

NC Forest Stewardship News

NC Forest Stewardship Program Newsletter
NC Forest Service - NCDA & CS

What is “Good Forest Stewardship”?

By Ron Myers



Good forest stewardship is the pursuit of a woodland owner’s goals within a set of principles that result in the long-term health and overall productivity of their forest property. Developing a plan and implementing your plan is an important component to laying the groundwork for sound stewardship principles.

The National Association of State Foresters in cooperation with the US Forest Service prepared a Stewardship Handbook for Family Forest Owners that outlines these important principles along with indicators of good forest stewardship. These indicators are also a good way to gauge how successful your efforts or accomplishments have been to promote a well-managed forest community. A copy of the handbook can be found at:



<http://www.stateforesters.org/files/NASF-Stewardship-Handbook-print.pdf>

NC Forest Service and other partner conservation agencies have several programs that seek to recognize landowners that are practicing good forest stewardship. If you think your property or your neighbor’s property deserves to be recognized please contact one of our local forestry offices to request a site visit to become recognized as an “Outstanding Woodland Steward”.

NC Forest Service and NC Longleaf Coalition is partnering to promote a landowner recognition program focused on longleaf pine management. Landowners that are practicing good stewardship of longleaf forests and habitat improvement on their property can be nominated for the NC Longleaf Honor Roll.

Nominate a fellow landowner or contact one of our local forestry offices to request a site visit to learn more about eligibility requirements and recognition details or visit the following website.



www.nclongleaf.org/honorroll.html

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Stewardship Coordinator's Corner:

By Les Hunter



A Message from The Forest Stewardship Coordinator:

Winter weather came with a vengeance introducing the 2018 New Year. As we thaw out from record low temps, it may be good to schedule a look at your woodland to see how it's weathering the winter storms. Is there ice damage to the trees? Are there blow-downs from wind? Try the [NCFS Recovering from Storms and Wildfires](#) web link to help you in your assessment and decisions to recovery if needed.

Of course when it's cold we think of warmer weather and look for the first signs of spring in our woods.



Some old home sites and cemeteries are the first to have flowers emerge as a testament to places others cared for. With spring on our minds comes taxes. We can't avoid them but we can better prepare for them.

[Tax Tips for Landowners for the 2017 Tax Year](#) is a good resource on tax tips for this past 2017 tax year. Your Forest Stewardship plan may qualify for your county's present use value tax assessment as well as a resource to use in meeting your objectives for your woodland.



For more information, please see the NCFS website for 2017 Tax Tips.

Did you know that February is N.C. Prescribed Fire Awareness Month? Prescribed burning, also known as "controlled" burning, is an important forest management tool that benefits North Carolina's forests, wildlife and fire-dependent plants. It also helps reduce the impact of wildfire hazards. When weather conditions are right, forest rangers burn vegetative material on the forest floor. The controlled burn stays small and moves slowly across the landscape. Prescribed fire has the added benefit of reducing undesirable plant competition so native North Carolina plants, shrubs, and trees have room to grow.

The NC General Assembly recognized the importance of prescribed burning in the [N.C. Prescribed Burning Act](#) (GS 106-80). If planned and used properly, prescribed fire can be an effective practice to reduce your property risk from wildfire damage while creating favorable habitat conditions for many species.

Many landowners who have a Forest Stewardship plan have carried out some, if not all, the recommended activities to meet their objectives to realize their financial goals with the personal satisfaction of having a healthy, well managed forest. Landowners can leave a legacy on their land with stewardship practices that benefit generations now and into the future. Each year the Forest Stewardship Program will annually recognize landowners for their efforts and they can become certified as Outstanding Woodland Stewards (OWLS). Be a part of the Forest Stewardship Program and become one of our North Carolina's OWLS.

For more information about the North Carolina Forest Stewardship Program, contact your [county forest ranger](#) or Stewardship Coordinator [Les Hunter](#) or simply fill out our online [Stewardship Request Form](#).

**NC Forest Stewardship Annual Landowner Meeting
May 2018**

Landowner Focus:**By Les Hunter and Kelly Douglass****Wrenn Properties III, LLC**

Wrenn Properties III, LLC of Roxboro, NC was recently recognized as an **Outstanding Woodland Steward** for the exceptional management of their Person County forestland under the NC Forest Stewardship Program.

The following are just a few of the recommendations that were implemented on the 207-acre tract:

Forestry Practices - A select harvest was conducted on one area of the property in the spring of 2016 for the purpose of opening up the mature hardwood stand and encouraging more oak regeneration. Future plans on the harvested area include an understory herbicide treatment to control sweetgum and red maple stump sprouts to aid the natural oak regeneration.

Forest Health – An overstocked loblolly pine stand was thinned in early 2016. A selective harvest in another area will be completed soon which will remove many older, mature shortleaf pine and encourage young natural shortleaf pines to regenerate.

Soil and Water Practices – Forest Practice Guidelines and Best Management Practices were followed during the timber harvest operations.

Wildlife Practices – Wood duck boxes were installed around the ponds on the property. Existing wildlife food plots continue to be maintained.

Recreation/Aesthetic Practices - Roads on the property are maintained and allow good access for hunting and hiking. During the timber harvests in 2016, trails were cut through several forested stands to allow better access for recreation.

NC Tree Farm – Wrenn Properties III, LLC is in the NC Tree Farm Program and is a certified American Tree Farm.

Congratulations to the Inscore Family who manages Wrenn Properties III, LLC with stewardship principles in mind. This achievement reflects a commitment to a program that positively impacts North Carolina's natural resources.



Pictured are Susan Inscore and Son, Chris Inscore, representing the family owned Wrenn Properties

Forest Health:

By Kelly Oten, Ph.D.

The Hunt for a Wanted Weed: Cogongrass

It's not often you hear about grasses with criminal intent, but if that could describe any weed, Cogongrass would be it. Listed as one of the "Top 10 Worst Weeds in the World", two new spots of Cogongrass were found in Pender County in August 2017.

These are the sixth and seventh detections of the invasive weed in N.C. since 2012.



Cogongrass forms large mats where no other species can grow. Image: K. Oten,

The first detection of Cogongrass in the state was in Pender County in 2012. Subsequent finds in Stanly, Martin, Scotland, Wake, and the two additional sites in Pender County indicate that this weed is not going away without a fight. At each location, the NCD&CS Plant Industry Division attempts to eradicate the weed using a combination of herbicide, fire, and mowing. The weed may not look like much, but its ecological impacts are significant and what lands it on the Top 10 Worst Weeds list. It is an aggressively-growing plant that covers large areas and out-competes native species. Essentially, in areas where Cogongrass has taken root, little else can thrive because of allelopathy (meaning the roots emit a chemical that kills other plants). It also burns hotter than native grasses and shrubs.

Prescribed fire, typically a useful management tool across the southeast, can spell disaster if Cogongrass is a part of the equation. Fires can easily get too hot, burn out of control, and kill seedlings or trees. Longleaf pine, our state tree, depends on periodic wildfires for its success, and if the understory is comprised of Cogongrass, even these fire-adapted trees are threatened. Cogongrass can also bounce back quickly after a fire because its rhizomes, or underground roots, are unharmed and able to quickly sprout new plants.



Unfortunately, the nefarious Cogongrass doesn't drive a certain make and model of car to be on the lookout for, but we do know what it looks like. Cogongrass is a tall grass, reaching 2-5 feet in height and is yellow-green in color. The mid-vein of each blade can be off-center and the edge is finely toothed. However, the best way to identify this plant is to jump out of your truck and try to pull it out of the soil with your bare hands. You will be able to do this with most of the look-alikes such as Johnsongrass and Vaseygrass. Cogongrass, on the other hand, has very strong roots and you will need a shovel to get them out of the ground. Once you get some of the roots out of the ground, inspect them – they will be bright white in color, and VERY sharp – capable of cutting through roots of other plants or drawing blood upon inspection. Cogongrass blooms in late spring or early summer and seed heads are large, fluffy, and white. It grows in circular patches, and you won't find just one plant growing by itself. In addition, there is no central "leader" to this plant like Johnsongrass – each of the leaves comes from the ground-level, and the plants will all be the same height.

Cogongrass is native to Asia and has become invasive in every continent except Antarctica. It is suspected to have first arrived in the U.S. near Mobile, AL in the early 1900s as packing material for oranges shipped from Japan. It was later intentionally introduced for animal feed and soil stabilization. Today, Cogongrass continues to spread across the Southeast. The most heavily-impacted states are Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, though it can also be found in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, and South Carolina.

We've all heard the expression "there's a snake in the grass", but in this case, the snake IS the grass. Often, Cogongrass infiltrates a new area when ornamental cultivars of it (e.g., Red Baron and Japanese Blood) are planted and they escape cultivation. It is illegal to sell or buy these cultivars in N.C. Cogongrass can also spread if its rhizomes are accidentally moved long distances on heavy soil-moving equipment or mowers, and it is even known to spread from contaminated hay.

For more information about the hunt and fight against Cogongrass, visit the [NCD&CS Cogongrass webpage](#).

To report a suspected Cogongrass infestation, contact the NCD&CS Weed Specialist, Bridget Lassiter at (919) 707-3749, or newpest@ncagr.gov.

Practices:

By Carla Freeman

Prescribed Burning in North Carolina

Know Your Goal

First, prescribed burning is not the answer for every landowner. Knowing your goals is key to answering the question “Should I consider burning?”. There are two major types of burning: site preparation and understory. Site preparation burning is done after a timber harvest to improve tree planting activities. Understory burning is done throughout the life of a stand to clean the landscape of woody debris, enhance habitat for wildlife and reduce the severity of a wildfire by decreasing the amount of material available to burn. Wildfires can destroy or degrade timber quality, negatively affecting your timber harvesting revenues. Control burning has risk and can be dangerous. If you don’t have experience, we recommend you hire a professional or contact the North Carolina Forest Service in your county to discuss your options. In most cases, a burn plan is required before you can burn. The NC Forest Service can provide you a burn plan free of charge.



Before you talk with a professional consider the following questions.

- *What do I want my property to look like?*
- *What wildlife, if any, am I interested in?*
- *Am I at an increased risk for wildfire occurrence?*

If wildlife is a goal, be specific, know the species of interest such as deer, quail or turkey. While burning can improve the habitat for many species, timing and intensity of the burn may change depending on the species. If you use your property for recreation such as horseback riding, burning can improve access and control understory vegetation. Typically, fire lines are installed to contain the fire in a desired location. The NC Forest Service can install fire lines at a minimum cost based on hours and miles on equipment. After the burn, these fire lines can be maintained as trails. Understory burning is not a onetime event. Normally a burn should be conducted every 3-5 years after the first burn.



Visit our website to find prescribed fire summary information along with link to an introductory video titled “Prescribed Fire—A Forest Management Tool. http://www.ncforestservice.gov/fire_control/fc_prescribedfire.htm

North Carolina Prescribed Fire Council

The North Carolina Prescribed Fire Council is another resource to consider when looking for assistance. The NC Prescribed Fire Council’s goal is to protect our right to burn, encourage the safe use of prescribed fire, and to promote the public’s understanding of prescribed fire. Their mission is to foster cooperation among all parties in North Carolina with interest or stake in prescribed fire. The Council sponsors training opportunities for both beginning landowners and professionals regarding prescribed burning.



For more information visit their website at: www.ncprescribedfirecouncil.org.

Places:

By NCFS Stanly County Staff

Fire on the Mountain—Morrow Mountain State Park

Morrow Mountain State Park is located in eastern Stanly County on the banks of Lake Tillery. The park, which is approximately 4,742 acres in size, is located in the Uwharrie Mountains, an ancient chain of mountains that have weathered over time but not nearly as fast as adjacent lands. This area is characterized by rocky outcrops and some dramatic topography with some slopes reaching upwards of 70%. This dramatic topography is mostly in contrast with the more typical Piedmont areas around the park.



Aerial view of controlled burn at Morrow Mountain State

The NCFS Stanly County personnel and District 3 Rockingham office staff, have partnered with Morrow Mountain State Park to conduct a series of prescribed burns over the last seven years. These prescribed burns were a response to an increase in fuel buildup that had occurred over the years. Storm damage from winter storms, severe summer thunderstorms along with high winds from Hurricane Hugo had greatly added to the fuel load in the park. Years of fire exclusion had also added to fuel loading in many parts of the park. Years of fire exclusion had allowed extensive areas of mountain laurel to thrive adding a hot flashy fuel to the landscape. Mountain laurel will burn exceptionally hot adding to fire control challenges.

Fire occurrences in the park are not well documented before the last 30 years or so. Wildfire occurrence was increasing in recent times however. The steep slopes present in parts of the park did not allow for traditional tractor plow firefighting tactics to be used. Hand crews were most often employed. Fire suppression efforts were increasingly becoming more difficult. One fire had required additional resources consisting of the CL 215 water tanker to be utilized because of rocky steep terrain and increased fire behavior. In 2010 a 100-acre fire occurred on the park which again brought the need for prescribed burning to reduce fuel loads into serious discussion.

NCFS Stanly County personnel met and planned with State Park personnel, including Thomas Crate, State Park burn coordinator, to get the burning program started. Agency discussion and planning for a hazard reduction burning program did result in a successful hazard reduction burn being conducted in the park.

The next question to be addressed was how to get the burn program funded and paid for. A program called the **Stevens Amendment** (Public Law 100.463, Section 8136) does allow for landowners to receive hazard reduction burning to be done free of charge if the property was within 10 miles of a US Forest Service boundary. Morrow Mountain State Park was well within that requirement.



Hazard reduction burn at Morrow Mountain State Park

Since that first burn was done, at least nine other burns have been performed, on at least 3000 acres. The trail system throughout the park made for excellent interior fire lines. The NC Forest Service utilized aerial ignition methods with aviation resources to cover large. All of these factors point to an excellent example of different state agencies working toward a common goal to achieve something all can be proud of. Morrow Mountain State Park is a much safer area

For more information about Morrow Mountain State Park go to the following email or website www.ncparks.gov/morrow-mountain-state-park or Morrow.mountain@ncparks.gov

Outstanding Woodland Stewards (OWLS):

Outstanding Woodland Stewards

July 1, 2017—December 31, 2017

Michael Hubbard	Brunswick County	Coastal Plain Region
Zeb Regan, Jr.	Bladen County	Coastal Plain Region
Elmore Campbell Heirs	Columbus County	Coastal Plain Region
Daniel Owens	Davidson County	Piedmont Region
Jack Fetterman	Scotland County	Piedmont Region
William & Penny Abernathy	Scotland County	Piedmont Region
Talmage & Carol Brown	Wake County	Piedmont Region
Susan Murray	Wake County	Piedmont Region
Tyrone Williams	Halifax County	Piedmont Region
Michael McInerney	Montgomery County	Piedmont Region
Paul & Claudine Cremer	Buncombe County	Mountain Region
Misty Meadows Farm	Burke County	Mountain Region
Sam Storey	Avery County	Mountain Region

NC Stewardship Key Wildlife Contacts:

Coastal Plain

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Piedmont Region

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 Technical Assistance Biologist
 NC Wildlife Resources Commission
 1722 Mail Service Center
 Raleigh, NC 27699
 (919) 621-3317

Mountains

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 Mountain Region Supervisor
 Private Lands Program
 NC Wildlife Resources Commission
 659 Glade Mountain Drive
 Canton, NC 28716
 (828) 646-9913



For Full List of Resources Available:

http://www.ncforestservice.gov/Managing_your_forest/pdf/NCWRCPrivateLandsBrochure.pdf