



THE REGISTERED FORESTER

Spring 2009

Meet New Board Member Ruth Cardinal Seawell



Twenty-five years ago I received the Alabama Forester Registration number 1168. Just last December I received a letter from Governor Riley appointing me to the State Board of Registration for Foresters. How did that happen?

It seems like only yesterday that I was toting a heavy box of forestry textbooks into the Amory to sit for the hours-long registration test. To say I was nervous is an understatement. Even though I had been through the required coursework at the University of the South in Sewanee, and worked diligently the last two years as a management forester for MacMillan-Bloedel in Camden and Butler, I still wondered if I was really a forester. I mean hadn't I gotten stuck so many times in the woods with MacMillan that my colleagues wouldn't even answer my radio calls? Didn't I manage to tear up the transmission of a brand new truck, one of the first to be equipped with air-conditioning? Also, while I did my part in the massive one-time company-wide cruise that MacMillan had undertaken in inventorying their entire landholdings, didn't I have more scratches, more bug bites and more torn clothes than any of the other foresters?

I tried to fit in; I mean I even volunteered to keep

the fuel tank record with the dip stick. But you see I was a girl. The first girl MacMillan had ever hired. Taking the registration test for me was a big deal. It was my chance to take my education and my freshman experience in the woods of west Alabama and see if I had really learned anything; to see if I really knew this forestry stuff. Of course, you know the end of the story – I passed. And now that certificate hangs on my office wall alongside my diploma from Sewanee, as well as my Master of Forest Resources diploma I got two years later from the University of Georgia. I have since gone on to work in this fascinating, off-the-beaten-path career we call forestry in different ways. After graduating from Georgia, I helped start the forestry technology program at Pensacola Junior College. In 1987, I moved back to west Alabama to work for Alabama River as a forest analyst. Finally, I joined Larson & McGowin Forestry Consultants in 1997, and currently serve as Vice-President, Manager of Analytical Services working out of our Mobile office.

Along the way, I managed to have and be part of a wonderful family. My husband Robert is the rector of Church of the Apostles, a church plant on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay. We have four children: Kacey, a senior at Boston College; Cardinal, a senior at Daphne High School and incoming freshman at Loyola

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University in New Orleans; Hails, a sophomore at DHS; and Sam, an eighth grader at Daphne Middle School. I am very active in our local community serving on the board of Daphne's educational foundation and managing our sons' travel and high school soccer teams. (Yes, I am a soccer mom and a forester!)

As I reflect on my forestry career and personal life, I see a common passion for always learning, always seeking new ideas, but always reflecting on the lessons and values of the past. To me, that is why I welcome yet another "volunteer" task, this opportunity to serve on the Board of Registration for Foresters. The board's mission of holding our profession accountable to standards that have been established and maintained through the years is critical for all our success. But also, the board's commitment to making sure that foresters are always learning, always seeking further education through the use of the continuing education requirement is significant to me. I look forward to helping the board with these issues and, in return, continuing to learn more myself about this fascinating community of Alabama foresters.

Board of Registration



Current Board and staff from left to right: Gerald Schwarzauner, Frank Walburn, Ruth Cardinal Seawell, Al Lyons, Alexis London, and Darrell Gates (Olivia Martin not pictured)

What does the Board of Registration do?

What does the Board of Registration do? This is a question I asked as my term as Chairman of the Board began this year. The answer to the question is simple. The Board of Registration's purpose is to protect the citizens of Alabama from unprofessional, incompetent behavior in forestry and forest management, by the offering of standards and a license to practice forestry in the state. The state of Alabama registered forester license is no guarantee of professional, competent behavior. The license is, however, evidence of an education, professional work experience, demonstrated understanding of the subject area and a documented agreement to behave as a professional.

Who gets this done?

The Board of Registration is comprised of five members who have been nominated by the Alabama Division of the Society of American Foresters and selected to serve by the Governor. The Board members serve five year terms. All of the current Board members have full time employment elsewhere and receive minimal financial compensation for their Board service. I've had the opportunity to serve in many volunteer roles as a professional but none that required more effort and time than the current assignment on the Board of Registration. The Board members give up personal and professional time to offer service to the Board.

The Board has one full time employee, Alexis London. Alexis serves as Executive Assistant for the Board. She demonstrates a willingness to work hard for the registered foresters in Alabama with a high degree of competence and professionalism. Alexis truly demonstrates the practice of treating others as you want to be treated every day.

The Board also has access to Assistant State Attorney General Olivia Martin. Olivia is very knowledgeable regarding state law and how the law applies to our Board. Olivia brings a wealth of knowledge, experience and common sense to our Board.

Another group of professionals is critical to the success of the Board of Registration. The group I am referring to is you, the registered foresters of Alabama. We currently have more than 1,000 foresters who are registered in the state. The role of the licensees is very important.

Licensees generate many of the complaints we receive and investigate to determine if there is, in fact, unacceptable behavior that needs corrective action. Licensees pay annual license fees that generate the revenue needed to have a Board. Licensees also give up personal time for many worthwhile professional associations and causes. It's pretty tiring just to think about all the activities our licensees are involved with and the total amount of time you give to others — not to mention trying to make a living and having a personal life.

There is one other professional activity that licensees participate in on a daily basis that goes unrecognized most of the time. That activity is leading by example. The vast majority of our licensees perform their professional duties with a high level of ethical and professional behavior. The real take-home pay for me as Chairman of the Board is the opportunity to observe and reflect on the high level of professional integrity in our profession. The number of complaints that we receive is extremely low compared to the number of registered forester licensees in Alabama.

Thank you for representing us so well!

Frank Walburn

Changes in Reporting CFE's in 2009

By Darrell Gates

The Board is running into some difficulties on the documentation of CFE's for some licensees.

Chapter 380-X-6-.04 of the Board's Administrative Code is a section every licensee should be familiar with. Specifically, it covers continuing education, the requirement to maintain your license and the reporting thereof.

Problems have arisen when licensees have entered the CFE's in the wrong category, have no documentation of taking a course, or are simply guessing as to how many hours a course was credited for. You can only imagine the headache that gives our office when you are pulled for an audit.

Chapter 380-X-6-.04 paragraph (6) states "Responsibility for documenting the fulfillment of the continuing education requirements provided for in this section rests with the licensee, and the licensee must retain for a period of two years, from the date of license renewal copies of the evidence to support fulfillment of the requirements." Please note that the responsibility of keeping your records rests with you, not with our office.

In an effort to minimize any problems, we are asking that you report only ten (10) hours in any renewal period. Should you need carryover hours from the prior year courses, please list those as carryover hours.

For example, if you had one course in the two years prior to the renewal period that gave you fifteen (15) hours credit (approved by the Board or a Board Approved Provider), you would list only the 10 hours needed in this renewal period. The remaining five (5) hours would be entered next year and designated as carryover hours along with all other necessary information. The additional five hours will no longer automatically show up the following year.

Currently, the Board has only two Board Approved Providers: Lou Hyman (Alabama Forestry Commission) and Rick Oates (Alabama Forestry Association). They have the authority to issue CFE credits for courses sponsored by and for their respective organizations only.

The Board will also accept SAF courses. However, since SAF's CFE standards have changed and some of their categories no longer correspond to the Boards, prior review and approval by the Board may be necessary. Please check with SAF or the Board prior to attending a course to find out if the Board has reviewed the course and has agreed to accept the category and hours designated by SAF. If not, it is your responsibility to have the course evaluated by the Board, preferably prior to attending the course.

No course will be accepted by the Board for audit purposes unless the licensee can provide a copy of a certificate issued by the Board or a Board Approved Provider stating the course name, date, category and number of CFE hours. Licensees must not take it upon themselves to evaluate courses for CFE's. When submitting course information to the Board for evaluation, sufficient documentation of having attended the course must also be submitted; e.g. certificate of completion, receipt, sign-in sheet, etc.

We would greatly appreciate your cooperation in trying to streamline this process.

The Board's Administrative Code may be accessed online at www.asbrf.alabama.gov by clicking the "Laws & Rules" tab at the top of the homepage.

Forest Certification Harvest Size Impacts on Plantation Silviculture

By: Al Lyons

Forest Certification systems have played a major role in the reduction of clear-cut regeneration size. SFI Standards require that clear-cut harvest average 120 acres or less and FSC standards for the Southeast limit clear-cut size to 40 acres. These standards can have both a positive and negative impact of which I am sure we could debate for some time. Both standards review the scientific literature but neither is based on scientific work that defines optimal harvest size. SFI is based on aesthetics considerations while FSC is based on forester and landowner opinion that 40 acres was a size that would normally be economically operable.

One characteristic of a smaller clear-cut is greater ecotone and edge effect. While this is beneficial for some wildlife species it can complicate plantation regeneration as the increase edge often has mature pine trees which are a source of wild seed and seedlings. This can be further complicated by extensive SMZs which again may contain a source of wild pine seed. Since the harvest size has been reduced the coverage of wild pine seedlings, within the harvest, is generally more extensive. For you to establish a productive plantation you must eliminate the wild pine otherwise you lose silvicultural control in the plantation. If you plan to invest in varietal, mass controlled pollinated (MCP) or advanced cycle open pollinated seedlings you must control the wild pine or you dilute your genetic quality and limit your return on investment. Wild pine control is also essential to

maintain spacing and stocking control. It only takes a slight increase in basal area to negatively impact the diameter of a stand. Over-stocked stands will increase rotation time to reach a target diameter that could otherwise be achieved in a shorter time given good silvicultural control.

Wild pine control is essential to good silviculture but is often difficult to achieve. Chemical site prep is often a hit or miss proposition as one time you have excellent control and the next time, while using the same prescription, it is ineffective. Personal field observations suggest that pine trees have the ability to metabolize or resist chemical control, which varies within the growing season, and this variation may be associated with flushing patterns. Perhaps a plant physiologist can comment on this theory. At any rate the forester may increase herbicide prescription volumes or have to rely on prescribed fire or mechanical site prep to eliminate the wild pine.

Forest certification systems can have principles, criteria and objectives that, at an operational level, can work against each other. In this case small clear-cuts often result in higher numbers of wild pine. Higher herbicide rates may be required to control these pine wildlings and thus criteria to reduce clear-cut size works against other criteria which seek to minimize or reduce herbicide use. Forest certification is not perfect and never will be but we all need to work to improve these systems by sharing our experience and feedback.

Where Wood We Be Headed?

By Gerald Schwarzauser

As I write this article, I hope that we are at the bottom of a mighty hole in the wood industry. I am one of the 48,000 people employed directly by the wood companies in Alabama. Almost each week I have friends that call about another sawmill that is shutting down or curtailing operations. One article I read says that Standard & Poor's economists are

forecasting new housing starts in 2009 to reach only 650,000 units, a 29% decline from 2008's estimated level of 910,000 units. This is a 65% decline from 1.8 million units, just 3 years ago. The article also goes on to say that Standard & Poor's believes the markets will stabilize and then recover in 2010. How does a sawmill STABILIZE when the Random Lengths composite price

is around \$200/m? When the industry that I love and respect starts to witness closures at such tried and true companies as Harrigan Lumber, Scotch Lumber and Weyerhaeuser at Pine Hill, we are in trouble.

Our brothers in the paper industry that we all depend on to sell our byproducts to are suffering with us. Each week I read about outages at each of the major paper mills in Alabama. Some are fighting just to survive the financial problems, not caused by bad management but by the market in general. To understand how much the paper business is suffering in 2009, just look at a few stock quotes from a couple of years ago.

	Dec. 1999	Jan. 2008	Feb. 2009
International Paper	\$42	\$32	\$6
MeadWestVaco	\$22	\$28	\$9.5
Weyerhaeuser	\$56	\$67	\$25

Back in 1933 it is said that 60% of the wealth was lost in 6 years in our great country. It has taken us 6 quarters to do the same in 2009. As if that weren't bad

enough, Goldman Sachs is predicting the unemployment rate to increase from the 6% range to 9% in late 2009. In 1929 the unemployment rate was just 3.2%; by 1933 it had climbed to the unbelievable amount of 25%. Hopefully, our government has learned from their mistakes, and they will be able to control this recession.

I was once told that a recession is when your neighbor loses his job and a depression is when you lose your job. But all of this was put into perspective for me, when one of my close friends in Opelika told me of the story that a bunch of guys were complaining about the possibility of losing their jobs, when one of their co-workers, Larry Hood, called and said his cancer was back. Last month, Larry, a 59 year old, wonderful person who loved people, lost his battle with cancer. As badly as our companies are getting whipped right now, we still need to remember to count our blessings. Look around and be thankful for your family, especially your children; they are a gift from God and are non-replaceable. We will survive!!!!

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