



THE REGISTERED FORESTER

Winter 2011

Farewell



Chairman Gerald Schwarzauer (right) presents Darrell Gates with a certificate of appreciation for five years of service on the Board

This is my last opportunity to write as a member of the Alabama Board of Registration for Foresters. Serving for five years has given me a renewed appreciation for the work of those who donate their time and energy to running the Board. Foresters don't seem to have a problem in expressing their opinions and the discussions at Board meetings certainly reflect that.

Protecting the public is the primary purpose of the Board and, hopefully, where most of our energy is channeled. Insuring that those who call themselves foresters are qualified according to the law and committed to staying up to date in terms of continuing education should remain our focus.

Over the years I have made many friends in the forestry community, a large portion of them foresters. I look forward to continuing to contribute to our profession which has given me so much. May your time in the woods be both productive and enjoyable.

I am proud to be a forester and to be a part of the forestry community here in Alabama.

– Darrell Gates

In This Issue...

New Registered Foresters	2
Renewal Reminder	2
Is it Ethical?	3
Recession Forest Management	3
Obituary of Harry Ernest Murphy	5
Watch Out for the Federal Snake in the Grass	6
Will We Be Pulling up Trees Some Day Soon to Put in Crops?	7
Update Your Roster Information	7

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Renewal Reminder

The grace period for 2012 license renewal ends December 31, 2011. If you submitted your renewal but have not received your new ID card, please contact Alexis London immediately at 334-240-9301 to make sure the renewal was received and processed. Licenses not renewed by December 31, 2011 will be revoked. The board is required by law to send revocation notices to all non-renewing licensees, including those who, for whatever reason, intentionally allowed their license to lapse.

New Registered Foresters

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Is It Ethical

Webster defines ethics, also known as moral philosophy, as a branch of philosophy that addresses questions about morality – that is, concepts such as good & evil, right & wrong.

Some years ago, sociologist Raymond Baumhart wanted to see how business people defined this, so he asked them: “What does ethics mean to you?” Among their replies were the following:

“Ethics has to do with what my feelings tell me is right or wrong.”

“Ethics has to do with my religious beliefs.”

“Being ethical is doing what the law requires.”

“Ethics consists of standards of behavior our society accepts.”

“I don’t know what it means.”

These replies might be typical of our own. Mr. Baumhart goes on to say that ethics refers to well founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. Ethical standards also include those that reflect virtues of honesty, compassion, and loyalty.

The reason that I am talking about ethics is because foresters deal with ethical decisions with landowners, loggers, and the people who buy our products every single day. We all can make unethical decisions like cheating a customer and the only other person who knows is God. As an example, the Board of Registered Foresters has been working to create a more thorough test with the help of Dr. Glenn Glover. In the middle of this process, we found out that a group of young men have been doing something unethical – they have been compiling a database of questions from past exams. It is sad that a new forester would start his professional career with an unethical act. Did he think it was wrong to use those questions? Probably not, but I think it is. Each one of the new foresters will have to work under the direction of a registered forester for two years; please help me in teaching them that two people know every unethical act - God and them.

Merry Christmas!

– Jerry Schwarzauer

Recession Forest Management

Today, we find ourselves buried deep in four years of recession, and many believe that we will sink even deeper before things get better. The recession has impacted all phases of our lives and businesses, forestry included. While the recession has negatively impacted all parts and levels of forestry, perhaps the small private landowner has been hurt most of all. Increasingly, small landowners are desperately grasping for cash anywhere they can get it. Oftentimes, they turn to that patch of timber on the backside of the farm. Although I say patch of timber, it could easily be 20, 40, 80 acres, etc. The point is, today, many small landowners have become desperate sellers. Desperate sellers make easy targets for unscrupulous timbers buyers. We, as Registered Foresters, should keep our eyes and ears open for those who might intentionally take advantage of desperate timber sellers. Of equal importance is the fact that many small landowners are simply cutting and not regenerating. With the many budget cuts in our government, cost share programs have either disappeared or provide very limited funds. More

often than not, today’s cost share programs target wildlife or other environmental projects more so than forestry. The purpose of this article is to remind you of some of the standard low-cost regeneration techniques and to suggest some not so standard ones.

Do it yourself regeneration:

Obviously, in today’s world this is a lot easier said than done. In years past, when many of us lived on small farms and had small gardens, etc., we were accustomed to getting our hands dirty. Now, just the mere thought of actually planting 40 acres of seedling is enough to give most of us a backache. Yet, the reality is that with proper planning and a little family teamwork, it can be done. Not only can it be done, it can save tremendously on planting cost.

Key points:

Plan ahead: No matter what regeneration technique you use, the key is planning ahead. If you plan to simply plant in the rough behind the logging, then seek out a logger who has access to a fuel wood operation. Have them chip all logging slash and underbrush after the

harvest. This prepares the site for planting at no cost.

Family teamwork: It is indeed an overwhelming task for one person to hand plant 40 acres, but you will be surprised at what a family of four can do with a little teamwork. All family members have to realize that they are not just planting trees, but making an investment for their future. Even with today's depressed prices, a well-stocked and properly managed 40-acre stand can yield \$300-\$600 per acre at the 1st thinning (age 13-14), then yield a similar amount six-seven years later in a 2nd thinning, and bring \$50,000.00-\$60,000.00 at harvest at age 25-28. With this financial carrot dangling before them, the family members are more likely to buy into the project.

Set realistic goals and make it fun (as much as possible): Don't try to become "Joe Super Tree Planter." Instead, set realistic goals. Plan to plant a modest number each week-end. Remember, the key is family teamwork and consistency. Look at it as an opportunity to get some exercise and get a little work done at the same time. If it is a little too much on Mom and Dad's backs, be sure to include the grandkids.

Below are a few more standard cost-saving regeneration methods.

Natural Regeneration:

Key points: Plan ahead. Leave seed trees and have loggers use multiple skid trails to expose as much mineral soil as possible. Encourage loggers to cut all standing brush. If the resulting natural regeneration is too thick, landowners should be encouraged to do a pre-commercial thin. If they can't afford a contractor, they might want to consider a little family teamwork and do it themselves.

Burn and Plant:

Key points for success: Plan ahead. Have loggers cut all standing brush and leave scattered over the tract. Have skidder drivers scatter logging slash from the decks over the tract to increase the fuel for burning. Unlike other projects, I would never recommend landowners burn themselves. Always use a professional. A properly timed burn can control the natural pines and help control hardwoods.

Selective Cutting:

Keys to Success: The landowner must have something to work with. Well-stocked uneven-aged hardwood stands are best suited for this. With the high hardwood pulpwood prices a few months ago, I was amazed at the many loads of 5-6" hardwood stems I saw headed to the mills. Stands well stocked with 4-7" gum and poplar in the understory,

perhaps, would be better managed by selecting the merchantable stems and leaving the younger ones to grow to larger pulpwood size before harvesting.

Chemical and Plant:

As Registered Foresters, we all know that the best way to grow a productive pine stand is to get control of the competing hardwoods with either a chemical and/or good mechanical treatment up front or to follow all of the methods mention above with a hardwood release treatment. However, with money being tight these days, it is increasingly difficult to get small landowners to make investments in proper regeneration techniques. Maybe some of the suggestions above will help.

Aggressively Seek Cost Share:

Key Points: Get applications in early and be persistent. There is still money available. However, the early bird gets the worm. You may have to go through a wildlife-oriented program in order get some assistance to plant trees. It is my understanding that the EQIP program will assist in planting no more than 300 trees per acre under a wildlife plan objective, but as I see it, 300 trees per acre is better than 'no' trees per acre.

Bottom Line: As we all struggle through this recession looking for ways to cut costs and increase our incomes, let us, as Registered Foresters, encourage and help small landowners find cost-efficient ways to regenerate those 20 and 40 acre patches. After all, we all will need something to fall back on when social security is bankrupt.

– Michael McCorvey

Obituary of Harry Ernest Murphy

Harry Ernest Murphy, 90, pioneering consulting forester, self-confessed “loveable curmudgeon” and philanthropist, died suddenly Oct. 21 in Birmingham. He was born Sept. 2, 1921, in Philadelphia, Pa., to Emma and Vincent Murphy, of German and Scotch-Irish heritage. Harry earned a bachelor’s degree in forestry from the Pennsylvania State University, fighting fires with “The Red Hats” of the U.S. Forest Service in the Pacific Northwest during the summer. In 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Army, assuming active duty in 1943. In 1944, he was assigned to the European Theater as a construction foreman, overseeing projects at various ports and serving in the Rhineland Campaign. The recipient of the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, and the Victory Medal, he rose from the rank of private to Master Sergeant, and later, First Lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army Reserve.

Whether he was working or playing, Harry was always guided by his joie de vivre, or joy of living. For example, while attending booby trap and mine school in New Orleans, he took pains to sample every restaurant in the French Quarter. While preparing to ship out from London, England, he studied botany, earning a technical certificate at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew. He told memorable stories of those times, lamenting a secret lost love in England or recounting a daring motorcycle escapade in enemy German territory. After the war, Harry came to the Southern U.S. to work as a District Forester in the Arkansas Forestry Division and then to manage forestry relations for the Tennessee Valley Authority. A bachelor, he brought his parents with him and set up home in Sheffield, Ala.

Harry soon met a Yale-trained forester from Birmingham, John M. Bradley, Jr., and moved to Birmingham to help Bradley form Resource Management Service, Inc., now a highly successful international forestry consulting firm. Harry believed passionately in the future of the commercial Southern forest and private enterprise forestry, helping to lead the national effort to establish the Association of Consulting Foresters, Inc. (ACF). Indeed, he was such an evangelist for his profession that he was once described as “the Billy Graham of consulting forestry.” An inveterate traveler, Harry especially enjoyed the culture of



*Murphy served on the Board from
1973 to 1978*

Latin America and maintained life-long friendships with friends and consulting colleagues in Argentina, Brazil, Honduras, and Guatemala.

In addition to ACF, Harry was a member and a fellow in the Society of American Foresters, a member and former board member of the Forest Landowners Association (and Tax Council), a member of the Alabama Forest Landowners’ Association, the Alabama Forestry Association and numerous other state and national professional organizations (who have honored and recognized him). An early advocate of Alabama’s “Forever Wild” program, he was twice the recipient of the W. Kelly Mosley Environmental

Award. In retirement, Harry focused on mentoring other foresters and philanthropy, contributing to the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, the Bradley-Murphy Forestry Natural Resources Extension Trust, the Central American Medical Outreach (CAMO), South Highland Presbyterian Church, and the School of Nursing at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), among other charitable causes.

Harry was preceded in death by his parents and his brother, Howard B. Maxwell. He is survived by his sister-in-law, Bonnie Moxey Maxwell; and a niece, Alison Maxwell Kochie (husband, John). In addition, he enjoyed a close group of Birmingham friends that included Billie Bowling, Robert Gandy and Jennifer Greer, Vikki and Mark Thomas, Lee and Eyvon Laechelt, Walter Henley, Susan Simpson, Fred Fregel, Ouida and Bruno Fritschi. For special dedication to Harry, the family would also like to thank Dr. Gorman Jones and the Camellia Group of UAB; caregiver, Doretha Samson; minister, the Rev. Dr. Ed Hurley of South Highland Presbyterian Church; and Ridout’s Valley Chapel. A private graveside service will be held Tuesday, Oct. 25, 2011, at a family plot in Oakwood Cemetery, Sheffield. A future celebration of Harry’s life is being planned. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that contributions be made in Harry’s name to the UAB School of Nursing, International Nursing Leadership Development Program, 1701 University Blvd. (NB 218), Birmingham, AL 35294-1210.

Watch Out for the Federal Snake in the Grass

It is always interesting to me that people from outside the state or people who don't have a vested interest in the state know more about what we in Alabama need. Take, for instance, the eastern diamondback rattlesnake (*Crotalus adamanteus*).

There are several groups advocating putting the eastern diamondback rattlesnake on the endangered species list. Can you imagine that? The Center for Biological Diversity, Protect All Living Species, and One More Generation, along with the Federal Government and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service are all working to this end.

Just for the record, let's identify some of those individuals on the snake's side.

Bruce Means of the Coastal Plain Institute said, "Africa has its lion, Asia its tiger, and we can boast of this marvelous 'Don't Tread On Me' snake. Like so many others, it's a wildlife treasure that we must not allow to go extinct. Remaining habitat for the snake must be preserved, and negative public attitudes toward these nonaggressive animals must be reversed."

Jim Ries, of One More Generation, states: "Sadly, the demise of the eastern diamondback is being incentivized by rattlesnake roundups."

Even Mark Sasser, "a non-game wildlife coordinator with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources," is on the snake's side. Sasser is supposed to be on our side, yet he agrees that the snake needs protection and is quoted in the *Scientific American* article: "It is evident that there are declines in not only the eastern diamondback, but also in a lot of species that are associated with long leaf pine ecosystems." Somebody needs to explain to me how to do rattlesnake population inventory. Do we use fixed radius plots or a 10 factor prism?

Sources for keeping up with the ongoing debate are several articles written by Kendra Bolling for the *Andalusia Star-News* or information in *Scientific American*, which can be reached through Google.

Some of the "do-gooders" blame the rattlesnake's decrease in numbers on the change in pine habitat. Quoted in the *Andalusia Star-News*, Means stated, "After these planted pine stands get to the 10 years and beyond, Eastern Diamondbacks cannot survive in them."

Other wildlife protection groups blame the Opp Rattlesnake Rodeo as cause of the snake's decline. Do you suppose that anyone catches enough of these critters to make a difference?

As usual, these snake advocates want to blame the forest industry for the change in forest habitat and thereby a decline in the rattlesnake population. In reality this is their excuse to control private lands and dictate how people are to use their own property. Can you imagine what it would be like if all of us have to write an Environmental Impact Statement on rattlesnake habitat before we could cut timber or do site preparation?

The "Don't Tread on Me" snake has challenged the "We Dare Defend Our Rights" state.

Fellow Foresters, we need to stay on top of these challenges that face us on property rights. There are many challenges out there, for example, Forest Certification, but that subject is for another article

Maybe the landowners in south Alabama could use the example of the group in Brent and surrounding areas when they fought the Fish and Wildlife Service while it sought to expand and enlarge the Cahaba River Fish and Wildlife Refuge. We must remember that no one in state government was in open opposition to this project. The landowners themselves formed groups and contacted their legislative leaders in Washington.

Most of us who have worked in the woods (cruising timber, marking timber, boundary line maintenance, and other forestry management activities) always have had encounters with snakes of various kinds and surely can tell interesting stories about those encounters.

In reality, the person who should make the decision about protected habitat is the informed landowner—not the federal government or some bureaucracy that tells us that we must live with snakes or in what fashion we are supposed to manage our forest habitat.

– Steve May

Will We Be Pulling up Trees Some Day Soon to Put in Crops?

With crop prices soaring and housing in a deep slump, the economics of land investment have turned upside down. The USDA 's Economic Research Service (ERS) projects U.S. net farm income in 2011 will top \$100 billion for the first time. That's up 31% from 2010, a year that saw earnings increase 28%. While future timber prices and timberland returns can be trickier to project than annual farm incomes, I dare say none of the current timber projections come close to this rosy picture. So does that mean we will see a conversion of timberland to farmland? Maybe or maybe not. Consider this.

All things are local

A recent USDA report provides insight into the rise in "the value of all land and buildings on famers that averaged \$2,350 per acre in 2011, up 6.8 percent from 2010." As with many real estate assets, not all values are up though. In Iowa, the per acre value of cropland is up 23.9% since 2010 but the value of crop land in Alabama is down 2.1%.

Timing matters

From a recent Wall Street Journal article - "The England family, recently repurchased 430 acres of cotton fields in Eloy, Arizona. In 2004, the Englands had paid \$713,000 for the parcel about 65 miles southeast of Phoenix. The family then flipped the property in 2009 to a Milwaukee-based apartment builder for \$8.6 million. Two months ago, the family, which had been leasing the land to grow cotton, bought back the farm out of foreclosure for \$1.75 million. 'It was a pretty good deal,' said Don England Jr., as

he rode his tractor around the property." Does this sound familiar to folks in Baldwin county or east Montgomery?

How long will it last?

Between 2000 and 2007, the amount of land used for farms fell by two million to four million acres a year, according to USDA survey. But since 2007, the conversion rate has slowed and the amount of land being farmed has held steady at 920 million acres. Low interest rates, world demand for food commodities of corn, soybeans and wheat, ethanol mandates and a reduced supply of available farmland for sale are affecting the upward pressure on farmland prices. For the next two years, the Federal Reserve should keep interest rates low and the possibility that world demand for crops will decline is slim, all supporting increasing demand for farmland. But is this two year "crystal ball view" enough to take a landowner out of a 20 to 30 year timberland investment.

Possible Responses to Farm Boom

More than likely the increased demand for farmland will be met first by idled cropland and abandoned pastures and then by abandoned or bankrupt development parcels. If crop prices keep soaring, who knows...maybe those last CRP trees planted in 2008 will be jerked out by farmers who would rather be farming than growing trees anyway. It remains to be seen though how "bad timber prices have to get" and "how good crops have to stay" in order to convince a landowner to spend the time and money it takes to switch from tree to crops. Food for thought?

- Ruth Seawell

UPDATE YOUR ROSTER INFORMATION

Please take a moment to review your current roster information online at <http://asbrf.alabama.gov/rosterofforesters.asp>. To submit changes, fax the form below to 334-240-9387 or submit the online Change of Address form at <http://asbrf.alabama.gov/vs2k5/changeofaddress.aspx>.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

Full Name: _____ License Number: _____

Title: _____

Company: _____

Business Address: _____

Business City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ County _____

Business Phone: _____ Business Fax: _____

Business E-mail: _____

Home Address: _____

Home City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ County _____

Home Phone: _____ Home Fax: _____

Home E-mail: _____

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