

Sustainable Forests

A resource for Georgia landowners, sponsored by the SFI Implementation Committee.

Sustainable Forestry & Family Forests

Family forest owners are critical to the practice of sustainable forestry in the U.S.

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) Implementation Committee of Georgia values the contributions of family forest owners and wants to provide you with the resources that will help you sustain your forests for the future.

Today, the SFI program is the largest sustainable forestry certification program in the U.S. and Canada with over 150 million acres enrolled and 130 million acres independently third-party certified to the SFI Standard.

Certification is available to family forest owners through the American Tree Farm System. As more consumers demand sustainably harvested wood and paper products from certified forests, certification gives landowners an advantage when selling their timber.

For more information about SFI, a list of Georgia Master Timber Harvesters or to learn about the Tree Farm program, contact the SFI office in Athens at 706-542-7691.

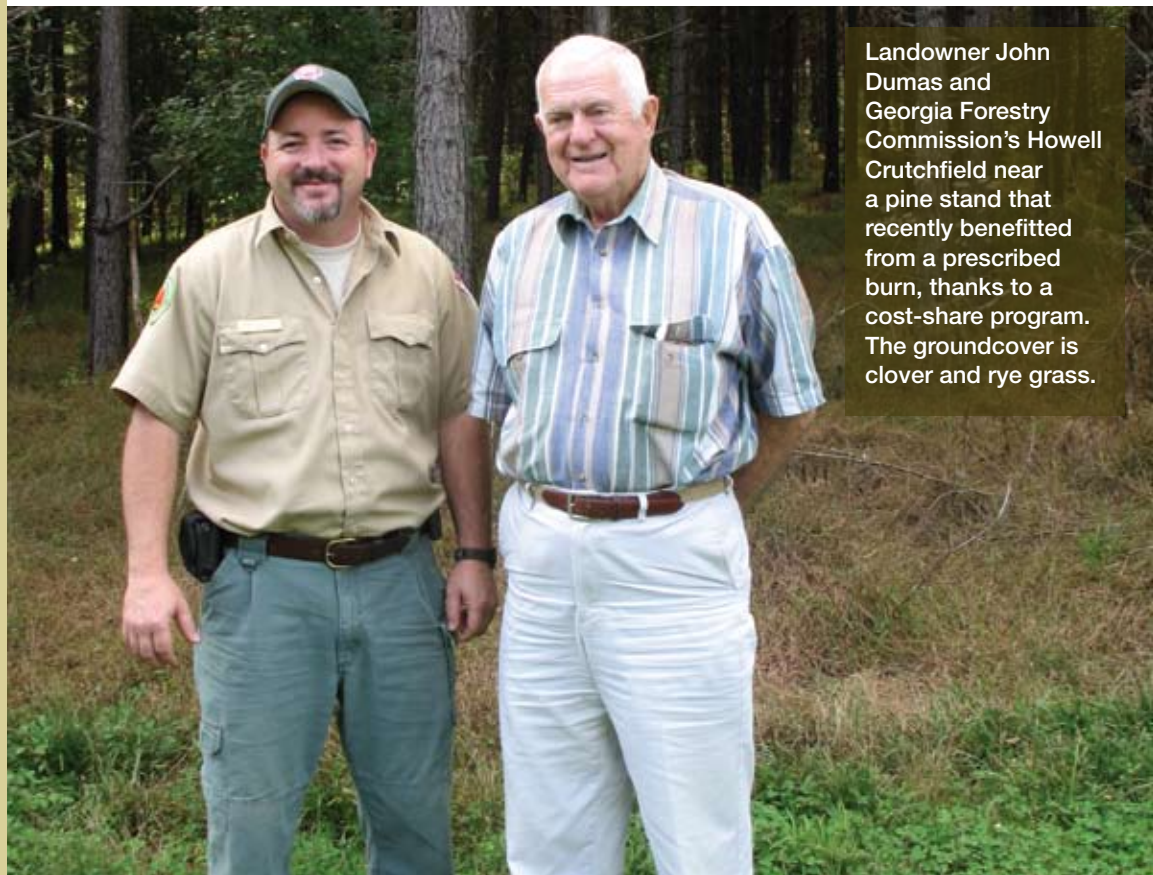
Exploring a Family Forest in Georgia

Sunny and in the sixties. It was a perfect fall day to explore a Georgia forest. Even the deer agreed. We saw several herds of does and yearlings, and a lone buck, as we rambled through just a small portion of Georgia landowner John Dumas' 2,500 acres of forestland in Jasper County.

While Dumas has a lot of land, more than the average family forest owner in Georgia, many of his management routines can be applied to smaller forest areas.

His active management efforts include prescribed burning, mechanical site preparation and reforestation, and of course, plenty of wildlife food plots and even an experiment or two. Managing erosion and planning for stream crossings are addressed with Georgia Best Management Practices (BMPs) for forestry. When available, Dumas also has taken advantage of federal and state assistance programs.

In this issue of *Sustainable Forests*, sponsored by the Georgia SFI Implementation Committee, we take a look at one family forest owner in the Georgia Piedmont with an eye toward practices and resources that you may be able to put to use on your land.



Landowner John Dumas and Georgia Forestry Commission's Howell Crutchfield near a pine stand that recently benefitted from a prescribed burn, thanks to a cost-share program. The groundcover is clover and rye grass.

All In The Family

A love of land and Hillsboro, Georgia, runs in the family. Dumas and his brother Bill grew up in the area and still maintain homes and spend as much time as possible on their land. The family first settled in Jones County, near Baldwin, and some of the land has been in the family since 1850.

Quite a bit of the contiguous 2,500-acre tract in Jasper County was acquired in recent years. Dumas has bought adjacent land when it became available—a large tract from Plum Creek Timber and additional property from the U.S.D.A. Forest Service. His land borders the Oconee National Forest, which includes 40,000 acres in Jasper County.

While Dumas' two daughters and their families don't live on the property, they look forward to regular visits and a host of activities centered around the forest—ranging from four-wheeling and working on the property to searching for arrowheads and antlers shed by deer. A huge collection of antlers is displayed in baskets on the porch.

Harvesting, Land Prep and Planting

Dumas' rolling property includes planted pine stands of all ages as well as some mixed pine and hardwood stands. Like most large acreages, all of the land is not equally fertile.

Five years ago, following a clearcut of one rocky and poor site, he conducted a heavy mechanical site preparation to create a clean site for tree planting. They actually dug up stumps, picked up large rocks and plowed the land before planting. Dumas is aided in his work by access to a large fleet of equipment, some of which he owns thanks to his primary business—Southeastern Roof Decks. (He also has a small portable sawmill, which he has used to saw lumber for his home and other projects. Large hardwood and pine cants are stored to be sawn in the future.)

Dumas has not used any chemical site preparation on his property, so the green of the young pine trees can be spotted among the dried grasses and other vegetation in the open area. Ten- to 12-year-old planted pine stands on his property seemed to be favored by deer herds, which were grazing in the rows of pines.

Hardwood planting was an expensive experiment for Dumas. He planted about 18,000 hardwood seedlings purchased from the state—white oak, cherrybark oak, sumac oak and nuttall oak—but with little success due to extremely dry weather. This past winter, he replanted pines on about 75 acres of the land where he had tried hardwoods and is pleased to report that the pines are doing well.

Howell Crutchfield, a Georgia Forestry Commission Ranger for the area, has provided support for some forestry activities on the Dumas property. He supervised prescribed burns on about 300 acres to control hardwoods and increase wildlife browse.

Keeping Water in Check with Forestry BMPs

If you look closely, you can still see the outlines of terraces from the days when most of the Dumas property was in farmland—probably cotton crops before the boll weevil wiped

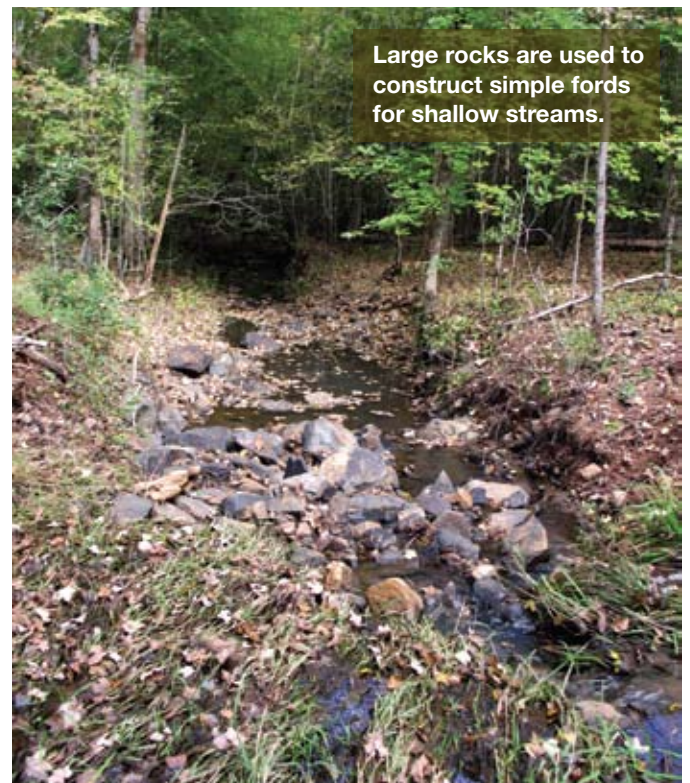
out vast acreages in the 1920s. A deep ravine in the woods is another reminder from that bygone era, when soil erosion was rampant and water was left to shape the land.

Today, water management is critical to protect your property and to meet state and Federal water quality standards. Specific guidelines for streams, rivers and lakes are addressed by Georgia Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Forestry. Even if you don't have a stream, creek or other body of water on your property, you should still consult the Georgia BMP manual when it comes to trails, road building and any land-disturbing activity—such as site preparation, planting and harvesting.

The Dumas family has used several techniques for water management:

- **Construction of Water Bars on Road** - If the ground is wet, he won't even let grandkids four-wheel on the roads to avoid tearing up the bars.
- **Seeding Four-Wheeler Trails and Forest Roads** - Dumas uses various ground covers for soil stabilization, such as wheat, rye, fescue, clover and buck oats, all of which provide food for deer and other wildlife.
- **Planning for Stream Crossings** - For shallow stream crossings, Dumas doesn't use culverts, but uses rock to construct fords. *Note: For crossing larger streams or rivers or to accommodate logging trucks or other equipment, a culvert or bridge may be required.*

For a copy of the Georgia BMPs for Forestry manual, call the Georgia Forest Commission at 1-800-GATREES (428-7337) or log on to www.gatrees.org.





American Beautyberry

Planting a Feast for Wildlife

When Dumas was younger, he enjoyed hunting. Now he's more interested in feeding the deer than shooting them; however, some hunting is necessary to control the population. Wildlife is well fed on the Dumas acreage. Food plots have been liberally sown on four-wheeler trails, bottomlands and open areas—with erosion prevention as an added benefit. Some favorites include: chicory, turnips, grain sorghum, collards, corn, clover and Egyptian wheat.

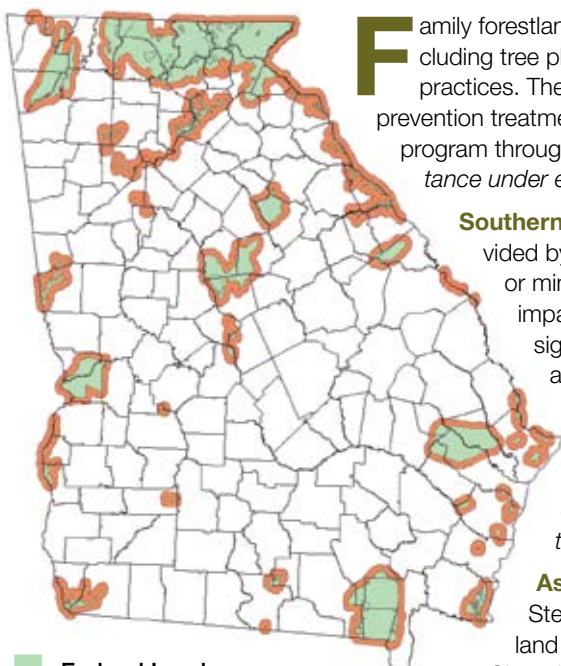
Naturally-occurring natives like American beautyberry, ragweed and blackberry round out the “gourmet” forage options for wildlife. Deer herds were even browsing on grasses in young pine stands and the area underneath several large white oak trees was heavily trampled by deer looking for acorns.

Fences do protect a few garden plots that were planted with food items more befitting human tables.



Grain Sorghum

Put Cost-Share Programs to Work for You



Federal Lands
3-mile Buffer

Family forestland owners can obtain cost-share funds for a variety of forest management activities, including tree planting, timber stand improvement, wildlife habitat enhancement and other conservation practices. The Dumas family has recently taken advantage of two programs—a Southern Pine Beetle prevention treatment through the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) and prescribed burning incentive program through the U.S.D.A. Forest Service and administered by the GFC. *You may qualify for assistance under either of these programs.*

Southern Pine Beetle Initiative: This GFC-administered program uses cost-share funds provided by the Forest Service to help landowners implement various practices that will prevent or minimize impacts of future Southern pine beetle infestations or to restore areas already impacted by these destructive insects. Dumas participated in a prescribed burn practice designed to improve the vigor of the remaining pines left on the treated tract. This program is available statewide for landowners that have 10+ acres of either loblolly or shortleaf pine.

Forest Service cost-share funds that cover about 40% of the actual cost are available for other practices, including: non-commercial thinning, chemical release, Southern pine beetle (SPB) suppression and restoration pine planting for areas impacted by SPB. *Call your local GFC office or view the “Forest Management” section of www.ga-trees.org for more information.*

Assistance for Landowners Near National Forests: Dumas also took advantage of the Stevens Grant, a prescribed burning incentive program for family forest owners who have land within a 3-miles radius of federal lands including Georgia's two national forests—the Chattahoochee and Oconee. This program promotes fuel reduction to improve forest health and enhance wildlife habitat. See map for location of federal land.



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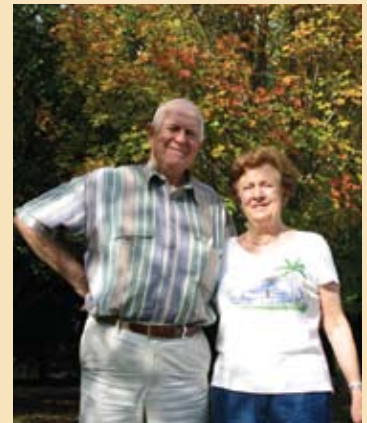


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A deer grazes in a young pine stand that has yet to be thinned. Dumas plants 800 pines per acre, and typically thins for pulpwood when the trees are age 16 to 18. To improve a stand without heavy equipment, he will sometimes manually fell the poorest trees in a young stand.



SPECIAL THANKS

The SFI Committee of Georgia wants to thank John and Janice Dumas for allowing us to feature their beautiful forest. We also thank Jody Potts and Howell Crutchfield of the Georgia Forestry Commission for assistance and photography.

For More Information about SFI, call 706-542-7691 or log on to www.sfi-georgia.org.

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