

Working Forest Summit For North Carolina Landowners

Wednesday, March 16, 2016

Woodland Management: My Perspective
Jess Hall, Cumberland County Forest Land Owner

My Conclusion after 15 years: "Fools rush in where Angels fear to tread"

"You can bite off more than you can chew"

Situation: Year 2000

250 acres of volunteer timber in eastern Cumberland County, in the Stedman Community, much of it flat, some poorly drained and portions of a Carolina Bay
Wish to convert "to managed" for quality, for sustainability and for income long term

Sought Professional Forestry Analysis Twice

Both concluded that best plan was:

Clear cut

Bed

Plant Loblolly Pine

Chemically Release

Three step thinning /harvest process

Family Decision: but really mine, I was retiring from my profession and this was a means to add value to the property

Did not like the financials of the recommendations

Did not like the aesthetics of the recommendations

Make the transformation more gradually

Plant a variety of trees We wanted diversity

Select timber that is suited to the land as it is

Take some risks ... experiment ... O J T

What we have done:

We located a Consulting Forester willing to help us do something "else": Thad Banks

We established a couple miles of "woods roads" to access different areas easily

We increased the timber content by converting 28 acres of farm land to CRP Long Leaf

We cleared 12 acres of mostly sweet gum and planted Yellow Poplar

We cleared 15 acres of mixed low value and planted Atlantic White Cedar

We cleared 35 acres of pond pine and trash understory and planted Bald Cypress

We cleared 25 acres of mixed low quality timber and planted Loblolly

We converted 5 acres of small fields to hardwood plantation

Northern Red Oak, Black Walnut, Ash, Swamp Chestnut Oak

We began a controlled burn program to release older mostly pine stands

We did a mechanical (chain saw and Gyro Trac) release process on selected pine stands

What Are Some of the Issues We Experienced?

We followed the CRP Long Leaf Plantation Rs and Rs

Had to plant five consecutive years to get a quality stand

The chemical release stunted the Long Leaf

We had to hire Gyro Trac contractors to clear some of the land

The existing timber was so poor in places that we could not give it away

We could some later years when the ground was drier

Chemical release programs used on the Atlantic White Cedar and on the Poplar killed half the cultivated saplings

We learned that morning glory and all other vine plants are sapling predators!

We spent “months” of time in various forms of mechanical release activities

... and walking rows of saplings manually releasing them from vines

Murphy’s Law ... watch what I do and then do something different

The Bald Cypress planted acreage dried substantially, so while there is a stand, it is highly suppressed and is being outgrown by volunteer pond pine, some loblolly and sweet gum

Last winter was the first in nearly a decade when traditional winter water levels have returned ... plus even more this winter ...

yet

Summer ground water levels remain very low vs. historic levels

With the substantial years long “dry spell”, in the winter of 2013/14 I planted 2nd generation Loblolly Pine on acreage where Atlantic White Cedar traditionally would have been best suited. The two year old stand may not survive this winter due to the amount of rain we’ve had.

We’ve had some interesting times ... Combined with my “doing it my way!”

What Would I Share With You

Prepare a Forest Management Plan, get it approved and apply for the property tax considerations available to you.

Find a Consulting Forester to advise you, but remember it is your land ... your decision

NEVER sell timber without a competitive bidding process

I absolutely believe you will make up for the commission paid a Consulting Forester

If you are considering doing forestry management in a nontraditional way, please come visit with me ... I will be pleased to show you our property and to discuss details of what we did and let you assess the results ...

Hind sight may be 20:10 but observing what someone did may be almost as good

Planting non loblolly pine saplings may create more cultivation and sapling survival work than you anticipate (time and money), so take these needs into consideration as you decide how much to plant and ... in particular ... the site preparation steps you should take in advance of planting

Consider a multi-year site preparation processes

Do control burning and chemical suppression (especially of vines) before planting

There is likely safety in “commodity” product cultivation ... Loblolly Pine ... in North Carolina

It is certainly what southeastern North Carolina does

There are multiple buyers and mills here

And ... be sure you can sit on the finished product for a while

Cash Flow needs can cause you to make a poor selling decision

One of the beauties of growing timber is that most of the time you can delay harvesting until the market is better

While there is some satisfaction for me in growing a broad variety of trees,
I am not sure where the market is for some of them now

While I thought that releasing mid age pine stands to mature into quality saw timber stands was a good idea,
I am not sure where the market is for them now

The industrial “Process” of timber cultivation in North Carolina is a proven one

It is primarily Loblolly pine based

I chose to plot my own course, so in addition to having “normal” challenges

I also had unique challenges

My Conclusion after 15 years: “Fools rush in where Angels fear to tread”

“You can bite off more than you can chew”

Thank You for listening ...

Do you have any questions ... that I can answer?

How to find me when you want to chat or to visit

Jesse Hall, Jr.

Post Office Box 695

Stedman, North Carolina 28391

910 584 3131

JessHall@nc.rr.com