

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION

COUNTY WIDE MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR

HARRISON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

HARRISON COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

INTRODUCTION: Harrison County has 12 sixteenth sections with the Harrison County Board of Education overseeing these sections. There is a total land area of 7,680 acres. Of this amount 6,067 acres is forested and 1,613 acres are non-forested. Based on percentage, 79 percent is forested and 21 percent is non-forested. The objective of the plan is to outline steps, which if followed, will allow for full timber production on every 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 with regulated harvests. At the present time, the average stand and stocking is fully 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 Harrison County Board of Education provides for the management of the timberland by the Mississippi Forestry Commission. The Mississippi Forestry Commission acts as the Board's technical advisor on all forestry matters. All work will be explained to and approved by the Board of Education prior to its execution. Services 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 to be noticeable in the near future as more sales are made and the volumes should increase.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES: Management objectives consist of four 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 fourth 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 two (2) main timber types which dominate the forests of Harrison County. These are pine and mixed pine hardwood. The pine stands are composed of longleaf pine, loblolly, and slash pine. The mixed pine hardwood stands are composed of a variety of pines, oaks, and other assorted hardwood species. The upland sites are best suited for the production of pine. The site index on the upland site ranges from 78 to 82 with the average being around 78. At present pine stands account for 4,975 acres (82 percent), mixed pine-hardwood stands account for 1,092 acres (18 percent). The forest product distribution is 29 percent reproduction/sub-merchantable, 25 percent pulpwood and 46 percent sawtimber.

PRODUCTION AIMS: The primary production aim is to produce high quality sawtimber and poles at the lowest possible cost. Pine stands will continue to be harvested using prescribed fire where applicable to promote natural regeneration within sawtimber stands, especially the longleaf stands. Attention will be given to leaving the appropriate streamside management zones to promote water quality as well as cover and food for various game and non-game species.

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.

It is the aim of this plan to have the forest area regulated by 2022 when the next comprehensive plan is written. In order to achieve this objective the sawtimber will be systematically removed over the next ten years, as the pulpwood and chip and saw timber is thinned. By having the forest area regulated a consistent stream of revenue and expenses can be scheduled during the next management period.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

Silvicultural general: This plan was written with the idea of restocking using a blend of natural and artificial regeneration. The overall plan for regeneration will be as follow:

First, identify those pine stands with the appropriate stocking to promote natural regeneration and conduct prescribed burning where needed to prepare seed beds for natural regeneration, reduce undesirable competition and promote longleaf pine stands.

Most, if not all, of the prescribed burning scheduled during the life of this plan will be at no cost to the Board due to available federal grants administered by the USDA Forest Service. In the event, these grants are discontinued; the prescribed burning will not be performed as scheduled due to cost. (The database currently used by the MFC does not allow for the cost associated with prescribed burns to be shown at a zero cost and as such the expenses by fiscal year are overinflated where the above grants are concerned.)

Second, in those stands where natural regeneration is not feasible this plan has scheduled regeneration harvests. These stands will need to receive a final harvest, be site prepared by aerial spraying, and then be machine or planted with improved pine seedlings.

Fire control: The Mississippi Forestry Commission has the responsibility of the fire control on all sections. The Commission operates three suppression units in Harrison County. In the event of an emergency, additional units may be called in from adjoining counties.

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

Insects and disease: At the present time there are no identified issues in the area. 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 area will be treated by the use of an 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 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 appropriate form classes. The sale will be advertised by the Harrison County Board of Education, Harrison 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 Mississippi Forestry Commission. All bids must be marked "bid" and sent to the Harrison County Board of Education, Gulfport, 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 Board of Education 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 Board of Education 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: Boundary lines are scheduled to be painted and/or maintained on a four (4) year cycle; permanent firelanes need to be maintained on some sections. These will be left to the forester in charge to designate. All work must be approved by the Board of Education.

The work may be done by the Forestry Commission employees or by contracting. Contract work should be limited to injecting, machine site preparation, herbicide application, and tree planting. All other can usually be best handled by Forestry Commission employees. 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 chemicals and other general maintenance work.
- (2) Timber harvesting – this is the harvesting and removal of forest products. These harvest operations will vary in size, shape and type cutting according to the specific situation. These harvests will include but not be limited to insect removal, thinning, and final harvests 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 herbaceous 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.