
The Florida Forest Steward



A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals

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Thanks 2007-2008 Tour Hosts!

***Fall 2008 tour announcements
in this issue***

Are We Valuing and Serving Family Forests?

By Chris Demers

This year's Spring Symposium, hosted by UF-IFAS School of Forest Resources and Conservation and the Florida Division of the Society of American Foresters, put a spotlight on the present and future challenges of sustaining family forests. Opening the event was the John Gray Distinguished Lecture featuring Bob Simpson, Senior Vice President of the American Forest Foundation, Center for Family Forests in Washington, DC. His talk, entitled, "America's Family Owned Forests: Under Valued, Under Served and Under Siege", highlighted a sobering array of challenges we must now face if many family owned forests are to survive the coming decades.

Kicking off the second day of the Symposium was a landowner panel consisting of forest landowners from around the state. They discussed some of the challenges they see as roadblocks to sustaining family forests, what the natural resources profession should do to promote or help sustain family forests, revenue sources they've



taken advantage of, and important sources of information they use and recommend.

The USDA Forest Service predicts a loss of 44 million acres of family owned forest by the year 2030 – that’s permanent loss of forest use to other uses. Why? This article will attempt to answer that question based on some of the discussions that took place at the Spring Symposium. We’ll also discuss some recent developments that could lead to a brighter future.

Family Forests are Under-valued

According to Simpson, about 67% of Americans believe that the forest industry and Government own forests. If family forests are to be recognized for the values and services they provide, we must communicate to the public these important realities:

- 60% of commercially valuable forest land is owned by families,
- 60% of roundwood harvests in the U.S. are on family forests,
- Over 80% of all fresh water east of the Mississippi River falls on family forests, and
- Family forests are home to about 90% of our threatened and endangered species.

Family Forests are Under-served

This problem probably stems from the under-valued problem above, but other factors contribute as well. Funding for cost-share programs to assist family forests under the Farm Bill and state programs has been limited in past years. A good example of this was the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP), which was underfunded and out of money before most could apply for assistance. This was due in large part to a catastrophic fire season for western states in 2005. See

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/> to review some of the new or reauthorized conservation programs in the 2008 Farm Bill.

One challenge that came out during the landowner panel is that there seems to be a lack of solidarity or organization for family forest owners. Most of the owners on the panel were members of organizations such as Florida Farm Bureau, Florida Cattlemen’s Association or Florida Forestry Association but they are among a relative few that take advantage of such opportunities. Without a strong, unified voice the needs and concerns of family forest owners are not effectively communicated to policymakers.

Speaking from my own point-of-view from extension, forest landowners are a challenging group to serve because their needs and interests are diverse and, as would be expected, they operate very privately. We reach a very small percentage of this audience with our Stewardship programs each year, less than two percent. According to Brett Butler of the USDA Forest Service’s Family Forest Research Center, only about eight percent of family forest owners, nationally, have a management plan and a little over twenty percent have sought some sort of advice from a natural resource professional. This group is largely unreached by many of the services and opportunities that are available to them. Much of the portion that is reached in Florida is reading this newsletter.

Another challenge, addressed by Butler, is that we are still learning how to communicate with family forest

owners. As you gathered from reading the title of this newsletter, we very often use the terms “forest” and “stewardship”, but recent social marketing research has discovered that few landowners recognize these terms as pertaining to them. Most landowners refer to their “forest” as woods, woodland, trees or plantation. A “forest” is perceived as something much more vast, like what you find in the western U.S. on public lands.

Family Forests are Under Siege

Sounds like some sort of science fiction thriller. Perhaps a better way to put it is family forests are facing some unintended consequences of changes in the forest industry, taxation policies and other developments.

Industry changes

Many changes in the forest products industry, mill operations and imports and exports over the last couple decades have shaped today’s markets. Globalization and consolidation of the industry have largely resulted in smaller mill inventories of raw material and lower prices for delivered logs, translating to lower stumpage prices paid to landowners.

Tax policy

As discussed at the last Forest Stewardship videoconference on greenbelt and new markets, property taxes are a hot issue for rural/agricultural landowners, property appraisers and local governments. Local taxation on land, especially the “highest and best use” category, can be overwhelming and may result in land sales and subsequent conversion to development. For family forest owners not engaged in intensive management, there may a social benefit gained by

extending greenbelt assessment beyond lands devoted to commodity production to those providing environmental services.

Bob Simpson observed that many from both ends of the political spectrum now agree that the estate tax, often referred to as the “death tax”, is no longer a class issue. It is an environmental issue. One landowner on the panel identified the death tax as the biggest threat to family forests. Heirs forced to pay 45 to 55% of a forest estate’s value will more than likely be forced to liquidate some part or all of the resource, and the legal cost of setting up tax shelters to protect heirs and property are very costly.

Green building standards

Green building rating systems give credit to structures and designs that are energy efficient and have minimal environmental impact. Federal, state and local governments are increasingly rewarding certified green buildings or developments with tax credits. This is beneficial but one particular rating system works against forest products grown on most family forests. The United States Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) favors non-wood materials for construction and the credits that it does award for wood go only to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood. This removes wood grown on certified Tree Farms, Stewardship Forests and otherwise well-managed forests from a growing and significant market. Furthermore, the LEED standard does not consider the significantly greater energy required to produce non-wood construction materials. LEED also

disregards the non-renewable nature of these materials and the environmental impacts of their production.

Charting a Brighter Course

Staying on the current track could lead to the loss of a large portion of our family forests, which is not a good option. Changes now taking place in the market, service and policy arenas will shape how the family forest landscape will look in coming decades.

New markets increase value

Wood to Energy: Sustainable forest management on private forests can and is providing woody biomass for energy. Over the last year there have been several articles in the press forecasting that the timbered regions of Florida will soon be an important source of renewable energy. The new Green Circle Energy plant in Cottondale, Florida just celebrated its opening in June. Much of the wood for this mill will come from private lands within a 50-mile radius of Cottondale. Green Circle will eventually produce 4,000 tons of energy pellets per day, to be shipped to Europe for electricity production. Mr. John Gould, Florida Tree Farmer and co-editor of this newsletter, had one of the first timber sale contracts with Green Circle in 2008.

Carbon trading: A short time ago the issue of climate change was a new and somewhat abstract concept to most landowners and forestry professionals, but it is now prominent in our newspapers, journals, meetings, workshops, conferences and forums and the Spring Symposium was no exception. Scott Sager of Environmental Services described the growing carbon trading opportunity in a tone of cautious

optimism. Carbon trading offers an additional income stream to landowners for growing trees, a practice they are already doing in many cases. With a few prominent carbon aggregators emerging there are now opportunities for landowners to become involved in this new market. However, Scott pointed out that without a binding cap and trade protocol and widely accepted standards for carbon trading, this market is now a “wild west”. Carbon credits are unregulated commodities so trading platforms and standards vary. Also, there is no legal precedent for chain of custody so landowners, with and without carbon contracts, are advised to include a provision in timber sale contracts that the seller retains the carbon credits associated with all products sold.

New visions for landowner services

The Florida Forestry Association recently announced that it is engaged in a visioning process in order to better serve what is now among its most important constituents – the family forest owner. With many of its industry stakeholders having sold much of their land, the Association recognizes that private nonindustrial landowners now hold the key to the future of Florida’s forests and the industry which relies on them.

A wide array of partners, including the Florida Division of Forestry, University of Florida, Florida Forestry Association, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and others, are working together to develop multiple approaches to reach more family forest owners with important

information regarding land management and planning.

Lifting the siege: revising tax policy

Recent legislation passed in the Florida legislature makes some small but deliberate steps toward a more level playing field for ad valorem taxation on private forest lands. HB 909 provides that no minimum acreage be required to qualify for the greenbelt agricultural assessment, changes the makeup of the value adjustment board to include two non-government citizen members, and eliminates a property appraiser's presumption of correctness when an appraisal is contested.

Amendment 4, The Conservation Amendment, will appear on the ballot on November 4, 2008. If passed by voters, landowners who place their environmentally significant lands into perpetual conservation protection, by a conservation easement or other mechanism, will be exempted from property taxes. Amendment 4 also allows those who use their lands for conservation purposes to be taxed at the same rate as those who have agricultural lands. While diminishing government revenue, this initiative could reduce public expenditures as conserved lands cost the public very little, requiring no ongoing public services, such as police, roads and public schools as are required with developed lands.

The Estate Tax will be repealed in 2010 but will resume at its peak rate of 55%, unless revoked permanently by Congress and the President, in 2011.

Green building standards we can support

While the LEED rating system described above currently works against family

forests by recognizing FSC certified wood only, the Green Globes and the National Association of Home Builders Green Building Guidelines recognize the value of wood in construction, including that grown on family forests. The American Forest Foundation and others who represent the interests of family forest owners, are working toward including these family-forest-friendly guidelines in green building legislation.

Conclusion

My wife sometimes calls me a pessimist because I often see the downside of an issue before the upside... kinda like I did with this article. That said, seeing and being a part of a collective movement to find ways to sustain family forests into the next century has made me a bit more hopeful. I believe we can sustain family forests if we join forces with public and private partners to work toward that end with a strong and unified voice.

Congratulations Don Ashley, Forest Stewardship Landowner of 2007!

Ashley Farms is a unique mix of natural and planted pines and hardwoods, agricultural fields, wildlife openings, ponds and a lake. Don Ashley's multiple-use objectives for the property are to incorporate timber, wildlife habitat, soil and water conservation, recreation, and aesthetics. Timber management on the property is based in sound forest management planning and practices, and provides a sustained income from the sale of forest products. Wildlife management is targeted for game

species such as quail, turkey, waterfowl and whitetail deer; but many non-game birds and mammals also benefit from wildlife and timber management activities. With downtown Madison only about two miles away and two major State Highways on the south and east borders, prescribed burning on this property is a challenge, but essential to improving wildlife habitat and decreasing wildfire hazards. Carefully planned prescribed fire and commercial thinnings are used to open up areas of dense pine and hardwoods to allow sunlight to reach the understory and promote new vegetation for wildlife. We'll have an opportunity to meet Mr. Ashley and see the property on November 6. See the tour announcement in this issue.

Many Thanks to these Landowners for Hosting Stewardship Tours in 2007-2008:

- Jack Buford and Dick Cochran,*
Buford-Cochran Tract, Gadsden County
- Jerry and Sandra Williams*
Cognito Farm, Bradford County
- Ernest and Jo Ann Palmer*
Tree Top Lodge, Lake County
- Doug and Teresa Moore*
South Prong Plantation, Baker County
- Jon and Carol Gould*
Gould Tree Farm, Washington County

Thanks 2007-2008 Florida Forest Stewardship Program Sponsors:

Many THANKS to these businesses for their support of this year's Forest Stewardship Program events: Blanton's Longleaf Container Nursery, Environmental Services, Inc., F&W Forestry Services, Farm Credit of North Florida, Farm Credit of Northwest Florida, Florida Farm Bureau,

Florida Forestry Association, Forestland Management, International Forest Company, Jowett & Wood Consulting Foresters, Manning Forestry, Marden Industries, Southern Forestry Consultants and Suwannee Lumber Company.

If your business or organization is interested in supporting Florida's Forest Stewardship Program events in 2008-2009, contact Chris Demers, cdemers@ufl.edu or (352) 846-2375.

Photos from 2007-2008 Tours:



Jack Sager has a close encounter with the chickens at Cognito Farm, Bradford County.



Chris Otremba, Chris Demers, Mark Asleson and Ernie Palmer plan the tour at Tree Top Lodge, Lake County



Doug Moore (left) welcomes the group to South Prong Plantation, Baker County



John Rudnianyn, Richard McGinley and Bill Bennett get a closer look at Doug Moore's "anti-hog" feeder.



Chris Demers and Jon Gould, Gould Tree Farm, Washington County



Forrest Dilmore prepares some award-winning chow, Gould Tree Farm



Property Tour

Stewardship Property of Bud and Karen Turner Okaloosa County, FL

Date: *Thursday, October 23, 2008; meet and greet at 8:30 AM CT,
program begins promptly at 9:00*

Activity: Bud and Karen Turner purchased their 203-acre property in 1993. It was in poor shape at that time: thick hardwood stands, off-sight pines and yaupon holly so thick even the deer had a hard time making their way through it. However, Mr. Turner wasn't discouraged. He had a vision for the property. Growing up on his Grandfathers ranch with longleaf pine, wiregrass, and Florida cracker cows; he wanted to bring some of that history and legacy to his own property. A little over 40 acres were cleared and replanted, under the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, in longleaf pine and a prescribed burning plan was implemented. He has also thinned the rest of the pines to create a silvopasture - pines and cattle. The property is a multiple-use Mecca. He uses goats for brush control and manages hay fields, threatened and endangered species, and timber. Cogongrass has recently become a challenge as well. Mr. Turner and his family are exemplary Stewardship landowners that have a vision of managing their land not only for their enjoyment but for future generations too. They were also recently certified as a Tree Farm. Join us for a tour of the property to see what can be accomplished with a vision, a plan and a lot of hard work.

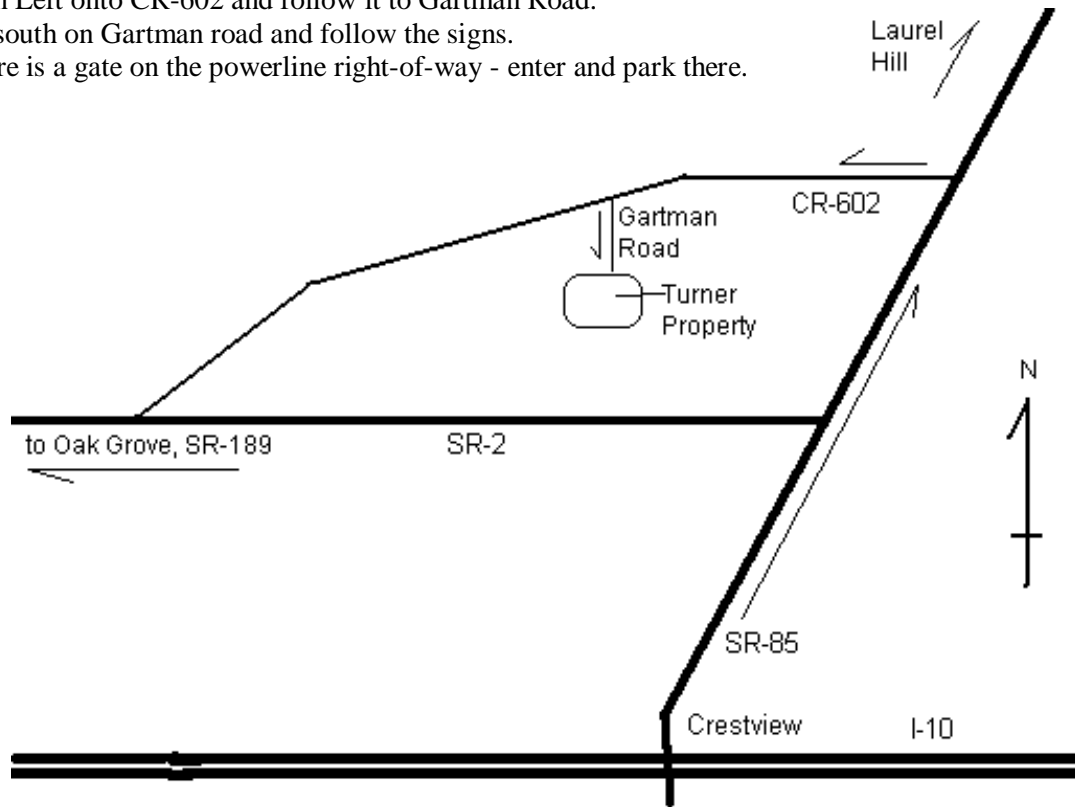
Register: A sponsored lunch will be served on-site after the tour, sponsors TBA. This program is free but you must preregister. **Call the Okaloosa County Extension Office at (850) 689-5850 to register. Attendance will be limited so please register soon!** Directions are on the back of this announcement. Please share with others who may be interested.

A Service of: **Florida Division of Forestry, Forest Stewardship Program**
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
University of Florida, IFAS, School of Forest Resources and Conservation
University of Florida, IFAS, Okaloosa County Cooperative Extension Service
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Funding for Florida's Forest Stewardship Program is provided by the USDA Forest Service through the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Division of Forestry and a grant from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

Directions to Bud and Karen Turner's

- Take I-10 to Exit 56, Crestview Exit.
- Turn north onto SR-85 toward Laurel Hill.
- Go through Crestview on SR-85 and continue through Silver Springs, Garden City, Campton and Okalooski to Hwy 602.
- Turn Left onto CR-602 and follow it to Gartman Road.
- Go south on Gartman road and follow the signs.
- There is a gate on the powerline right-of-way - enter and park there.



**Meet at the property at 8:30 AM CT
October 23, 2008**

Questions about this or other Forest Stewardship Program activities can be directed to Chris Demers at 352-846-2375 or by email at cdemers@ufl.edu. For more information and events see the UF Forest Stewardship Web site at:

http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/Extension/florida_forestry_information/index.html





Property Tour: Ashley Farms
Stewardship Property of Don Ashley
2007 Forest Stewardship Landowner of the Year
Madison County, FL

Date: *Thursday, November 6, 2008; meet at 9:00 AM ET,
tour will begin promptly at 9:30*

Activity: Ashley Farms is a unique mix of natural and planted pines and hardwoods, agricultural fields, wildlife openings, ponds and a lake. Don Ashley's multiple-use objectives for the property are to incorporate timber, wildlife habitat, soil and water conservation, recreation, and aesthetics. Timber management on the property is based in sound forest management planning and practices, and provides a sustained income from the sale of forest products. Wildlife management is targeted for game species such as quail, turkey, waterfowl and whitetail deer; but many non-game birds and mammals also benefit from wildlife and timber management activities. With downtown Madison only about two miles away and two major State Highways on the south and east borders, prescribed burning on this property is a challenge, but essential to improving wildlife habitat and decreasing wildfire hazards. Carefully planned prescribed fire and commercial thinnings are used to open up areas of dense pine and hardwoods to allow sunlight to reach the understory and promote new vegetation for wildlife. Join us for a tour of an exemplary property and landowner.

Register: A sponsored lunch will be served on-site after the tour, sponsors TBA. This program is free but you must preregister. **Call the Madison County Extension Office at (850) 973-4138 to register. Attendance will be limited so please register soon!** Directions are on the back of this announcement. Please share with others who may be interested.

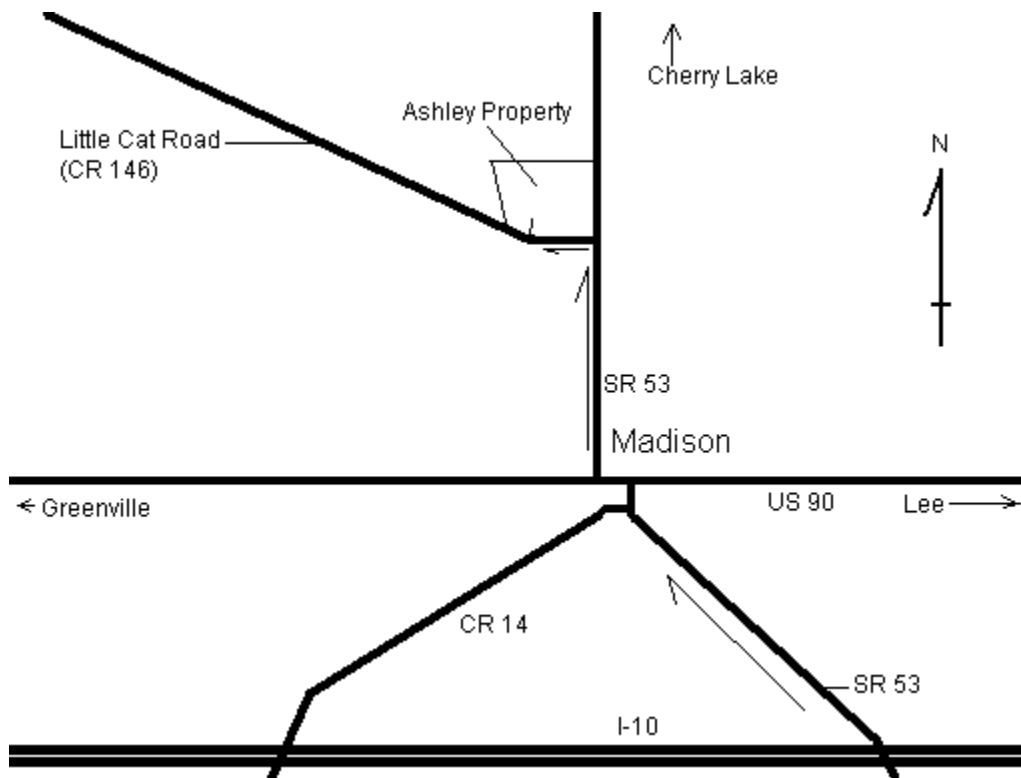
A Service of: **Florida Division of Forestry, Forest Stewardship Program**
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
University of Florida, IFAS, School of Forest Resources and Conservation
University of Florida, IFAS, Madison County Cooperative Extension Service
Southern Forestry Consultants

Funding for Florida's Forest Stewardship Program is provided by the USDA Forest Service through the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Division of Forestry and a grant from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

Directions to Ashley Farms

The property is located just a couple of miles north of the City of Madison:

- From either I-10 or US 90, take State Road 53 North (Exit 258 off the Interstate)
- Travel 7.0 miles (from I-10) or 1.5 miles (from US 90) on SR 53 - to Little Cat Road (Madison County Road 146).
- Turn west (left) onto Little Cat Road, then proceed approximately 1/3rd mile to the 1st gate on the north (right) side of the road. Enter



**Meet at the property at 9:00 AM ET
November 6, 2008**

Questions about this or other Forest Stewardship Program activities can be directed to Chris Demers at 352-846-2375 or by email at cdemers@ufl.edu. For more information and events see the UF Forest Stewardship Web site at:

http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/Extension/florida_forestry_information/index.html



Timber Price Update

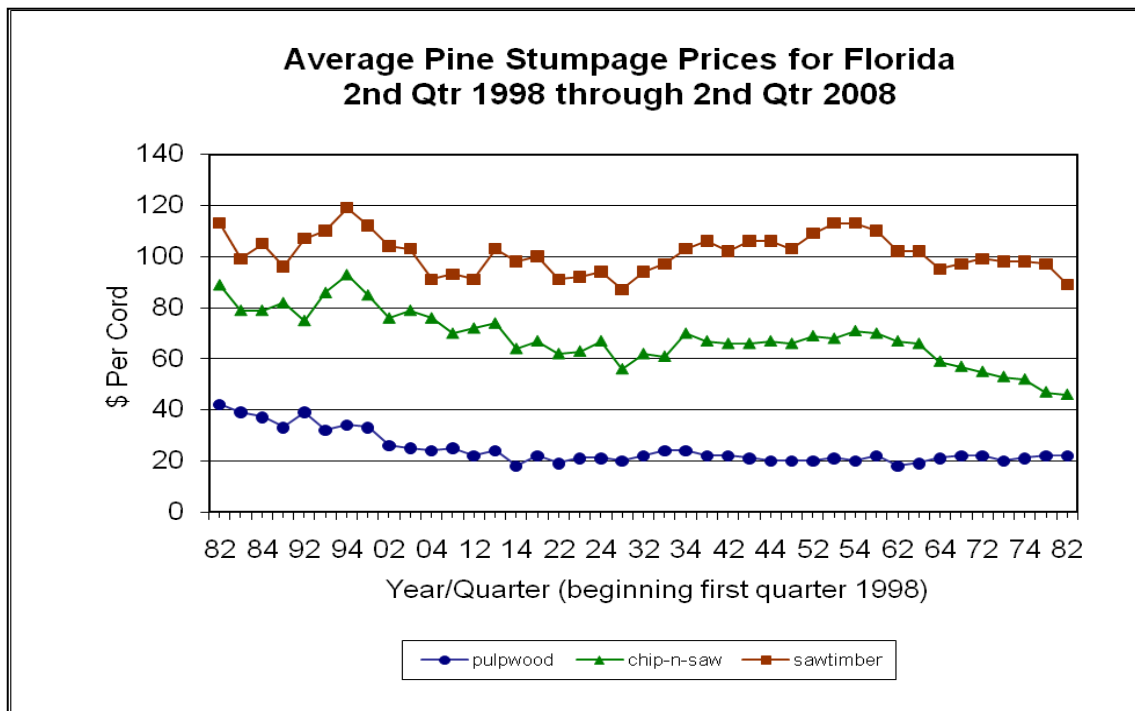
The timber pricing information below is useful for observing trends over time, but does not necessarily reflect current conditions at a particular location. Landowners considering a timber sale are advised to solicit the services of a consulting forester to obtain current local market conditions. Note that price ranges per ton for each product are also included.

Stumpage price ranges reported across Florida in the **2nd Quarter 2008** Timber Mart-South (TMS) report were:

- Pine pulpwood: \$16 - \$28/cord (\$6 - \$11/ton), ↑ slightly (from average 1st Quarter 2007 prices)
- Pine C-N-S: \$38 - \$52/cord (\$14 - \$19/ton), ↓
- Pine sawtimber: \$76 - \$99/cord (\$28 - \$37/ton), ↓
- Pine plylogs: \$77 - \$104/cord (\$29 - \$39/ton), ↓ slightly
- Pine power poles: \$102 - \$164/cord (\$38 - \$61/ton), ↓
- Hardwood pulpwood: \$9 - \$28/cord (\$3 - \$10/ton), ↑

Trend Report

With the exception of those for pine and hardwood pulpwood, average Florida stumpage prices were down for all products in the 2nd Quarter 2008. Pulpwood prices remained at their peak average price in the last 4 years. As was the case last quarter, chip-n-saw prices continue to decline and sawtimber prices remain low due to a continued slump in construction activity. Over the last year, a total of nine major sawmills have closed across the South, two of them in Florida, and many have reduced production capacity by ten to twenty percent. Bio-energy opportunities continue to develop across the U.S., with ten new wood-to-energy projects starting during the second quarter. Green Circle Bio Energy in Cottondale, FL just celebrated their opening in June.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Event, Location, Contacts
September 3-4	<i>2008 Florida Forestry Association Annual Meeting, "The Future Looks Bright", Bay Point Marriott, Panama City Beach, FL. See http://www.floridaforest.org/conference.php for details.</i>
September 9, 16, 23	<i>Master Tree Farmer Mini-Series: Risk and Risk Management, at 12 locations across Florida. Registration brochure is in the mail. Contact Benjamin Koubek at FLboy275@ufl.edu, (352) 846-2374 for details.</i>
September 11	<i>Surviving Difficult Times in the Green Industry: Managing Risk and Uncertainty in a Maturing Marketplace, North Florida REC - Suwannee Valley, Live Oak FL. Contact Linda Landrum at 386-362-1725 ext 105 or LLandrum@ufl.edu for details.</i>
September 12	<i>Moneymaking Options for Increased Profitability of Your Land, St. Johns County Ag Center. Topics include conservation easements, agritourism, community supported agriculture, organics and a Farm Bill update. Call (904) 827-9870 or email nfltooffice@bellsouth.net for details.</i>
September 16	<i>Florida Division of Forestry Workshop: Silviculture Best Management Practices, 9 am - 4 pm ET. UF-IFAS Clay County Extension Office, Green Cove Springs, FL. Call Roy Lima at (850) 414-9934 for details.</i>
October 23	<i>Forest Stewardship Tour, Property of Leo "Bud" and Karen Turner, Okaloosa County. Call the Okaloosa County Extension Office at (850) 689-5850 to register.</i>
November 5	<i>Florida Division of Forestry Workshop: Silviculture Best Management Practices, 9 am - 4 pm ET. UF-IFAS Marion County Extension Office, Ocala, FL. Call Roy Lima at (850) 414-9934 for details.</i>
November 6	<i>Forest Stewardship Tour, Property of Don Ashley, 2007 Forest Stewardship Landowner of the Year, Madison County, Call the Madison County Extension Office at (850) 973-4138 to register.</i>

For more information and events about Florida's Forest Stewardship Program and forest management visit:
www.sfrc.ufl.edu/Extension/florida_forestry_information/index.html

The Florida Forest Steward is a University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Florida Division of Forestry and Florida Tree Farm joint project:

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