

# Field Day Educates &



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**M**anaging Woodlands and Wildlife in Challenging Times was the descriptive title of a most successful educational forestry field day held on April 18, 2013, at the 2010 National Outstanding Tree Farm at Saloom Properties, LLC in Conecuh County near Evergreen, Alabama. You may wonder, what exactly are the criteria that determine a “most successful” field day? With this article, I hope to clarify those specific points that lead to a successful educational field day, as well as documenting highlights of this event.

It is imperative that everyone work together to help Alabama sustain its diverse natural resources for future generations. One of the rewards of multiple agencies, industry, and landowners working together is that it builds stronger and lasting relationships. These cooperative relationships compound into improved

long-lasting conservation on the ground. Each of us views the world through a different set of lenses. When we bring the unique gifts of individuals and organizations to the table, we have established a recipe for success. Therefore the strong relationships of the various agencies, industry, and private volunteers working together and bringing different gifts to the planning of an event such as a forestry field day help to ensure its success.

The Conecuh County Forestry Planning Committee did just that when it pulled various groups together using the Incident Command protocol in planning and implementing the April forestry field day. This Incident Command System (or ICS), developed in the 1970s as a result of catastrophic wildfires in California, has become a standard in emergency management across the United States. Its five major functional areas are 1) Command, 2) Operations, 3) Planning, 4) Logistics,

and 5) Finance/Administration. In addition to disaster situations, ICS can be modified to help plan and implement large events such as field days and meetings.

Implementing such a plan, the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) took the lead in logistical protocol on the day of this educational forestry event. This organizational structure is invaluable in helping the agency practice employing ICS and train for future emergencies. Under the leadership of an AFC Forester as Incident Commander, 34 AFC personnel were directly involved in the field day activities.

Other agencies and organizations that had key roles in the field day included the Alabama Natural Resources Council, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the National Wild Turkey Federation, Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, the



# Inspires Landowners



Longleaf Alliance, the Nature Conservancy, the Alabama Wildlife Federation, and many private forestry consultants and individuals.

For the tour, four educational stations were established throughout the property. Because these are challenging times for forestry landowners, we wanted to be able to help those landowners find ways to become economically sustainable as well as having the tools to manage their woodlands. Therefore, at each educational station we encompassed the themes of longleaf, wildlife, and markets. There were lectures and offerings on subjects of feral hog control, pine straw production and markets, understory/mid-story mulching, longleaf and wildlife, longleaf and prescribed burning, longleaf markets, food plot planning and construction, as well as mid-rotation thinning via clean chips and fuel wood. With 28 vendors on site, the participants were also able to attain some

tools to help them manage their own woodlands.

During the luncheon program featuring State Forester Linda Casey, over 320 participants enjoyed grilled chicken with side dishes prepared by our cooking team. More than 60 door prizes were given away, contributed by the vendors as well as local businesses in Evergreen, Brewton, and Monroeville.

By now, you may have noticed the near absence of specific names of individuals who contributed to this field day. Space is simply not available; and besides, as stated earlier, any successful event is a cooperative effort. Many new relationships were forged and others strengthened as a result of the planning and implementation of this outing. Furthermore, the educational process did not end at the close of the field day. Participants had an opportunity to complete a form requesting additional contact from an agency with information regarding certified Tree Farm,

TREASURE Forest, Stewardship Forest management plans, longleaf pine management, timber, wildlife, aesthetics, as well as other educational events.

The foundation for this educational forestry event was formed by the following objectives: it would 1) actively engage state and county resource agencies in working together for a common goal, 2) provide useful information about wildlife and longleaf timber restoration and management, 3) present a harmonious fun-filled family atmosphere for all participants, and 4) create an attitude that by working together, we can make a positive difference in our county and state. Overall, we wanted to provide a safe and enjoyable, yet informative field day learning about the longleaf pine ecosystem, timber markets, and wildlife habitat enhancement concentrating on wild turkey, deer, and feral hog management. At the end of the day, we felt that our objectives had been met. 🙏