



Case Study 19

Treasuring Forests in Alabama

Alabama has more than 23 million acres of forestland that provides ecosystem services that directly and indirectly contribute to the quality of life of its residents. Forests support the production of forest products, the state's number one manufacturing industry, and also sustain wildlife, purify the air and water, protect topsoil, and provide recreational opportunities. Approximately 95 percent of Alabama's forests are privately owned and landowners often need assistance in making effective management decisions.



Photo by: Alabama Forestry Commission

In a state where 95 percent of forestland is privately owned, it is essential that natural resource agencies engage in outreach education and provide incentives to landowners for appropriate management.

To help protect these forestlands and the benefits they provide, the Alabama Forestry Planning Committee developed the TREASURE Forest Program in 1974. It was considered a model program for the National Stewardship Program. TREASURE is an acronym for Timber, Recreation, Environment, Aesthetics, for a Sustained Usable Resource. Through the program, natural resource agencies help conserve natural resources and reduce problems in the wildland-urban interface by providing forest management guidance to landowners. The

program, similar to other state forest stewardship programs, is designed to promote forest stewardship by private forest landowners. The program provides voluntary guidelines for responsible forest management and formally recognizes qualifying forest landowners who practice active stewardship on their land. In addition, the program provides important opportunities for landowners and natural resource professionals to work together to address forest management and interface challenges. More than 2,000 landowners have been certified through the TREASURE Forest Program and 1.89 million acres are being managed according to its guidelines.

Since its implementation, air and water quality in the state have improved, forest regeneration has increased, and the state's general environmental and economic well-being has improved.

The forestry commission provides incentives for responsible forest management through the Certified TREASURE Award Program.

Landowners must own at least 10 acres of forestland to qualify, and winners are selected from nominations sent in by individuals, county forestry planning committees or government agencies. Landowners must identify a primary, and at least one secondary management objective for their land from the following list: timber production, environmental education, recreational opportunities, wildlife, and aesthetics. A written multiple-use management plan for the property is also required (resource professionals from the Alabama Forestry Commission provide assistance when needed). Finally, there must be evidence of active, multiple-use management on the property.

Landowners can get more information about active management requirements from the local forestry commission office. A registered forester or wildlife biologist must inspect the land to verify that it complies with program requirements. The TREASURE Forest Subcommittee of the Alabama Forestry Planning Committee reviews and approves all nominations.

The Alabama TREASURE Forest Association (AFTA) is a related nonprofit association dedicated to promoting responsible forest management and stewardship values. AFTA promotes the Alabama Forestry Commission's Certified TREASURE Award Program. In addition to its other activities, ATFA also holds special events just for women, such as *A Woman's Story of the Land: Tour and Workshop for Women Forest Landowners*. These functions provide information, encouragement, and hands-on instruction to assist women forest landowners with land management. Events are open to females 18 years or older and teach about tree farms, hurricane recovery, wetlands, invasive exotic plants, and prescribed burning. Participants often tour local TREASURE forests owned by women. Some workshops also teach outdoor skills such as hunting, fishing, archery, shooting, and plant identification.

Photo by: Alabama Forestry Commission



The Alabama TREASURE Forest Association holds events to encourage women to engage in outdoor skill-building and forest stewardship.

The Alabama TREASURE Forest Program and ATFA help respond to challenges in the wildland-urban interface by providing guidance to landowners who want to know more about active forest management and promoting stewardship ethics. Participants in the TREASURE Forest Program and in AFTA influence the development of natural resource programs, policies, regulations, and incentives.

Sources

Alabama Forestry Commission. 2005. *TREASURE Forest: Minimum Standards and Basic Guidelines*. Montgomery AL: Alabama Forestry Commission, http://www.forestry.state.al.us/TF_Requirements.htm (accessed October 5, 2005).

Alabama TREASURE Forest Association. 2005. Mobile AL: Alabama TREASURE Forest Association, <http://www.atfa.net> (accessed: October 5, 2005).