

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION

COUNTY WIDE MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR

SOUTH DELTA SCHOOL DISTRICT

SHARKEY AND ISSAQUENA COUNTIES

INTRODUCTION: The South Delta School District has 23 sixteenth sections with the South Delta School Board overseeing these sections. There is a total land area of 15,562 acres. Of this amount 10,801 acres is growing timber and 4,824 acres are non-forested. Based on percentage, 69 percent is timberland and 31 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 be revised in 2022. It should be understood that the plan was prepared as a guide and it can be changed as conditions warrant.

At this point in time, the cutting schedule cannot be regulated by growth alone. This is due to several factors that will be discussed in detail later. This plan provides a starting point to bring this land into optimal production through regulated annual harvests. Through timber harvests, tree planting, and timber stand improvement activities, present growth rates can be increased over the coming years.

HISTORY OF THE FOREST: The forest management agreement between the Mississippi Forestry Commission and the South Delta School Board provides for the management of the timberland by the Forestry Commission. The 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. Work such as timber marking, burning, fire-lanes, 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 as more sales are made and harvested volumes increase.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES: Management objectives consist of four (4) main points. The first objective is to manage for sustainable hardwood sawtimber production. The second is to build up growing stock. The third is to improve growth rates of existing and future forests through harvests and other stand improvement activities. The fourth objective is to continue to provide quality wildlife habitat on all school trust lands. 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 that dominate the forest of these counties. These are bottomland oak forests, and forests dominated by other misc. bottomland hardwood species. These hardwood stands are composed of a variety of bottomland oaks, hickory, ash and other low-grade bottomland hardwood species such as, sugarberry and box elder. The site index on bottomland will range from 85 to 95, with the average being around 90.

PRODUCTION AIMS: The primary production goal is to produce high quality hardwood saw-logs at the lowest possible cost. Sales will be made to remove low-grade trees and undesirable species. Forests dominated by less desirable species will be converted to bottomland oak plantations as harvest activities continue.

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 stands naturally through the use of selective thinning. The overall plan for regeneration once a harvest area has been selected will be as follows: First, approximately one-third (1/3) to one half (1/2) of the trees will be designated for removal with the use of blue tree-marking paint. The marking process will focus on removing undesirable species and trees that exhibit poor form, poor quality or disease. This removal will create growing space, allow sunlight to reach the forest floor, and leave a variety of quality species to act as a seed source. Secondly, these harvested areas will be monitored to ensure that natural regeneration is occurring as desired. Lastly, once natural regeneration has been established, typically within 5-7 years, the seed trees will be removed.

Areas where few desirable species exist and/or are dominated by low quality trees will need to be clearcut. These areas typically have poor wildlife and economic values. These areas may need to be site prepared by herbicide spraying and/or burning to eliminate undesirable re-growth and then planted with hardwood seedlings to restore the forest to a more diverse and economically attractive condition.

Most of the bottomland hardwood stands are mature and are in fair condition. Stream-Side Management Zones (SMZ's) act as a buffer alongside streams and lakes preserving water quality and improve wildlife habitat. These areas make up a significant portion of the 16th section forests. They will, however, need work during the life of this plan. In many cases, SMZs will be thinned in conjunction with adjoining timber sales. These thinnings will not reduce the crown cover below 50% within the SMZ. 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 one (1) suppression unit in the South Delta School District (Sharkey and Issaquena Counties). In the event of emergency, units may be called in from adjoining counties.

Dispatching of firefighting crews is done the central dispatch located at the District Office in Brookhaven, Mississippi at 1-888-823-3473

INSECTS AND DISEASE: At the present time there are no identified problems in these counties. 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 harvested 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 South Delta School District, Sharkey and Issaquena Counties. 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 South Delta School District, Sharkey County, 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 upon completion of the sale. A minimum of 15% percent of the sale price 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 Board of Education to place additional funds in the escrow account. This may be from timber sales, or from the general fund money.

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT: Boundary lines will be painted and/or maintained on a five (5) year cycle; permanent fire lanes need to be plowed on some sections. These will be left to the forester 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. Funding of fire lane, site preparation, and the tree planting activities 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 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 from forestry activities 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.