



ALABAMA TREASURE FOREST

Association Newsletter

In partnership with the Alabama Farmers Federation

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Late Season Pond Management

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Ponds are a common enhancement for properties across Alabama, with over 250,000 estimated within state lines. Although ponds serve multiple uses, recreational fishing is by far the most common. Just like the rest of a property, water sources must be actively managed to maximize benefits. Late summer and early fall are ideal times to focus on pond maintenance and work on management goals.

Alkalinity and hardness are important water quality measures indicating a pond's health and productivity. Alkalinity buffers pH shifts in the pond, while hardness increases the water's capacity to absorb nutrients. If these are low, the pond needs to be limed to maximize the impact of fertilizing and, ultimately, fish production. Having a water sample tested at the end of summer will prepare for liming the pond in fall and winter. A local Forestry, Wildlife & Natural Resources (FWNR) regional Extension agent can be found at aces.edu. These agents are great

resources and will test water samples for free.

After enjoying a pond each summer, it's good to focus on other maintenance best addressed in the off-season. Trees growing on the dam can threaten structural integrity. A good rule of thumb is to cut and remove any trees with a diameter of less than 6-7 inches at breast height (4 1/2 feet above the ground). Many hardwood species regenerate from the root collar; a cut stump application using a water-soluble glyphosate or triclopyr should be applied to freshly cut stumps.

Ideally, pond bottoms should quickly reach a depth of at least 3 feet with a slope of 2:1 to 3:1. Combined with dyes and fertilizers, this will help manage aquatic vegetation outbreaks. Over time, sediment will collect in these areas and shallow the pond's margins. These shallow areas are prime locations for nuisance aquatic vegetation to grow. If frequent vegetation issues occur, it might be necessary to dredge out excess sediment during fall and winter.

Also use this time to restock grass carp. Rates vary (five to 20 per acre) depending on the species and density of weeds and how clean the owner wants the pond. They need restocking every five years since

weed consumption slows as they age.

Lastly, use time at the end of the season to examine harvest records. Largemouth bass must be harvested annually to maintain pond balance. Yearly harvest rates vary by management goals, but for general balance, largemouth bass harvest should be around 10-15 pounds per acre for unfertilized ponds or 20-25 pounds per acre for fertilized ponds. Focus largemouth bass harvest on fish less than 13 inches. These rates may need to be increased at the end of the season to reach harvest goals, or if a pond is bass crowded. Largemouth bass help maintain bluegill populations, so meeting harvest rates for bluegill is not as critical.

Effective pond management continues long after catching the last fish of the season. Use this time to identify areas of improvement and adjust management plans accordingly.

Local FWNR regional Extension agents or state fisheries biologists are great resources to discuss effective pond management strategies and provide guidance on maintaining ponds for quality fishing. ■

Visit www.TREASUREForest.org to join the ATFA.

ATFA Members:

Thankfully, life is beginning to look somewhat normal. Hopefully you and your families are well and have been enjoying the summer. We recently celebrated the marriage of our youngest daughter and the birth of our second grandchild from our oldest daughter. Life is good on our TREASURE Forest.

On the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association front, we recently approved sponsorship of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System's new handicap-accessible all-terrain vehicle. The \$10,000 donation will help share the love of the outdoors with our fellow Alabamians. The ATV should be available for statewide use later this year. We look forward to sharing success stories of using the ATV in coming months.

Within our organization, we have committees working on an upcoming audit and exploring the possibility of making changes in our Classroom in the Forest program. If you have suggestions, please email our executive director, William Green, at wmgreen@alfafarmers.org.

I would also like to encourage you to become involved in local meetings in your area. Continuing education never ends. Also, save Oct. 21-22 for our annual Alabama Landowners Conference in Columbiana at the 4-H Center. William Green has been hard at work making sure this event will be enjoyable and educational for all.

Until later,
Mark Finley
ATFA President



**ALABAMA
LANDOWNERS
CONFERENCE**

2021
Alabama TREASURE Forest
Association Annual Meeting

Oct. 21-22 | 4-H Center | Columbiana

Don't Miss It!

Landowner Tours *Plus-*

- ▶ LONGLEAF MANAGEMENT
- ▶ TURKEY MANAGEMENT
- ▶ DCNR UPDATES
- ▶ CARBON CREDITS
- ▶ USING PRIVATE CONTRACTORS
- ▶ FOREST HEALTH

FOR REGISTRATION INFO, VISIT: TREASUREFOREST.ORG



Feral Swine Control Program Expands In Wiregrass

Landowners throughout Coffee, Dale and Geneva counties are now eligible for the Alabama Feral Swine Control Program.

The program, funded by the 2018 farm bill, connects property owners with U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services professionals who will help trap wild hogs. A 70% rebate on hog traps for eligible landowners is also available.

Landowners may choose among many commercially available traps, including those using smart technology. They may also build traps according to Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee standards. The 70% rebate is capped at \$6,000 for landowners with less than or equal to 1,000 acres or \$12,000 for landowners with more than 1,000 acres.

The Alabama Feral Swine Control Program is currently available in select portions of certain Alabama counties, including Baldwin, Barbour, Clarke, Coffee, Conecuh, Dale, Escambia, Geneva, Greene, Henry, Houston, Mobile, Monroe, Pickens and Sumter. Counties were selected based on a high overall percentage of land in agriculture production, a history of damage due to feral swine and landowner interest.

Learn more at alabamasoilandwater.gov/fscpl/. ■



FINANCIAL RELIEF PROVIDED FOR TIMBER LOSSES

Timber owners adversely affected by Hurricane Michael in 2018, in addition to the Lee County tornadoes of March 2019, can apply for financial relief through the Alabama Forestry Commission.

The Hurricane Michael Block Grant is made possible through an agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency.

This program provides \$10 million to qualifying non-industrial private forest landowners with a one-time payment.

Eligible citizens must own timber in the following counties: Barbour, Bullock, Coffee, Covington, Crenshaw, Dale, Escambia, Geneva, Henry, Houston, Lee, Montgomery, Pike or Russell. Additional eligibility requirements must be met for compensation of hurricane or tornado-related crop loss.

Grant applications are due Aug. 1. Learn more by visiting the Hurricane Michael Block Grant section at forestry.alabama.gov. ■



Wildlife Trends

with Andy Whitaker



SUMMER CHECKLIST FOR LANDOWNERS

Keep Learning

Although the past year has made it challenging to attend seminars due to COVID-19, more in-person events are being offered as social-distancing restrictions are lifted. There are also more podcasts, events and tools available online as a result of the pandemic.

Take advantage of these opportunities and learn how to best manage land and enhance hunting success. Educational events peak in summer because hunting season hits during fall and winter. Finding meetings to pique individual interests is easy; contact a local Extension office, state wildlife agency, wildlife federation or national organization geared toward a specific interest. The Alabama TREASURE Forest Association and Alabama Farmers Federation have both ramped up educational efforts. The Alabama Landowners Conference is Oct. 21-22, and the Alabama AgCast is released each Wednesday on most major podcast platforms.

There are always opportunities to learn to improve wildlife and habitat. If you attend some of these events, don't be surprised if you see me there. Even as a veteran wildlife and land manager, I continue to seek better ways to manage wildlife to achieve desired results.

Take Care Of New Trees

Many landowners, wildlife managers and hunters incorporate fruit trees into wildlife management programs to provide additional food sources and aesthetics. Many landowners discover their trees died — after deciding where to plant, digging appropriate-sized holes, loosening surrounding dirt, adding time-released fertilizer, firmly packing soil around the root ball, and adding a tree tube to protect the tree and enhance growth.

So, what's the problem?

It could be the transplanting process itself, which stresses a tree. However, in many cases, the tree died from a combination of transplant stress and neglect. They need some tender, loving care.

Simply planting the tree is often not enough. After planting a tree in late winter, survival is much higher if weed competition is eliminated (normally done via herbicide applications) around the tree. Weeds compete with trees for nutrients and water. It's also important to monitor rainfall and water trees when needed during their first year after transplanting. Most trees have been propagated and grown in a



nursery in ideal conditions with adequate nutrients, water and sun. Some trees do not fare well with the struggles of the "real world," where irrigation is not providing daily water. Taking extra care during their first year will help trees adapt and develop a root system to better handle periodic droughts.

Another helpful tip is to place 3-4 inches of mulch around the base of trees. Mulching will reduce weed problems and conserve soil moisture. High mortality tends to occur in July.

Let Wildflowers Mature Before Mowing

Managing wildflower areas is a great addition to property management strategies, particularly if a goal includes improving habitat for turkeys and quail.

Wildflowers attract abundant bugs and insects eaten by turkeys and other birds.

Avoid mowing these wildflowers until seedpods have matured. This ensures adequate reseeding for a good crop the following year. If you are not currently managing wildflowers but want to, determine the best wildflower blend for the soil and climate. Begin preparing seed beds well before planting time in the fall to create a smooth, firm seed bed. Small seed size means a smooth seed bed is critical to success. Rough seed beds often result in seeds getting covered too deep and leads to low germination rates, even if broadcasted by hand. Once established, and with periodic management such as mowing, wildflower areas can persist for many years. ■

GULF COAST RESTORATION PROJECTS RECEIVE \$81 MILLION



Restoration activities along Alabama's Gulf Coast received a boost this spring when the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (RESTORE Council) approved \$81 million in project funding.

The funds, part of \$302 million distributed across Gulf Coast states, address injuries resulting from the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.

The RESTORE Comprehensive Plan seeks to restore water quality and quantity through activities on private and public forests. The initiative provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners and communities in watersheds where forest resources are instrumental to the health of the Gulf of Mexico.

Gov. Kay Ivey announced the allocation April 28.

"These efforts restore our coast and contribute to its resilience," Ivey said. "I thank the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Federal RESTORE Council for their continued leadership and collaboration in these efforts."

Visit AlabamaCoastalRestoration.org to learn more. ■

PROGRAMS WILL RESTORE FORESTS, WILDLIFE AND WATER

Project	Funding
Enhancing Gulf Waters through Forested Watershed Restoration	\$10 million (Alabama Forestry Commission)
Perdido River Land Conservation and Habitat Enhancements	\$28 million
Coastal Alabama Regional Water Quality Program	\$35 million
Flow Decision Support Tool for Mobile and Perdido River Basins	\$3.4 million
Gulf of Mexico GulfCorps Program	\$2 million
Perdido Watershed Water Quality Improvements & Restoration Assessment Program	\$1.5 million
Enhancing Hydrologic Connectivity in Justin's Bay (Mobile Bay)	\$1 million
Tribal Youth Coastal Restoration Program	\$225,000



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What Is TREASURE Forest Certification?



Scan this QR code to learn more about TREASURE Forest Certification — what it means and how to apply.

- Open your phone's camera app
- Point your phone at the code (all four corners of the code should be in the frame)
- Click the link that pops up at the top of the screen
- Learn about TREASURE Forest Certification!

THE ALABAMA TREASURE FOREST ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER is published by the Alabama Farmers Federation, a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation. Correspondence may be addressed to **ATFA NEWSLETTER**, William Green, Editor, P.O. Box 11000, Montgomery, AL 36191-0001.