

SHORTLEAF IN PERSPECTIVE: OUTLOOK FOR THE STATES

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First, I want to express my appreciation to all the attendees of this Shortleaf Pine Symposium for taking time away from busy schedules to come to Little Rock and learn more about the management of shortleaf pine. Second, I want to thank the many speakers who have prepared and presented fine papers on shortleaf pine management these past two days. These presentations should give many foresters new ideas and criteria with which they can better evaluate and manage shortleaf pine stands.

I would now like to give you a brief summary of the Arkansas Forestry Commission's position on the management of shortleaf pine. However, before I do this, there are some pertinent facts that I wish to point out.

1. The Arkansas Forestry Commission works mostly with small private non-industrial landowners scattered all over Arkansas. They own lands on many different and varied sites.
2. Their timber stands generally are in very poor condition initially.
3. These landowners usually have very little capital to invest in their timber stands.
4. By far, the biggest percentage of these landowners will want and need to reforest by natural regeneration.
5. They will, as a matter of economic necessity, have to rely on natural stand management.
6. Sites in Arkansas vary drastically as any you will find in the southeastern United States. From the Coastal Plain to the Quachita and Ozark mountains, to the Flatlands of eastern Arkansas, you will find a variety of site conditions.

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Our foresters and technicians are trained and instructed to consider the landowner's objective for his woodland, to evaluate existing stand conditions, and to build a forest management plan suited to the landowner's goals and financial ability. We have to be extremely careful and practical with our recommendations. If the practice fails, the landowner may not have the means to repeat a practice. Even if he does, he will have lost at least one year's growth plus all costs of the practice installation. If management practices fail for whatever reasons, small landowners are most likely to let their land remain unmanaged or convert it to open land. This, we want to avoid.

With these things in mind, we must be extremely careful to recommend the correct tree species for management on appropriate sites. We know that in the past loblolly pine has been planted outside its natural range on sites adversely suited to its survival and growth. Loblolly is not as drought hardy as shortleaf, nor is it as fire or ice resistant (shortleaf has the ability to sprout back after fire). Also when managed properly, shortleaf has unequaled quality. In the near future this characteristic will mean more dollars to landowners. Finally, shortleaf occurs naturally over all the state and seed is produced in abundance so that natural regeneration can be counted on where adequate seed trees are present. This cannot be said of loblolly, when planted far north of its natural range. For example, if site preparation is required for stand establishment and you don't get adequate flowering and seed production due to species being off site and too far north, you will have failed to establish a stand. You will also have lost the cost of site prep, a year's growth, and in all probability, the landowner's interest.

In conclusion, let me say that we are fortunate in Arkansas to have sites that are suited to both loblolly and shortleaf pine. We must take advantage of this opportunity and recommend the correct species for appropriate sites. We must also remember that results of incorrect management prescriptions will be with us for many years. Although it may take many years for these mistakes to become evident, surely they will. It is my hope that this symposium has stimulated thoughts and that we can continue this informative mode in the management of shortleaf pine. This information is timely and badly needed.

In conclusion, the policy of the Arkansas Forestry Commission is to prescribe the species of tree best suited for a given site, taking into consideration site conditions and the natural ranges of the species. Also, we must consider the long range advantages and disadvantages and not limit ourselves to just the immediate future. Therefore, shortleaf pine has an important niche in the future of Arkansas forests.

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