



# Georgia's Stewardship Forests

## Standards for Forest Stewardship Plans

### **INTRODUCTION**

Georgia's Forest Stewardship Program began in 1990 as part of a larger national effort to better educate non-industrial private forest landowners in multiple use, or stewardship management of their land and resources.

The program utilizes the unprecedented cooperation of resource professionals from both the public and private sector with backgrounds in forestry, wildlife biology, soil science, and recreation management. Working together, they produce detailed and comprehensive management plans, called Forest Stewardship Plans for landowners enrolled in the program.

Landowners with an interest in multiple use management begin by completing an official application which details their interests and objectives. The resource professionals responsible for constructing the plan then evaluate the property and develop a management program to help the landowner reach their objectives while improving the management of all resources.

This booklet gives the specifications for those plans so that participating resource professionals understand what is required in plans under this program. Once completed, all plans are subject to a review and signature process which assures consistency and high standards throughout the program.

The program also seeks to recognize those landowners who adopt their plans and do an outstanding job of managing their forest resources. A set of guidelines was developed against which the landowner's accomplishments are measured to determine which ones will be designated *Certified Forest Stewards*. These landowners are recognized locally for their accomplishments and given a property sign signifying their achievements.

The local program contact is the Georgia Forestry Commission District Stewardship Forester. A list of these individuals is included in the back of this booklet.

### **COVER LETTER**

- ◆ Identify the landowner as a participant in Georgia's Forest Stewardship Program and congratulate him on his intent to practice multiple-use forestry.
- ◆ Specify that the management plan covers a ten year period.
- ◆ Refer to the possibility that the landowner may be designated as a *Certified Forest Steward* and duly recognized at some point in the future when significant progress has been made in implementing the plan.

- ◆ All plans must be reviewed and signed by the GFC district stewardship forester, DNR wildlife biologist, and local Natural Resources Conservation Service representative. Additionally, if the landowner specified recreation or aesthetics as a primary or secondary objective, then the plan must also be reviewed by the Forest Recreation Specialist Lonnie Varnedoe (706-549-1034) in Athens. The district stewardship forester should be the last to sign the finished plan.
- ◆ Give the name, signature, phone number, affiliation and position of all the plan reviewers.

## **LANDOWNER OBJECTIVES**

- ◆ Specify the landowner's primary and secondary management objectives. **These must reflect the landowner's interests as detailed on his/her application for participation in the program.**
- ◆ In order of landowner interest, briefly mention each forest resource (timber, wildlife, soil and water, recreation, aesthetics) and summarize the overall management strategy for each, indicating how their management will be integrated.

## **LOCATION**

- ◆ Describe the location of the tract so that anyone reading the plan could find the property easily
- ◆ Describe access to the tract in relation to the proposed management of the forest resources there
- ◆ Optional location materials to consider:
  - ◆ legal descriptions
  - ◆ county road maps
  - ◆ property plats

## **MARKETS**

- ◆ Consider all the markets available to the landowner:
  - ◆ timber products
  - ◆ pine straw
  - ◆ other forest products
  - ◆ hunting rights
  - ◆ recreation users
- ◆ Provide as much information as possible on the location and nature of these markets (timber buyer's list, pine straw producer's directory, etc. could be put in the appendix and referenced here).
- ◆ When appropriate, price information may be given here.
- ◆ Agency plans should include a cautionary statement about the pitfalls and hazards of selling timber and the need for professional assistance when doing so

## **TOPOGRAPHY**

- ◆ Draw in the tract on the appropriate USGS Topographic map with map scale for inclusion in the plan.
- ◆ Identify **all** areas where topography will limit the management of the resources in any way.

## **SOILS**

- ◆ The NRCS will provide maps, interpretive information and a table listing productivity and management concerns. **This is required in all plans.**
- ◆ Soils which are designated by the NRCS as hydric (possible wetland sites) or those considered highly erodible should be clearly indicated.
- ◆ Include pertinent information on wetlands regulations and the interaction of wetlands and/or highly erodible conversions to USDA program benefits as specified by the Farm Bill.
- ◆ BMP's should be referenced in this section and copies of *Recommended Best Management Practices for Forestry in Georgia* and *Best Management Practices for Forested Wetlands in Georgia* should be included in the Appendix.

## **RARE, THREATENED & ENDANGERED SPECIES**

- ◆ General statements about the importance of protecting and enhancing rare, threatened, and endangered species should be included in all plans
- ◆ **If RTE species are known to exist in that county**, then detailed information on that species should be provided to the landowner in the Appendix of the plan. Fact sheets, location maps and county lists are available in the publications "Georgia's Protected Plants" and "Georgia's Protected Wildlife" published by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.
- ◆ If it is suspected that RTE species exist on a tract, then the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Freshwater Wetlands & Heritage Inventory office (770) 557-3032 should be called for verification. The presence of the species should then be documented in the plan.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL, CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES**

- ◆ Any sites of archaeological, cultural, or historical significance should be identified and located. These might include old buildings, roadbeds, or artifacts of previous use.
- ◆ Every attempt should be made to convince the landowner to preserve and protect such resources so that they will be available to future generations.
- ◆ Significant archaeological sites should be brought to the attention of the State Archaeologist, Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department Of Natural Resources, 500 Healey Building, 57 Forsyth Street NW, Atlanta, GA, 30303, or call (404) 656-2840.

## **ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE**

- ◆ List appropriate sources of assistance and services available including contact person's name, phone number, and address.
- ◆ Suggestions include:
  - ◆ Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
  - ◆ Farm Services Agency
  - ◆ DNR Game Management
  - ◆ GFC
  - ◆ Cooperative Extension Service
  - ◆ Consulting Foresters & Wildlife Biologists
  - ◆ Industry landowner assistance programs
  - ◆ Vendors
  - ◆ Suppliers
- ◆ All plans should include the following statement regarding federal cost share programs:
 

**Several federal cost share programs are available to financially assist landowners in the management of their forest resources. The Forest Lands Enhancement Program (FLEP) is administered by the Georgia Forestry Commission. The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).**

**Landowners participating in these programs incur certain obligations when they take federal funds. They must agree to install the practices applied for according to the specifications given them by the appropriate resource professional and they must maintain each practice, at their expense, for at least ten years. All interested landowners should study these programs and the obligations they impose carefully before making any participation decisions.**
- ◆ Extensive lists can be referenced here and included in an appendix.

## **AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH**

- ◆ All plans should include a camera or digital reproduction and enlargement of an aerial photo of the property including a legend showing the landowner name, county, and correct map scale.
- ◆ A designation of magnetic north should be drawn on the photo, and all property lines plainly marked.
- ◆ The division of stands on the photo should have the same numbering scheme as the stand descriptions in the plan.
- ◆ All marking and lettering should be neat in appearance.

## **STAND DESCRIPTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

- ◆ Each stand should be delineated and numbered on the aerial photograph.
- ◆ Each stand should be fully described so that the landowner knows what he has and what the condition is.
- ◆ The extent to which a particular resource is described should relate to the landowners interest in that resource. See below.

- ◆ The following should be addressed in the description section:
  - ◆ **Timber resource.** If timber management is a primary or secondary interest of the landowner, then a thorough description of the timber should be included. Proprietary information such as volumes and value may be added at the discretion of the forester. This information should be presented in a form that is both understandable and useful to the landowner. Tables should only be used when there is a clear reason for doing so.
  - ◆ **Wildlife resource.** If wildlife management is a primary or secondary interest of the landowner, then **extensive** information on the habitat and conditions of populations should be given.
  - ◆ **Soil resource. Any critical soil conditions occurring within this stand should be fully described.** A general description of the soil (including a measure of productivity) may be given if it is pertinent to the anticipated management recommendations, but remember that the soils should have been fully described already and redundancy should be avoided.
  - ◆ **Recreation resources.** Existing recreation use in the stand should be detailed, if applicable. Potential resource use and development should be covered as well. **When this is a primary or secondary objective of the landowner, considerable detail is expected here.**
  - ◆ **Aesthetics resource.** Comment on the aesthetic appeal of the stand, but tread lightly (remembering that beauty is often in the eye of the beholder!). Any eyesores should be detailed here. **When this is a primary or secondary objective of the landowner, considerable detail is expected here.**
  - ◆ **Water resources.** Describe water resources with comments on water quality. When wetland conditions are present or likely, report it.
- ◆ Recommendations for each stand should immediately follow the description for that stand (before the next stand is described).
- ◆ Recommendations should address multiple use management as indicated by the landowners choice of objectives and not focus on only a single resource.
- ◆ Recommendations should be explained in layman's terms, be concise and easy to understand and should include:
  - ◆ timetable including season and year
  - ◆ anticipated total costs and revenues, if available
  - ◆ sources of assistance for the particular action recommended (or sources of materials, etc.)

## **TABLES**

- ◆ A summary table for recommendations by year **must accompany all plans** and should be organized to list the recommended practices by year, then by stand so that the landowner can use this table directly as a work scheduling and progress measuring tool. This table should include the following:
  - ◆ schedule (year, season, etc.)
  - ◆ description of practice
  - ◆ extent or acres
  - ◆ total cost or revenue, if available (useful for planning purposes)
- ◆ A summary table for timber stand information may be a good idea if timber is of primary or secondary importance and there is a clear need to summarize the information for improved understanding or quick reference. Such a table should benefit the landowner

and may not be useful or needed in all instances. Using tables for window dressing should be avoided.

- A volume and value summary may be appropriate but should be accompanied by a disclaimer stating that volumes and values should not be used for sales purposes and are in no way guaranteed.

## **APPENDIX ITEMS**

- ◆ Glossary: a glossary of forestry terms is helpful to most landowners.
- ◆ Sources of assistance: lists of vendors, consultants, government agencies and programs, timber buyers, etc. along with an explanation of what they are is very helpful to landowners.
- ◆ Literature: Any literature referenced in the plan which covers recommended practices and management techniques should be included for the landowner to study as he wishes. This will allow the forester to write a more streamlined plan by leaving out long explanations.

## **Statewide Program Specialists**

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### District Stewardship Foresters – GFC

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3	Washington	Keith Murphy	kmurphy@ gfc.state.ga.us	PO Box 1463 Waynesboro, GA 30830 706-554-2310
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## CHECK LIST

1. **Landowner Application:** Regardless of who writes the FSP, a program application must first be completed by the landowner and returned to the Georgia Forestry Commission.
2. **Standard Soils Information:** It is the responsibility of the professional writing the plan to obtain from the USDA – NRCS a soils map and standard soils information report.
3. **Topographic Map and Aerial Photograph:** These are available free through the Georgia Forestry Commission but may be obtained from other sources.
4. **Endangered Species Information:** County specific information is available through the Georgia Forestry Commission.
5. **Customized Notebook:** All plans are presented in ring binder notebooks supplied by the Georgia Forestry Commission. Customized covers for each notebook are created when the landowner application is received.
6. **Literature:** The many cooperating agencies in this program provide a wide variety of published literature on all aspects of forest resource management which, when included in an Appendix, may enhance the landowner's understanding and enjoyment of the plan.
7. **Approval:** All plans must be reviewed and approved in the manner described in this booklet before they can be considered official Forest Stewardship Plans under this program.

### Georgia's Forest Stewardship Program Cooperating Agencies:

- ◆ Georgia Forestry Commission
- ◆ Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources – Wildlife Resources Division
- ◆ Univ. of Georgia – Warnell School of Forest Resources
- ◆ USDA – Farm Services Agency
- ◆ USDA – Forest Service
- ◆ USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service



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