Learn About Forest Management at Annual Tree Farm Conference

The Arkansas Tree Farm Program will host the 2020 Arkansas Tree Farm Virtual Conference on Friday, October 16. The free conference is open to Arkansans who are interested in learning more about the benefits of managing woodland areas on their properties. The conference’s focus will be on participation in the Tree Farm System, a national program for woodland owners who are committed to sustainably managing their forested property for wood, water, wildlife, and recreation.

The free conference is open to anyone interested in learning more about forest management.

During the conference, attendees will hear from Jasmine Brown of the American Forest Foundation. She will discuss upcoming changes to the Tree Farm System Standards of Sustainability, a Landscape Management Plan planned for implementation in Arkansas in 2021, and the 2021 program assessment. Max Brasswell, Arkansas Forestry Association EVP, will provide a legislative outlook for the 2021 General Session. Then a panel of foresters (Bill Chaney, Arkansas Dept. of Agriculture – Forestry Division; Doug Teale, Demarc, and Phil Wright, Kingwood Forestry Services, Inc.) will discuss the difference in the duties of a state, industry, and consulting forester, and the roles they play in assisting landowners.

After a break for lunch, the meeting will convene with District Tree Farmer Award presentations, followed by a virtual tour of the 2020 Arkansas Tree Farm of the Year.

The Tree Farm Conference will be held via Zoom. Although participation is free, pre-registration is required. Conference registration and information is available at https://www.arkforests.org/event/2020FTConference. Contact Jennifer Johnson, ATFP Program Administrator at (501) 374-2441 or jjohnson@arkforests.org for more information or additional details.

As always, we would like to thank our wonderful sponsors for making this year’s conference possible.

Joe Fox Elected as President of National Association of State Foresters

By: Whitney Forman-Cook
National Association of State Foresters

Joe Fox, state forester of Arkansas, will lead NASF as president in 2021. As the director of the Forestry Division of the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Fox is responsible for the statewide delivery of wildfire protection services and technical forestry assistance on both public and private lands.

“Joe is an awesome thing for me to represent state foresters and Arkansas as president of NASF,” Fox said. “Wise forest management and safe wildfire fire operations are central to our collective work and dependent on our collective capacity. My greatest hope for this year is that we are able to build greater collaboration and communication within the forestry community. Together we...”
Shrub Thickets - Covey Headquarters for Quail
By: David Graves, AGFC, Private Lands Biologist, East Arkansas

The northern bobwhite (Colinus virginianus) is the native quail species found throughout Arkansas. These predominantly ground-dwelling birds are primarily found in areas that contain large amounts of edge habitat. Edges are boundaries between different habitat types or land use practices.

The home range of a quail covey can cover as little as 20 acres up to 160 acres. In that home range, quail require various types of habitat, including: escape cover, nesting habitat, brood rearing habitat, and feeding and loafing areas.

Headquarters are used by quail on a daily basis to provide protection against severe weather and predators along with nesting & loafing areas. Photo Courtesy of AGFC.

So, what is a “covey headquarters” and how does it fit into the equation for great quail habitat? Covey headquarters are patches of escape cover with dense, shrubby canopy cover and little ground-level vegetation. Headquarters are used by quail on a daily basis to provide protection against severe weather and predators along with nesting & loafing areas.

The percentage of the landscape designated as covey headquarters can range between 1-20% of the total area with the remainder set aside for the other habitat components needed by quail. Covey headquarters should be provided in clusters of not less than 30 feet by 50 feet blocks of shrubs that are not more than 150 feet apart, which will allow the quail to have quick access to their escape cover if the need arises.

Shrubs that serve well for this habitat component include: American (wild) & Chickasaw plum, fragrant & smooth sumac, rough-leaved dogwood, deciduous holly, cockspur hawthorn, and American beautyberry. Plum thickets are an excellent example of quail covey headquarters and occur naturally on many properties across Arkansas.

Existing Thickets - Protect and manage any existing plum or other shrubby thickets on your property. These shrubby thickets can be improved to better benefit quail. If invasive grass species have taken over the ground-level cover, those grasses should be treated with a herbicide, timing depending on whether they are warm season or cool season. This will re-open that ground-level cover making it easier for quail to move throughout the headquarters. Also, any over-hanging or adjacent trees to the plum thicket should be removed from the area. This strategy will help reduce predation from overhead predators and also provide a clear flight path for quail to escape from ground predators.

Creating Thickets - If thickets do not occur naturally on your land, they can be established by planting seeds, seedlings or container-grown shrubs. For beautyberry, dogwood & sumac, spacing should be on a 3 foot by 6 foot spacing. Other shrubs can be planted on a 5 foot by 5 foot spacing. Just remember, thickets intended for use as covey headquarters should be established in edge habitat, those areas of transition between habitat types and in open fields lacking shrubbery cover. After you have identified the best location for your headquarters, the existing vegetation should be controlled using a herbicide before you plant the shrubs. This will promote the growth of your new plantings as well as open the ground-level cover to facilitate quail movement throughout the new headquarters.

Headquarter Maintenance - Whether you have existing or newly planted covey headquarters, you should avoid damaging these when conducting other habitat management practices on your property, i.e. prescribed burning or herbicide. Herbicides can be used to control invasive grasses within and around your thicket; however, care should be used to avoid spraying shrubs. Also, livestock should be excluded from these areas to maintain the integrity of the thicket as a quail covey headquarters.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 2
AFA Office Closed

October 16
8:30 a.m. - Virtual Tree Farm Conference
Zoom

November 10
10 a.m. - PLT Steering Committee
AFA Office / Zoom
Little Rock

November 26-27
AFA Office Closed for Thanksgiving Holiday

December 9
10 a.m. - Arkansas Forestry Association
Education Foundation Board Meeting
AFA Office / Zoom
Little Rock

1 p.m. - Executive Committee Meeting
AFA Office / Zoom
Little Rock

December 16
10 a.m. - Tree Farm Committee Meeting
AFA Office / Zoom
Little Rock

December 23-25
AFA Office Closed for Christmas Holiday

January 7, 2021
10 a.m. - Program Committee Meeting
AFA Office / Zoom
Little Rock

Please Note:
For meetings that are held at the AFA Office, please park on the street or in one of the area lots – do not park in the Arkansas Chamber of Commerce parking lot.

Opportunity Available to Donate to Log a Load for Kids

Even though many of the Arkansas Log a Load for Kids events were canceled this year due to COVID-19, there is still an opportunity to help children in need at Arkansas Children’s.

Log a Load for Kids

Send a donation to Arkansas Children’s and specify Arkansas Log a Load for Kids in the notes section if you are unable to attend an event.

Our chapters had big plans this year after raising over $600,000 in 2019, which was the most money raised since 1993. Our River Valley chapter was moving back to Morrilton in September to have their event in the Devil Dog Stadium, Texarkana expected to hold its largest shooting competition to date, and Bradley County was excited to continue the growth they saw after last year’s event.

After phone calls and virtual meetings, each group decided that they did not feel comfortable having large groups of people together during the pandemic. The safety of those who assist each year is a huge priority for our chapter leaders.

Despite having to cancel their in-person event, Bradley County organized an online auction from September 5 - 11. We are still waiting for the results of their fundraiser.

Other groups originally planned to hold events this year have also decided to cancel and raise money differently. The South Central chapter mailed letters to those who have given in the past detailing how they can donate this year. The Central Arkansas and River Valley Chapters are also figuring out details on what they would like to do this year. Keep an eye on the Arkansas Log a Load for Kids and the Arkansas Forestry Association Facebook pages for more details as they become available.

Joe Fox Elected as President of NASF, con’t.

Joe Fox can achieve so much more for our forested landscapes.

Before Fox was appointed Arkansas state forester in 2012, he was the director of conservation forestry for The Nature Conservancy’s Arkansas field office. There, he directed and promoted forest conservation projects and forest land acquisition throughout the state. Fox is a native Arkansan who worked for 20 years as a procurement forester for a family-owned lumber business in Pine Bluff and Sheriden. He has served as president of the Arkansas Forestry Association and chairman of the Arkansas Forestry Commission and holds two bachelor’s degrees from North Carolina State University in forestry and agricultural economics.

NASF also elected Christopher Martin, state forester of Connecticut, as the association’s new vice president and Kacey KC, state forester of Nevada, as its new treasurer. Greg Joern, state forester of South Dakota, will serve on the executive committee as immediate past president. Each will serve a twelve-month term.

As his first order of business, Fox appointed the following state foresters to chair NASF’s standing committees:

- WILDLAND FIRE COMMITTEE Chair: George Geissler, State Forester for the Washington Department of Natural Resources

- FOREST RESOURCES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE Chair: Holly Bybee, State Forester for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources