



ARKANSAS TREE FARM PROGRAM

www.arkforests.org  
501-374-2441

# FAMILIES & FORESTS

A NEWSLETTER FOR ARKANSAS TREE FARMERS

APRIL 2020

## Focus the Same, Approaches Change During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way the forestry sector is doing business but not stopped it for the most part (although two forest products companies have announced curtailments at three Arkansas facilities). The Arkansas Forestry Association (AFA), AFA Education Foundation (AFAEF) and the Arkansas Tree Farm Program have continued their focus on advocacy, education and communication, albeit from a distance.

“Tree Farm inspections have actually soared in the past few weeks as foresters have embraced the opportunity to spend more time in the woods,” said Jennifer Johnson, tree farm program coordinator. “Adding those inspections to our growing program and preparing for the upcoming 2021 assessment has been a big part of my focus. It’s been a unique and busy time.”

The pandemic has only increased the need for forestry sector advocacy and outreach. AFA’s focus has been on ensuring that timber and forest products are part of essential critical infrastructure, included in temporary truck weight relief and targeted regulatory relief, and sharing as much virus related information as possible, including health, safety and financial information.

“Despite virtually every face-to-face meeting or activity being canceled or postponed, AFA wants to be a leader

in keeping our sector connected and productive,” said Max Braswell, executive vice president. “I commend Governor Asa Hutchinson, Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward, the Arkansas Congressional Delegation and so many of our forestry, agriculture and business partners for their tireless work to balance health and safety with keeping our economy going.”

There are challenging times ahead. Forest Economists like Dr. Matt Pelkki, George Clippert Endowed Chair of Forest Economics, College of Forestry, Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Arkansas, are projecting that impacts from COVID-19 may stretch over the next 2-3 years. For sure, there will be slowing lumber and wood panel demand as housing starts decrease in the next few months, lower stumpage prices for landowners, increased unemployment and other economic challenges. However, according to Forest Economic Advisors, all of the fundamentals of a strong economy and improving timber and forest products sector were in place before COVID-19, including the long-term value of owning timberland.

We shall return, and through it all, AFA, AFAEF and the Arkansas Tree Farm program will be here for its members - and with their help, and that of our many partners, continue to lead as the *Voice of Forestry*.

## How’s Your Habitat? *Park the Bush*

### *Hog to Benefit Wildlife*

Written by Clint Johnson, AGFC Private Lands Biologist, Central Arkansas Area

Spring is here; flowers are blooming, bees are buzzing, and turkeys are strutting in every field. For those managing open land for wildlife, spring is prime time sit back and enjoy the fruits of your labor. As tempting as it may be to hop on the tractor and enjoy the warm country air while mowing your fields, spring can be a sensitive time for wildlife. As early as April 1st, turkeys are beginning to nest, and the first fawns are being born. This period of reproduction lasts through August 1st when the last of the newly born bobwhite quail begin to fly. Agricultural activities such as bush hogging, disking, and haying can destroy nests and injure young wildlife from April 1st through August 1st. If fields must be worked during this time, fields should be mowed from the center outward to allow wildlife to escape. Chains mounted on the bucket of a tractor also give wildlife an early warning and greatly reduce



Note the waist-high grass in this field, which offers wildlife cover even in winter. Thickets should be left in each field to offer escape cover. Lone mast-producing trees like the one in the center provide food, shade, and attract deer.

tragic mishaps.

Mowing and disking in August will avoid unnecessary disturbance to young wildlife and significantly improve habitat quality. Work during this period can encourage the growth of native

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**THE TREE FARM PROGRAM...**  
is administered by the Arkansas Forestry Association (AFA) and its Tree Farm Committee.

**AFA’s goal is to provide relevant, timely information about the Tree Farm program and forestry resources.**

## Arkansas to Participate in 2021 Assessment

Each year, a sample of State Tree Farm programs is selected for review. During the spring of 2021, the Arkansas Tree Farm Program will undergo a third-party certification assessment to verify compliance with the 2015-2020 Standards of Sustainability. This assessment is vital for the program in two ways. First, it affirms the great work you do to manage your forests. Second, the assessment provides an opportunity to review how well our program operates and helps us determine how ATFS can better serve you, the landowner, with the tools you need to work on-the-ground and into the future.

When conducting a certification assessment of the Arkansas Tree Farm Program, a random sample of Tree Farms is selected for on-site visits by the professional foresters from PricewaterhouseCoopers, the organization that gives ATFS third-party recognition in Arkansas. If your Tree Farm is chosen in the random sample for site visits, your Tree Farm inspector will contact you between February-April 2021.

“In the meantime, we would greatly appreciate your help while we update our records. Please let us know if there have been any changes in your Tree Farm, such as acreage bought or sold, a change of address, a change in ownership, etc. This is also a great time to update your forest management plan.” said John Cook, Chair of the Arkansas Tree Farm Program.

Please contact Jennifer Johnson at (501) 374-2441 or [jjohnson@arkforests.org](mailto:jjohnson@arkforests.org) with updated tract information or with any questions. For more information on the Standards, you may visit <https://www/treefarmssystem.org/view-standards> or call the AFA office at (501) 374-2441 to have a copy mailed to you.

# Wildlife Habitat, continued

wildflowers – forbs like black-eyed Susan, partridge pea, butterfly milkweed, and Illinois Bundleflower – that provide food for bobwhite quail and other upland birds. Be sure to leave at least 3-4 areas the size of a truck for every acre of field to grow into brush to provide cover for small game. Longer strips will provide even more cover. Blackberries in these small thickets can also attract deer in early bow season. Thickets can be carefully managed and should be mowed before taken over by saplings. A few mast-producing trees such as oaks, black cherry, mulberry, and persimmon that sprout naturally can be left in the field to produce food and attract wildlife. Avoid mowing after September 1st to allow enough re-growth to provide cover over winter.

Fields with invading trees and shrubs can be controlled by spot-spraying herbicide even during the nesting season with little disturbance to wildlife. Spraying will also clear a small area of grasses and encourage early successional forbs the next year to provide habitat heterogeneity and food for wildlife. Spot-spraying has been shown more effective in controlling trees than mowing in scientific studies. This work can be done with a tractor or ATV mounted sprayer that consumes less fuel than a bush hog and uses little herbicide. Be sure to properly identify the trees you want to control and select the best herbicide to do the job. Private Lands Biologists can help with this task and may be able to lend herbicide sprayers.

As busy as our lives can be, we sometimes assume we must do something to get something in return. However, the best thing we can do for upland wildlife is to park the bush hog and other implements from April 1st through August 1st to avoid disturbing young and reproducing wildlife. Many plant species in fields also benefit from growing this time of year, which, in turn, also benefits wildlife. So, spend this spring relaxing and enjoying the wildlife on your property and allow your favorite critters time to do the same.

For more information on establishing and maintaining land for wildlife habitat improvement and programs to help, contact an AGFC private lands biologist by visiting [www.agfc.com/habitat](http://www.agfc.com/habitat).



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## Arkansas: *My Land My Forest* Initiative

Written by Austin Klais, Associate Wildlife Biologist, Pheasants Forever, Inc.

Over the past year, many of you have received a brochure/letter or heard a radio ad about the Arkansas: *My Land My Forest Initiative* and wanted to know more about the initiative. Questions such as “Who is in this partnership?” and “What does this partnership do?” have been coming in regularly. To provide further insight, here is the story of the Arkansas: *My Land My Forest* Initiative.

In 2017, partners came together throughout Arkansas and Louisiana with the shared goal of helping private landowners improve forest management in southeast Arkansas and northeast Louisiana. This partnership officially formed with initiatives in each state to provide an effective and directed outreach program designed to take landowners through the process of managing their forest to meet their objectives. Within Arkansas, this initiative incorporates outreach in four southeastern counties; Ashley, Bradley, Drew, and Lincoln.

The process begins with outreach (mailings

or radio ads) to landowners with forestland in Arkansas. Landowners can then respond based on their interests to request site visits from a forester or wildlife biologist and receive information on different topics including prescribed burning, forest stand improvement, and forest certification. When landowners respond, this information is coordinated by the initiative partners and passed along to the local field personnel, who then set up a site visit with you to discuss your objectives and your management options. Field personnel can then help develop a plan and assist you through the steps of management. As we all know, there are many options and ways to manage forests, so having partners that can provide technical advice and recommendations is critical to achieving objectives.

While this initiative is focused on outreach and connection in southeast Arkansas, natural resource professionals can be found throughout the state. These professionals would love to visit with you about your objectives on your land and

discuss how those can be accomplished! This includes, but is not limited to, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture - Forestry Division, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Quail Forever. Please see the contact info for each of these partners below. Just give us a call or shoot us an email, and we will get some information to connect you with the natural resource professionals who can help you through the management process.

- <https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/arkansas-forestry-commission-contacts>
- <https://www.agfc.com/en/wildlife-management/private-lands-program/private-lands-biologist/>
- [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ar/contact/local/nrcs142p2\\_035190/](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ar/contact/local/nrcs142p2_035190/)
- <https://quailforever.org/Habitat/findBiologist.aspx>