



Financial Incentive Programs Support Shortleaf Pine Restoration

Tim Albritton, State Staff Forester,
Natural Resources Conservation Service, Alabama

Many federal and state governments offer financial incentive programs for forest landowners. Several of these programs provide cost-sharing payments that reimburse landowners for management activities. Other programs provide tax incentives, tax credits, and deductions for reforestation.

Landowners who want to plant shortleaf pine are able to do so with financial help from Farm Bill Programs. In recent years, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) added shortleaf establishment to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) under the Forest Health and Wildlife section. Eligibility and technical requirements of the program vary state to state. To find more information on shortleaf financial aid programs through the EQIP program, contact your local NRCS office: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/sc/contact/local/ or state forestry agency.

Forest Stand Improvement

Traditionally, the majority of government financial assistance program funds have been used for site preparation and tree planting on private lands. The rationale has been forestry is a long-term investment and landowner's need an incentive to entice them to invest.

However, many of these newly established plantations are left virtually



Prescribed burning is a good practice funded under EQIP. This picture shows a private landowner in Alabama prescribed burning a pine stand to remove hardwood competition. Credit: Tim Albritton, NRCS

unmanaged until they reach a merchantable size. The NRCS now offers a more diverse selection of Forest Stand Improvement (FSI) practices.

Some of these practices include: precommercial thinning, prescribed burning, crop tree release in hardwoods, heavy thinning in pines to reduce southern pine beetle susceptibility, pruning, and chemical release from woody competition.

These FSI practices have multiple benefits; improved growth, wildfire hazard reduction, enhanced wildlife habitat, improved access, and many more. There is also a secondary benefit, one that is hard to measure, the satisfaction derived from working the land and being a good steward. This benefit may be more spiritual in nature than financial, but it is a poor soul indeed that ignores this aspect of forestry.



A true steward of the land recognizes the full slate of values derived from the forestland: wood, water, wildlife, forage, and recreation. I have seen the government financial assistance programs become more and more diversified to assist landowners with all of these values.

If you are interested in reforesting a cutover site or managing an existing stand of shortleaf, there has never been a better time to seek assistance than the present. Check with your local USDA Service Center or your local Forestry Department for more information. The Service Center Locator can be found at: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app> and state forestry offices.

Financial Assistance Program in Alabama

In Alabama, natural shortleaf pine is often harvested without replanting. If the site is replanted, it is replaced with loblolly pine plantations. This is because loblolly pine is thought to be superior in growth compared to shortleaf. The soils and climatic conditions in many counties of north Alabama, however, often favor shortleaf over loblolly. One benefit to shortleaf is that it is less susceptible to ice damage than the longer-needled loblolly.

You may think the threat of ice damage in Alabama is minimal, but it is more frequent than one might think. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) keeps track of all major disasters across the United States. In the FEMA library listing major disaster declarations, Alabama has been listed four times since 1993 for winter storms, ice storms, or freezing rain. That is approximately one ice storm every 3 years or 9 ice storms during a 30 year pine rotation.

Until recently, Alabama landowners that wanted to plant shortleaf pine were unable to do so with the help of Farm Bill Programs. Since the USDA NRCS added shortleaf pine replanting to the EQIP program, north Alabama landowners now have a practical alternative to loblolly pine without compromising timber production goals. The Alabama NRCS/EQIP Program link: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/al/programs/?cid=nrcs141p2_022777

Because of the littleleaf disease problems in central and south Alabama, shortleaf pine planting under EQIP is currently only eligible in the following counties: Blount, Cherokee, Cullman, DeKalb, Etowah, Jackson, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marshall, Morgan, Walker, Winston, and those eastern portions of Colbert, Lauderdale, Fayette, Franklin, and Marion that are outside of the coastal plain soils.



*Shortleaf pine planted in northern Alabama, at age seven.
Credit: Jim Schrenkel*

Additional Resources

The Alabama Forestry Commission has a very helpful and informative web page see below:
<http://www.forestry.alabama.gov/CostSharePrograms.aspx?bv=2&s=2>

The Alabama NRCS program information is listed at:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/al/programs/financial/>

NRCS National site for Financial Assistance Programs:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/>

Tax Tips and Tax Credits

Tax tips: <http://www.aad.arkansas.gov/tax-tips1>

Federal Income Tax on Timber informational pamphlet:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/library/taxpubfaqs.pdf>

Mississippi reforestation tax credit:
<https://www.mfc.ms.gov/reforestation-tax-credit>

Texas A&M Forest Service forest estate planning Recommendations: <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=16998>

Federal Assistance Program Overview

Overview for federal assistance programs for landowners:
<http://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Documents/Landowners-2008%20Farm%20Bill.pdf>



Shortleaf pine (*Pinus echinata*) forests and associated habitats contain extraordinary cultural, ecological, and economic value by providing wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, enhanced water quality, and high value wood products. Despite these values and services, shortleaf pine has significantly declined across much of its 22-state range. These fact sheets provide tools and resources necessary for the restoration of shortleaf pine.