



Hardwood Stands

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When wearing the hat labeled “Hardwood Guy” for the AFC, I get asked to look at a lot of unique hardwood stands. In this article I would like to discuss the last two hardwood properties that I had the opportunity to visit.

Case One

On October 10, the Central Region Forestry Field Day/Landowner Tour was held on Dr. Chip Taylor’s property in Hale County. I had initially visited with Dr. Taylor three or so years prior to the tour, with the intent of seeing how he could possibly make improvements on one of his hardwood stands toward his primary management objective, wildlife, as well as his secondary management objective, timber production.

When walking through this stand with Dr. Taylor, we determined that it was not unique; actually it was quite commonplace. It consisted of a closed canopy stand of mixed hardwood species that had been selectively high-graded prior to his purchase of the property. Dr. Taylor indicated that he wanted to increase the cover in the understory, as well as start any natural regeneration for the next rotation. After an on-the-ground inspection — looking at sprouting potential, desired species composition, and the presence or lack of invasive species — a pretty direct plan was established. Being the methodical person he is, Dr. Taylor decided to make the leap and implement the recommendations. A consultant forester was hired, and specific attention was paid to

marking the desired species of leave trees, primarily oak, at a desired basal area per acre. The sale was made and monitored. The purchaser was experienced in logging hardwood. The plan was coming together; would it work? Would Dr. Taylor’s objectives be met?

If you happened to be on the 2013 tour or have talked to Dr. Taylor, the answer is a resounding “yes.” Just in an 18-month or so span, the understory has thickened up with browse and the ground is littered with plenty of oak regeneration. This station on the tour was an opportunity to show what the stand looked like before the cut (by looking at an adjacent stand) and comparing it to the recently manipulated stand. The best part is that Dr. Taylor is happy and pleased.

Results: A unique stand of hardwood that meets Dr. Taylor’s objectives. The key to success with this plan was:

1. Having clear objectives;
2. Being able to evaluate the stand before it was cut;
3. Following the plan — no shortcuts.

Case Two

On October 17, I attended another tour in the Coffeetown area of Clarke County. This property is in a trust that is managed by Regions Trust, out of Mobile. Mark Elliott, managing forester, and the Clarke County Planning Committee presented landowners and foresters an opportunity to look at some 22-year-old

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hardwood plantations that had recently been commercially thinned. The plantations were old field plantings completed by Boise foresters in 1991. In talking with them, I found the species selection by site was made after consulting with Tom Cambre, who just happened to be the AFC Hardwood Specialist at the time.

You may ask, what is remarkable about all this? The uniqueness lies with the results and findings from these plantings and the thinning:

1. Crown closure was apparent by an early age.
2. Some species grew better than others (no surprise).

3. So far there has been no problem with block-planting single species.
4. Different thinning regimes yielded 30 to 40 tons per acre.
5. The difference in aesthetics (appearance) of different types of thinning (i.e., free thinning vs. row thinning, different residual basal area targets per acre).
6. Differences in potential for epicormic branching between different regimes.
7. Some species were browsed hard by deer just after planting.
8. What types of understory will develop after the thinning?
9. Hardwood seedlings will survive and thrive after being planted with a machine planter.



I could go on and on; this project is on a working scale and not a test plot. But this is real “in the field” forestry that can answer some of your questions.

I deeply appreciate the learning opportunities afforded to me by these two landowners. By their willingness to share the work they have completed, others may learn; they just have to look for such occasions. 🙏