

familyforests

News from Georgia-Pacific for Forest Owners and Outdoor Enthusiasts

LANDOWNER PROFILE: BUNYON, BARBARA AND ALLEN DOUGLAS

MISSISSIPPI

ACROSS THE GENERATIONS: A Legacy of Land Management

The family legacy of forestry began around the turn of the century – 1905 to be exact – when Bunyon Douglas’s father acquired a portion of the property he and his family now manage in southeastern Mississippi and southwestern Alabama.

Douglas and his wife, Barbara, continued the tradition when they married and then inherited some of his family’s 6,000-acre farm. Today, Douglas, his wife and son, Allen, own and manage approximately 1,100 acres. Of that acreage, a small portion is in Alabama and the balance is in Wayne County, Miss., near the small town of Buckatunna.

“The biggest part of it is in Forest MAP,” said Douglas. “I’m trying to look after it for my family who is scattered across the country.”

Over the years, Douglas has relied on friends, as well as GP foresters, to help manage the land. “I have a good friend who was furnishing me with help on some of the property and before Roger Thigpen started working with us, I worked with Robin McCoy, who retired last year.”



Bunyon Douglas (L) talks about the growth of his pine stands with his FMAP forester Roger Thigpen.

The Douglas family’s timber stands are made up primarily of pine trees, including a 400-acre natural stand of longleaf pine. He planted longleaf seedlings on 27 acres back in 1990 and 1991, and Robin McCoy helped him plant 123 acres of loblolly pines a few years back. “We are returning much of the land to the longleaf stands that were originally there,”

said Douglas.

After returning from World War II, Douglas joined his father to work the land. They’ve produced timber, as well as turpentine, cotton, corn and cattle. One of their primary livelihoods was turpentine production but that slowed in the ‘70s because of the labor intensive process. They eventually got out of the business.

In addition to purchasing land and working the family farm, Douglas was in the logging business for many years, which kept him up to date on the trends in the forest industry. He retired in 1990.

As part of their management plan activities, the Douglas family will be planting 33 acres of containerized longleaf pine on the property this year. “We also have a lot of loblolly pine,” noted Douglas.

Like many Southern landowners, the Douglas’s sustained a lot of damage from Katrina. While some of the timber was picked up shortly after the storm, much of it was left, including some good standing timber that will be harvested later.

“We were able to burn all our land last year and that helped to clean up the debris from the storm,” Douglas said. “The Mississippi Forestry Commission helped us with that. Because we are within three miles of State land, we often



Allen Douglas, his mom, Barbara, and dad, Bunyon, see managing their land as an investment in the future. The Douglas family has been a part of making it productive for more than a century and they plan to pass that responsibility to their children and grandchildren.

work with them to perform some of the same management activities.

“In addition to GP, I talk with the Forestry Commission and the county forester so that we are all in agreement about an activity before I make decisions on my land,” Douglas said.

In addition to the income it provides, the property affords the family a great deal of personal enjoyment. They hunt and provide many acres of habitat to encourage a variety of wildlife.

“I have two granddaughters – 19 and 14. They are also interested in the land and realize where the money comes from,” said Douglas. “I

would like us to keep this land together – I want to see it continue in our family.

“It’s pretty rural here,” he continued, “and along with the government, several land companies own property around us so I think we’re in pretty good shape in terms of keeping the land productive with timber for some time to come.”

“I’m trying to look after it for my family who is scattered across the country.”

Optimizing Your Forests For Wildlife

You may often spend time planning and implementing your management activities in order to optimize your forest's potential for timber production. But what about optimizing your forest's potential for developing wildlife populations? Management for timber production and wildlife are not exclusive of each other and considering both can make the difference in their productivity.

THE BASICS

Developing a plan for your property that optimizes wildlife begins with a look at your management plan for timber. As an FMAP landowner, you work with your forester to develop and implement a management plan for the productive growth of timber on your property. If wildlife is also an objective, you can include not only wildlife management activities within that plan, but also work with Georgia-Pacific to develop a multi-year plan for developing and maintaining your

example, roads are extremely important and usually overlooked as part of a good wildlife plan. An adequate road system is not only good for timber access but for wildlife travel lanes and hunter access. Roads should have ample daylight to prevent mud puddles and rutting during wet periods. Developing strips on either side of the roads (usually done by making total road and buffer area 20 to 30 feet wide) provides linear food plots or natural bugging and nesting areas.

Periodic burning and thinning are also effective tools in bringing back early succession

viding a history of the property's yield which can potentially increase leasing opportunities and profits. Records also help determine the direction for your land management strategies to maximize antler quality or deer herd size."

In addition to attracting more hunting leases, strategies for attracting higher rates from those leases include having scattered food plot areas in place. The ideal size of these plots should be from one-half to two acres in size and they should be scattered throughout the property, not just along roadsides. They don't necessarily have to be planted, just in shape to be planted. They should be in areas with good soils and be free of rocks and stumps.

"Don't overlook waterfowl potential," said Maddrey. "In many areas of the country, we now have burgeoning beaver populations. These areas can very easily be managed for waterfowl. Duck hunting leases typically bring in some of the higher land lease rates."

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Attracting non-game is also important to many landowners – to add to the diversity of the wildlife as well as the aesthetic value of the land. Examples of these management activities include installing purple martin or other bird houses scattered throughout the property for those, including the owner, who enjoy bird watching.

"Both hardwood and pine can be managed similarly for wildlife," said Maddrey. "The main difference is considering the rotation age of your timber and what type of hardwoods you have. Many people with more mature oak and hickory hardwood stands think they have a wildlife paradise, but without having some areas of harvested, or cutover land, and thickets, they won't support any spring and summer browse or escape cover for deer. They also don't necessarily provide any brood range or nesting cover for turkeys."

A person who is aggressively managing for timber may not be committed to providing large food plots or extensive browse on roadsides, but a few minor enhancements to an already effective timber management plan can result in the additional benefit of wildlife habitat that can be enjoyed for generations to come.

The most important thing you can do to begin the process is contact a professional wildlife biologist who can assess your property and help you gauge its potential. To find out how to get started, contact Georgia-Pacific wildlife biologist Bobby Maddrey at rcmaddre@gapac.com, or talk with your local FMAP forester.

property as prime wildlife habitat.

"An effective management plan can significantly increase wildlife populations and diversity, the quality of hunting opportunities and the aesthetic values, while improving financial returns from your forest," explained Bobby Maddrey, Georgia-Pacific's wildlife biologist.

GETTING STARTED

"Natural vegetation management goes hand in hand with how the timber was managed in the past," noted Maddrey. "Predominantly pine properties benefit from having groves of oaks or other hard mast producers within or adjoining the stands. These areas hold deer, turkeys, squirrels and other wildlife in the fall. As you plan your management activities, particularly harvesting, it is important to leave some of these areas scattered throughout the property."

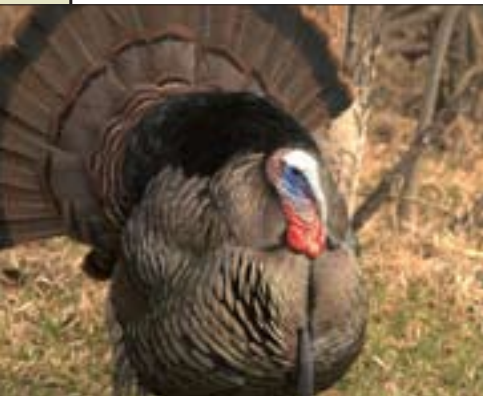
Considering all aspects of your management plan also can help increase your ability to attract wildlife throughout the year. For

plant species that are attractive to a number of wildlife species. Harvesting and natural regeneration play a significant role in the success of wildlife habitat development and maintenance, too. Deer need younger timber stands for cover and browse, and these thick areas are important escape cover for quail, rabbits and other small game.

OPTIMIZING PROFITS THROUGH EFFECTIVE HUNTER HARVEST STRATEGIES

Developing quality wildlife habitat and documenting the results of wildlife harvest are critical to attracting hunters if you are considering offering leases on your property. Hunters also provide extra help in monitoring and maintaining your property.

"Properties that have quality deer management programs in place tend to attract more interest from hunters wishing to lease properties," noted Maddrey. "Keeping records of deer harvested on a piece of property is imperative for timber management decisions and for pro-



The son of a forester, Roger Thigpen always had an idea that he might follow in his father's footsteps. Thigpen spent most of his youth in the small south Georgia town of Homerville and later in Waycross, where his dad was a district land management forester, responsible for three forests in that area.

"I grew up around land management," said Thigpen. "I enjoyed going with my father as he built roads, performed site prep and planted trees. And I enjoyed the different harvesting operations."

He loved science and biology and excelled at both in high school, making the decision to pursue forestry an easy one. "It just all fit – it was where I wanted to be," he said.

Thigpen also had another love – basketball, which he played during his two years at Valdosta State University.

After an injury, he began focusing more on his career and transferred to the University of Georgia's forestry school. During the summers, Thigpen was a co-op student with Union Camp in south Georgia, where he worked in procurement and as a foreman for 14 wood yards operated by the company. He also began cruising timber and buying wood.

"I had the opportunity to do so much before I finished school," said Thigpen.

Once he graduated, Thigpen joined Great Southern Paper Company in Manchester, Ga., as a unit forester, where he was responsible for managing three

woodyards and overseeing 25,000 acres of company land. In 1979, Thigpen moved to Opelika, Ala., where he served as district forester and managed 45,000 acres of company land and two of the biggest rail suppliers for Great Southern. For the next two decades, he held management positions in several areas of Alabama. He joined Georgia-Pacific with the purchase of Great Northern Nekoosa and Great Southern.

In early 2000, Thigpen joined GP's Forest MAP and began growing the program in south Georgia. From there, he moved to Jackson, Miss., as a region manager for FMAP, where he stayed until his recent move to Leaf River, Miss.

Since then, he has had the enormous task of melding several FMAP territories into one and developing relationships with landowners in his newly formed area. He works with 166 landowners who manage approximately 130,000 acres.

In the midst of developing a new area, he

has maintained salvage efforts that are still ongoing after Hurricane Katrina. "This has been a big year for site prep and tree planting, with the next few years potentially being even bigger," noted Thigpen. In fact, he will oversee planting on approximately 2,300 acres this season on 20 FMAP landowners' property.

"Originally after Katrina, crews went in and harvested the trees that were broken, leaning or blown over," explained Thigpen. "However, many good trees were left on the property. Now, we are returning to those tracts and harvesting the remaining trees so that we can replace them with productive stands."

Of Thigpen's 166 clients, about 70 percent had some kind of damage from Katrina, so the work has been ongoing since fall 2005.

"The most unique difference in working in this part of Mississippi is the salvage challenge of the last year," said Thigpen. "And now that the salvage efforts are ending, we are replanting." Both State and Federal agencies are offering cost-share programs to those who replant longleaf pine on these tracts.

"The longleaf pine is native to the wire-grass ecosystem of southern Mississippi and Alabama and we're helping some landowners replant a portion of their acreage with it.

This area was part of the original longleaf belt," explained Thigpen.

"It's also great for wildlife. Longleaf is the most wildlife-friendly pine species," he continued. As part of these efforts, Georgia-Pacific is now working with the National Wild Turkey

Federation on a project that develops strategies for landowners who want to encourage wildlife by replanting stands with longleaf pine trees.

Wood from Thigpen's landowners helps supply GP's mills in Leaf River, Taylorsville and Columbia, Miss. This area offers good conditions for growing timber, with sandy loam soil and milder weather. "We are able to balance wood shipments to our mills throughout the year," said Thigpen.

"I still enjoy forestry," noted Thigpen. "I enjoy reforestation and contributing to my children's future. Forestry spans from one generation to another. My biggest joy is working with landowners. I enjoy people who want to learn how to get the most out of their property and I like helping them pass their values of stewardship to their children. There's a lot of pride in working with folks on a daily basis. Their accomplishments become my accomplishments."

But as land changes hands, many times



FMAP forester Roger Thigpen has spent many years assisting landowners and advising them on forest management issues. His biggest joy is helping landowners pass their stewardship values on to the next generation.

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"I enjoy reforestation and contributing to my children's future."



the connection to it doesn't remain. "As development and fragmentation continues, educating landowners on the benefits of forest ownership is critical," said Thigpen. "I want to help landowners – families, investors and absentees – not just keep their land, but be connected to it," said Thigpen.

He does that through active participation in local education, as well as working with the Mississippi and Louisiana Forestry Associations. And he also does it by staying connected with his landowners.

"The technology we have now is very helpful," noted Thigpen, "but I believe our landowners are more interested in personal contact, and that's what I'm trying to do – one phone call and one visit at a time."

Thigpen and his wife, Lorraine, have two sons and a daughter, all grown. They recently moved to Hattiesburg.



HUNTING LEASES: The Foundation For A Successful Program

The following information is not intended as legal advice. Its purpose is to create an awareness of issues and concerns regarding hunting leases and permits and the need for qualified legal counsel to assist in these documents.

Hunting leases have the potential to be a source of long-term income. A well-planned written agreement is the foundation of a successful hunting lease program and is designed to protect the rights of both the landowner and the hunter. Here are some things to consider when developing a hunting lease agreement:

- **References** - If you don't know them personally, ask your hunters or hunter groups for references. References may be from landowners who leased to them in the past, conservation officers or key community leaders.
- **Organized Hunters** - Hunting clubs, whether local or out-of-area, should be organized, governed by self-regulating bylaws, and have a contact person. If you lease to local hunters, they can usually spend more time on the property and provide greater protection and property improvements. Lease income may not be

as high from local hunters, but the intangible benefits may be greater.

- **Proof of Liability Insurance** - Hunters should have liability insurance, list you on the policy and provide you with proof of coverage. In order to make sure that policies cannot be canceled without your knowledge, you may want to include insurance requirements in the lease agreement.
- **Annual Meeting** - Meet with hunters annually to discuss concerns and issues. At the meeting, inform them of any major land management practices that could alter the hunting habitat (e.g., harvesting or thinning). This will help prevent future misunderstandings and conflicts.
- **Restrict Number of Hunters** - For safety and enjoyment, restrict the number of hunters per acre. Examples: one deer hunter for every 25 acres, one turkey hunter per 200 acres, and one duck hunter per 100 acres of waterfowl habitat.
- **Incorporation** - Hunting club representatives cannot legally represent the entire club unless it is incorporated or otherwise organized under state law. Also, require

all hunters to pass an approved hunter education course.

- **Review by Attorney** - Before the agreement is signed, involve an attorney in the process.
- **Upfront Payment** - Consider requiring hunters or clubs to make the lease payment at the beginning of the hunting lease period.
- **Policy on Permanent Structures** - Decide if and what types of permanent structures you may be willing to allow, and what happens to these structures when the lease is terminated.
- **Notification of Presence** - Require hunters to check in and out or notify you when they plan to be on the property.
- **Arbitration** - Specify the terms for arbitration of disagreements. Arbiters may be local attorneys, conservation officers, extension agents or other mutually agreed upon individuals.

Source: Dr. Greg Yarrow, Associate Professor of Wildlife; Aquaculture, Fisheries and Wildlife Department, Clemson University.



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For questions regarding Georgia-Pacific's FMAP program, call 1-877-GP4FMAP. Leave a message and one of our foresters will return your call.

Please send us your feedback and story ideas.

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