

SHORTLEAF PINE IN PERSPECTIVE: OUTLOOK FOR THE NATIONAL FORESTS

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ABSTRACT

Shortleaf pine occupies more acreage on Southern National Forests than does any other softwood species but major concentrations on National Forest lands occur only in Arkansas, Texas and Missouri. National Forests in these states intend to continue to regenerate most shortleaf stands to shortleaf.

INTRODUCTION

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this panel discussion today. For the past three days you have heard the foremost experts in the field discuss the silviculture and management of shortleaf pine. I will not attempt to add to that, but will try to give you an overview of the occurrence and use of shortleaf on the National Forests.

Shortleaf pine occurs naturally on all the National Forests in the Southern Region except the Delta in Mississippi, the St. Francis in Arkansas and the Ocala in Florida. In fact, the shortleaf pine type occupies a larger acreage (about 2.4 million acres) on Southern National Forests than does any other pine type. Significant acreages, however, occur mainly on the Ozark and Ouachita Forests here in Arkansas and on the National Forests in Texas. The Ouachita has 1,070,000 acres in shortleaf pine type, the Ozark has 332,000 acres and Texas has 165,000 acres. Taken together, these three National Forests contain 65 percent of Region 8's shortleaf acreage. Another significant concentration of shortleaf is found on the Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri where the shortleaf pine and shortleaf pine/oak types occupy some 324,000 acres.

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POLICY

Because of the threat of Littleleaf disease, most National Forests located east of the Mississippi River are not replanting shortleaf after harvest, but are replacing it with other species. The Chattahoochee in Georgia and the Daniel Boone in Kentucky are exceptions. The Kisatchie in Louisiana also has about 10,000 acres of shortleaf which they plan to maintain in this forest type.

In Texas, shortleaf mostly occurs on dry, sandy soils. The policy there is to regenerate these sites to shortleaf because it is considered to be the best species for the droughty conditions.

In Arkansas, shortleaf pine occupies a wide range of sites on the National Forests from the dry cherty soils of the Ozark Plateau to deep alluvial soils along stream bottoms in the Boston and Ouachita Mountains. Although some loblolly pine is being planted on the better soils and at lower elevations, it is the policy on both the Ozark and the Ouachita that the majority of shortleaf sites be maintained in shortleaf. In this respect, the Forest Service differs from most managers of large shortleaf acreage, many of whom routinely plant loblolly behind shortleaf.

Why do we plan to continue to feature shortleaf pine in our management when the early growth of loblolly appears better almost anywhere it is planted throughout the shortleaf range? There are several reasons.

1. Shortleaf is the native pine species on both the Ouachita and the Ozark National Forests. Although there is some native loblolly on the south edge of the Ouachita, it soon fades out as one moves north and there is no native loblolly on the Ozark. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 clarified and formalized long standing Forest Service policy to "maintain the diversity of tree species similar to that existing in the region". We understand this to mean continued use of native species. Inherent in this policy is the notion that native species are generally better adapted to an area and are less susceptible to failure due to insect and disease attack or catastrophic weather occurrences. Because maximum fiber production is not the primary purpose of the National Forests, we are willing to sacrifice some early volume production for the greater ecological security of using a native species.
2. The timber product objective on the National Forests is to grow quality sawtimber size trees on all sites that are capable of producing them. For this reason, rotations are generally longer on National Forest lands than on private holdings. Rotations for shortleaf pine

are generally 70 to 80 years in current Timber Management Plans. Existing yield data for shortleaf seems to indicate that on rotations of this length, the mean annual board foot growth increment for shortleaf will equal or exceed that of loblolly.

3. Shortleaf pine from National Forests here in Arkansas has developed a reputation for producing high grade lumber which is sometimes referred to in the trade as "Mountain Pine". We feel that there will continue to be a demand for this type of lumber and that the National Forests should be responsive to this demand.

In conclusion, shortleaf pine will continue to be the major softwood species used on the National Forests here in Arkansas and in Missouri. One indication of our commitment to continued use of shortleaf is the seed orchard which has been established on the Ouachita National Forest. In this orchard are separate seed sources for the Ouachita, the Ozark and the Mark Twain National Forests that will produce sufficient seed for all their shortleaf regeneration needs. A progeny testing and second generation orchard establishment program are also well underway.

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