camps were funded through the Enhanced Forestry Education Program in Wilkinson County.

Similar camps are being held during July 2005 and scholarships are available for more Wilkinson County kids to spend the week at Tara Wildlife in Vicksburg, MS. If you have kids ages 9 – 16 that might be interested in the Youth Conservation Camp this summer, contact the Wilkinson County Extension Office for an application. Visit Tara Wildlife at www.tarawildlife.com.

Pine Thinning Workshop

Approximately 50 landowners, loggers, and foresters met April 21 at the Wilkinson County Extension Office for a forestry workshop entitled “Are My Pine Trees Ready To Thin?” Trey DeLoach, Extension Forester led this course.

The morning session was held indoors at the Extension office. During this session, participants were introduced to pine management by discussing their growth and ecology. Timing of the first thinning was the major topic for the morning. Additional benefits to wildlife were discussed as a result of the thinning.

The afternoon session was held at Mr. Lester Stockett’s property. During the field session, participants were guided through a process of measuring trees to determine if the plantation was ready to thin. The evaluation process guides landowners through the steps to evaluate a plantation to determine when to thin for the first time. A publication “Are My Pine Trees Ready to Thin” is available from the MSU-Extension Service.

Proper Pine Management Improves Wildlife Habitat

Before the area was settled, Mississippi’s pine forests managed themselves naturally and provided excellent wildlife habitat.

Today, those forests are overrun with mid-story hardwood species, which compete with timber production and take away the thick growth of grasses,

legumes and other herbaceous vegetation that wildlife species need to survive.

Ben West, Wildlife Specialist with the Mississippi State University Extension Service, said a process called Quality Vegetation Management benefits both timber production and wildlife habitat.

"Research has been ongoing at MSU for several years on Quality Vegetation Management, or QVM. This is a simple management process that consists of herbicide treatments, a prescribed burning program and, optionally, fertilization in conjunction with the herbicide and burning," West said. "The first herbicide treatment has to be done following a thinning operation, during mid-rotation. If you do it before that, the forest canopy is too thick for needed sunlight to reach the forest floor."

Apply the herbicide amasapere, or Arsenal, at a rate of 16 ounces per acre. Apply the herbicide with a skidder or aurally anytime during the growing season, usually between June and the first frost.

"Follow this treatment with a prescribed burning program, which is usually done in late winter or early spring. County foresters can help with the planning and implementation of a prescribed burn," West said. "Optionally, research has shown that applying a 0-26-26 fertilizer at around 200 pounds per acre can help spur the growth of grasses and legumes."

Besides decreasing competition for valuable nutrients for the pine trees, West said getting rid of the mid-story hardwoods significantly improves wildlife habitat.

"One research project shows QVM resulted in a 350 percent increase in the amount of forage plants for deer, which represents about a 500 percent increase in the amount of digestible protein," West said. "A variety of other wildlife species also benefit, including Northern bobwhite quail, songbirds, turkey and others."

West said the costs of implementing QVM can range from \$70 to \$110 per acre.

"This is not pocket change, but research shows the increase in timber production may offset the application cost long-term," West said.

For the short term, cost-share options are available. The Natural Resources Conservation Service administers two programs, the Conservation Reserve Program and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, that provide up to half the cost of

Program, administered by the Mississippi Forestry Commission, also offers cost-share options.

Landowners increasingly are turning to hunting leases to bring in extra income. Extension forester Marc Measells said this route offers landowners the opportunity to tap into the several million dollars hunters spend annually in Mississippi.

"There are several benefits of leasing hunting rights on your land; the first being an annual income that can help offset property tax cost each year," Measells said. "Another potential benefit is that you have someone out there watching your property. This can help reduce the number of people trespassing, and therefore poaching, on your land."

The presence of hunters on the land also can deter trespassers who might dump trash or otherwise vandalize the property. They also would be available in the event of a fire on the property.

The most typical types of hunting leases are annual, seasonal and short-term. Rates for leases vary from \$2 an acre to \$40 an acre, with average deer hunting land leases running \$5 to \$10 an acre. Measells said landowners often set the rate according to their annual tax cost.

Landowners should have a written lease agreement prepared by an attorney. Also, make sure hunters carry liability insurance.

By: Keryn Page

For more information please contact

Trey DeLoach
Extension Forestry Associate
(601) 857-2284
treyd@ext.msstate.edu

or

Ann Davis
Wilkinson County
Extension Director
(601) 888-3211
annd@ext.msstate.edu



Mississippi State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, handicap/disability, or veteran status.