

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION
COUNTY WIDE MANAGEMENT PLAN
FOR
HANCOCK COUNTY SCHOOLS
HANCOCK COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

INTRODUCTION: Hancock County has 12 sixteenth sections and an additional four partial sections of lieu lands with the Hancock County School Board overseeing these sections. There is a total land area of 7,405 acres. Of this amount 5,992 acres is forested and 1,407 acres is non-forest. Based on percentage, 81 percent is timberland and 19 percent is open land. The objective of the plan is to outline steps, which if followed, will allow for full timber production on every forested acre of sixteen 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. At the present time, the average stand and stocking is moderately stocked with some sections being understocked. Through final harvests, 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 Hancock County School Board provides for the management of the timberland by the Forestry Commission. The Forestry Commission is to act as the Board's technical advisor on all forestry matters. All work must be explained to and approved by the Board of Education prior to its execution. Work such as timber marking, TSI, burning, firelanes, tree planting, boundary line painting, and other work will be done on an actual cost basis.

In the past few 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 near future as sales are made, tree planting is performed and timber stand improvement work is accomplished thereby increasing volumes in the future.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES: Management objectives consist of three main points. The first being to have the forest managed for sustained yield for pine sawtimber. The second is to build up growing stock. The third objective is to get every acre producing to its full potential. 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 forests of

Hancock County. These are pine pulpwood, pine chip and saw and pine sawtimber. The various pine timber types occupy the upland dry sites. The mixed pine hardwood stands are composed of red maple, sweet bay, black gum, yellow poplar, water oak and slash pine. The upland sites are best suited for the production of pine. The site index on mixed pine hardwood sites will range from 85 to 95, and the site index on the upland site ranges from 75 to 90 with the average being around 78.

At present pine stands account for 5,218 acres, or 87 percent of the forest, with mixed pine and hardwood accounting for 780 acres, or 13 percent of the forest. The product class distribution is 28 percent reproduction and sub-merchantable, 33 percent pulpwood, 7 percent chip and saw, and 31 percent saw timber.

PRODUCTION AIMS: The primary production aim is to produce high quality sawtimber at the lowest possible cost. Pine-hardwood stands will be converted to stands that have 60-65% pine and only 35-40% hardwood. Attention will be given to leaving enough hardwood for game food. Logging in these areas can only be done in extremely dry conditions.

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 quality trees growing the most volume possible. Attention also needs to be given to removing the high value slash pine sawtimber scattered throughout these mixed pine hardwood stands. Sales need to be made in these mixed stands when adjoining upland sites are harvested. These stands will be site prepared and converted to pine plantations. Necessary thinnings will be conducted in the pine plantation stands.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

Silviculture General: This plan was written with the idea of restocking upland stands mainly by planting either containerized longleaf or improved slash. These stands will be harvested; site prepared by chemical spraying or machine site prep and planted with either containerized longleaf or improved slash depending upon the site.

The mixed stands are in fair condition. These stands are mainly in Streamside Management Zones along the numerous creeks and drains in these sections. It is recommended that only select cutting be done in these areas. Regeneration in these stands will be by natural means. All site preparation, release, burning, and sales are scheduled in the tables of the appropriate section. All management recommendations will take into account Mississippi's Best Management Practices guidelines.

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

Dispatching of fires is done by contacting the central dispatch located at the District Office in Wiggins, Mississippi at 1-800-240-5161.

Insects and Disease: At the present time there are no real issues 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, the affected area will be treated by the use of emergency timber sale, cutting, piling, burning, spraying with chemicals, 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 provided in the appendix. All timber will be marked at stump and eye level. After marking or cruising the forester in charge will compute the volume of all products. Volume will be computed using Doyle Scale with the appropriate form classes. The sale will be advertised by the Hancock County School District. The period of advertisement will be 21 days. Sample contracts will be sent to all buyers in the area of the sale by the Mississippi Forestry Commission. All bids must be marked "bid" and sent to the Hancock County School District, Kiln, Mississippi. The successful bidder will be governed by the terms of the contract. The forester in charge will make periodic checks of the harvesting operations to insure compliance with the terms of the contract.

The District will be invoiced for the work at the completion of the sale. A minimum of 15% percent of the sale will be placed in an escrow fund for forestry work of any approved type. It is projected that costs will exceed the 15% escrow during the life of this plan. The following factors are primarily responsible for this: stagnate timber prices, increasing costs, and stocking losses from Hurricane Katrina. When more funds are needed, the Mississippi Forestry Commission may request the District to place additional funds in the escrow account. This may be from timber sales, or from the general fund money. If additional funds cannot be secured; the Mississippi Forestry Commission may have to defer and/or postpone some planned activities until funding becomes available.

Physical Improvement: Physical improvements are needed. Boundary lines need to be painted and/or maintained on a five (5) year cycle; permanent firelanes need to be plowed on some sections. These will be left to the forester/technician in charge. All work must be approved by the Board of Education.

The work may be done by the Forestry Commission employees or by contracting. All contract work must be advertised, bids taken, and the work awarded to the approved bidder. Contract work should be limited to injecting, machine site preparation, herbicide application, and tree planting. All other work can usually be best handled by Forestry Commission employees. Funding of firelanes, site preparation, and 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 that 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 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 chemicals 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 cuttings 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, 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.