

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION

COUNTY WIDE MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR

COPIAH BOARD OF EDUCATION

COPIAH COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

INTRODUCTION: Copiah County has 14 sections with the Copiah Board of Education overseeing these sections. There is a total land area of 8,840 acres. Of this amount 8,044 acres is growing timber and 796 acres are non-forested. Based on percentage, 91 percent is timberland and 9 percent is non-forested. There are 73 inoperable acres located on these sections. The objective of the plan is to outline steps, which if followed, will allow for full timber production on a sustainable basis on every acre of section land covered by this plan. This plan was written for a ten (10) year period. This plan will have to be revised in 2022. It should be understood that the plan was prepared to be used as a guide and it can be changed as conditions warrant.

At this point in time, the cut cannot be regulated by the growth completely. This is due to several factors that will be discussed in detail later. This plan provides a starting point to continuously bring this land into full production on a sustainable basis with regulated annual cut. At the present time, the average stand and stocking is well stocked. Through improvement cuts, tree planting, and timber stand improvement work, growth can be increased to the desired level over the coming years.

HISTORY OF THE FOREST: The forest management agreement between the Mississippi Forestry Commission and the Copiah Board of Education provides for the management of the timberland by the Forestry Commission. The Forestry Commission acts as the Copiah Board of Education's technical advisor on all forestry matters. All work will be explained to and approved by the Board of Education prior to its execution. Work such as timber marking, burning, firelanes, tree planting, boundary line painting, and other work will be done on an actual cost basis.

In the past 30 years, a considerable amount of work has been done on these lands in an effort to get all forest acres into full production. These efforts will continue in the future as more sales are made and the volumes should increase.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES: Management objectives consist of four (4) main points. The (1) being to have the forest managed for sustained yield for pine sawtimber and hardwood where sites are favorable. The (2) is to build up growing stock. The (3) objective is to get every acre producing to its full potential. The (4) objective is to continue to provide adequate game habitat while still producing good quality timber. The steps necessary to meet these objectives will be outlined in the remainder of this plan.

FOREST DESCRIPTION: There are three (3) main timber types which dominate the forest of this county. These are hardwood bottomland, pine-hardwood, and pine plantation. The pine-hardwood stands occupy the upland dry sites as well as some of the intermittent drains. The hardwood stands are composed of a variety of oaks, hickory, Sweetgum, and other assorted hardwood species. The pine-hardwood stands are composed of shortleaf pine, loblolly, and low grade upland hardwoods composed mostly of post oak, hickory, red oak, and other assorted hardwood species. The upland sites are best suited for the production of pine. The site index on bottomland will range from 85 to 95, and the site index on the upland site ranges from 80 to 90 with the average being around 85. At present hardwoods account for 1,448 acres (18%), mixed pine-hardwood stands account for 724 acres (9%), while pine stands total 5,872 acres (73%). The product distribution is 30% in sawtimber, 29% in pulpwood, and 41% in sub-merchantable.

PRODUCTION AIMS: The primary production aim is to produce high quality sawlogs at the lowest possible cost. Pine-hardwood stand will be converted to stands that have 90-95% pine and only 5-10% hardwood. Attention will be given to leaving enough hardwood for game food. This will be done by leaving hardwood draws and selected areas in hardwood. Sales will be made to remove the low hardwoods. The hardwood on hardwood sites will continue to be managed for the production of high quality hardwood sawlogs.

No amount of volume can be set at this time to be removed from these lands each year. Attention needs to be given to removing low grade material with the ultimate objective of having the best species of trees growing the most volume possible. The available market will be one of the governing factors on the size and speed of the sales, as well as the land classification and type of lease, if any, involved.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

Silvicultural general: This plan was written with the idea of restocking using artificial regeneration. The overall plan for regeneration will be as follows: First, remove as much of the existing stand as possible; second, aerial spray remaining hardwood and herbaceous competition and then burn where needed to prepare seed beds; third conduct artificial planting. Some areas will need to be clear cut, site prepared by spraying, or machine, and planted with pine seedlings.

Most of the bottomland hardwood stands are mature but are in fair condition. They make up a significant portion of the Stream-Side Management Areas. They will, however, need work during the life of this plan. Since most of the stands are part of SMZs, they will be thinned in conjunction with adjoining timber sales. These thinnings will not reduce the crown cover below 50%. All management recommendations will take into account Mississippi's Best Management Practices guidelines.

Fire control: The Mississippi Forestry Commission has the responsibility of the fire control on all sections. The Commission operates two (2) suppression unit(s) in Copiah County. In the event of emergency, often units may be called in from adjoining counties.

Dispatching of fires is done by contacting the central dispatch located at this District Office in Brookhaven, Mississippi at 1-888-823-3473.

Insects and disease: At the present time there are no identified problems in the county. The best prevention of insects and disease is a healthy vigorous stand. A close watch must be kept to detect an outbreak of insects and disease. If an outbreak occurs, treatment may include the use of emergency timber sale, cutting, piling, burning, spraying with pesticides, and/or a combination of these measures.

Utilization and marketing: All products removed from the lands covered by this plan will be utilized if at all possible.

All marketing will be in accordance with the schedule in the appendix. In some cases of clear cuts, timber may be cruised by a professional forester employed by the Commission. After marking or cruising, the forester in charge will compute the volume of all products. Volume will be computed with tons being the commercial unit of measure. The sale will be advertised by the Copiah Board of Education, Copiah County. The period of advertisement will be 21 days. Sample contracts will be sent to all buyers in the area of the sale by the Forestry Commission. All bids must be marked "bid" and sent to the Copiah Board of Education, Hazlehurst, Mississippi. The successful bidder will be governed by terms of contract. The forester in charge will make periodic checks of the cutting operation to insure compliance with the terms of the contract.

The School Board will be invoiced for the work at the time of the sale being sold. A minimum of 15% percent of the sale will be placed in an escrow fund for forestry work of any approved type. When more funds are needed, the Forestry Commission may request the School Board to place additional funds in the escrow account. This may be from timber sales, or from the general fund money.

Physical improvement: Physical improvements are needed. Boundary lines need to be painted and/or maintained on a four (4) year cycle; permanent firelanes need to be plowed on some sections. These will be left to the forester in charge. All work must be approved by the Copiah Board of Education.

The work may be done by the Forestry Commission employees or by contracting. Funding of firelanes, site preparation, and the tree planting can be cost shared under the Forest Resource Development Program.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: The term "best management practice" refers to a practice or combination of practices, which is determined to be the most effective, practical

means of preventing or reducing the amount of pollution generated by non-point sources to a level compatible with the water quality goals.

Public land management can generally be divided into three categories as follows:

- (1) General forest management which consists of prescribed burning, hardwood brush control with herbicides and other general maintenance work.
- (2) Timber harvesting – this is the cutting and removing of forest products. These cutting operations will vary in size, shape and type cutting according to the specific situation. These cutting will include but not be limited to insect removal, thinning of stands or clear cutting of stands.
- (3) Post harvesting – this is any activity carried out as a result of harvesting and conducted after the harvesting has been completed. These activities will include but not be limited to hardwood brush control, regeneration work and road construction/maintenance.

All work on public lands will address pollution matters on upland, bottomland and wetland sites. All work will be planned and carried out according to Mississippi's Best Management Practices Handbook.

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES: All public lands will be managed in accordance with the current laws and regulations governing both plants and animals that are considered threatened and/or endangered. Prior to any management activity the tract(s) in question will be surveyed for any known threatened or endangered species. If any species is found on tract, then the tract will be managed in accordance with the guidelines published for that particular species.

HISTORICAL, CULTURAL OR ARCHAEOLOGICAL ITEMS: Any historical, cultural, or archaeological item that is found on public land will be identified, located, marked and preserved. No silvicultural practice that will damage or destroy these items will be conducted on the site. Sufficient area around the site may be excluded to insure that the site will not be damaged. There are no published lists of items to be preserved. Items would generally consist of old monuments, grave sites, Indian mounds, etc.